

# Becoming an LGBTQ+ Ally:

## Pronoun Etiquette and Best Practices

Winter 2021

Hannah Gorback  
Social Ecology PhD '19-20  
AGS LGBTQ+ Engagement Chair '20-21



Let's start with our first best practice:

## ***NORMALIZING PRONOUNS***

Please add your pronouns to your zoom  
name now

Content warning:

Brief mention of suicide and homicide on next slide

# Why are we having this conversation?

Because **trans and nonbinary people exist** ...and deserve respect.

But also because continuing to knowingly misgender someone can now legally be considered harassment.

- ✓ **CA SB 179** (2020) added the Nonbinary gender marker (X) to the options for ID, DL, and BC
- ✓ CA law considers LGBTQ people a **protected demographic**
- ✓ **The UC system** and UCI regulations are based around these laws
- ✓ **Bostock v Clayton County** (2020) - Supreme court ruling that LGBTQ identities are protected under Title IX
- ✓ January 20, 2021 - **Biden's executive order expanded these protections** to additional titles and regulations including education, housing, and healthcare

# Why do pronouns matter?

Transgender and nonbinary people exist in every:

- Community
- Socioeconomic status
- Race / Ethnicity / Culture
- Industry / Job Sector – yes, even sports
- University / School / Department / Program

Transgender and nonbinary people:

- Are more likely to experience homelessness
- Experience higher rates of depression, anxiety
- Are more likely to attempt/die by suicide
- Are more likely to experience addiction
- 1 in 4 trans adults reports experiencing physical violence due to their gender in the last year
- 1 in 10 will become a victim of homicide

***Educated and inclusive allies can help reduce these statistics and increase acceptance by normalizing the practice of introducing pronouns\****

# What gender is

**Gender** - marker on legal documents (F, M, X)

**Gender identity** - internal sense of gender

**Gender expression** - physical expression of gender

- People of all genders may express themselves in “feminine” “masculine” or “androgynous” ways
- All people can experience fluctuations in the way they experience and express their gender

**Gender binary** - the normalized male-female binary of gender

**Gender norms** - social constructions of normative gender performance and roles - reinforces the gender binary

# What gender is not

**Sex** - biological category based on reproductive anatomy and sex chromosome expression

- Problematic in its own right, especially due to the erasure of intersex people and non-consensual gender assignment surgeries

**Sexuality** - romantic/sexual attraction to the same or other genders

Rather, sexuality *pivots* off of gender identity

# Gender Dictionary

**Gender assigned at birth** – normative gender assigned by medical staff based on visible reproductive organs

- AFAB/DFAB – assigned/designated female at birth
- AMAB/DMAB – assigned/designated male at birth

**Cisgender** – gender identity matches gender assigned at birth

**Transgender/trans** – gender identity does not match gender assigned at birth

- May present in feminine, masculine, fluid, or androgynous way\*
- “trans” is an adjective, a qualifier, or a condition of gender - *not* a gender itself

**Trans man / trans woman** – identify with opposite gender on the binary

- Trans man - female to male - FTM
- Trans woman - male to female - MTF

**Nonbinary** – identify with a gender outside of the binary or no gender

- May term as nonbinary, genderqueer, gender fluid, agender, third gender, etc.
- Many non-binary identities belong to certain cultures (e.g. Two-Spirit) – not okay to appropriate these terms

**\*Trans people do not owe anyone a performance of their gender**

- Trans and nonbinary people may experience body dysmorphia (feeling of not being in the right body or feeling like certain anatomy does not match one’s gender) *or not*

# Names and Pronouns

**Deadname** – the name someone was assigned at birth, no longer in use

**Legal name** – name that appears on documentation, may or may not match gender identity/expression/lived name

**Lived name / preferred name / name in use**

We already use *Bob* for Robert, *Kate* for Katherine, *Jude* for David Jude Law  
So it should be easy to use *Dylan* for [Deadname] and *Josie* for [Deadname]

**Pronouns** / preferred gender pronoun (PGP)

She/Her/Hers - Herself

He/Him/His - Himself

They/Them/Theirs - Themselves

# Basic Pronoun Etiquette

You don't have to get it, you just have to **respect it**

## Misgendering

- Frequent or intentional misgendering is considered harassment
- May cause someone to feel invalidated, dismissed, alienated, devalued, unheard, invisible

**Recognize** where experiences with gender identity **intersect** with experiences of race, ethnicity, language, ability/disability, etc.

