

Management Techniques for Gender Dysphoria with Particular Reference to Transsexuality.

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Abstract

Existing theories do not adequately explain the conflicts and characteristics of gender dysphoria. Recent research and current concepts are used in a new approach which defines the formation of personality and self identity as a process of linking together individual concepts to form a coherent whole. It is argued in this paper that the source of the conflict arises from the failure to build a coherent sense of self identity and that this manifests itself in gender terms. The rejection of the assigned gender identity drives the dynamics of the conflict, and it is the medium through which the discord is expressed.

The approach presented in this paper puts forward a management strategy which calms the dynamics of the conflict. It does not itself remove the latency but it does enable people to find the correct path. Its aim is to neutralize the scapegoat mechanism by creating an inclusive identity so that considered decisions can be made. This may lead towards gender reassignment or it may not and it is fundamental to its functioning that either result must be treated as being equally correct. It works by enabling people to find a balance between the need to be fully oneself in the life that gender allegiance demands and the loyalty to the commitments and relationships that have been made in the life that has been built. This balance changes with time and attempts to fight the conflict destroy the transcendence required.

A new perspective on compulsive behaviour and the way in which it impacts on gender dysphoria is presented. This explains the extremity of the conflict. It also shows how an understanding of the dynamics can moderate or eliminate the demand. A recommended method of management is given, together with a summary of the newly developed approach. It is shown how these provide strategies which can minimise the disruptions encountered. However success depends greatly on the understanding of others. The importance of achieving this is emphasised in the paper.

This exploration indicates that the same or similar approaches can be applied to other areas of identity formation and personality development. It also demonstrates how the defects of the current approaches have imposed significant trauma, for which transsexuals and others have had to pay a very high price. The results of this examination make it clear that complete support should be given to those who have decided that full gender reassignment including genital surgery is correct. Making the body conform as completely as possible to the gender allegiance which is possessed resolves these conflicts at source

This paper forms part of a study on scientific and theological perspectives on gender and sexual variation. For the latest information, bibliography, summaries and publications by the author see: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm> .

¹ Personal Biography <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SusanBiographyPapers.pdf>

² With some updates to August 2016

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1:0: Preface

This paper forms part of a study on scientific and theological perspectives on gender and sexual variation, including the development of self-identity and personality using a new neurophysiological and psychological approach. For the latest information, bibliography, summaries and publications by the author see: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm>.

The currently accepted theories do not give a satisfactory explanation of the causes and characteristics of gender dysphoria and current theories have been examined. This has led to a newly developed approach which is presented in detail in a companion paper: Gilchrist, S. (2013); "*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*"⁵. This paper may be accessed at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/201P-PersonalityDevelopmentAndLGBTPeople.pdf>. For a bibliography and full references to sources, this paper should be consulted.

Any new or modified hypothesis must also provide ways of testing its validity. One such way is to examine mature experience and use this to test the predictions it makes. The poetry anthology and commentary "*Verses in Search of the Self*" (Gilchrist 2011)⁶ is an account of a personal journey but it also tests the predictions of the hypothesis against the outcomes that are encountered. This current paper on "Management Techniques for Gender Dysphoria with Particular Reference to Transsexuality" (Gilchrist 2013) discusses the management issues involved⁷.

2:0: Identification

This examination does not try to fit the characteristics of gender conflict into existing theories of personality development. Instead it uses the features associated with gender conflict to test and adapt the personality development theories themselves. It uses for its base a theory of mimesis put forward by René Girard (Girard 1965, 1972, 1978, 1987, 1996 etc.) which is based on possessive imitation. The results of this study have much wider implications than those relating to gender dysphoria as they can be used to explore personality development as a whole.

³ Personal Biography <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SusanBiographyPapers.pdf>

⁴ With some updates to August 2016

⁵ Gilchrist, S. (2013): "*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/201P-PersonalityDevelopmentAndLGBTPeople.pdf>

⁶ Gilchrist, S. (2011): "*Verses in Search of the Self: Poems and Commentary*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/301V-VersesSearchOfSelf-PoetryAnthology.pdf> :

Gilchrist, S. (2003): "*Selfhood's Tower*": Poetry Anthology: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/302V-Selfhood'sTower.pdf>

⁷ This paper is available online at: Gilchrist, S. (2013): "*Management Techniques for Gender Dysphoria with Particular Reference to Transsexuality*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/205P-ManagementTechniquesInGenderDysphoria.pdf>

Mimetic theory has used a bubble analogy to argue that the creation of self identity begins through the formation of many small bubbles, each of which represents an individual concept. These bubbles gradually coalesce as they interact to form a coherent whole (Girard 1978). Through this each person develops an individual self awareness and theory of mind. However there are some difficulties with this bubble analogy. In this analysis the individual concepts are not lost in this coalescence but they remain hidden in the matrix underneath. This affects the coherence of selfhood we create.

In this approach the conflict with gender identity is seen as the symptom of the failure to build a coherent sense of self identity rather than the cause. Instead of building a gender identity which is totally male or female, each person creates an identity which a composite of the early concepts that are formed. This can account for the great variety of experience encountered. There will be a different end point for every individual who resolves their conflict with the gender they are assigned to. The need to make sense of this also requires each person to create an exclusive gender allegiance which is either male or female; to which total loyalty is required. The demand for this is reflected in the attitudes of society at large. The complete analysis is given in the paper: Gilchrist, S. (2013); *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*⁸.

Current studies attribute the origins to genetic influences or to the pre-natal effect of hormones on the baby in the womb⁹. Even the old and now discredited social learning theories accepted that the sense of core gender identity has become firmly and unchangeably fixed by the age of three years¹⁰. In the work on conflict resolution carried out by Girard and others the use of the scapegoat mechanism plays a major part.

