

# GENDER, SEXUALITY & GENDER DYSPHORIA IN ASC

Dr Wenn B. Lawson

## WHO AM I?

When looking out upon the world  
I see as any might,  
The things I notice, boy or girl  
Are captured within my sight.

## WHO AM I?

When looking out upon the world  
I feel as any might  
My heart can hurt, ache or break  
My senses heightened, set or curled  
I live through day and night.

## WHO AM I?

- ▶ But, as you look in upon my world
- ▶ Your head might judge, your eyes not see,
- ▶ The true reality that makes up me.

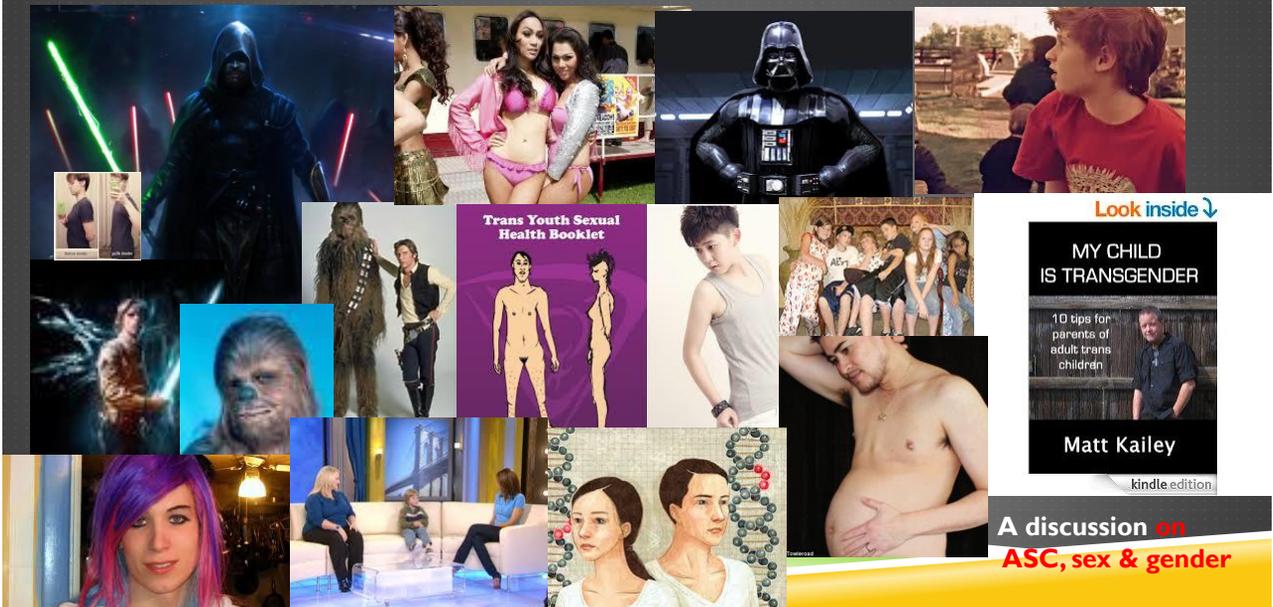
## WHO AM I?

Flesh and bone of body image  
May not make the man  
The clothes I wear, may cause a stare,  
My choices may confuse.  
But what if she is not I am?  
What if he is not a man?

## WHO AM I?

This binary world imposed  
Is set by those who propose,  
Male and female is set in time  
When reality says there's not one line.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS PRESENTATION



## GENDER AND SEXUALITY ARE DIFFERENT

- ▶ Physical attributes of the body alone do not make up one's gender or sexuality
- ▶ Autism is a spectrum
- ▶ Gender and sexuality: also a spectrum?

## AUTISM

- ▶ Autism is not one thing. There are 'the autisms'; autism is a spectrum.

It means:

Being single minded: focussed on things of interest to the individual.

Separating issues, therefore, social, public, private **etc. can be difficult....**

## GD AND MENTAL HEALTH

- ▶ Over 40% of trans individuals living with GD attempt suicide (see:
- ▶ [http://www.getconnected.org.uk/get\\_help/gender\\_and\\_sexual\\_identity/transvestites\\_and\\_transsexuals?gclid=CLyrzbTEqMUCFYgfwwodQI4ALQ](http://www.getconnected.org.uk/get_help/gender_and_sexual_identity/transvestites_and_transsexuals?gclid=CLyrzbTEqMUCFYgfwwodQI4ALQ)
- ▶ <http://www.translifeline.org/>
- ▶ Autism & GD:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIFSeq9LxnQ>

## ASC & GD DEBATE

▶ <http://www.alternet.org/personal-health/what-my-female-born-transgender-autistic-brother-can-teach-you-about-how-we>

▶ Some debate the studies actually show a reasonably strong link to **ASD & Gender**. Most studies exhibit **Low Power**.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-red-light-district/201411/link-between-autism-and-gender-dysphoria>

