

Best Practices for Collecting Gender and Sex Data

Suzanne Thornton, Dooti Roy, Stephen Parry,
Donna LaLonde, Renee Ellis, David Corliss, and
Wendy Martinez (presenting)

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The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics or the U.S. Census Bureau

Any errors are Wendy's.



Who are we?

- Suzanne Thornton, Swarthmore College
- Dooti Roy, Boehringer Ingelheim
- Stephen Parry, Cornell University
- Donna LaLonde, American Statistical Association (ASA)
- Renee Ellis, US Census Bureau
- David Corliss, Peace-Work
- Wendy Martinez, Bureau of Labor Statistics





Who Am I?

How I got Here

- Moderated a panel at the Women in Statistics and Data Science Conversation
- Co-wrote a resource article for Significance Magazine
- Established an LGBTQ+ Working Group as an ASA Presidential Initiative
- Participated in a project to offer guidance for statistical best practices regarding gender and sex data
- Established the ASA Pride Scholarship with the goal of supporting LGBTQ+ statisticians



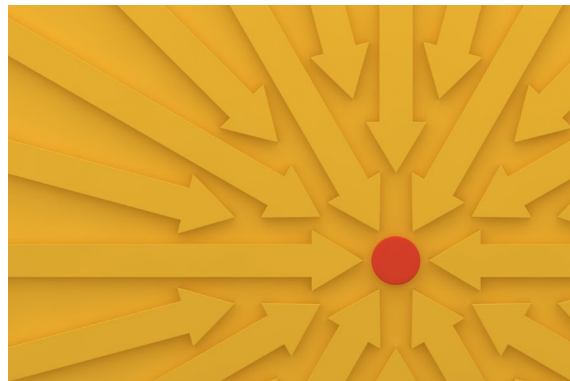
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Wrote white paper to ...

Equip statistical practitioners with better understanding and practices for collecting and analyzing data about gender and sex



Background & Terminology

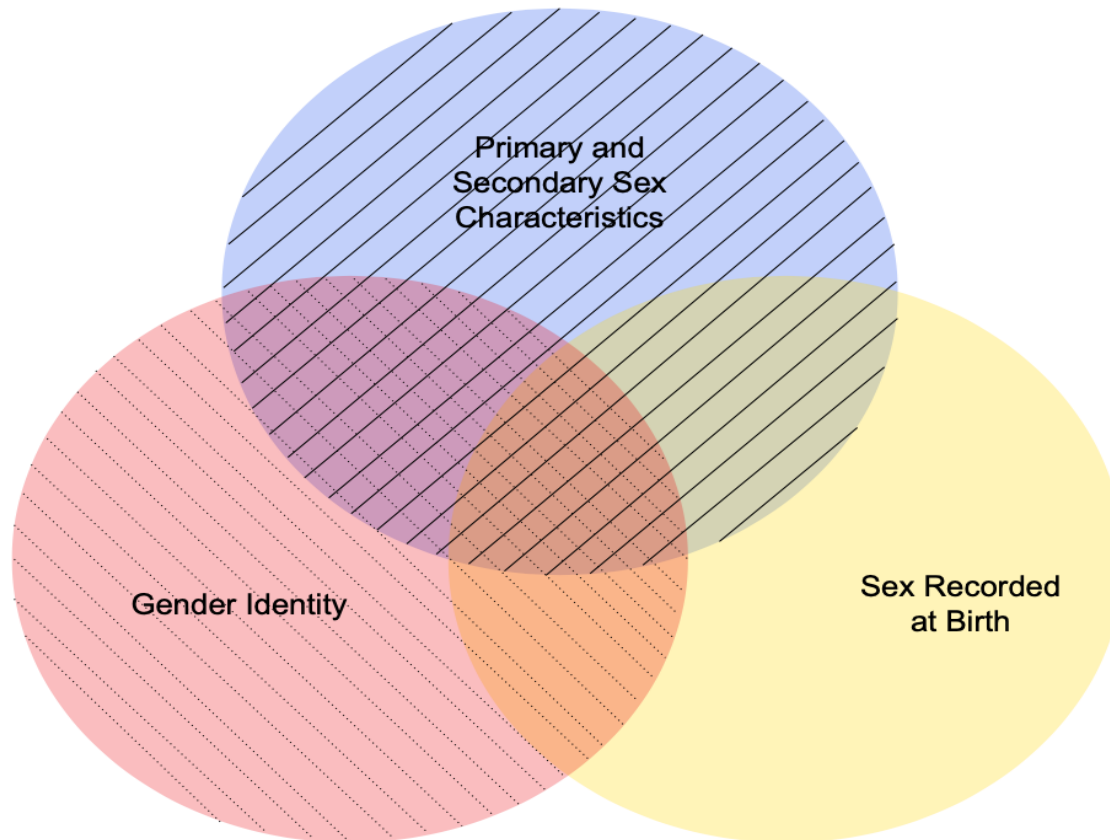
- Gender is a continuum & can change with time.
 - ▶ Gender identity: comes from within – personal understanding of oneself
 - ▶ Gender expression: many possible expressions of gender – clothing, hair, mannerisms, etc.
- Biological sex – not really binary – could be:
 - ▶ Chromosomes
 - ▶ Genitalia at birth