**Be willing to learn and grow** – the conversation isn't over!

- Terms, language, and ideology change as more people feel safe to live openly and join in the conversation

**Remember** that it is a **privilege** to not worry about being misgendered or the consequences of constantly bringing up the topic of pronouns

- Avoid becoming defensive if someone corrects you
- Trans and nonbinary people are the only experts on their gender

**Be consistent**– correct pronoun use is **not optional**



# Best Practices: Language of an Ally

Introduce your pronouns without having to be asked



"Hi, my name is Hannah and I use she/her(/hers) pronouns"

Ask what pronouns someone else uses



"What pronouns do you use?"

(Asking is way less awkward than assuming incorrectly)

"Oops, I just realized I don't know what pronouns you use."

Ask for a reminder if you forget



"Sorry to have to ask, can you remind me what pronouns you use?"

*Quickly* apologize, correct yourself, and move on if you make a mistake



"Sorry Shelly, *she* will be heading up the planning committee."

Allow participants on Zoom to change their name and invite them to add their pronouns



"Please feel free to use your lived name in this session and add your pronouns after your name if you feel comfortable doing so."

Interrupt microaggressions – call out discriminatory language and be willing to educate (if you are able)



"Actually, it seems to me like Shelly knows exactly who she is and has worked hard to be able to live her life authentically."

Consider shifting to the use of gender neutral language in general



"This is my partner, Maya." "Welcome esteemed colleagues and audience members!"

# Best Practices: Showing up

**Check forms, websites, emails, etc.** for gendered language

- Does it need gendered language? Is gender important to this topic?
- Is there a nonbinary, X, or Mx. option?

Are trans and nonbinary people **represented** in your department, program, committee, working group?

- If not, why do you think that is? What could you do to make your space more inclusive?

Take **Safe Zone, inclusivity, and diversity trainings** offered by your organizations

**Check on people** who are open about their gender with you

- If you are a mentor, ask your mentee if they experience any difficulties because of their gender identity and **ask how you can support them**
  - **You can also just listen** or help connect them with campus resources

The easiest way to show up as an ally to trans and nonbinary people is just to educate yourself, engage in a few simple practices,

# Best Practices (or rather, Worst)

## DO NOT

- **Require disclosure** of pronouns – you don't know who is out in what settings
- **Out someone** – non-normative gender identity is not your information to share with others
- Use “masculine” or “feminine” language to describe pronouns
- **Turn a slip into a big deal** – this derails the conversation and draws attention to the person's otherness
- **Ask personal questions** about deadnames, anatomy, transitioning, hormone therapy, sexuality, or anything else you would feel uncomfortable being asked

## DO NOT

- **Assume someone's gender**
  - If you don't know someone's pronouns, default to they/them/theirs
- Use terms like “it”, “he-she”, or “tranny” – these are all slurs
- **Create extra work** by asking for education
  - Existing while trans or nonbinary is round-the-clock work, exhausting, and often defeating
- **Question someone's pronouns** if they don't seem match up in your eyes
- **Police bathrooms** – you cannot tell someone's gender by their appearance

# Examples of Micro-aggressions

"But what's your real name"

"What does it say on your driver's license?"

"What do you have down there?"

"It's just a phase/They're confused"

"Shouldn't you be using the \_\_\_\_\_ restroom?"

"You're really pretty for a trans woman / You're really handsome for a trans man"

"You don't look trans/nonbinary"

"Remembering your pronouns is a lot of work for me"

Commenting on someone "passing" or not

Asking a trans or nonbinary person to educate you about terminology or politics

Asking personal questions about their experience or past

# Reflection Exercises

How do I **perform** my own gender and what **assumptions** do I make about others?

What have I done / what am I doing to **create an inclusive environment** in my class/office/program/department?

How might my **experiences on campus** change if I were trans or nonbinary?

**What gendered** or gender-exclusive **examples can I identify** in my life and my environment? (e.g. lack of gender neutral bathroom in office)

**How might experiences** of gender discrimination **intersect** with experiences of racial, ethnic, ableist, or other forms of discrimination?

Ex. A Jewish, agender, woman-aligned, disabled, neurodivergent, queer person? (hint: ask Hannah)

# Resources

[Forbes Article - How Pronoun Inclusion Saves Lives](#)

[GLAAD Beginner's Guide to being an Ally](#)

[Trevor Project Ally Guide](#)

[CA SB 179](#)

[LGBT Resource Center](#)

[Counseling Center LGBTQ Mentoring Program](#)

[UCI Safe Zone Training \(annually in fall\)](#)

[UC Gender Inclusion Statement](#)

[UC Title IX and Harassment Policies](#)

**AGS LGBTQ+**

**Engagement Chair:**

[lgbtq@ags.uci.edu](mailto:lgbtq@ags.uci.edu)

**Hannah Gorback:**

[hgorback@uci.edu](mailto:hgorback@uci.edu)

***Thank you!***

Questions?