Language is a social construct... just like gender.
**Gender Pronouns**

**THE MEANING OF GENDER HAS CHANGED**

Historically, gender has followed a male/female dichotomy. Typically used interchangeably with sex (the designation of one’s chromosomal and anatomical make-up), gender refers to socially-determined characteristics of particular types of behavior, interests, and expectations. Gender roles vary from society to society, but are typically decided based on the anatomical sex of individuals. As society progresses, however, many people re-conceptualize what it means to be men or women, and question whether these gender identities remain relevant to individual experiences.

**WHY WE SPECIFY PRONOUNS**

When individuals or groups do not adhere to established gender norms, they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion – all of which adversely affect health. It is important to be sensitive to different identities that do not necessarily fit into binary male or female sex categories.

The use of pronouns in daily conversation is a pervasive way to either enforce or challenge cisnormativity, which is the assumption that people are either male or female and cisgender identification is superior to other forms of self-concept. Introducing yourself with pronouns or adding them to your professional signatures creates a culture of acceptance for those who do not use cisgender pronouns (he/him/his or she/her/hers). Even if you are cisgender, using your pronouns sends the message that you support an inclusive environment and that it is safe for everyone to use theirs.

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**Using Pronouns to Promote Inclusivity**

**NORMALIZE DECLARATION OF PRONOUNS**

- Consider specifying your pronouns in emails, name tags, business cards, and when introducing yourself.
- Use as part of introductory activities (e.g. icebreakers).
- Practice using “they, them, and theirs” as pronouns.

**RECOGNIZE PRIVILEGE**

- Understand that the world caters to the gender binary and do your best to be more inclusive.
- Notice gender specific language – use of terms like “partner” instead of wife or husband, discussing concepts in gender-neutral terms, etc.,
- Don’t assume the gender or sexual orientation of others

**RESPECT OTHERS**

- Ask pronouns in respectful ways, and use them.
- When you make a mistake, correct it and then move on–avoid over-apologizing.
- Validate others’ identities even if you don’t agree with them.

**ASK RESPECTFUL QUESTIONS**

- As you seek understanding, be mindful and respect others’ boundaries and privacy.
- Know that gender identity is entirely personal and each individual has a unique way to conceptualize what gender means. One person does not speak for the group.
- As you learn more, don’t be afraid to apply your new knowledge. Keep practicing.

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LGBTQ+ VOCABULARY

Gender Transition: The process taken to more closely align one's internal knowledge of gender with their outward appearance.
- Social—dressing differently, using names and pronouns.
- Physical—modifying one's body through medical or other inventions (e.g. hormones, binding, voice alteration).

Gender Dysphoria: Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned sex at birth is not the same as the gender with which they identify.

Cisgender: Someone who identifies with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Transgender: Living as a member of a gender other than that expected based on sex or gender assigned at birth.

Gender Void/Non-Conforming/Non-Binary: Rejection or refusal to present or behave in a gendered way as expected by society.

Agender: Relating to a person that doesn’t identify themselves as having a particular gender.

Genderfluid: A person whose gender identity varies over time, depending on varied circumstances.

Genderqueer: Having a gender identity that is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders.

More resources can be found at https://studentaffairs.lmu.edu/community/ethnicandinterculturalservices/lgbtstudentservices/