

Rise, Teach, Learn - Season 2, Episode 3

Gender Identity and Inclusivity

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We acknowledge and are mindful that CSU Chico stands on lands that were originally occupied by the first people of this area, the Mechoopda, and we recognize their distinctive spiritual relationship with this land and the waters that run through campus. We are humbled that our campus resides upon sacred lands that once sustained the Mechoopda people for centuries.

00:28

Welcome to the Rise, Teach, Learn podcast. I am Dr Chiara Ferrari, Director of Faculty Development at Chico State, and we are happy to make this resource available to our campus community and beyond. The podcast is hosted by Dr. Jamie Gunderson, and she will engage in timely conversations with faculty, staff, and students and give you a taste of the Chico experience, subscribe to our podcast and explore the many resources available on our website. Thank you for listening.

01:00

Hello, and welcome to Rise, Teach and Learn. I'm your host, Jamie Gunderson, in this episode entitled gender identity and inclusivity, I speak with colleagues and students from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines, but all focused on promoting education, acceptance and empowerment of the LGBTQIA community. I am here with a group of folks who have a lot of personal interest and professional interest in gender inclusivity and identity, and we are going to have a conversation about how to embed these practices to be more inclusive in our learning and teaching at CSU Chico, so I want to just take a moment to introduce our guests so I'm going to throw it to Susan Frawley and Erin Whitney, and Eric and Amy Bartelink and Thomas Delgado to introduce ourselves.

01:49

Welcome, I'm very glad to be here. My name is Susan Frawley and I am faculty with the multicultural and Gender Studies Department. I teach LGBTQ identities, or actually LGBTQ issues and identities I always get that backwards, and I also teach queer and trans, California. I identify as a lesbian, and gender non-conforming, and I still use she/her pronouns.

02:19

My name is Erin Whitney My pronouns are she, her, and I am faculty in the School of Education, and one of my areas of research and practice in my role is to do professional development work and working with teachers to help support students who identify as LGBTQ, and more specifically students who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming within the K 12 setting so I've done some work with Stonewall, and we'll talk about Stonewall later but I consider myself to be an ally and I've seen the wonders of what happens when we support kids and their identities and how much they can thrive.

03:03

Right, thank you so much for including this podcast, this is Eric Bartelink, I'm a professor of anthropology and Chico State and I teach classes and forensic anthropology, forensic science and bio

archaeology. I am the father of a trans child and I am an ally to the community, and I'm trying to learn more so that I can create more inclusive environments for my own students on campus.

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My name is Amy Bartelink and I share the same trans child with Eric Bartelink. And I am also a student, I'm in the master's program for social work, and I am here as an ally, and I'm here to learn, and also share what I have learned in this journey with my child.

03:59

My name is Thomas Delgado, I use they/them pronouns. I identify as a non-binary /trans queer Latina anthropologist, anthropologist is important to me so I work in biological anthropology forensic anthropology and also cultural anthropology, so I do a lot of work with marginalized and oppressed communities looking at power structures rates of death and identification, and also in altering and changing and decolonizing methods within forensic and biological anthropology.

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So as you can see we've assembled quite the interdisciplinary group of folks to talk about gender identity and inclusivity tonight. And so our first section of this podcast we really want to dive into definition and explanation of terms, Thomas, do you want to start us off.

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Yeah, I am more than happy to. So I personally am not as familiar with these terms and like a dictionary idea. But, to me at least, the way that I've interpreted this through like the literature and such is that when we're discussing, you know specifically we have transgender and cisgender, so we have those that do not agree with their, basically, their gender identity, that is assigned to them at birth, because gender is a social construction but also so is sex. And then we have cisgender, which is just essentially those people that are happy with the way that they are assigned at birth and are comfortable in presenting that way. So I see these two terms as large umbrellas. Transgender also which does for me incorporate non binary individuals. And then when we talk about queer, to me, queer to me is just anyone that deviates from the normal. So it's both a term that I tried to like reclaim and something that has been used as a slur against me, but also because if we look at like queer theory that's been around since the 70s of the 80s it's just talking about people that are deriving from the norm that is just a nonnormative and any challenge to you know the Western sexual cisgender male dominated society I think is really important and taking what queer is and making it power.

