

Evolving Identities: Survey Changes over Time



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Overview

- What's happening on your campus?
- Brief intro to NSSE
- Terminology
- Complications
- "Best practices"
- Things to keep in mind
- NSSE's evolution and findings
- Final thoughts and questions

What's happening on your campus
that brings you to this session?

NSSE

- National Survey of Student Engagement
 - An annual survey of first-year and senior students measuring their participation in educationally effective experiences
 - Topics cover content such as aspects of academic challenge, learning with peers, experiences with faculty, campus environment, and high-impact practices
- Participation
 - More than 1,500 colleges and universities have participated in NSSE since 2000
 - 1,030 institutions participated in 2014-2016

Sex Versus Gender

- **Sex:** biological characteristics that are used to categorize individuals (male, female, intersex)
- **Gender:** socially constructed characteristics with psychological, social, and behavioral dimensions (man, woman, masculine, feminine)
- **Transgender**
 - A diverse population that departs significantly from gender norms (Institute of Medicine, 2011)
 - Anyone who has a gender identity that differs from their sex assigned at birth (Spade, 2008)
- **Cisgender:** a person whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth are consistent

What exactly are you trying to study?

- **Sexual identity**—the way someone identifies with a given sexual orientation
- **Gender identity**—an individual's self-identified sense of gender
- Sexual attraction—the sex or gender to which someone feels attraction (can include affection, affiliation, and emotional preference)
- Gender expression—an individual's external manifestation of gender
- Sexual behavior—the sex of a person's sexual partners

What do we call the people?

Non-straight (Queer?)

- Sexual minorities
- Queer
- GLBQ

Gender variant

- Gender minorities
- Trans*
- Trans-spectrum
- Gender non-conforming

What terms do you or others at your institution use?

Language and Cultural Difficulties

- “Straight” has become far more common than “heterosexual” but, for example, “straight” doesn’t translate easily in Spanish so “not gay” may be better
- Comprehension and terminology use differs by age, race/ethnicity, level of education...
- Some terms are very culturally specific such as “two-spirit” for American Indian tribes, “fa’afafine” from Samoan culture, “same-gender loving” or “DL, or Down Low” are used by Black or Latino men
- Gender and sex are often used interchangeably or are conflated
- Gender variant respondents may have difficulty choosing a sexual orientation, for example “straight” might apply but not feel right

With all of these complications, how do we ask about these aspects of identity?

Questionable Questions from the Recent Past...

What is your sexual orientation?

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Queer
- Bisexual
- Heterosexual 😞
- Celibate 😞
- Other ___ 😞
- Decline

What is your gender?

- Male 😞
- Female 😞
- Transgender 😞
- Genderqueer
- Something else 😞
- Decline

Best Practice? Maybe Not

What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?

- Male
- Female

How do you describe yourself?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Do not identify as female, male, or transgender.

What is your current gender identity? (check all that apply)

- Male
- Female
- Trans male/Trans man
- Trans female/Trans woman
- Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming
- Different identity (please state):

(Williams Institute, 2014)

Best Practice? Maybe

Sexual orientation (choose all that apply)

- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Gay
- Straight (heterosexual)
- Lesbian
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Questioning or unsure
- Same-gender loving
- An identity not listed please specify
- Prefer not to disclose

Gender identity (choose all that apply)

- Agender
- Androgyne
- Demigender
- Genderqueer or gender fluid
- Man
- Questioning or unsure
- Trans man
- Trans woman
- Woman
- Additional gender category/identity: please specify
- Prefer not to disclose

(Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals, n.d.)

General Best Survey Practice

- Limit check-all-that-apply questions
 - Respondents tend to “satisfice” (aim for a satisfactory answer rather than the optimal answer) resulting in the options at the top being selected more often or several incorrect/random responses chosen
 - Primacy/ordering effects are exaggerated when options are not mutually exclusive
 - Long lists worsen all of these issues
 - Check-all data is difficult to analyze, in statistics respondents must belong to a single category
- Write-in responses can be resource-intensive to analyze and difficult to use

Awesome Resource: Iowa State

- Tips and suggestions for asking questions with different levels of inclusivity
 - <http://www.lgbtss.dso.iastate.edu/library/Research>
- Terminology list
 - <http://www.lgbtss.dso.iastate.edu/library/education/terms>
- Suggestions and FAQs for different areas of campus (admissions, housing, healthcare, etc.)
 - <http://www.lgbtss.dso.iastate.edu/trans>
- Student services and resources
 - <http://www.lgbtss.dso.iastate.edu/library/education/gi-ge>

