

The Pronoun Project Report

By

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The Pronoun Project aimed to provide pronoun badges for students and/or staff at Uppsala University. The project hoped to aid in creating a gender inclusive and safe environment within the classroom, particularly for students or staff that are misgendered and feel the need to repeatedly 'come out'. The launch of this project came approximately a month before the beginning of the COVID pandemic. This significantly impacted the implementation of the project originally outlined in the Project Plan document. With the unexpected pandemic and the shift to online education, we adapted the project to focus on the digital classroom environment. The following was created/implemented:

1) Project Plan

This strategic plan can be viewed as the original ambition and plan of this project. Some stages or goals within a stage were either delayed significantly or were unfortunately not feasible to implement as the pandemic unfolded.

For details see the attached '*Pronoun Project – Project Plan*', which outlines the implementation of the project influenced from background research, badge design and procurement, launching the pilot studies (The Center for Environment and Development Studies and the Center for Gender Research at Uppsala University) and the evaluation of the project.

2) Interviews with Key Stakeholders

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted (see Appendix 1 below for a summary of each interview). The interviews were approached in an informal way and ranged from 35 minutes to an hour and a half in duration.

Interviewees who were teachers were asked about their knowledge and understanding of gender identify, what they would like to see provided in a workshop and classroom setting; and any ideas, thoughts or reflection they had on the use of pronoun badges. The non-binary student interviewed was asked similar questions but the focus was more on their experiences in the classroom and thoughts and reflections on the use of pronoun badges. These questions were asked with the hope that interviewees could identify what skills and information would be needed for teachers to feel well equipped in the classroom to create a gender inclusive space. By

identifying these areas, gaps within the organization could allude to areas of improvement and thus recommendations for moving forward.

Key finding - We deduced from the interviews that there was a limited understanding of gender identity but a clear desire and enthusiasm of interviewees to gain such knowledge.

3) Exploration of gender inclusive policies at other Universities

Transgender and non-binary inclusive policies and initiatives were explored at other universities with specific focus on the subject of gender diverse pronouns.

Key findings:

- Inform about relevant terminology to support a common language about gender identity and expression.
- Inform about what practices create discomfort and/or hostility for gender diverse staff and students, and share gender affirming practices.
- Provide suggestions for how to normalize not making assumptions about gender based on appearance.
- Provide guidance on how to best handle mistakes and conflicts.

4) Digital Education Recommendations

As part of the project's transition from a physical classroom environment to an online format, we suggested a set of actionable inclusive pronoun diversity recommendations to CEMUS:

- Include your pronouns in your e-mail signature.
- Include your pronouns in your zoom name.
- Include a pronoun 'round' during the first or second week of the course.

See Appendix 2 for an example email template that can be used to introduce your department to this initiative.

5) Workshop on Gender Identity for Teachers

A three-hour digital workshop has been designed to support teachers and address the knowledge gaps mentioned in the interviews. The workshop will commence this Spring for staff at CEMUS.

Please see the attached PowerPoint.

6) Informational Video

An informational video to support the above recommendations and workshop was created and can be found [here](#). The video covers Uppsala University's policy on discrimination, and introduces gender identity, pronoun use and misgendering.

Feel free to distribute this video internally or imbed it within a university website. It has been created with the hope that staff in any faculty of Uppsala University can utilize it.

7) Proposal: Update Uppsala University Wide Email Signature

A proposal was submitted to the communications department to recommend all Uppsala University staff include their pronouns in their email signature to aid in creating a gender inclusive space. This was approached in a similar fashion to that of recommending teachers at CEMUS to add their pronouns (see appendix 3), however it was answered with a rather dismissive and uninterested response (see appendix 3.1).

Project Reflections and Recommendations

The original focus of this project was to procure badges and to provide supportive information for teachers. Through the interviews and as the project progressed it became clear that what was needed first and foremost was the provision of information and understanding of non-normative gender identities.

The badges are needed and would act as a materialized manifestation of this gained knowledge, while also prompting those who are not wearing them to gain more knowledge on the topic. They would be both the result of a process where teachers felt competent to discuss gender identity and students could feel their gender identity was acknowledged and respected within the classroom and more widely at Uppsala University; and a source of normalizing non-normative genders.

