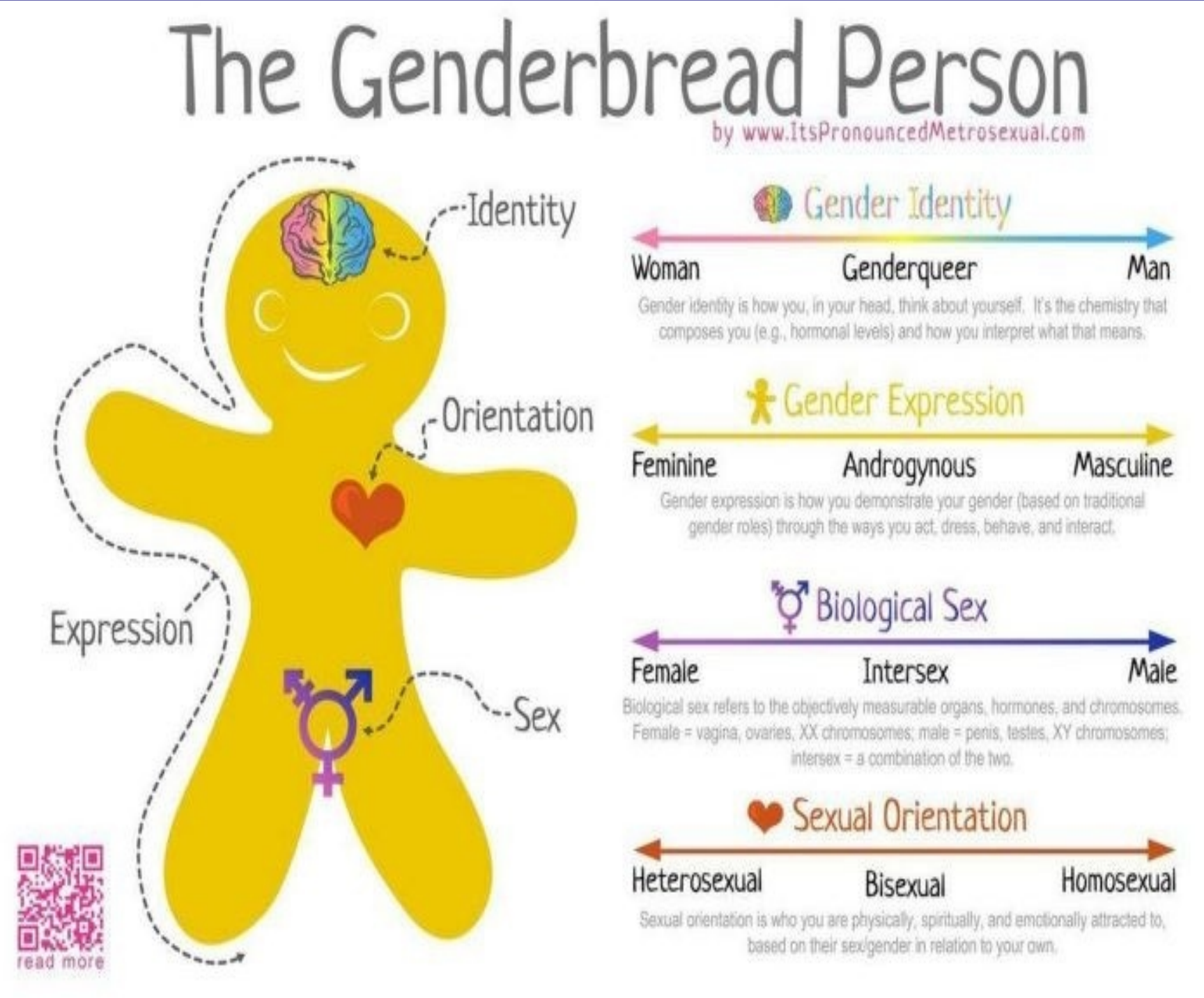


Families in Transition: The Lived Experience of Parenting a Transgender Child



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Abstract: This qualitative study explored parent's experiences of their child undergoing gender transition. Data analysis yielded themes that begin to identify the complex nature and struggles parents face as they encounter the emotional and physical aspects of this transition. The focus is on the context of the family rather than the broader social context of school or community. The central question is: "What is the experience of parenting a transgender child?"



Purpose: The purpose of this study was to raise awareness of the parent's perspective, provide a better understanding of the complex family issues that occur and provide suggestions on how to continue to work to facilitate "healthy families."

Method: A qualitative study was conducted using semi-structured interviews to explore the experience of parents whose children have transitioned. Word of mouth and a local support group were used for recruitment. Sample eligibility included: (a) male or female, (b) parent of a transgender child who was 13-30 years of age and (c) English speaking. The interviews took place in person or via phone. They were audiotaped, transcribed and analyzed following naturalistic inquiry methodology.

Trustworthiness and credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement, peer debriefings, member checking and an audit trail. Member checking with two study participants provided validation of results.

Demographic		N=16 #	%
Age	40-49	7	44
	50-59	8	50
	60-65	1	6
Relationship Status	Single	0	
	Married	10	63
	Divorced	6	37
Education	HS	3	19
	Associates	1	6
	Bachelors	4	25
	Masters	7	44
Religious Affiliation	Yes	9	57
	No	6	37
	No Answer	1	6
Race	Hispanic	0	
	African Am.	0	
	White, non-Hispanic	15	94
	Asian	0	
	Other	1	6
Relationship	Mother	12	75
	Father	4	25
How long ago was transition?	0-2yr	6	37
	3-5yr	7	44
	6+yr	3	19
Child	MTF	4	25
	FTM	11	69
	Gender Non-Binary	1	6

Results: Data analysis resulted in 5 themes:

1. It rocks your world

"I was a little taken aback. I was sad because I felt like I was losing a son."

2. Dancing around in a way that doesn't distance

"Somebody's got to take different roles, and that seemed to be the way it shaped up."

3. Your child is still your child

"It's still my child and will always be my child, and I love him. I don't care, as long as he's happy, because he hasn't been happy."

4. Worrying about the future

"testosterone going to have a significant effect on her.... Competing hormones... hormones have created a different person... extra doses of estrogen..."

5. Transformational, finally an answer

"Our relationship is better because he's happy."

Conclusion: The objective of this qualitative study was to begin to understand the experience of parents' whose children undergo gender transition. This transition process affects the individual and family simultaneously and most parents agreed that while there are many uncertainties and stages that the family progresses through, the most important goal is a loving relationship with their child, their children are happy and successful, and the family remains intact. There are many implications for nursing practice, education and further research.

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