Background & Terminology

- Primary and secondary sex characteristics
 - ▶ Physical characteristics
 - ▶ Primary present at birth
 - ▶ Secondary present at puberty
- Sexual orientation is emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.

Background & Terminology

- Three different aspects of sex & gender identity.



Background & Terminology

- For many people, all three characteristics overlap.
- For gender or sex minorities (GSM) one or more of these characteristics may not align with the others.
- Note: GSM is catch-all label includes transgender, non-binary, other gender non-conforming, and intersex people

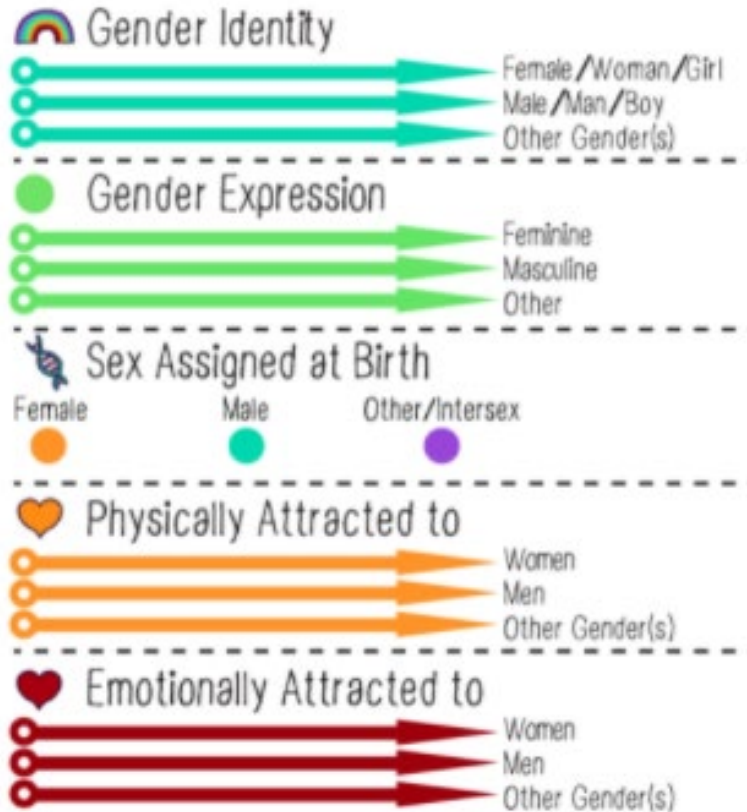
The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore



GOAL:

