

# Parents' Disorders Driving Surge in Trans Kids: Psychiatrists

'Transhausen by proxy' describes narcissistic parents who may push transgenderism because they enjoy the attention from having a 'trans kid'

**By Darlene McCormick Sanchez, ET 11/21/23**

"Transhausen by proxy," a term coined for narcissistic parents who push so-called "gender transitioning" on their children, may be playing a role in the sudden rise of transgender children, some experts say.

Celebrities are increasingly in the limelight with announcements about their children who come out as transgender or nonbinary. Nonbinary individuals identify as neither male nor female.

"Transhausen by proxy" isn't an officially recognized psychological condition; it's a play on an official condition known as Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy (MSBP). MSBP is a mental illness that's also sometimes called medical child abuse or factitious disorder imposed on others. It's exhibited mostly by women seeking attention by exaggerating or making up an illness of children or others in their care.

Transhausen by proxy has very real effects on society, experts told The Epoch Times.

They point to headlines such as the one on Pride.com in May, which gushes: "15 Celebs Who Are Out & Proud of Their Trans & Nonbinary Kids." The article praises stars such as Cher, Sade, Jennifer Lopez, and Charlize Theron for supporting their children who reject their biological sex.

Another article by Pink News details how UK television stars Carrie and David Grant claim that three of their four children are transgender or nonbinary.

Ms. Grant is a singer and voice coach. Her husband was part of the '80s band Linx and worked with groups such as the Spice Girls. The couple told the publication that they had discussed alternate gender identities before their children "came out."

They're currently pitching their book, "A Very Modern Family," on the topic of "understanding queer and neurodivergent children."

But celebrities aren't the only ones heralding transgender and nonbinary children.

Parents routinely post on social media cheering their children's transition or advocating for "transgender rights." Some parents have been featured in news articles for fleeing red states that block transgender procedures for children and moving to blue states where "gender-affirming care" is allowed.

The increase in cases of gender dysphoria and families with multiple transgender children have led some medical and mental health professionals to suspect psychological illness, such as narcissistic personality disorder, is involved.

## **A Parent-Fueled Condition?**

Dr. Erica Li is a pediatrician in Spokane, Washington, who considers herself an old-school liberal. She's not necessarily against gender transitioning. Early in her career, she considered becoming a pediatrician specializing in gender dysphoria.

However, she began to question why doctors were advocating for medical procedures to transition children without solid scientific evidence that the procedures came with an overwhelming benefit for their young patients, she told The Epoch Times.

If the cause of gender dysphoria is unknown in a patient and the prognosis of treatment is uncertain, then radical treatment with morbid side effects isn't justified, she said.

Dr. Li believes that contemporary gender medicine is no longer based on reality. Now, she said, it's more about ideology. And the outcomes and long-term side effects of treating gender dysphoria are "murky."

Until recently, gender dysphoria was rare and occurred mainly in young males. Left untreated, the condition often resolves naturally after puberty. In some cases, children struggling with gender dysphoria turned out to be gay, according to studies.

But in recent years, many in favor of "gender-affirming care" argue that medical interventions save lives by reducing suicidal tendencies in youth. They assert that it's a human right for people to be able to identify as the opposite sex and that society must be accepting.

Dr. Li now, in some cases, sees another force at work—parents with personality disorders.

Narcissism, which has similarities to MSBP, may contribute to the proliferation of gender dysphoria claims and shouldn't be ignored, she said.

"The narcissism of some of these mothers has to be exposed," Dr. Li said.

Mothers, in particular, may use the attention from having a transgender child to climb the social hierarchy, she said. She's not the only medical professional to feel this way.

MSBP in parents has been described by insiders working in gender clinics in the United States and abroad, Dr. Li said. The condition is associated with what's known in personality research as the "Dark Triad," she said.

Those exhibiting the Dark Triad express Machiavellianism, which uses deception to win power. They also express underlying psychopathy, such as amoral behavior. And they express narcissism, which is the need for admiration coupled with an absence of empathy for others.

### **'Transhausen by Proxy'**

In February, Jamie Reed, a former case manager at the Washington University Transgender Center at St. Louis Children's Hospital, exposed practices at the clinic and described parents who were adamant about transitioning their children. Her revelations became the catalyst for Missouri lawmakers to draft a law barring hormone therapy for minors.

In a July article appearing in LGBT Courage Coalition, Ms. Reed wrote about how children at the clinic were the victims of "one parent's own psychological needs."

"As horrible as this is to say, I did see parents (primarily moms) who showed signs of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy," she wrote.

Ms. Reed, a lesbian and mother of five, described how the clinic tore families apart when both parents didn't agree to putting their children on hormones. Fathers often attempted to stop the medical transitioning of their children, she wrote, and staff often referred to those fathers as "idiots" or said they had "patriarchal issues."

"Often the dads were fighting for the most reasonable things—more time in therapy, therapy with a provider who would actually explore where his child's desire to escape his or her own body was coming from, time to allow mental health professionals to do proper psychotherapy," Ms. Reed wrote, adding that she no longer trusts "affirming" doctors because they are "blinded by ideology."

Likewise, in the UK, the Tavistock and Portman gender clinics accepted about 30 children under the age of 5 in the twoyear period ending in 2022, according to National Health Service data. About half were younger than 4.

Dr. Az Hakeem, a psychiatrist who worked at the Portman Clinic until 2012, was quoted by The Telegraph and the Daily Mail as saying he was concerned with cases that smacked of "transhausen by proxy."

Dr. Hakeem told the news outlets that he had seen a significant number of grieving parents who had lost a child and eventually had another baby. Some parents wanted to transition the later-born child to the sex of the child who had died.

