GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN RESEARCH

Definitions

**Gender or Gender Identity** describes the internal/psychological sense of self, regardless of biology. Response options to questions categorizing gender would typically include woman, man, transgender, and non-binary.

**Sex** is the biological category based on chromosomes, hormones, and secondary sex characteristics. Response options to questions categorizing sex would typically include male, female, and intersex.

**Sexual Orientation** refers to an individual’s emotional, physical and sexual attraction to other people. Response Options to questions categorizing sexual orientation would typically include heterosexual, gay/lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Description

When researchers ask questions about sex, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation, there must be an understanding of what is being asked and what information is sought. Sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation are specific terms and should not be used interchangeably. Investigators must be specific when asking questions and collecting information with regard to gender identity, sex, and sexual orientation.

When investigators plan to collect information about sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation, the following items should be considered:

- Investigators should determine whether questions about sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation are necessary. If the investigator has no plans to use the data, it may not justify asking the question.
- Questions about sex, gender, and sexual orientation should be separate. Investigators do not need to collect data about all three, but investigators should ensure that the questions are designed to obtain the information that is sought.
- Investigators must allow individuals the option to decline responding to questions about sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
- Because sexual orientation and gender identity are separate aspects of identity, investigators should not combine them into one question (not asking, for example, “Do you identify as a part of the LGBTQ community?”).
- In order to provide additional response options for identifying sex, gender, or sexual orientation, the preferred response option is “Not Listed.” The use of the word “Other” can have a negative connotation.
- Rather than simply introducing options following the title, “Gender,” it is preferable to ask a question such as, “How do you identify?” or “To which gender identity do you most identify?”

Please contact the IRB Office at (801) 581-3655 or irb@hsc.utah.edu for additional guidance.
Sample Questions

Sex
Sex:

_____ Female
_____ Male
_____ Intersex
_____ Not Listed: ________________
_____ Prefer not to reply

Gender/Gender Identity
How do you identify?

_____ Woman
_____ Man
_____ Transgender/Trans woman
_____ Transgender/Trans man
_____ Non-Binary
_____ Not Listed: ________________
_____ Prefer not to reply

Sexual Orientation
Sexual Orientation:

_____ Heterosexual/Straight
_____ Gay/Lesbian
_____ Bisexual
_____ Not Listed: ________________
_____ Prefer not to reply

Pronouns
When appropriate, investigators should ask subjects which pronouns they use. An example question that can be used in a survey (or reworded into an interview question) follows:

Pronoun Use:

_____ He/Him/His
_____ She/Her/Her
_____ They/Them/Their
_____ Not Listed: ________________
_____ Prefer not to reply

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References & Links

American University Center for Diversity and Inclusion: Inclusive Survey and Data Collection Practices Concerning Gender, Sex, and Sexual Orientation
SurveyGizmo.com: How to Write Gender Questions for a Survey

http://nebula.wsimg.com/4c27929f438a2dee7c064e1c5b2a7b51?AccessKeyId=B6885E9DB42D0C2EAC6F&disposition=0&alloworigin=1