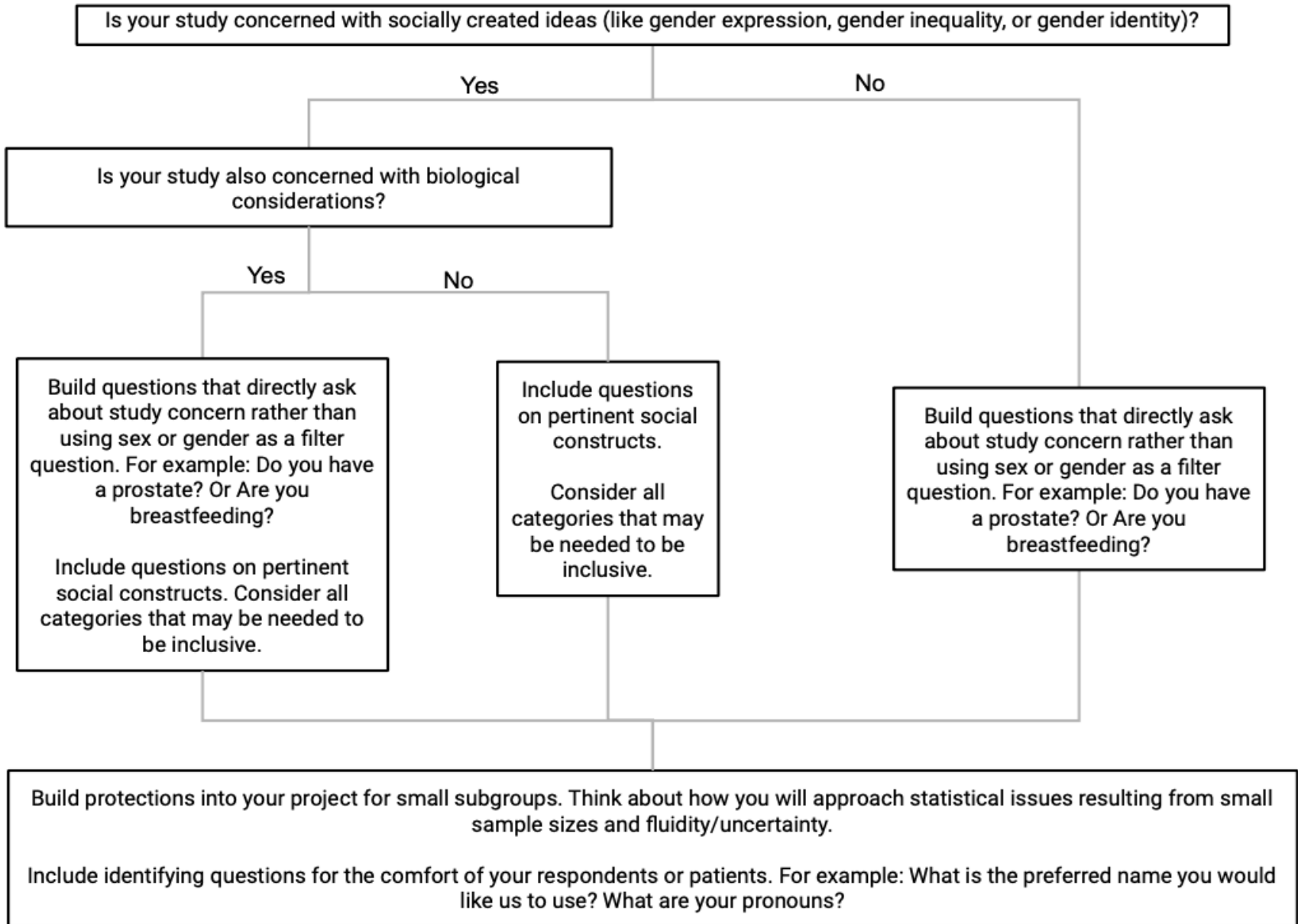
Motivation for Inclusive Data

the ethical
treatment of
human subjects

the collection of
better-quality
data

Identifying the Relevant Gender and Sex Information for a Study





Is your study concerned with socially created ideas (like gender expression, gender inequality, or gender identity)?

Yes

No

Is your study also concerned with biological considerations?

Yes

No

Build questions that directly ask about study concern rather than using sex or gender as a filter question. For example: Do you have a prostate? Or Are you breastfeeding?

Include questions on pertinent social constructs. Consider all categories that may be needed to be inclusive.