He described instances in which parents of toddlers came to the clinic wanting a son instead of a daughter, or vice versa. In one example, he said the parents changed the name of their male child and put a wig on his head to shore up their belief that he really was a girl.

The UK gender clinics eventually merged into one. Eventually, the combined clinic was ordered by the UK government to close after a review condemned the use of cross-sex hormones and puberty blockers for patients who transitioned. The review found no solid evidence that the treatments benefited patients.

### **Malignant Narcissism**

Sam Vaknin, who lives in Europe, wrote about narcissistic abuse in his book, “Malignant Self-love: Narcissism Revisited.”

Mr. Vaknin, who has a Ph.D. in physics and certification in psychological counseling, has studied pathological, malignant narcissism since the mid-1990s.

Many parents resist the idea that their child could be transgender. However, some parents enjoy the attention that they receive when their child comes out as transgender, he said. “A trans child renders them special, renders them unique,” Mr. Vaknin said. “It is a badge of distinction.”

That kind of narcissism isn’t the same as MSBP, he said. Parents affected by MSBP seek the attention of medical professionals under the guise of diagnosing puzzling medical conditions. Parents with overt narcissism may see their children as objects to be used to gain attention, he said, or may even see their children as extensions of themselves.

Children of narcissists, he said, learn to modify their behavior to receive approval from their parents. In severe cases, parents may have narcissistic personality disorder, he said. These individuals exhibit grandiosity, a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy, according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

### **All the World’s a Stage**

In June, some pop-culture magazines highlighted a public spat between actress Megan Fox and producer and director Robby Starbuck over a social media comment he made about her three boys dressing like girls.

Mr. Starbuck, once a Republican write-in candidate for the U.S. House from Tennessee’s 5th Congressional District, posted a photo of Ms. Fox with her three long-haired boys on X, formerly Twitter. In the photo, her oldest wore a pink “girls” T-shirt.

“We used to live in the same gated community, and our kids played at the park,” Mr. Starbuck wrote. “I saw 2 of them have a full-on breakdown, saying they were forced by their mom to wear girls’ clothing as their nanny tried to console them.

“It’s pure child abuse. Pray for them.” Ms. Fox shot back in a profanity-laced response, calling Mr. Starbuck a “narcissist” and “clout chaser.”

“Irregardless [sic] of how desperate you may become at any given time to acquire wealth, power, success, or fame—never use children as leverage or social currency,” she posted on X.

“Exploiting my child’s gender identity to gain attention in your political campaign has put you on the wrong side of the universe.” Despite what parents may say about their children’s gender identities, a person can’t switch sexes, Dr. Li and Mr. Vaknin said. Sex is defined by reproductive cells known as gametes, Dr. Li said.

The brain doesn't define sex, as some believe, she said. Scientists haven't found significant differences between the male and female brains, and they haven't linked gender identity to a specific location in the brain. The unclear terminology surrounding transgenderism makes it all the more difficult to discuss and understand, Mr. Vaknin said.

Gender dysphoria should be called "sex dysphoria," because it refers to someone confused about his or her sex, he said. Gender can be seen as a societal role of a man or woman, but sex is biologically determined, Mr. Vaknin said. Sexual appearance and genitalia can be changed, he said, but sex can't.

"Sex cannot be assigned," Mr. Vaknin said. "You're born with it."

### **Exploitation by Medical Professionals**

What may look like parental advocacy from afar may be the work of medical and mental health practitioners who have exploited parents, Oklahoma psychiatrist Lauren Schwartz told *The Epoch Times*.

She lays the blame squarely on professionals who have manipulated parents by telling them, "It's better to have a trans child than a dead child."

That has brought out "behaviors that otherwise you wouldn't expect from parents," Dr. Schwartz said.

She began speaking out about transitioning children when she saw poor outcomes, producing little benefit for patients.

The core claim of those promoting the idea of gender dysphoria is that someone can be born into the wrong body, Dr. Schwartz said. "There's never been anything in medicine, especially not in mental health, where we would start with that," she said.

Affirming the identity of children as something other than their biological sex could be detrimental to them, Dr. Schwartz said. It signals to children that they are somehow wrong about who they are, and it tells them that their confusion or uncertainty isn't normal.

Allowing children to change pronouns can make it difficult for them to reverse course and go back to identifying with their biological sex later when they're no longer confused, she said. The general population may wonder why doctors are going along with gender ideology that flies in the face of science, Dr. Li said. In her view, gender ideology dominates thinking in medical schools, leaving little room for dissent.

Doctors who promote so-called "gender-affirming care" often are praised by their peers as "life-saving heroes," Dr. Li said. Appearing "empathetic and progressive" in this way helps some doctors to climb the social hierarchy in some circles, she said.

But it's a "travesty" when parents or doctors allow children younger than 18 to make life-altering decisions based on sparse research, Mr. Vaknin said. He argues that a more cautious approach would limit the procedures available to patients until at least age 25, when the brain is fully mature.

Adolescents don't have what's known as an "identity core," he said. That means they don't know who they are yet, and they're still changing in response to peers, family, and education.

The part of the brain responsible for executive function is incomplete before age 21, he said. Executive function refers to the higher-level cognitive skills used to control and coordinate other cognitive abilities and behaviors.

"When you're an adolescent, you try everything," Mr. Vaknin said. "And to render one of these experiments permanent is a crime. Anyone collaborating with this is a criminal."

What is striking, Mr. Vaknin said, is the lack of unbiased, high-quality research on transgender procedures and outcomes.

“There isn’t a single study that has followed kids exposed to puberty blockers and then have transitioned,” he said. “Not one.”

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