## NEUROLOGICALLY TYPICAL (NT) OR ASC?

- ▶ **None of us are great at accepting difference.**
  - ▶ **But, NT's may notice more of the big picture**
  - ▶ **ASC may notice less**
  - ▶ **And, in ASC gender & sexuality more fluid.**
- This maybe one reason for **statistics** on **ASC & Gender Dysphoria?****

## USUAL BEHAVIOUR, DEVELOPMENTALLY

- ▶ **Babies, toddlers, children learn early what gives them pleasure**
- ▶ **Parental approval (in NT) helps guide behaviour (what's allowed; where, when)**
- ▶ **Because NT's not single focussed therefore aware of others:  
opinion/acceptance/approval... these are **important** deterrents, rewards & guides.**

## TABOO

- ▶ **Certain behaviours have taboo attached (sexual public activity)**
- ▶ **Mum notices child gaining pleasure from exploration**
- ▶ **Mum may slap hand, say no.**
- ▶ **If NT because notice approval/disapproval, want to please Mum, or significant other, **behaviour changes accordingly.****

## ASC

- ▶ In **ASC** we may not notice other, or be aware of public and private as 'different'.
- ▶ Not notice when some behaviours are encouraged or discouraged
- ▶ Our attention is elsewhere focussed.

## EDUCATION AND ASC

- ▶ Just like we teach everything in **ASC** e.g. social awareness, manners (systematically) the same with sex ed.
- ▶ Need to teach appropriateness
- ▶ We also need to teach public and private
- ▶ All education needs to be explicit, logical, **using** correct names for body parts etc

## BEING HUMAN IS A BIRTH RIGHT

- ▶ **Being a sexual human is also a right**
- ▶ **Channelling one's sexual 'being-ness' needs to be done right**
- ▶ **Punishing a behaviour that is human, right and alright, is never right.**
- ▶ **Teaching appropriateness and propriety is right.**

## HOW WE GO ABOUT IT

- ▶ **How we go about it makes a difference to personal acceptance**
- ▶ **First, recognise the person's ASC and learning style**
- ▶ **Second, use learning style and interest to build concepts**

## AND THEN GENDER

- ▶ Mis-gendering is a common practice because our prejudices/belief systems tell us that the body dictates the gender
- ▶ Need to be 'in tune' with the individual
- ▶ That means – observing, putting aside one's own agenda, and working 'with' the **individual.**

## RECOGNISING SIGNS AND CHARACTERISTICS

- ▶ Just like with recognising **ASC**, we need to recognise individual gender and sexuality.
- ▶ Because gender is also a spectrum, it is not black and white
- ▶ We only have two words in English – male and female to represent gender.
- ▶ **But reality is quite different.**

## SPECIAL INTEREST; OCD, BEING SINGLE MINDED?

- ▶ **A Boy who loves soft material and plays only with girls says ‘I like soft things, I play with dolls with long hair, & I play with girls, I must be a girl’.**
- ▶ **Another says: I love dresses and drawing... girls wear dresses, I must be a girl.**
- ▶ **Actually, the above single minded thinking is related more to ASC than to gender ID.**

## DREW SAYS:

- ▶ **“I’ve recently been making exciting and very daunting discoveries about my gender. As a result, I currently identify as “30% ‘George Clooney’ and 70% ‘Georgina Clueless’”. I’m frantically researching all the posh names for where I’m at and I’m guessing that I’m non-binary / genderqueer with a degree of gender fluidity. Essentially, I live on Planet Drew, which has an erratic rotation around the Gender System. We’re currently quite close to Venus. I’m an adult fan of Lego, a sci-fi geek, Doctor Who fan and the occasional gamer. I’ve also discovered that I can ‘do’ liquid eyeliner, which is nice!**

## GENDER DYSPHORIA: DSM 5

- ▶ **For a person to be diagnosed with gender dysphoria, there must be a marked difference between the individual's expressed/experienced gender and the gender others would assign him or her, and it must continue for at least six months. In children, the desire to be of the other gender must be present and verbalized. This condition causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.**
- ▶ **Gender dysphoria is manifested in a variety of ways, including strong desires to be treated as the other gender or to be rid of one's sex characteristics, or a strong conviction that one has feelings and reactions typical of the other gender.**

## GENDER DYSPHORIA

- ▶ [www.nhs.uk/conditions/gender-dysphoria/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gender-dysphoria/Pages/Introduction.aspx)
- ▶ Therefore, gender dysphoria is a condition where a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their biological sex and gender identity. Biological sex is assigned at birth, depending on the appearance of the genitals.

## CHROMOSOMES XX AND XY

- ▶ **DNA physical elements can appear to tell one story**
- ▶ **Hormones and chemical wash during utero may tell another**
- ▶ **This is what we need to look out for**
- ▶ **Is the child with ASC conforming to typical understanding of gender development? Or are they telling us a different story?**

## CHROMOSOMAL COMBO:

- ▶ **Some times individuals have mixed combinations of sex chromosomes. Mixed chromosomes where there is a lacking of paired chromosomes, is the cause of Turner syndrome (45,X) and Klinefelter syndrome (47,XXY). Also, there are often mosaic mixtures of sex chromosomes too.**

## CHROMOSOMAL COMBINATIONS

- ▶ **Klinefelter's syndrome: an extra X chromosome.** The normal male chromosome arrangement is **46XY**, but for males with **Klinefelter's syndrome** it is **47XXY**
- ▶ **Klinefelter's syndrome: the most common chromosomal disorder in males, affects about 1 in 650 men.** However, many with Klinefelter's syndrome are never diagnosed.

