

STANDARDIZING GLBT RESEARCH VOCABULARY

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ABSTRACT

Title: Glossary of standardized terms relating to GLBT affairs.

Objective: To create an executive document for the Mayor's Office of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Affairs (GLBT) of standardized GLBT language that can be distributed and used by DC Government agencies in survey questions and other data collection tools over an extended period of time in order to assess reliability and gain fidelity.

Methods: Several previous team research reports were reviewed along with the 2006 Philadelphia report and the new ACA guidelines regarding HHS standards for data collection. Current studies, reports, and surveys on the GLBT community were also reviewed to gain knowledge of current language usage. Key terms were identified through the research and definitions were obtained.

Results: The research team created a glossary of standardized terms. The glossary will be used in data collection within the GLBT community to be distributed to DC Government agencies. The group then drafted a final report including an expanded glossary, outlining proposed standardized language for use by DC government agencies in surveys, in-take forms, and other data collection tools.

Conclusions: Creating a standardized glossary of terms for the Office of GLBT affairs will help minimize language discrepancies that government and private organizations may have when drafting surveys and reports on GLBT issues. Today's climate surrounding GLBT issues calls for both politically correct and culturally sensitive language. Because the glossary was thoroughly researched and evaluated it takes out any guesswork that public health professionals may have to do when drafting surveys and reports. Moving forward, the DC community working on GLBT affairs will now have a standardized language that will eliminate any confusion or discrepancies regarding definitions of GLBT terms.

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INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades the GLBT community in the United States has been reported to be more active, involved and identified culturally, and has been positively accepted by the society. Nine states and the District of Columbia have legalized same-sex marriages and two states (Rhode island & California) recognize them. As the society is becoming progressive, much more needs to be done to strengthen the research domain, particular to this community. Language and vocabulary for conducting research in this community has always been a debatable issue and "What is right?" is often the question asked by many while interacting with the community.

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ Review previous research team reports, the 2006 Philadelphia report and the new ACA guidelines regarding HHS standards for data collection
- ❖ Analyze current studies, reports and surveys on the GLBT community.
- ❖ Create a glossary of terms to be distributed to DC Government agencies for use in data collection within the GLBT community.
- ❖ Draft a final report outlining proposed standardized language for use by DC Government agencies in surveys, in-take forms, and other data collection tools.

METHODS

Several methods and materials were used in the preparation of our glossary for the client - The Mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs. The project initiated by holding a meeting with Mr. Jeffrey Richardson in the beginning of the Fall 2012 semester to discuss the expectations and requirement of the client. A work plan was created right after, that outlined every step in sequential order and equally divided work among the team. Reports for review and analysis were then identified by the group. The reviewed reports included previously created on GLBT literature by research teams from George Washington University in Fall 2011 and Spring 2012, the 2006 Philadelphia Report, the 2011 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services proposed rules for implementing section 4302 of the Affordable Care Act, current GLBT research studies and other grey literature found on the internet and finally, suggestions were taken from Mr. Richardson in-person.

Following the initial reviewing of these reports, an in-depth analysis was done to identify the extent of GLBT research language discrepancy. A list of over 50 words were extracted as a result of this analysis, words that were not well defined or had multiple meanings in the GLBT research language. A matrix with compilation of all the different words was then created on a database that every group member could access. A team of three group members were designated solely on compiling this expanding glossary. Two versions of the glossary were created: a one page glossary for Mr. Richardson, that were to distribute to organizations throughout DC, and an extended glossary for our use and the purpose of this project.

One of the group members was assigned the task of keeping in contact with the client and giving him regular updates on project developments and proceedings. While the other three were responsible for writing and editing the final report and the project poster. Regular group meeting were held to discuss the progress of the project and for valuable suggestion/comments from the course Teaching Assistant.

