

## Engendering Support: The Power of Family for Transyouth

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### Disclosures

- Within the past 12 months, I have not had any financial relationships with the manufacturers of health care products.
- I will not discuss any pharmaceuticals, medical procedures, or devices that are investigational or unapproved for use by the FDA, with exception of....
- The off-label use of pubertal suppressing agents (such as Lupron)

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### Learning Objectives

- How does stigma and prejudice impact patient, family and caregiver attitudes towards working with transgender, gender non-conforming, gender expansive and gender non-binary youth?
- What is the impact of family affirmation on transchildren?
- How can we characterize good enough families when it comes to engendering healthy identities- including gender identity- in their adolescent and young adult children?
- How does ASD impact Gender identity?

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### The Fire on the 57 Bus in Oakland The New York Times Magazine 1/29/15



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### Non-binary



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### Terminology: Gender Identity

- *Natal/Assigned Gender*: external genitalia, chromosomes... "sex". **AMAB/ AFAB**
- *Gender Identity*: core/ innate sense of gender (male, female, bi-gender/non-binary...)
- Congruent = **Cisgender**
- Incongruent = **Transgender**
- *Gender Dysphoria (GD)*: A diagnosis including core negative affective discomfort with one's natal gender/sex assigned at birth.
- **Gender Nonconformity/expansiveness**

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## Gender Dysphoria: Biological Factors

- **Neuroimaging Studies in adolescents with GD:** Some neuroimaging studies have revealed that adolescents with GD have structural and functional characteristics that were similar to controls of their experienced gender, while other studies failed to find these differences. [reviewed in Lejbowitz and de Vries. GD in Adolescence. International Review of Psychiatry, DOI: 10.3109/09540261.2015.112844. 2016 -published online Feb 1, 2016]
- **Brain structure sexual dimorphism:** Swaab noted that the sexually dimorphic hypothalamic bed nucleus of the stria terminalis (BSTc) in natal Male to Female Transgender adults was the smaller female size. Likely related to fetal/neonatal gonadal steroids. Trapped in the wrong body?
  - In M to F, the BSTc was similar in size to control women.
  - In the only F to M subject studied so far, the BSTc was similar in size to control men.

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## Gyneandromorphs

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## The Next Civil Rights Frontier?



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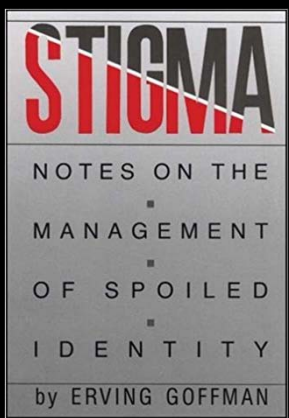
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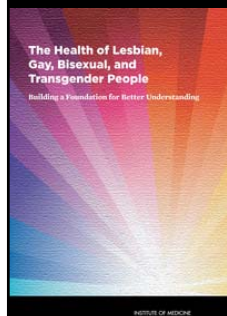
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### Health disparities

- Sizable literature noting elevated risk taking and poorer health status among youth who have same sex attractions, experience same-sex sexual relationships, and/or identify as LGBT.
- Important contributors: stigma, harassment, victimization, witnessing/perpetrating violence
- Remafedi '91: 36,741 MN students grades 7-12. LGB have increased suicide risk. Highest risk: effeminate boys, and boys who identify at earlier ages.
- Savin Williams: Unclear if those who come out earlier have more conflicts, or are less well equipped to handle the pressure- so coming out does not always lead to better mental health
- Add Health Study : 12,000 youth studied by Russell and Joyner: "regardless of age and family background more likely than peers to report suicidal thoughts".

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National Geographic: Gender Revolution, January '17



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FAMILY SUPPORT



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COMING OUT: IS IT A GOOD THING?

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### Sarah McBride

- Sarah McBride is the National Press Secretary for the Human Rights Campaign and the author of "Tomorrow Will Be Different: Love, Loss, and the Fight for Trans Equality."
- In 2012, Sarah made national headlines when she came out as transgender while serving as student body president at American University. A native of Wilmington, Delaware, Sarah serves on the Board of Directors of Equality Delaware and helped lead the successful effort to add gender identity and expression to her state's nondiscrimination laws. In 2008, Sarah worked for Governor Jack Markell (D-DE) and, in 2010, for former Attorney General Beau Biden (D-DE). Prior to coming to HRC, Sarah worked at the Center for American Progress and interned at the White House, the first out trans woman to do so.
- Sarah became the first openly transgender person to address a major party political convention when she spoke at the 2016 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.

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About a boy. Transgender surgery at sixteen. A reporter at large. The New Yorker, March 18, '13



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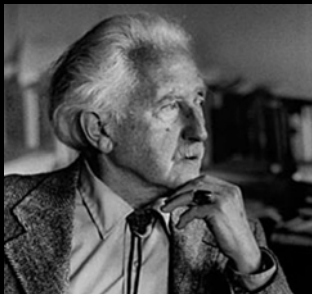
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*Identity*  
Erik Erikson 1902-1994



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**STIGMA:**  
*"The sad truth is that in any system based on suppression, exclusion and exploitation, the suppressed, excluded and exploited unconsciously accept the evil image they are made to represent by those who are dominant". Erik Erikson, 1967*

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**SATURDAY**  
*with jenna*  
See how she and son Beckett go off duty in style.



