Gender Identity Disorder
Psyc 311 – Abnormal Psychology

Overview
- Often referred to as transsexuals
- 6 times more frequent in boys than girls
- Feel from early childhood they are the opposite sex
- Are aversive to same sex clothing and genitals
- When they feel sexual attraction to the same sex, it is from the opposite sex viewpoint and feels heterosexual

Observed in Early Childhood by Parents
- Begins about age 2 - 4
- Child plays with opposite sex toys and games

Other issues
- Typically meets with disapproval by peers, co-workers, etc.
- 15th – 16th Century
  • Burned at the stake
  • Some Native American cultures
    • Seen as a third gender
  • Experience anxiety and depression
    • 1/100,000 for women
    • 1/30,000 for women

Causes
- Biological Factors
- Nature vs. Nurture debate
  1. Dominican Republic Study
  2. Joan / John Study

Dominican Republic Study
- Contends gender identity is influenced by hormones
- Extended family
  • Unable to produce hormone responsible for shaping the penis and scrotum
  • Male children are born with extremely small genitals
    • Look like female genitals
  • 2/3rds are raised as female
  • Reach puberty
    • Testosterone levels increase
  • Sex organs change
  • 17/18 develop male gender identity
Increasing estrogen or progesterone

- Used to stop interuterine bleeding
- Show a difference on a child
  - More feminine qualities but not enough for a disorder
- Efforts to study adult hormone levels are difficult
  - May take hormones to alter the body.

Case study Joan / John

- Two twins with foreskin closing
- Circumcision went wrong
  - Equipment
  - Happen to see a documentary on TV for sex change for transsexualism
- Dr. John Money
  - Said to turn John into Joan
    - Castration, female genitals, hormones
    - Relate to him as a girl
  - After soul searching and consultations, parents approve the operation
  - Money claims success

Problem

- At age 2, Joan tear off a dress
- Play activities are clearly masculine
- Reluctantly takes hormone
- Refuses surgery to improve female genitilia
- Age 14 decides to stop living as a girl
- Is told full story
- Has penis rebuilt
- Married at age 25
- Conclusion – environment did not influence hormones

Psychological and Social Factors

- Parents think boys dressing up as girls is cute if they want to.
- End up encouraging it, provide makeup
- Boys with GID are rated as more attractive than control kids
- Girls rated less attractive
- Boys have distant relationships with Dad
- Females physically sexual

Therapies for GID

- Body Alterations
  - Require a minimum of 6-12 months of therapy and living in the desired gender
- Cosmetic surgery
  - Remove facial hair – electrophoresis
  - Reduce chin size or Adams apple
- Female hormones to grow breasts and soften skin

Sexual Reassignment Surgery

- More likely to be male to female
  - Remove genitals
  - Start hormones 1 year prior to surgery
  - May have plastic surgery
  - More men than women have surgery
- Estimated more than 1000 transsexuals are surgically altered
Outcomes

• More favorable if
  • Emotionally stable
  • Successful in gender role for one year
  • Have adequate understanding of limitations
  • Have Psychotherapy

Problems

• Many still have issues in their life
  • "If only"
  • Even after the changes still have work problems, family life problems, etc.
  • If they live in another role for one year and see they still have same issues, some change their minds.

Other treatments

• Use behavioral therapy
• Alter gender identify
  • Instead of altering to opposite sex, train the person to be more like their same sex.
• Ethical dilemmas???

Conclusion

• Interesting disorder
• Affects relatively few individuals
• Need money to complete the entire process
  • May be paid for by Federal Government in some circumstances.