RESULTS

- ❖ The group emphasized on accessing most recent and updated data pertaining to research language used in GLBT survey and interview, however, a pronounced deficiency was still seen during the process due to lack of research conducted.
- ❖ After completing this project report, two glossaries of standardized language were created. A one page glossary for Mr. Richardson, that will be distributed to organizations throughout DC, and an expanded glossary for our use and the purpose of this project.
- ❖ The knowledge of the group as well as the knowledge gained from extensive research and review of current reports and cultural competency, helped put together the glossary of standardized terms that organizations throughout Washington, DC can utilize when creating surveys and collecting data that relates to GLBT communities and affairs.
- ❖ The second expanded glossary was created for this project and could be used in conjunction with the one-page glossary to further explain the usage of each word and why one word could be preferred over another.
- ❖ One of the interesting and recurring events noted was that, the term 'homosexual' had a negative connotation due to its ambiguity and was often associated with pathology and criminal behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

- ❖ There are many GLBT-related terms utilized throughout the United States; however, a lot of these terms are either redundant, unclear, or possess a negative connotation.
- ❖ Continual efforts need to be made in the direction of research for language used during GLBT research studies and surveys.
- ❖ The Mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs should implement the language glossary created during this research and try to incorporate revisions whenever possible.
- ❖ The Mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs should continue to work with research and educational institutions like the George Washington University, in order to keep up to date with the current research scenario and methods.

Key References Used to Develop the GLBT Glossary

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Bisexual	An individual whose sexual preference is both to males and females An individual whose sexual orientation is to the same sex. Gay can be used in reference to a male whose sexual orientation is to males or a female whose sexual orientation is to females. However, because there can be confusion as to whether gay refers to solely males or both males and females, this term should only be used after the sex of the individual(s) has been stated.
Gay	A male whose sexual orientation is to males. Because there can be confusion as to the word gay refers to only males or males and females, the term male should follow. This term should be used rather than homosexual due to negative connotation and ambiguity.
Gay male	A social constructed system of classifying characteristics of masculinity and femininity.
Gender	One's personal sense of their gender. For transgender individuals, their birth-assigned sex and their own sense of gender identity do not match. This can also include refusing to describe oneself with a gender.
Gender identity	Issues or events that specifically involve GLBT communities
GLBT affairs	A group of people whose individuals either identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, or who identify as heterosexual but support those who identify as GLBT. GLBT communities can consist of both those who identify as GLBT or GLBT supporters.
GLBT community	
GLBT individual(s)	An individual who identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.
Heterosexual	An individual whose sexual orientation is to the opposite sex. Heterosexuals are also referred to as straight.
Homosexual	See gay. This term should be avoided because it has a history of an association with pathological and criminal behavior and does not refer specifically to a male or female.
Intergender/ Genderqueer	An individual who is transgender identifies themselves as in-between, both of, and apart from the traditional gender roles. This is a gender role identity.
Intimate partner	Refers to an individual's current partner or spouse.
Lesbian	A female whose sexual orientation is to females. This term should be used rather than homosexual due to negative connotation and ambiguity.
MSM	A medical and social research designation for men who have sex with men, regardless of how they identify themselves.
Transgender individuals	Individuals that express their gender differently than conventional expectations, such as opposite of their sex listed on their birth certificate. This is an umbrella term that covers gender nonconforming individuals, including transsexual or cross-dressing individuals.
Transsexual individuals	Individuals that have or are in the process of changing their physical and/or legal sex to match their sexual identity. Individuals transitioning from male to female and female to male are often referred to as MTFs and FTMs, respectively.
Same-sex married couple	A married couple comprised of two individuals of the same sex.
Same-sex partners	A couple comprised of two individuals of the same sex.
Sex	The sum of the structural and functional differences between the male and female division of a species.
Sexual identity	Refers to an individual's innate identification as male or female, which may or may not correspond with the sex they were assigned on their birth certificate.
Sexual orientation	Refers to an individual's attraction to the same or opposite gender, and includes heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual. Use this term instead of sexual preference, as preference suggests some degree of choice by the individual.