

Cultural COMPETENCY

awareness
action
advocacy

Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression within Families

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- PhD and MS in Adolescent Development and Family Studies and Master's in Public Health
- Research interests include gender development among adolescents and young adults and the influence of social contexts including schools and families



Department of
Family Social Science



Guiding Question

What is your level of comfort in talking with clients about gender expression and sexual orientation?



Gender Variance in Families

- Gender Identity
- Gender Role
- Gender Expression



Gender Variance in Families

Gender Identity
Gender Role
Gender Expression



ALL families have a gender environment



Sexual Orientation in Families

Sexual attraction and sexuality
Dating and sexual behavior
Family structure



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ALL families have a sexuality environment



Power of Family as Social Institution/Socializer

Family as Social Institution/Socializer
• Policing of gender roles/gender expression



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What is it like for kids with lesbian/gay families?



What is Normal Anyway?



Are you “allowed” to be not “normal”...

In a family?



In the military?



Parental Reactions to Gender Variance



Acceptance

- Open Communication
- Advocacy
- Inclusivity
- Gender Literacy
- Explicit care and support

(Kuvshinov, Weiner, Mahan, 2014; Rahilly, 2015; Ryan et al. 2010)

Link to: [Family Gender Environment Measures-Adolescent and Parent Versions](#)



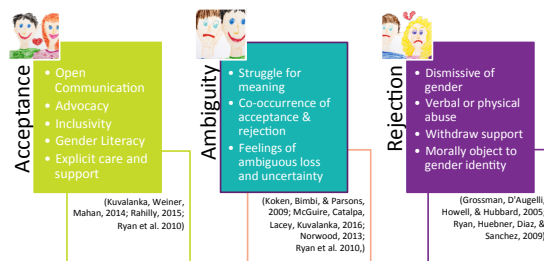
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FES-Y Instrument

0 1 2 3 N/A
Never Once or twice A few times Many times Acceptance Subscales

- Open communication**
Talk openly to you about your gender and gender roles?
Discuss and work through differences within the family about your gender expression?
Talk with your siblings about accepting your gender expression?
Talk with extended family about accepting your gender expression?
- Accepting/ inclusive behavior**
Invite openly LGBT or transgender friends to join family activities?
Accept your clothing or hairstyle, even though it might not be typical for your gender?
Make sure the family environment is supportive of your gender expression?
Appreciate and support your gender expression?

Think about your overall family environment in the past year when responding to the following items.

- Advocacy/ resources**
Give you information about gender role or transition?
Show you books, videos, or items that supported diverse gender expression?
Require that others treat you with respect?
Advocate for your safety, inclusion, or well-being outside the home?
Talk with teachers or school personnel to accept your gender expression?
- Explicit Care and Support for Gender Expression**
Disregard gender stereotypes about items (toys or clothes)?
Support you in using a different name or pronoun?
Purchase items to support your gender expression?
Allow you to dress in gender variant ways in the home?
Discuss your gender with a medical provider in a positive way?
Take you to a gender clinic or other supportive health care provider?

To access the free measure: www.sexualhealth.umn.edu/ngqsh/measures



FES-Y Instrument

0 1 2 3 N/A
Never Once or twice A few times Many times Rejection Subscales

- Exclusion and Abuse**
Ridicule, tease, or call you names about your gender?
Hit or physically abuse you?
Not let you attend certain events/ activities because of your gender expression?
Make you feel "not normal"?
Give you fewer opportunities than siblings?
Talk negatively about you to others?
Force secrecy about your gender expression?
Express shame about your gender?
- View gender expression as morally wrong**
Tell you that others do not approve of cross gender expression?
Blame you for any mistreatment that you experienced?
Tell you that your behavior is a "sin"?
Tell you that your religion or your god does not approve?
Force you to meet with religious leaders about your gender expression?
Talk negatively about you to others?
- Try to change gender expression**
Force you to dress or behave in gender conforming ways?
Take you to see a medical provider who tried to change your gender expression?
Buy you items that push you into gender conformity?
Assume your gender expression was an act of defiance?
Tell you that you are not allowed to socially transition?
Treat your cross-gender interests as a phase?
Allow others to enforce gender conformity against you?