Potential Bias and Error

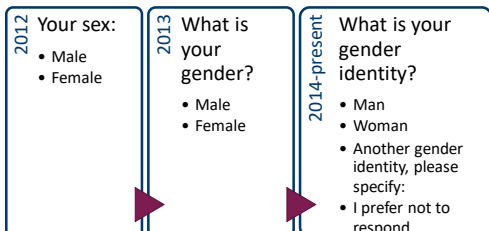
- Measurement error
 - Not understanding the terms or concepts being asked about. Adding definitions may help.
 - Concepts on a continuum are often asked as nominal categories, some may be “between” categories. Check-all questions may help, but are difficult to analyze.
- Social desirability or anxiety
 - To some people these are sensitive questions. Assurance of privacy may help.
- Nonresponse bias
 - Any population may not want to respond if they generally feel marginalized. This is a cultural problem!

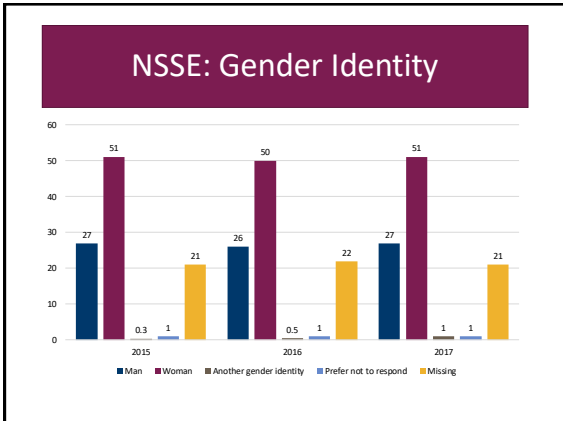
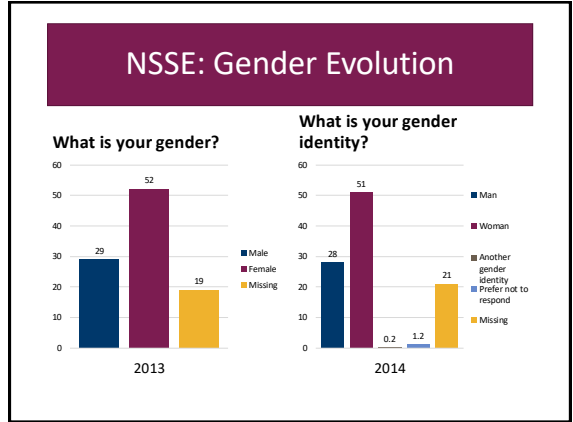
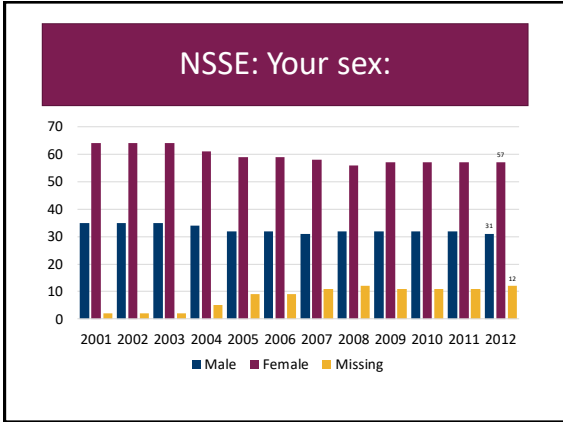
Things to Think About

- How do you plan to analyze the data you collect?
- How will you use, recode, or combine categories?
- Who will you be reporting the information to?
- How will you use the information to disaggregate other information?
- What will be the consequences for choosing a select-all-that-apply question versus select-one?
- What is it that you *really* need to know?
- What is your balance between useful survey data and inclusivity?

So how does NSSE ask about gender identity and sexual orientation?

Asking about Gender Identity: NSSE





- ### Another Gender Identity: Larger Groups
- Genderqueer, nonbinary, gender non-conforming, etc. (23%)
 - Gender fluid, fluid, pangender, polygender, demifluid, tri-gender, etc. (15%)
 - Agender, gender neutral, non-gender, etc. (13%)
 - Transgender, trans, FTM, MTF, etc. (8%)

