

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SCIENCES

DISSERTATION DEFENSE

Leslie C. Guditis, B.B.A., M.S.

Ph.D. Candidate, Family Therapy

**WHEN A TRANSEXUAL FAMILY MEMBER TRANSITIONS:
A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF THE FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE**

Linda Brock, Ph.D., Chair

Glen Jennings, Ed.D., Member

Joel Muro, Ph.D., Member

Human Development Building (HDB)

Room 204

Monday, November 9, 3:00 p.m.

All TWU faculty, staff, and students are invited to attend.

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study explored the experience of family members and romantic partners of transsexual individuals who have completed gender transition. The conceptual framework of the study was family systems and ambiguous loss theories. In order to find rich, deep meaning in what the participants shared, a phenomenological approach was employed. Participants came from parts of the continental United States and Canada. The recruitment process involved criterion sampling and snowball sampling. Twenty participants, including parents, siblings, adult children, and romantic partners of transsexual individuals came forward. Face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted, transcribed, and then analyzed to determine themes.

Two themes emerged from the data analysis, which are: 1) *I Need to Be Heard/Validated* and 2) *Ambiguous Loss*. The themes contained the following concepts: a) *selfishness/self-absorption*; b) *lack of support and educational information*; c) *how changes in transsexual individual affected relationships*; d) *mixed feelings*; e) *coming to terms with ambiguity*. The researcher gave a voice to the participants by including several direct quotes from the interviews, as they shared their lived experience.

Biographical Information

Leslie Guditis holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Management from University of Houston – Clear Lake and a Master's degree in Family Studies from Texas Woman's University. She is currently a therapist at Inspirations, an adult psychiatric outpatient clinic, and she has a private counseling practice. Ms. Guditis also teaches undergraduate Family Sciences courses at Texas Woman's University.