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Acceptance

Major constructs include

- Inclusion
- Explicit care for gender expression
- Acceptance and support



Acceptance Narratives

Accepting:

My parents are 100% behind it now. They use my name all the time, male pronouns all the time. My mom slips every once in a great while but generally it's in reference to my past where it becomes problematic...But you know birthday cards it's about being a son. *My dad always, you know refers to me as his son now. Its, 'Hey boy! how's it going?'* You know, that kind of thing. ~ (Allen, [no ethnicity information provided], 24, F-M/GQ)



Note: Underline indicates ambiguity

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Advocacy and Resources:

Well I first started by wearing a shirt to school that said 'I'm gay, get over it'. And my administrators tried to tell me that I had to take off the shirt. And I was like, "Oh no I don't"... And they pulled my dad out of class because he was subbing and they were like, "did you know she was wearing this shirt?" And he was like, "I bought it for her, and drove her to school this morning" ~ (Evan, White, 20, F-M/GQ)



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Open Communication:

"My grandmother was the only one that I was really worried about because she of all people was the one that I was closest with. She and I were like this [crosses fingers] She told me she didn't support that but she still loved me and she wasn't going to stop talking to me and that was the biggest deal to me" ~ (Dandra, African American, 22, M-F)



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Explicit Care and Support for Gender Expression:

I assume they completely accepted it because they paid for my surgery. My parents told me they'd pay for 4 years of college. I finished in 2 and a half. The cost of surgery was less than the cost of having gone to school, so I asked if they'd pay. They discussed and came back to me with yes" ~ (Casey, White, 24, M-F)

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Rejection

Major constructions include

- Create barriers
- Disaffirm identity
- View gender variance as morally wrong



Rejection Narratives

Alter Gender Expression:

My mom was like, she would always tell me to please compromise with the clothing cuz didn't want me dressing like a dude, so she'd be like "ok at least get this, its not as feminine but it's for girls" and I'd always get pissed at her and like what's the difference, if I'm gonna get those girl jeans in 3 sizes than what my size is, its like the equivalent of getting guys pants cuz they're both gonna be baggy. She just wanted, I don't know, the clothes is really what... ~ (Habib, White, 18, F-M)



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Exclusion & Abuse:

Ya he said, *don't you dare set foot on my lawn ever again.* So and he called me like *nasty and disgusting* and stuff like that (Turbo)

She was awful upset... And I think when it sunk into her-when it had really sunk in for her, that what I wanted to do was to transition. I-I don't think she handled it to well. And I kind of...she had said something to me, where her exact words *'I think it would be best if we went our separate ways' which was pretty horrific* ~ (Girlfriend, Irish, 30, M-F)



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Moral Objection:

I: What's the relationship between your family's practice of religion and your experience of your gender? P: Oh um, yeah, even when I came out, they're all of a sudden pulling out their bibles and flipping through different passages and [Participant sighs/scoffs]. (Kayla, White, 18, M-F)



Ambiguity

Work through differences:

The second time around she took it rough for about a day and a half. The next day I came over, she sat me down, she was like I love you no matter what with tears in her eyes. You know what I think about this but I love you are my child, I will love you matter what. She kind of walked away because she didn't know what to do or to say. There is the conflicts of what the church beliefs are and ... the conflicts of her feelings about me and being her child you know. ~ (Karina, Latina, 20, M-F)

Explicit Care and Support for Gender Expression:

I guess one thing that I kind of mentioned earlier where sometimes I'll talk a lot about something I'm not clear about and she wants a lot of clarity. So she's like so are you going to, like one time she asked me, she went to a P Flag meeting and met all these Trans ladies in their 50's and then called me up and was like I'm confused, when you close your eyes what is your gender, and I was like oh my goodness. Yeah I have such a bigger and more complex way of thinking about this and things are ambiguous and I'm not always sure that I even believe in gender.

I: Right, and she had met like really clear transsexuals. A very directional pathway.

P: Yeah, so that has been one challenge. And probably also yeah the refrain I have heard from her over the years is I just want to understand, I just want to understand, you know and also that she hasn't - like she kind of reaches out for resources but not really and I have tried to pass them along but we have a huge cultural divide and I have learned a lot from reading Zeens and like meeting people. ~ (Batboy, White, 23, F-GQ)



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Secrecy, Shame, & Moral Conundrums...

How would you respond?

"I couldn't come to Thanksgiving dinner because extended family was visiting."



Military Structure & Moving...

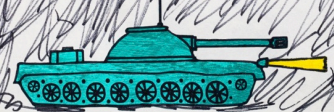
How could you assist?

You are working with a child who is gender nonconforming and preparing to move to a new base



Application in Military Settings

- Acceptance and rejection are different major themes, can co-occur
- Deployment and transfers may influence gender environment and gender variance
- Importance of family as a safe and affirming place



Questions? Comments?



Contact Information



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Access the free measure at <https://www.sexualhealth.umn.edu/ngcsh/measures>



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NEXT SESSION

*Health Disparities at the Intersection of
Race, Ethnicity, and Disabilities*



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