Engagement Differences: Higher Engagement

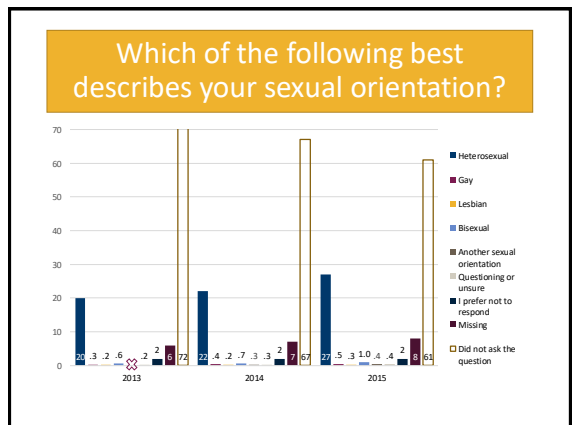
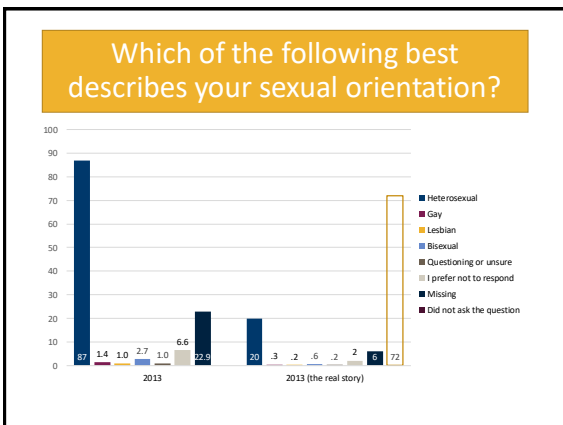
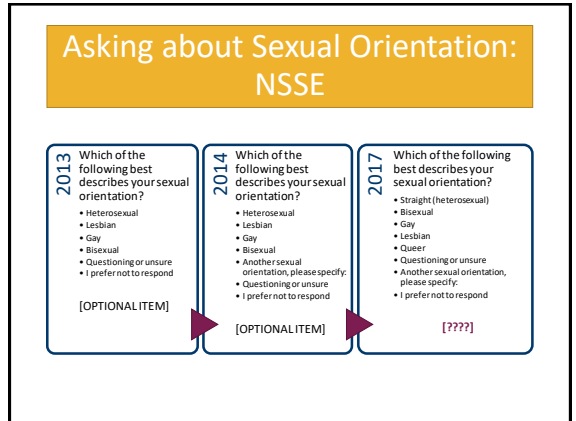
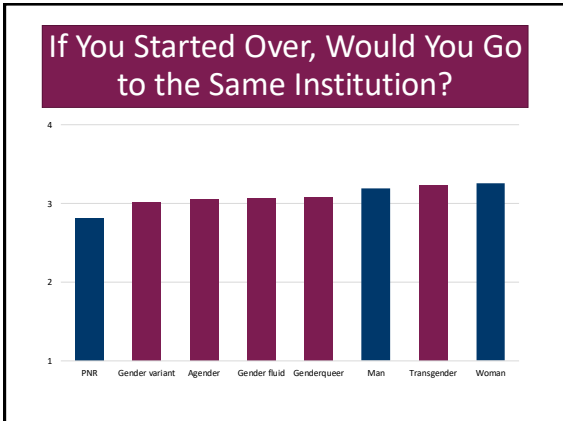
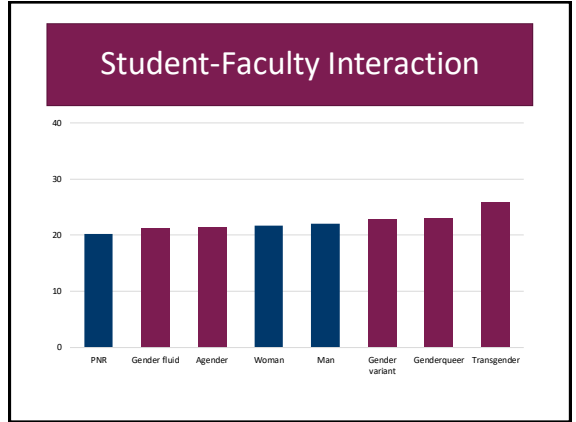
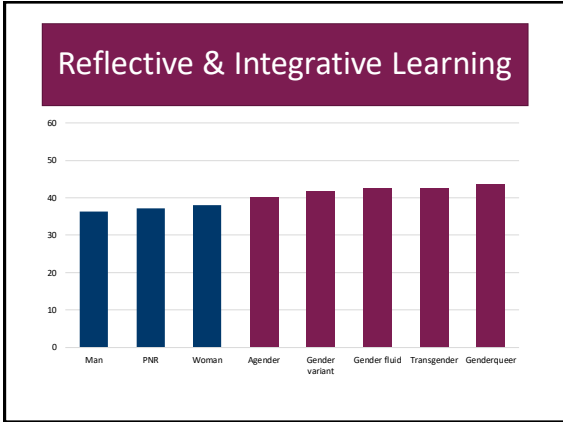
Gender Identity (gender variant)
Sexual Orientation (non-straight)