## CHROMOSOME COMBOS.

**XXYY** only affects males. Males affected with **XXYY** syndrome have 48 chromosomes instead of the typical 46. This is why **XXYY** syndrome is sometimes written as 48, **XXYY** syndrome. It is estimated that **XXYY** affects one in every 18,000–40,000 male births.

Some symptoms similar to Klinefelter's but more **cognitive & emotional** challenges.

## 48 XXYY

- ▶ Developmental delays, Speech impairment
- ▶ Scoliosis, Clinodactyly, Low muscle tone
- ▶ Flat feet, Sterility, Delayed sexual development
- ▶ Undescended testes, Low testosterone
- ▶ Behavior outburst and mood swings
- ▶ Learning disabilities, Intellectual impairment
- ▶ ADHD symptoms, Autism spectrum disorders
  - ▶ Tall

## SO, CHROMOSOMES? HORMONES?

- ▶ **Even if our DNA has the usual 23 pairs of either XX or XY chromosomes, this is not the end of the story. We can physically develop reproductive organs of one gender whilst our brain dictates we are the other.**
- ▶ **Sex refers to biological differences; chromosomes, hormonal profiles, internal and external sex organs.**
- ▶ **Gender describes the characteristics that a society or culture delineates as masculine or feminine.**

## GENDER

- ▶ One's internal sense of gender identity may be different to one's sexual orientation
- ▶ gender dysphoria is biological and caused by the development of gender identity before birth.
- ▶ The condition is not a mental illness.
- ▶ Your biological sex is determined by chromosomes.
- ▶ **BUT**, the biological sex (as determined physically by the reproductive organs and genitals) could be male, while the gender identity (as determined by the brain) **could be female & vice versa.**

## SPECIAL INTEREST

- ▶ Is there an apparent obsession with wishing they were a girl or a boy opposite to their physical features?
- ▶ Is this story they give a life story not just an obsession?
- ▶ Much harder to tell in ASC than in typical development due to single minded **disposition**

## AUSTRALIA'S TRANS GENDERED PRE-TEENS

### OBSERVATION

- ▶ **Looking for separate interest that is gender biased is a clue**
- ▶ **Wishing they were a girl, dressing in girls clothes, wanting dolly, pram etc. as opposed to just wanting to wear dresses**
- ▶ **Parents need to watch out for the clues**

## GENDER DYSPHORIA

- ▶ Brain body discrepancy
- ▶ Observations
- ▶ Research
- ▶ General conversations
- ▶ Gut feeling
- ▶ **Letting go of prejudice**

## ASC EDUCATION MEANS 'US' TOO

- ▶ **We can work hard to understand ASC**
- ▶ **We can work hard to assist our kids build social skills and propriety**
- ▶ **We can work hard to develop appropriate values, knowledge and beliefs**
- ▶ **We must also check for any unwanted baggage that is clouding our thinking and preventing us from seeing.**
- ▶ **Once we see the baggage we can deal with it**

## CONCLUSION

- ▶ **Typical gender and typical sexuality – there is no such thing!**
- ▶ **Learning to ‘let go of prejudice’ and note an individual’s disposition is critical**
- ▶ **Teenage years, depression, suicide, mental illness often linked to gender and sexuality issues**
- ▶ **Being aware – prevention is better than cure!**

## GENDER DYSPHORIA

- ▶ **Gender dysphoria is not diagnosed if the symptoms co-occur with a physical or intersex condition (mixed chromosomes and/or genitalia).**
- ▶ **Gender dysphoria is not the same as liking to dress in opposite sex clothing.**

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- ▶ My home page has info on ASC but also links to other resources.
- ▶ Sharing our own stories with each other gives perspective on issues of gender & sexuality.
- ▶ Perhaps things we thought were taboo were really our own fears?
- ▶ We only accept others in as far as we first **accept ourselves.**

WENN B. NOT WENDY!



## SOME RESOURCES

- ▶ <http://www.news-medical.net/health/Causes-of-Gender-Dysphoria.aspx>
- ▶ [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/04/gender-dysphoria-dsm-5\\_n\\_3385287.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/04/gender-dysphoria-dsm-5_n_3385287.html)
- ▶ <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Gender-dysphoria/Pages/Causes.aspx>
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEXL908cqAw>
- ▶ <https://plus.google.com/117441729018847156617/posts>
- ▶ <http://www.ps3youtube.com/user/ElectricDade>

## SOME RESOURCES

- ▶ [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbb-X\\_YWI7wuf164XQwu2pg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbb-X_YWI7wuf164XQwu2pg)
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/user/FinnThelInfinncible/videos>
- ▶ [WWW.wennlawson.com](http://WWW.wennlawson.com)