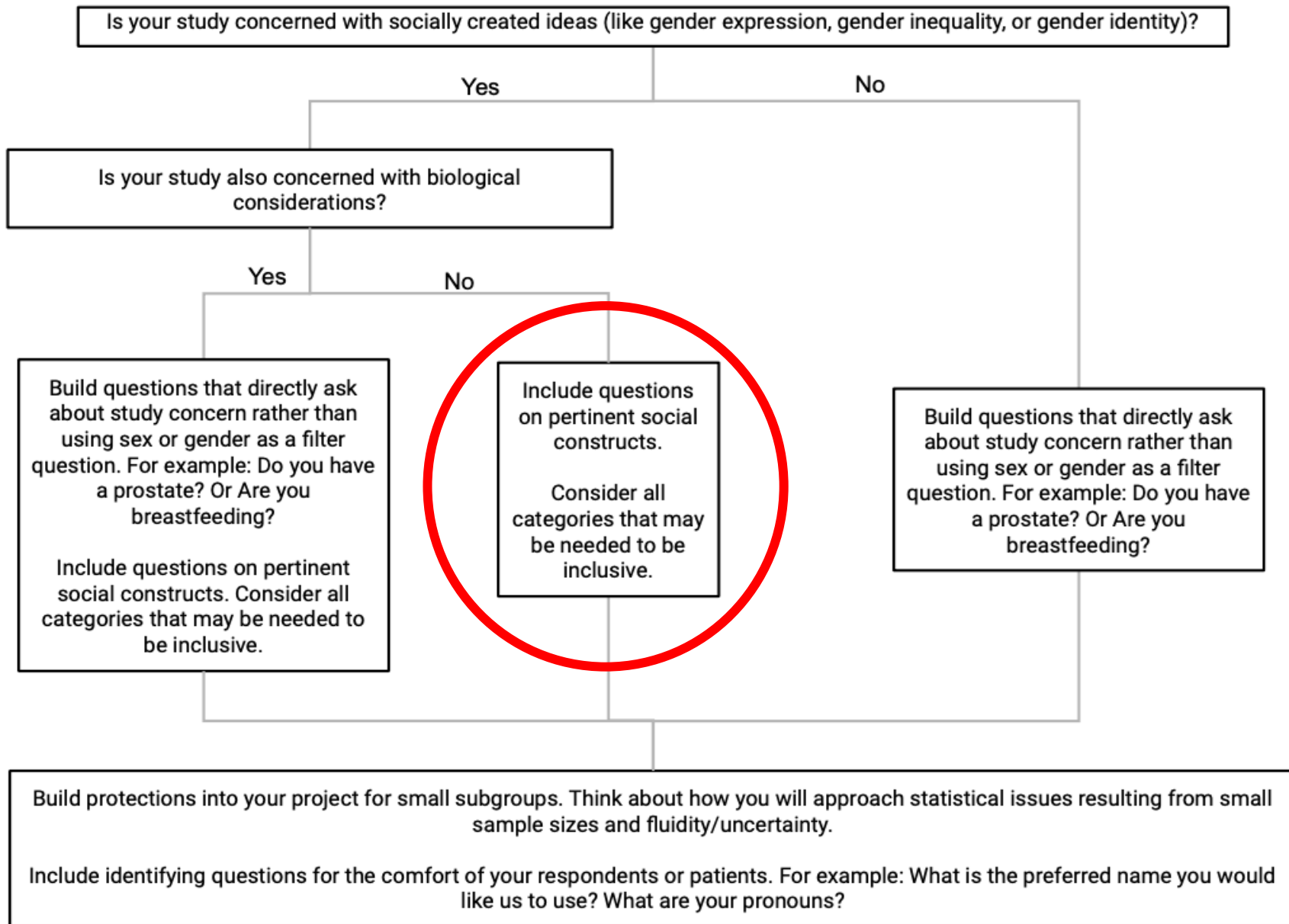
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Build protections into your project for small subgroups. Think about how you will approach statistical issues resulting from small sample sizes and fluidity/uncertainty.

Include identifying questions for the comfort of your respondents or patients. For example: What is the preferred name you would like us to use? What are your pronouns?



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Statistical Considerations

- Consideration 1: Identify relevant information – sex and gender are not interchangeable & do not necessarily need to be included in every study
- Consideration 2: Embrace inclusivity and respect – the Belmont Report identifies “respect for persons” as a basic ethical principle of research
- Consideration 3: Protect the participant and the data – data privacy is complicated by a lack of general, consistent standards



CDC Webinar (8/15/19): Improving Measurement of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the Federal Statistical System by Nancy Bates and Sylvia Fisher

Measuring Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Research Group

The purpose of this Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM) research group is to explore the best practices of the measurement of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in the context of Federal information collections.

Background reports from the Federal Interagency Working Group for Improving Measurement of Sexual Orientation

- [Why Do Federal Agencies Ask About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity \(SOGI\) on Surveys?](#)
- [Updates on Terminology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Survey Measures](#)
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FCSM SOGI Work

- SOGI – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
- 2016 reports – research on terminology
- Literature Review (2020) of SOGI terminology
- Discusses response option terminology and methodological implications
- Focused on youth and SGM (sexual and gender minority) population

<https://nces.ed.gov/FCSM/SOGI.asp>



Sexual Orientation – Takeaways

- Terms used for sexual identity/orientation are not exhaustive
- Some sexual minority groups do not like using labels for sexual orientation
- Sexual orientation is a continuum and can change over time, but terminology does not address it as such

Gender Identity – Takeaways

- Terminology does not work for all transgender individuals
- Self-identification can
 - ▶ Change over time
 - ▶ Use a variety and/or multiple terms
- Can be affected by
 - ▶ Culture and language
 - ▶ Age, sex at birth and educational attainment

Call to Action

- Work to change standard data collection of gender and sex for the sake of inclusivity and to decrease measurement error and bias.
- Be thoughtful in identifying what information is relevant and necessary.
- Understand the importance of respecting and protecting participants' identities.
- Plan in advance of data collection for statistical measurement and disclosure issues.
- **Continue the conversation**



**It's complicated and
evolving, but we have to
keep working on it.**



Contact Information

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