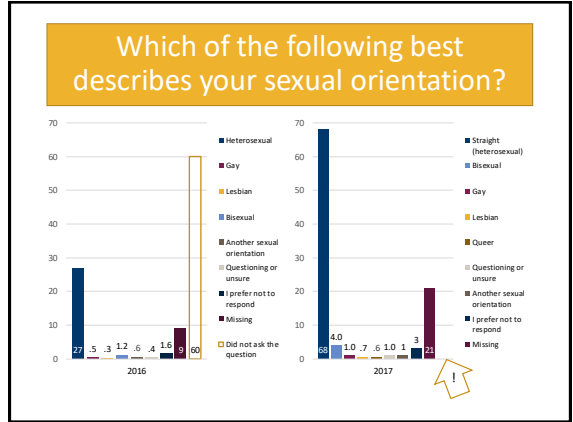
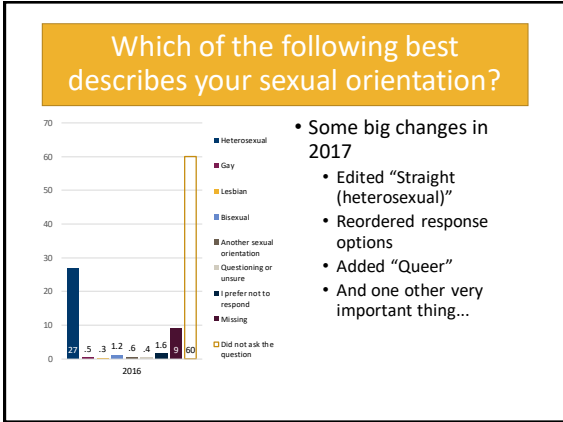
- Reflective & Integrative Learning
- Discussions with Diverse Others
- Student-Faculty Interaction

Engagement Differences: Lower Engagement

Gender Identity (gender variant)
Sexual Orientation (non-straight)

- Higher-Order Learning
- Learning Strategies
- Collaborative Learning
- Effective Teaching Practices
- Quality of Interactions
- Supportive Environment
- Perceived Gains





Another Sexual Orientation: Larger Groups

- Pansexual, omniseual, multiseual, polysexual, etc. (33%)
- Asexual, aromantic, nonsexual, etc. (25%)
- Queer (11%)
- Demiseual, gray, etc. (6%)
- Flexible, fluid (2%)

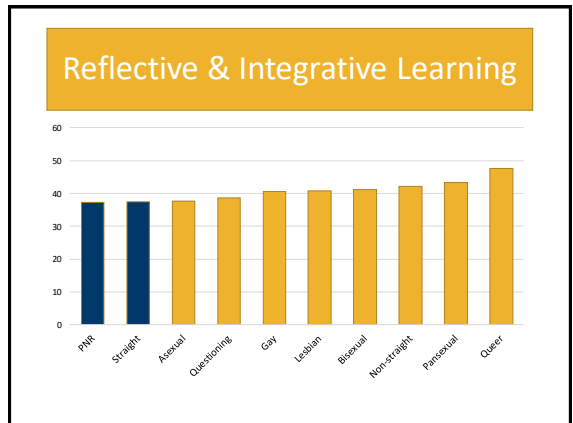
Straight (uuuuugh!) (8%)

Engagement Differences: Higher Engagement

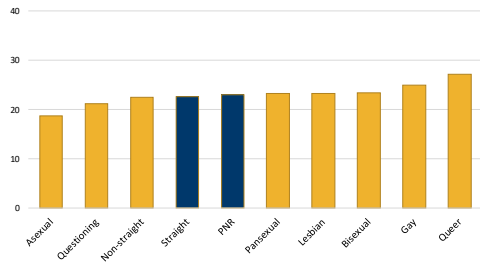
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Engagement Differences: Lower Engagement

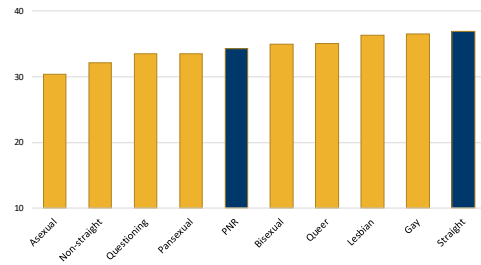
Gender Identity (gender variant)	Sexual Orientation (non-straight)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher-Order Learning • Learning Strategies • Collaborative Learning • Effective Teaching Practices • Quality of Interactions • Supportive Environment • Perceived Gains • Satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative Reasoning • Learning Strategies • Collaborative Learning • Effective Teaching Practices • Quality of Interactions • Supportive Environment • Perceived Gains • Satisfaction



Student-Faculty Interaction



Perceived Gains



Final thoughts or questions?

Thanks for joining us!

nsse.indiana.edu

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