

Experts Examine Possible Link Between Asperger's and Gender Dysphoria

Increasingly, anecdotal reports and research are linking gender dysphoria with Asperger's syndrome. [The Australian](#) recently featured a leading expert who wants an inquiry into the disproportionate number of teenagers with autism in gender clinics.

Professor Tony Attwood, a psychologist and author of a number of books on autism, is not opposed to gender change as such. But he feels that people could slump back into depression if [trans status](#) was embraced with impulsive and unrealistic hopes of a fix for autism.

"Once they've changed gender, they still have autism and when (gender) transition doesn't solve their problems they think, Oh no, that was the only option I had, what's the point of life?," he told The Australian.

"One of the characteristics of autism is what we call a one-track mind, and sometimes the issue of gender dysphoria (discomfort with one's body) and changing gender becomes a special interest with a phenomenal knowledge and determination."

"A girl that I knew wanted to become a boy – where did this come from? She was bullied by girls who didn't bully boys, so her autistic logic was, if I become a boy they will stop bullying me," he said.

"You've got to look at aspects of sexuality, and whether the (gender) transition has been viewed as a psychological as opposed to a medical success."

Girls are particularly good at “masking” the condition, Professor Attwood says. “They have the ability to act, and this can camouflage and delay their diagnosis until another issue comes up, like an eating disorder or depression or gender dysphoria, and you see behind the mask. So this is why there needs to be a lot of what I call psychological archaeology.

“I am not denying the transition, I am looking at the psychological processes that led to that decision, and to affirm that and look at developing the sense of self, irrespective of gender, because we know there’s a fragmented sense of self in autism.”

Professor Attwood is far being the only autism expert who has made the link between autism and gender dysphoria.

Last year a study published in the journal European Psychiatry led by [Dr. Steven Stagg](#), of Anglia Ruskin University found that many transgender and non-binary individuals appeared to be autistic, with difficulties in in empathizing and an overreliance on systematic, rule-based reasoning.

“One of the striking findings was the number of individuals born female who met the cut off for autism spectrum disorder,” he said. “This is particularly important given that individuals born female are twice as likely to be referred to gender identity clinics.”

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