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Comments Received:

Gathering information in the ACS about gender and sexual orientation will certainly be of great use to researchers, but I would caution about using politicized language or asking intrusive questions.

For gender identity, the approach taken by healthcare providers is probably best. First, ask if the person's gender is the same as that assigned at birth and second, ask which gender they identify as. I believe "man, woman, non-binary, and intersex" would be the best choices, as a large number of social identities are encompassed by non-binary (and the distinctions between these aren't always clear or are disputed), and being intersex is different from the aforegoing categories, in fact, an intersex person might have answered "yes" to the first question yet still identify as intersex.

As for sexual orientation, probably others with more experience surveying people about their sexual orientation would have a better insight. As a member of the LGBTQ community unfortunately I find that people have highly politicized these terms and they become an identity that is somewhat divorced from a person's actual life history. So I would counsel that the agency needs to be clear if you are asking about behaviors or asking about a social identity. If it is a social identity, it's likely that the main options will be "gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual". I have never in my life been able to figure out what the difference is between bisexual and pansexual other than when dishonest interlocutors falsely claim that "bisexual" means that you do not date trans people. A quick review of the research shows this to be an utter lie. Self identified bisexuals are more likely to date trans people than any other segment of the population. However, if you do not include pansexual as a social category, the professional activist class and the twitter warriors will immediately cry foul. As a side note, some gay women identify as gay and not lesbian. The use of lesbian is another case of social category, not a behavior. Otherwise we could say "gay, straight, bi" and call it a day. In the end, I hope that you carefully review what's already know about surveying and interacting with MLM and WLW communities in order to craft a question about sexual orientation.

With regards to my personal preference, I believe the Bureau should ask about social identity and leave history and behavior alone. Those kinds of questions are the realm of public health and much too intrusive for an ACS form. Social identity shapes certain kinds of behaviors and therefore this kind of information can be meaningful for a lot of kinds of research. For other researchers, they may need to simply stay in the public health realm to drill down into the kind of behaviors they want to understand.