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One of the things I want to point out is the word queer, because that one Thomas pointed out that they are reclaiming queer as part of their identity and that it has been used as a slur in the past, and you have to be a little careful when you're using that word because older, as I am, older members of the LGBTQ community are still many of them are still trying to get a handle on that and they themselves don't understand it being reclaimed and becoming a positive word, because to them it's still something they've only heard as an insult, and so that's something even the LGBTQ community itself is working on is, is using the word queer.

07:06

That's really interesting. Thomas, and Susan you also mentioned this idea of non-conforming non binary in our conversation. And so I kind of want to transition over to explaining those terms because I have to say as a faculty member, I'm a little unfamiliar with the gender nonconforming and gender non binary what's the difference and what do those things actually mean.

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How about if I explain gender non-conforming and you explain, non-binary.

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I love that.

07:36

I love that too. I'll start with gender non-conforming because that was part of my introduction, and gender non-conforming are just basically people who were a little bit on the rebel side because we don't feel that we have to conform to society's idea of gender stereotypes, and what that means to be feminine or masculine or neither. And we tend to be a lot more individual in the way we express ourselves. And it's not necessarily a dress, yeah you know you may see me around campus in my suit and tie, but it's not necessarily always the way we dress but it can involve gender roles, at home or at work as well and so we're just basically people that don't conform to gender roles, that's this simple explanation.

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And getting to these causes of non-binary, I don't want to say it's like a step further, but it's just a little bit more intense and is dealing with, I think, a kind of a different concept it's not really focusing on gender, as much as I want to say it's focusing on like assigned sex. So this is breaking out of that dichotomy that we have been ingrained that male female dichotomy, and instead identifying and recognizing that not only do we don't have to conform like to our gender norms, we don't have to conform to our assigned sex, we don't have to conform to what is being, you know, presented throughout most of science and education that there is a biological reality to sex. If we look at the literature, if we want to take it to the absolute minutiae of like, {...} sperm versus egg, maybe, but why are we seeking out that level of minutiae when we're talking about what we're being assigned. So when it comes to being non binary, it's just going against that male female dichotomy, and whether or not we want to conform to what our gender is, is up to you so it's up to the individual, I should say so it's not quite, you know, you can not conform to your gender and also be non binary or you can conform to what you, What society would put on you normatively and be non binary, so there's reality to both.

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That's so interesting, I love the the different ways of that we're using language to be more specific about what we're talking about. And that just kind of reminds me you know that we also there are large, there's a large population of individuals who are intersex and who have chromosomal variations or other variations you know it's not so clear cut as Thomas was saying as, as you know, male or female, and then I want to throw in one other term which we often use in education is gender expansive, which, you know, kind of honors, you know, when children are playing on different gender roles, it doesn't necessarily mean they're trans or, you know will be trans later in life or are non-binary, it means that all of our all children should be experimenting with gender and we want to encourage gender expansiveness and you know, kind of moving children away from thinking that you know gender is fixed, when it's not.

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This explanation of terms and these definitions is very helpful but one of the things that I'm just trying to wrap my head around, is this idea of sex assigned at birth versus gender identity versus sexuality. And so I know that they, these are vast concepts. These take these are very individualized. But I wonder if

the Bartelinks could share a little bit of their perspective of what they're learning, as they're parenting a child who's trans.