*quality time*  
"Lucky for me, I ended up with a boy whose favorite color is pink. Toenail painting is way more fun in men."

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### Billie



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### Margarita <-> Marcos



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### Gender Dysphoria: DSM-5

- There must be a marked difference between the individual's expressed/experienced gender and the gender others would assign him or her, and it must continue for at least 6 months, and cause distress/impairment.
- In children this desire to be another gender must be present and verbalized.
- May manifest in many ways, including strong desire to be treated as the other gender or to be rid of one's sex characteristics, or a strong conviction that one has feelings and reactions typical of the other gender.
- Post-transition specifier ensuring treatment access/insurance coverage, including psychotherapy, cross-sex hormones, gender reassignment surgery.

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## Gender Dysphoria: TO PERSIST OR DESIST?\*

\*MOST CHILDREN DESIST; WHEREAS MOST ADOLESCENTS PERSIST (ENDURE)

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## The vast majority of Gender Dypshoric children (80%) are *NOT* Persisters

- Common outcomes include homosexuality and bisexuality
- Desisters tend to become less dysphoric during early adolescence and with puberty, tolerating pubertal changes and settling into their natal gender.
- Ages 10-13 are particularly significant. Thus some experience with puberty is diagnostically helpful.

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## GD & Psychopathology

- Psychopathology likely driven by stigma.
- Dutch and Toronto studies have found higher rates of psychopathology in TG Youth, however psychopathology drops post transition/treatment.
- '16 JAACAP study from Toronto and Netherlands of 572 children referred for GD collected Achenbach data over a period of 40 years: compared to the non-referred children, children with GD were more than 8x more likely to self harm or attempt suicide, worsening as they grew older. Quality of peer relationships did not seem to affect suicidality, and statistics did not seem to vary according to year of assessment....
- Peer Victimization: Other studies have found that poor peer relations was the strongest overall predictor for emotional and behavioral problems (de Vries et al '15, Steensma et al '14)

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### Social Transitioning & Mental Health

Olson et al, JAACAP '17; 56(2):116-123

- Social transitions are increasingly common for transgender children.
- Transgender children who had socially transitioned reported depression and self-worth that did not differ from their matched-control or sibling peers, and they reported marginally higher anxiety. Parent reports similar, although they reported marginally higher anxiety. First controlled study using parent & children's reports.
- These findings lessen concerns from previous work that parents of socially transitioned children could be systematically underreporting mental health problems.

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### Jessie: Intense GD in a Young Child- A Psychosocial "Emergency"?

- Intense anxiety evoked in caregivers & clinicians when a child "transgresses" a treasured gender line- feels "like" a crisis...
- I received an urgent EPIC evaluation request in response to a deeply distressed mother who found her 3.10 year old son Jessie in the bathroom holding a nail clipper and his penis, declaring that he wanted to cut it off. She told him "You can't do that, you need it to pee", resulting in him putting down the clippers.

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### Jessie: Diagnostic Impressions

*GENDER DYSPHORIA?*  
*WILL IT ENDURE?*  
*AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER?*

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## ASD and GD

**There is an over-representation of ASD in patients who present to specialized clinics for evaluation and treatment of Gender Dysphoria.**

- ? Shared etiological factors
- ? Due to over-valued intense areas of interest.
- ? Due to rigidity/ obsessional style, or due to underlying co-morbid OCD.
- ? Linked to concrete understanding of gender and difficulty developing aspects of identity (neurotypical 3-5 year old have rigid gender-related beliefs)

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## Life as a Minion\*!

\*Despicable Me- A Boy or a girl?



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SOCIETY & CULTURE

**A NEW GENDER ERA?**

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### UNI Trans Homecoming Queen '13



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### Steven Sanchez: Non-Binary Gender Identity



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### Hippocratic Oath (5<sup>th</sup> Century BC)

...ἐπι δηλήσει δὲ καὶ ἀδικίῃ εἴρξειν.

... and I will take care that they suffer no hurt or damage.



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### Concluding Thoughts....

- We need to strive for a complex understanding of the life-story of youth with gender dysphoria, and how to best follow the child's lead. Ultimately, only the child or adolescent can know what their gender identity is.
- Children are born with an "assigned" gendered "identity", and parents often develop a complex set of beliefs regarding who their child is and will be.
- When those deeply held beliefs are threatened, angst and grief over the loss of the fantasized child may occur.
- With support, parents can develop both a stronger sense of their affirmed child, and a conviction that rather than losing a child, they are gaining one, and are truly "seeing" their child as who he or she (or they) is/are.....

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### Resources for LGBT Caregivers, Youth & Families

- **Family Acceptance Project:** [familyproject.sfsu.edu](http://familyproject.sfsu.edu)
- **Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays:** [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)
- **It Gets Better Project:** [www.itgetsbetter.org](http://www.itgetsbetter.org)
- **The Trevor Project** (suicide prevention): [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)
- **Gay Straight Alliance Network:** [www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)
- **Gay Lesbian & Straight Education Network:** [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)
- **KidsHealth:** [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)
- **TransYouth Family Allies:** [www.imatyfa.org](http://www.imatyfa.org)

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### Resources: Professional Organizations

- **World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH):** [www.wpath.org](http://www.wpath.org)
- **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) Practice Parameters:** [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

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