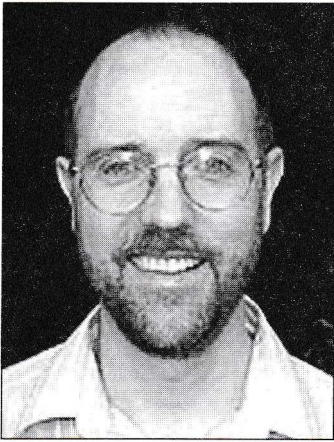


Letters to the Editor

Psychologist Christopher Rosik says APA Should Retain Gender-Identity Disorder Diagnosis



Christopher Rosik, Ph.D.

I believe the recent APA discussion about the possible removal of gender-identity disorder (GID) from the diagnostic manual requires a response from NARTH.

A good source to offer perspective on the subject is the 1997 Bradley & Zucker article on childhood GID (*J. Am. Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry*, 36:7, 872-880) which I referred to in my recently published paper in the *Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy*.

I quote Zucker and Bradley at length here, as they identify the possible causes of childhood gender-identity conflict:

"The other parental variable implicated as etiologically significant by Stoller (1975) in extremely feminine boys and in homosexual men by Bieber and Bieber (1979) was a distant father-son relationship. This finding has been confirmed in several studies of homosexual men (Friedman, 1988) and

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Then in a 1998 letter to the editor responding to a critique of their article, Bradley & Zucker additionally comment (J. Am. Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry, 37:3, p. 245):

"Dr. Menvielle asserts that '[w]ith the progress of science we have learned that parental personality and childrearing practices....do not have any significant causal role in the development of child psychopathology.' This is a gross oversimplification of a complex issue. No responsible or sophisticated clinician is interested in 'blaming' parents, but rather, in understanding the causal sequences that lead to, or perpetrate, child psychopathology.

"In general, most child psychiatric disorders are understood as a product of an interaction between biological risk factors or vulnerabilities in the child and psychosocial factors within the family matrix and the larger social world.

"We agree that, to date, no studies have demonstrated a causal relationship between parental behavior and GID. This lack of evidence for causal relationship is found throughout most of child psychiatry, and we find ourselves being forced to develop our models based on associations. This does not, however, suggest that these factors have no relevance in the development of disorders."

was also evident in Green's (1987) study of feminine boys. Although it has been suggested that some of the difficulty fathers have in relating to their feminine sons is due to lack of shared interests, this does not seem to be an adequate explanation.

"Sherman's (1985) study of boys with GID using a projective measure of family relationships indicated that the sons perceived their relationships with their fathers as distant, negative, and conflicted. Together with the above reports of parental psychopathology, these findings would suggest that this relationship deficit may be a factor in contributing to the child's anxiety and, furthermore, that these fathers would have a hard time buffering deficits in the mother-son relationship.

"Fathers of girls with GID are often perceived as aggressive and threatening to their wives, and many of these girls report dreams and fantasies of protecting their mothers from aggressive figures. In our female adolescents with GID, a history of sexual abuse or fears of sexual aggression has appeared commonly. This is consistent with reports of physical and sexual abuse in female-to-male transsexuals (Devor, 1994) and with a report by Cosentino et al. (1993) of more masculine behavior in a sample of sexually abused girls." (pp. 877-878)

continued

This was a point I made very similarly in my article.

Gay activists often argue that gender variance and homosexuality typically reflect a person's "true nature." In mentioning the notion of a "true nature," it seems to me that one has left the world of the social scientist and assumed the mantle of a philosopher. We must not forget the is/ought distinction—that it is the philosopher, drawing on his observations of the natural world, who shapes our understanding of which things just "simply are," and what things in fact "ought to be." "Is" does not invariably lead to "ought."

I don't begrudge the need to address such an issue—but implying that the statement, "homosexuality is who one truly is" is a conclusively "scientific" fact seems disingenuous to me. One's conception of what our "true nature" is clearly must be embedded within our larger worldview and its associated values, beliefs, and understandings, which need to be explicitly owned and debated on that level.

Sincerely,

Christopher Rosik, Ph.D.
NARTH Member