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Certainly, you know, with regards to sex assigned at birth and it is a cultural construct, I mean it's very embedded in our society. There are about as many people that are intersex, meaning they don't biologically fit into the male or female dichotomy, as there are people with red hair. Just to give you an idea that's more common, and you think, we do study a lot of things in regards to, you know biological sex in you know in science and things like that and it is one of the sort of limitations I think we have and it hasn't been inclusive in a lot of ways and so, so, you know I'm talking as an anthropologist here but as a father of a non-binary child, which is really important is just because someone who was assigned at birth in regards to sex doesn't mean that they're going to necessarily track that through adolescence into adulthood. And so, when the child is telling you that they feel different and want to identify as something that's different, you have to take that very seriously. You can't just say it's gonna be a phase. That's something that parents have to get over because it's, it can be traumatic and in some cases for certain people, because they have these expectations that their gender, and their gender identity is going to track with their sex because that's things that people are used to, but we know that, you know, children do much better when you accept them for who they are and give them the space to develop into the person they need to be, and don't, don't put pressure on them and don't be dismissive of what they feel is their gender identity, and just recognize that that can change too how they might feel one way at one point, and that can continue to change as they grow and develop. So it's been a real learning process for us.

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Yeah, definitely I would also say that, um, honoring your feelings, you know, as, as, a parent of, I don't want to say, like, the loss or just the experience of the change can be...is a process, and it's a learning experience. I know that for me I just want my child to be happy. And that's the most important thing for me. And so, I have taken it upon myself and I know my husband has too to learn as much as we can and embed ourselves in the community as much as we can through Stonewall through joining the transgender Task Force everything just to make the world kind of a more accepting place for when they get older and for now, but that's not to say that, that it's not a huge change and saying they/them for instance you know I mess up all the time, and I use their dead name, occasionally too and I get corrected and yelled at and they're laughing in the background. But, but I think just honoring those feelings, and then knowing that it's, you know that it's a process is really important.

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Eric Amy, thank you so much for that insight I think that's a great segue way into our next kind of topic which really is embracing identity and the use of pronouns and names in our classrooms so much like Eric and Amy said that their goal in life is just to have a happy well-adjusted child. That's what we want as faculty is happy well-adjusted students so let's transition and talk about how we get students to share their preferences. Is this a public thing, is this a private thing Do we have examples and ideas of how we might do this in our classes.

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Yeah, I can talk a little bit about some different ways I approach this in my in my courses, um, you know, I feel like it's really important to acknowledge individuals' pronouns and the names that they, that might be different from their from how they are on the roster. Although, one thing is that's important to know is that students can add their pronouns and change their names in Blackboard. And so that's, you know, something to and as a professor, you get a list of, you know, it may say what their pronouns are

so that can be helpful. So I do approach this a couple different ways and I'm curious to hear how others have. I'm in the beginning of class because I teach future educators who are in the K 12 Realm I It's important to me that they start thinking about gender as an identity that one proclaims and not that we assigned to other people. And so I have done it publicly where you know we introduce ourselves we maybe, say you know what we'd like to do on the weekend and we include, you know what our pronouns are so I have done it that way. However, I've also heard from folks that doing it in such a public way can be scary, and, and not a good way to do it so another thing I've done is like a Google form, where people can privately tell me what their pronouns are, what their name is if it's different from the roster. So I'd love to hear from other faculty and from students, what they've done.

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I do my approach a little different. Right, a little different and, and what I like to do is I like to do it privately with my students, because not everyone is out, or feels that the classroom is necessarily a space, a safe space to reveal their identities. So before the semester starts, I send out an email to the class. And I asked them if there is another name they would rather that I use to address them in class. And this way, I'm prepared to use the correct name, even if they have not had a chance to change it in the class roster on Blackboard. And I also asked them if they would like me to use a pronoun, other than the one listed. Again, they may not have had a chance to change it, or they may not know how to change it, even though it's very simple. And so this for me, I like to do it this way because it keeps the confidentiality of the student. And it lets them know that I'm willing to treat them with respect in relation to their name and their pronouns. And one other thing I want to mention is, is I, I know this is the way we do it right now but I am not a big fan of calling them preferred pronouns, or a preferred name. This is not something they prefer to use, it's just, they are their pronouns, this is their name, and instead of saying your preferred pronouns or your preferred name, just say what is your name, what are your pronouns let's, I don't like saying oh you've got something different, right,