Projects like this are an important start. Our most pressing recommendation is that more initiatives such as The Pronoun Project are encouraged and supported within Uppsala University. There needs to be more awareness of non-normative gender identities and more information provided from both a top-down and bottom-up approach at Uppsala University.

Providing workshops for teachers within all faculties, educational information in various forms (videos, posters etc.) and through various means (studenthälsan, the student union, nations etc.) would aid in this normalization and 'pave the way' to adopting pronoun badges on a wide scale.

Appendix 1 – Interview Summaries

Interview 1

Course Coordinator, The Center for Environment and Development Studies (CEMUS), Uppsala University

Duration 35 minutes

What would you require in workshops?

- Action list of clear responses to certain situations. For instance, if this situation happens, you could respond with XYZ
- Suggestion to include a pronoun round during the introduction class. Course coordinators can mention if students want a badge to go to 'pick-up' stations

General points:

- Clear guidelines as to the expectations with the badge use. For instance, how long are teachers to wear them and in what contexts should they wear them? Only in the classroom, or all day at work?
 - Perhaps the first couple weeks, to give everyone a chance to learn pronouns? (does that then defeat the purpose of wearing one?)
- Perhaps send out a questionnaire to cemus/gender center to ask some questions on teachers attitudes to nonbinary/trans students?

Ideas:

- Pronouns on ID badges (but potentially an issue if someone wants to change their pronouns)
- Could wear a pronoun badge on the cord your ID is attached to
- Perhaps a CEMUS open lecture on gender identity
- Add something on pronoun badges in the end of term course evaluations?

Interview 2

Course Coordinator, The Center for Environment and Development Studies (CEMUS), Uppsala University

Duration 35 minutes

What would you require in a workshop?

- Conceptualization of what gender identity is and how it differs from or is connected to sexual orientation. Maybe a general overview of those terms and definitions and a historical overview of different gender identities and LGBTQ+ history

General points:

- The purpose of this is important to Interviewee 2 so he would feel well equipped to handle potential conflicts within the class room. He understands the importance of gender identity and that discrimination is not okay etc. but would need a more conceptual (perhaps theoretical) understanding to compliment that.
- Would quite happily wear a badge in the classroom, at CEMUS, outside of CEMUS, when at events and even in personal situations.

Ideas:

- Include the intersection of gender studies with sustainable development at CEMUS. Perhaps outside the scope of this project but it is an important issue that needs to space to be heard:
 - Perhaps have the CEMUS open lecture to include something like this? Include this perspective in courses more?

Interview 3

Professor, The Center for Gender Research, Uppsala University

Duration - 1 hour

What would you require in a workshop?

- Education in the sense of language. For instance, what terms to use and what to say?
 - A lot of people are afraid of saying the wrong thing
 - A need of how to know how to speak respectfully
- Information and tools on how to manage conflict in the classroom.
 - The interviewee spoke of a situation in the classroom where a student who was quite new to gender studies and gender identity terms, had said something transphobic. The interviewee did not think this person was aware of the

comment being transphobic, but felt it was a difficult situation to be in and navigate in the best way.

General points:

- Happy to wear a badge in the classroom
- Magnet badge would be better to not damage clothes

Interview 4

Non-Binary student, Göteborg University

Duration – 1 and a half hours

What would you require in workshops?

- Teachers creating a safe environment to discuss pronouns/misgendering.
- Misgendering hurts those who are misgendered...
- That teachers (especially teachers in gender studies) need to be aware of gender identities outside the binary.
- A point on not questioning students/teacher's pronouns or name
- If teachers are put in a position where there is a student conflict/misgendering and they do not know how to respond in the moment - the teacher should ask the student if they're okay afterwards or during a break, for example
- An explanation of pronouns and a need to normalize the correct use of pronouns in the classroom (it is exhausting to repeatedly come out over and over again and for students to feel they are the 'token' or 'trophy' NB/Trans/GNC (gender non-conforming) student.
 - An explanation of pronouns would be especially useful in classroom environments that are international, intercultural and so on.

