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Beyond the Male/female Binary:

Gender Equity and Inclusion in Evaluation Surveys

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Beyond the Male/female Binary: Gender Equity and Inclusion in Evaluation Surveys

by Alexander Lussenhop

This issue of the *Journal of Museum Education* explores gender in museum education through an intersectional lens, including the ways in which museums can be more inclusive in their evaluation practices. As [a previous Reader Guide](#) has explored, evaluation of museum programming is essential to measuring and improving the quality of these learning experiences, including the necessary task of considering the ethics of data collection. This Reader Guide extends the conversation of ethics and data collection into the field of inclusion and poses questions that allow readers to consider the ways in which museums can do more to consider the inclusivity of their sex and gender questions. This article asserts that “museums collecting any kind of gender data should think critically about why and how they collect those data and recognize gender diversity beyond the male/female binary” (p. 194). The guide below provides questions in a framework that will allow readers to consider their own experiences and work towards promoting dialogue within their institution around issues of evaluation, gender, and inclusion.

You can [access the article online](#) through our publishing partner Taylor & Francis's *Journal of Museum Education* web page.

Section 1: Community Building

Questions in this section help build the discussion community by allowing participants to share information about themselves.

- Who or what has influenced your understanding of gender inclusivity?
- What is one word that comes to mind when you hear the phrase *data collection ethics*?
- What drew you to read this article/seek more information on gender inclusivity and data?

Section 2: Sharing Our Own Experiences

Questions in this section help participants recognize how their experiences are alike and different and why.

- The author provides an explanation of terms associated with gender identity to help readers who may not have clear definitions (p. 197). Have you had experiences where not clearly understanding

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or defining these terms has been problematic? How can a shared understanding of these terms help promote inclusion?

- The author states that “exclusion can be an upsetting experience for the survey respondent (p. 198) and also discussed how evaluators can stigmatize non-binary identities and make respondents feel dismissed by using “other” (p. 201). Have you ever been made to feel uncomfortable because of survey questions about your identity?
- The author states that “gender is often relevant in museum contexts” and then cites the gender gap in science, technology, engineering and math as an example. What experiences have you had that made you consider when gender data might prove useful for museums? Conversely, what are example situations where you would not need to collect gender data?

Section 3: Exploring Beyond Ourselves

Questions in this section help participants engage in inquiry and exploration about the article topic in an effort to learn with and from one another.

- Does your museum collect demographic data about your visitors, staff and/or volunteers? If so, what demographic data? Who collects the data and how do they do it?
- Consider the ethics of collecting gender/sex identification data. What ethical issues might there be in collecting racial, cultural or ancestral data?
- The author offers several methods for collecting gender/sex data: two-step, fully open-ended, hybrid, and direct response (pp. 199-202). Think of a situation at your institution where you would need to collect gender data. Which question format would you advocate for your institution to use and why?

Section 4: Synthesizing the Article

Questions in this section help the group to reflect on the dialogue and what has been learned from the article.

- The author acknowledges that this article was written from the perspective of research and evaluation at a large science center. What are some ways you could apply these lessons to your institution or to smaller museums with different concentrations?
- Do you see opportunities for your institution to change the way you collect gender data? If so, what changes should be made? How could you successfully advocate for those changes?
- How could you expand these lessons of gender equity and ethics into museum education?

The questions in this Reader Guide were written using the Arc of Dialogue, a structure for facilitated dialogue developed by Tammy Bormann and David Campt and used by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. (www.sitesofconscience.org)