American Academy of Pediatrics Webinar Series

Part 1: What is Gender?

Ilana Sherer, MD, FAAP

Palo Alto Medical Foundation Palo Alto, CA
UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital San Francisco, CA

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Objectives

**Webinar 1: What is Gender? Terminology and Definitions**
- At the completion of this webinar, participants will be able to:
  - Define gender identity, gender expression, gender role, gender variant, and transgender
  - Describe ways pediatricians can support healthy gender development in all children
  - Identify “first steps” and resources to support parents in developing healthy gender identity in their children
What is Gender?

- Gender Biology  **Assigned**
- Gender Identity  **Within**
- Gender Expression  **Imposed**
Gender Biology (assigned sex) is Assigned at Birth (or before)
Gender Identity is internal sense of self
Gender Expression

- Culturally determined manifestation of gender identity through outward appearance
- Includes hair, clothes, mannerism, name, gender role, etc
What is Gender Variant?

• Children whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what others expect of their gender biology/assigned sex.

• Also called: gender non-conforming, gender creative, gender expansive, gender independent, or transgender.
What is transgender?

Gender Variant

Transgender
“Being [gender variant] or transgender is a matter of diversity, not pathology.”

- World Professional Association of Transgender Health
Gender Identity Appears Early

Kennedy and Hellen, 2010; Transgender Children - More than a Theoretical Challenge
How Environment Shapes Gender Expression and Roles

- For most kids: imitate expected roles—> reward
- Imitate the ‘other’ sex —> punishment (more for boys than girls)

Punishment (and reward) for gender behavior cannot change internal gender identity, it can only influence external gender expression.
Gender Expression: Socially Influenced

Who is this?

Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1886
Pink and Blue

"The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl."

— Ladies Home Journal
1918
What is Gender?

- Gender Biology  Assigned
- Gender Identity  Within
- Gender Expression  Imposed
Gender versus Sexual Orientation

- Sexual orientation is not a part of gender (although it can influence gender expression)
- Attraction to other versus self
- Transgender people can have any sexual orientation

“Who you go to bed WITH versus who you go to bed AS”
Typical Gender Development

1-2 year olds
- Notice Physical differences and biological sex
- Know if they are boys or girls (or other)

3-4 year olds
- Strong and consistent gender identity
- Gender expression emerges
- Playmates and activities aligned with gender expression
- May believe gender can change with expression
**Typical Gender Development**

4-6 years
- Established gender identity
- Many gendered stereotypes and rigid categories and beliefs
- Sense of adult gender roles

6-7 years
- Believe that gender is a constant attribute

Teens
- Become aware of Sexual Orientation
Gender is a Spectrum

Sex

Female

Sexual Identity

Girl

Gender Expression

Feminine

Masculine

Intersex

Intersex/DSD

Boy

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Gender is a Spectrum

Sex

Gender Identity

Gender Expression

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Gender is a Spectrum

Sex

Female

Male

Gender Identity

Girl

Boy

Gender Expression

Feminine

Masculine

Intersex /DSD

Transgender/ Gender Variant

Tomboy, etc
Gender is not binary
The genderbread person

• Itspronouncedmetrosexual.com
How Many?

- The research is mixed
  - One study (1991): 2-4% of boy and 5-10% of girls behaved as the “opposite sex” from time to time
  - Another study (1993): 22% of boys and 38% of girls exhibited “gender atypical behaviors”

Healthy Gender Development for All Children

• All children need opportunity to explore different gender roles and styles of play.
  ▫ Toys: provide a wide range
  ▫ Books
  ▫ Support your child’s emotional expression (i.e. allow boys to cry, girls to get angry, etc)
  ▫ Allow children to make their own decisions about what activities and sports they want to participate in.
Books for Kids

Mental Health Therapeutic approaches

- **Old method:** pathologizing treatments aimed toward changing behavior
- **Contemporary approach:** affirming treatment
  - Destigmatize gender variance
  - Promote child’s self worth
  - Strengthen parent-child bond
  - Create opportunities for family peer support
  - Offer parents advocacy skills to create safe spaces in schools, daycares, etc
Guiding Families who have Gender Variant Children

- Family acceptance is crucial
- familyproject.sfsu.edu
- Follow the lead of the child
- Network with other families (local PFLAG or LGBT resource center to start)
- Mental health referral (for the parents) may be helpful. Ask your local PFLAG/LGBT center
- Join a provider listserv
“Gender independent children who are strongly pressured to conform are prone to anxiety, sadness, social withdrawal, self deprecation and other signs of internalized distress.”

Pediatricians: Creating Affirmative Offices

- Use the correct name and pronoun. Train your staff to use the correct name and pronoun.
- Offer multiple choices for gender on your intake forms.
- Have gender neutral or single stall bathrooms available.
- Have gender nonconforming toys or books in waiting room.
- Have posters/handouts in your waiting room.
Resources for Families

• List of children's books that address gender identity

  National organizations that serve families with gender variant children
  •  PFLAG
  •  Gender Spectrum
  •  Trans Youth Family Allies

  Online sites by parents of gender variant children
  o  Trans Parenthood http://transparenthood.net
    Raising my rainbow http://raisingmyrainbow.com
    Sarah and Ian Hoffman http://www.sarahandianhoffman.com/blog/
• Questions?
References