

Gender Dysphoria and Asperger's Syndrome

Thursday 16th April 2015

The Diagnostic Criteria in DSM 5: A

- Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity
- Deficits in non-verbal communicative behaviours used for social interaction
- Deficits in developing, understanding and maintaining relationships

The Diagnostic Criteria in DSM 5: B

- Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects or speech
- Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines or ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behaviour, or excessive resistance to change

The Diagnostic Criteria in DSM 5: B

- Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
- Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of environment

Gender Identity in Very Early Childhood

- *I am teaching a class of 23 students in Year 1. One of the students was diagnosed with ASD and possible gender dysphoria at the age of 3. He was born a boy and around the age of 2/3 began dressing as a girl (he has an older sister and supportive mum and dad). This year the child wrote a letter to the school counsellor saying "I don't want to use the boys toilets anymore and I want to wear the girls uniform to school" (out of school hours the child has been dressing as a girl since the age of 3).*

- *The next day the child came with pigtails and wearing a girl's school uniform. 'She' was so happy and there were no separation anxiety issues that morning or mornings to follow (fellow students have just accepted it as the 'way it is'). There was lots of loud talk to others from the student announcing "say she not he" and telling her story*

- *Since starting school in 2013 the student has preferred to play with girls and has similar interests to her peer group.*
- *I started thinking is this a way to fit in with a 'safe and understanding' friendship group - girls? The student is very good at role playing and is very close to sister and Mum.*
- *“Is this autism or transgender or both'?”*

Aspie Logic

- Changing gender to solve a problem
- Girls teased by her female peers, wanted to become a boy to stop the bullying

Friendship: Boys

- Solitude
- Adopted by girls
- Girls are kind, friendly
- Girls are good at social skills
- An interest in changing gender

Friendship: Boys

- A transient special interest? (Parkinson 2015)
- Would changing gender be a cure for Asperger's syndrome?
- Becoming a eunuch. Male genitals removed, no sexual desire and uncomfortable with erections (sensory sensitivity?)

Friendship Girls

- Feeling uncomfortable and confused when with girls
- Preferring gender neutral or boys toys
- Enjoying mathematics, science, information technology, boys jokes
- Becoming a Tom Boy

A Tomboy

- *Many stereotypical girls activities were stupid, boring and inexplicable.*
- *It is more accurate to say that I am gender-neutral. As a child I liked to play with boys because I enjoyed toy cars, Lego,, building blocks, sports and that kind of thing, and sadly girls are not often given toys like cars and blocks; also girls were more complicated, and unkind in ways I didn't understand.*
- *Boys are more logical.*

A Tomboy

- *I was very much a tom boy (to my mother's disappointment) and still have those tendencies, but I have always been interested only in men. Not a good way to attract them!*

A Tomboy

- *It was easier to identify with boys because they just wanted to have fun. Girls had more social rules to follow or blunder. They had more gossip and didn't like to get dirty. The guys were fun and I could almost be myself around them.*
- *I don't know how to do girl things.*



Ultra-feminine or anti-social conventions

- Try to fit in during Primary School by being ultra feminine (pink and frilly)
- In adolescence, when it is not working, the pendulum can swing the other way

Ultra-feminine or anti-social conventions

- Despise femininity and defy social and gender conventions
- Becoming a boy to prevent bullying from girls
If a Tom Boy, try to prevent signs of femininity
(Anorexia Nervosa)

Clothing and Fashion

- *Most of my clothing is gender-neutral. I generally don't like dresses or skirts and find many of them impractical, too ornamental, and uncomfortable; likewise women's dress shoes. I usually wear unisex sneakers or brown loafer shoes.*
- *Nothing feminine or fancy!*
- *Just make sure there are no florals and frilly bits*

Clothing and Fashion

- *Girl clothes fit better, but I always try to find androgynous ones.*
- *Guy clothes are generally more practical*
- *I like jeans and shirts because I don't have to think about what to wear. Clothes styles don't really interest me. I feel odd when I dress fashionably and I am not sure whether I am overdressed or underdressed.*

Gender Specific Toys

- *I was given gender specific toys such as Barbie dolls but I did not play with them the same way that all other girls I knew played with them. The other girls wanted to play out getting married scenarios whereas I played out adventure scenarios such as replacing Tarzan with my Barbie as the hero rescuing my brother's Action Man in the jungle.*

Sexuality

- *I'm straight, but inside I've always felt mentally androgynous. Although I look very female.*
- *I'm bisexual and think it fits neatly into my aspieness.*

Sexuality

- *I'm interested in alternative sexual expression/sado-masochism/leather fetishism.*
- *I consider myself to be bi-sexual but I am celibate due to religious reasons.*

Celibacy

‘Can I deal with sharing a house with someone who might possibly touch my model airplane collection?’ ‘Model airplanes do not decide that they want to be built by someone else who is more attractive or less needy’



ASD in Gender Dysphoric Children

De Vries et al

- Screened children and adolescents referred to a Gender Identity clinic in Holland for signs of ASD
- A positive diagnosis of ASD was made for 7.8%
- Profile had some unusual aspects such as hoping that taking oestrogen would improve communication problems

ASD in Gender Dysphoric Children

De Vries et al

- While almost all adolescents with Gender Identity Disorder are sexually attracted to individuals with the same birth gender, the majority of ASD adolescents with GID were attracted to partners of the opposite gender
- For the majority of ASD children with GID, the signs of GID alleviated at puberty, but for 12-18 year olds the signs persisted

Trans Gender

- **Jones et al 2012 JADD 42:2**
- Females with Gender Identity Disorder have an increased number of autistic traits
- Same for males who want to be female



Gender Identity

- Bevans: The Bridge (Magazine of Jr Child Psychol and Psychiatry)
- Gender identity issues and dysphoria more common pre-puberty

Gender Identity

- In a Gender Identity clinic in the UK, 16% of new cases had an ASD
- Netherlands, 6.4% childhood and 9.4% in adolescence
- Tavistock in London: 10%
- Parkinson: Australasian Psychiatry
- 2 cases, male, may be a transient obsession (special interest)

Minds and Hearts Clinic

- **An Information Session:**
- **Sexuality and Asperger's Syndrome**
- **Tuesday 28th July 2015 – 6:00 – 7:30 pm**
- **www.mindsandhearts.net**
- **The Greek Club, 29 Edmondstone Street,
South Brisbane**
- **\$99**