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Yeah, and that's also something that I have had to make a transition to so I'm not faculty but I am a teaching assistant, so I do teach I've been teaching for about three years to undergraduate students. And I used to do the public like, what's your name. What's your pronouns like let's go through it, but I also recently like I would say like just the last year, kind of grapple with what it means to like actually say this publicly. Right, so what I started doing is you know we have our standard deductions I do name pronouns. But I also provide my students either like a Google form or this semester since we're back in person, I handed out sheets of paper in my lab. I was like hey, if you want to tell me anything, tell me what your expectations are of me as a teacher, what, how do you want me to address you. How do you like, is there anything you want me to know like, like what's going on in your life. It's like any information that a student wants to give in a private format I want to always make sure that it's a very open line of communication, I'm always very open and like, email me, write it down, come to office hours like I will accommodate you, whether it's, you know, sex and gender or if it's you know, health and disease or illnesses and stuff like that, just making it like having the option for them to divulge stuff, privately. And if they say they want you to refer to them in one way and emails and in private and another way in class, that's just something that we do. That's our responsibility as educators, right, is to make our classrooms safe.

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This is so helpful but Amy and Eric, you mentioned something about making mistakes as a faculty member, I'm a little nervous about making mistakes. If I call a student by the wrong pronoun or if I fail to recognize their individuality, how can I remedy that, do you have any great tips from your trials as parents to help our faculty.

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I can say that, you will make mistakes, unintentionally, but sometimes, just because you forgot. And the best thing that you can do is if you realize you made a mistake is to correct yourself, we're all human, we're all trying. If somebody knowingly makes the mistake and isn't interested in correcting themselves, then that's a problem. So I think it's, it's making the, the attempt, and it does get easier over time as well. So I think you just have to know that you're going to make mistakes. I think also,

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I think also just, just saying the correct thing and then moving on, is really important. I used to have this long like, oh my gosh, well I'm 45 And you know, and I would give this big explanation and and boy does that bother my child, and so I've learned to just move on. And it's fine. Otherwise you're making it about yourself, and it's not about you. And I think that's a really important thing to know.

21:42

Erin, I just want to make a really quick comment about why the name and pronoun is so important. There's research has been done. I'm happy to share sources with, you know, mostly what I've been reading is K 12 education but, you know, students, trans students are at risk for suicide for dropping out of school for for mental health issues, but it's not because they're trans it's because people are not accepting them for who they are and they're being bullied and their teachers are bullying them by not accepting them. It's a form of bullying to not accept the name and the pronoun that somebody is telling you they are so it's a small thing that professors can do it doesn't take much time. And it's just affirming who the person is in front of you.

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It took years, years for our society to land on a genderless pronoun that everyone agreed upon, and that is singular, they/them, and theirs and it is accepted, and it is grammatically correct APA recognizes it as a generic and this is a quote from APA, a generic third person singular pronoun in English. And so, we also use they as a generic third person singular pronoun to refer to a person whose gender is unknown or irrelevant to the context of the usage. So, it is absolutely perfectly fine to use they, them there as singular, it was added to the dictionary in 2019. If you aren't aware of this, using it as singular is perfectly fine in student assignments

23:28

And there you have it folks. Today we defined an explained key LGBTQIA terms and we discuss ways to promote acceptance within our classrooms. For more information, access any of our campus resources, including the gender and sexuality equity coalition, get involved in the trans Task Force, or access the many resources in support through WellCat health and Stonewall Alliance Center, I'd like to thank our guests for contributing to this episode. And as a friendly reminder, you can access previous episodes of rise teach, learn as well as all of the resources discussed in our episodes through our FDEV podcast webpage.

24:06

Thank you for listening, and exploring. Until next time, we got this, Wildcats.