General points:

- Would wear a badge, providing others (cisgender people) would also wear a badge, to avoid feeling like the token NB person.
 - Perhaps push for solidarity in the classroom?

Appendix 2 – Example Email Template

“Hej Everyone,

A fairly large email below, but bear with me, it's important 😊

With support from Uppsala University's equality fund, I am working together with a colleague on The Pronoun Project, which is an action to combat discrimination at the university based on gender identity and expression. With the unexpected pandemic and the shift to online education, we have adapted the project to focus on the digital classroom environment; and recommend a few actions that can aid in making the classroom as gender inclusive as possible.

A person's preferred pronouns are a part of their gender expression. However, it is not always possible to know what a person's pronouns are from their name or appearance. Adding pronouns to the email signature is a simple yet effective way to show recognition and respect for everyone's identity. It is a simple solution to accidental misgendering. Accidental misgendering is when someone mistakenly refers to another person with the wrong pronouns or gendered words. For example, if Alex is a man and his preferred pronouns are he/him, but his colleague accidentally refers to Alex as "she." Accidental misgendering happens to transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming persons as well as cisgender persons with names where their name does not necessarily adequately communicate information about the person's gender; a problem that disproportionately affects persons of minority/foreign language backgrounds.

As part of this project, we recommend the following:

- Include your pronouns in your e-mail signature (you can see mine below as a reference).
- Include your pronouns in your zoom name
- Include a pronoun 'round' during the first or second week of the course*

These are easy action that can be taken to make the working environment more welcoming and less discriminatory for employees and students who have non-normative genders or gender expressions as well as those from minority ethnic/language backgrounds. Following these recommendations, normalizes the practice and normalizes gender diversity. It shifts the cultural norm from "gender is something we can assume about other people based on their name" to "gender is not something we can assume about other people based on their name."

*If for whatever reason you don't feel you have the adequate skills or vocabulary to discuss gender identity or pronouns in the classroom, get in touch with me. I'm more than happy to discuss this further and give some ideas on how to approach the topic in the classroom.

Best,

XXX”

Appendix 3 – Proposal to Communications Department at Uppsala University

“Hey XXX!

This e-mail is in regards to the university webpage "[Create a signature in your email](#)." It is my understanding that you are responsible for maintaining this webpage. If that is incorrect, please forward this email to the responsible person.

With support from Uppsala University's equality fund, I am working together with a colleague on The Pronoun Project, which is an action to combat discrimination at the university based on gender identity and expression. As part of this project we will recommend that university employees include their pronouns in their e-mail signature.

A person's preferred pronouns are a part of their gender expression. However, it is not always possible to know what a person's pronouns are from their name or appearance. Adding pronouns to the email signature is a simple yet effective way to show recognition and respect for everyone's identity. It is a simple solution to accidental misgendering. Accidental misgendering is when someone mistakenly refers to another person with the wrong pronouns or gendered words. For example, if Alex is a man and his preferred pronouns are he/him, but his colleague accidentally refers to Alex as "she." Accidental misgendering happens to transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming persons as well as cisgender persons with names where their name does not necessarily adequately communicate information about the person's gender, a problem that disproportionately affects persons of minority/foreign language backgrounds.

Adding pronouns to the e-mail signature is concrete and easy action that can be taken to make the working environment more welcoming and less discriminatory for employees and students who have non-normative genders or gender expressions as well as those from minority

ethnic/language backgrounds. When everyone adds their pronouns, it normalizes the practice and normalizes gender diversity. It shifts the cultural norm from "gender is something we can assume about other people based on their name" to "gender is not something we can assume about other people based on their name."

Therefore, it would be good if the "Create a signature in your email" webpage were updated to include "pronouns" in the sentence "However, it should include a minimum of your name, Uppsala University, your phone number" as one of the basic pieces of information to include in one's signature. Additionally it should be starred as an item in the suggested list that should always be included.

Kind Regards,

XXX"

Appendix 3.1 - Response from Communications Division at Uppsala University

"Dear XX,

Thank you for your Email! However, we have consulted the HR Division and we find that this addition would not be appropriate for the University's Email signature recommendations/templates, which is why we cannot add your suggestion to the instructions in the Staff Portal.

Sincerely,

XXX"