The scapegoat is usually some expendable person or symbol to which all opponents can transfer the blame. The destruction of the scapegoat resolves the conflict. Its success in this can give the scapegoat large symbolic power. Girard also addresses the underlying and hidden violence with which such conflicts are fought (Girard 1987 etc). The use of the scapegoat mechanism is a method of last resort and in conflicts as deep seated as this it is argued that often no acceptable scapegoat can be found.

3:0: Compulsion

When it is impossible to find an acceptable scapegoat the conflict continues to escalate without limit¹¹. Compulsions then arise from the conflict between the inner concepts of gender identity and the gender allegiance being enforced. Transvestites and transsexuals face the same types of compulsion although the outcomes are different in each case: This is fully dealt with in the poetry commentaries¹², where the contrasting effects of restorative and disruptive compulsions should be noted.

Successful management of the conflict depends on the ability to manage compulsive demands. Parallel dynamics can be seen in addiction, alcoholism, depression, conflicts of sexual orientation and in other areas as well¹³. However the differences are also important. Alcoholism for example

⁸ Gilchrist, S. (2013): *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/201P-PersonalityDevelopmentAndLGBTPeople.pdf>

⁹ See section 8:2 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*

¹⁰ See section 5:7 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*

¹¹ See section 5:4 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*

¹² Gilchrist, S. (2011): *"Verses in Search of the Self: Poems and Commentary"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/301V-VersesSearchOfSelf-PoetryAnthology.pdf> :

Gilchrist, S. (2003): *"Selfhood's Tower"*: Poetry Anthology: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/302V-Selfhood'sTower.pdf>

¹³ See sections 10:5 and 5:6 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*

gives rise to a compulsion of *mortido*, which leads towards oblivion and death, whereas the compulsions associated with gender dysphoria and sexual orientation are those of *libido* which lead towards peace and the fulfilment of life. (Note: *libido* and *mortido* are here defined in the Jungian sense of “Life Force” and “Death Force” rather than by the specific psychosexual definitions that Freud applied)

Compulsions of *libido* are much more difficult to manage for the rewards for continuing to live in the original role must be seen to outweigh those that transition can bring. This creates a much higher demand. The degree of compensation required in the search for hope of fulfilment in the original role is ever increasing and it eventually becomes unsustainable. Collapse usually occurs from the attrition and exhaustion caused by a continual struggle and the failure of the attempts to meet these demands¹⁴.

An initial common history for transsexuals is that of repression of the inner sense of gender identity. This continues until this repression can no longer be sustained. Providing some sort of outlet has the effect of affirming the true gender allegiance, which is opposite to that being enforced. The more strongly and more often this is resisted the stronger it becomes. The dynamics create a runaway drive, where repeated compulsive encounter further increases the demand. Increasingly a scapegoat is sought to which the blame for the conflict can be transferred.

The scapegoat is usually the most obvious symbol of the trauma, and this is normally the genitalia of the birth assigned sex. Gender reassignment surgery becomes an overwhelming demand, and the relief when that is completed is enormous. Removing the symbols of the rejected gender allows transsexuals to move forward in their new role. Most merge invisibly into society in roles appropriate to the gender allegiance possessed¹⁵. The contrast between behaviour and desire implies that gender is the focus but not the drive and reassignment satisfies the objective of allowing people to be themselves.

This contradiction between the extremity of the conflict and the modesty of the demand suggests that the discord caused by gender dysphoria acts only or primarily at the fundamental level. Most transsexuals simply want to change the frame of reference in which they live and in every other way they wish to preserve their present life. Therefore the pressure to turn up as members of the gender allegiance that their drive demands and then seek to continue as though nothing has happened may grow until it becomes impossible to resist. Without preparation the trauma caused to others can be enormous.

This would be seen as a disaster which must be avoided at all costs; so other methods of escape can often be sought. Some transsexuals may increasingly go to locations or engage in activities where they are likely to be discovered: In this way a situation is created where their predicament becomes known and they are enabled to pursue the changes that are required. Usually this happens despite the best intentions; it overcomes all attempts to control it and it is an outcome of the compulsive drive.

4:0: Prognoses

Current psychiatric approaches often require the client to take a “Life test”, during which the person lives full time in the appropriate gender role for at least a year before any irreversible action is taken. Some may also use the early administration of hormones as a diagnostic tool. The trauma caused by the conflict grows stronger with age and “may be” transsexuals are often advised not to marry in

¹⁴ See section 10:6 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); *“Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach”*

¹⁵ See section 12:4 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); *“Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach”*

their original gender role. It is usually considered that the earlier the exploration of gender identity is the better, since further delay only increases the trauma and the problems that are caused.

The progress towards gender reassignment is very good news for some transsexuals since it resolves the conflict at source. For others the situation is more problematic since many will have married, often have young families and have embraced cherished relationships, which depend on maintaining the original gender role. This analysis shows that gender and sexual allegiances can go their separate ways¹⁶. When transsexuals encounter a conflict between gender and sexual allegiances, it is their sexuality that is normally suppressed¹⁷. This suggests that gender allegiance is the more deeply seated of the two drives. The fact that transsexuals are compelled to give up all of these things is a measure of the intensity of the conflict that is faced.

By the time most transsexuals see a psychiatrist they have already made their decision. Many engage in client games of getting support for the urgent demand for gender reassignment and professional validation of their runaway drive. This forces psychiatrists into responses which check this pursuit and employ methods of assessment that validate or modify the truth of their demand. Of course psychiatrists also fulfil their professional activities by helping clients to come to terms with their conditions and by giving them the freedom to follow the correct path.

This may not be the best method for one type of approach is more capable of destroying social relationships than the other. The outcomes may also differ because of the management methods used. None of the current theories have recognized the type of approach described in this commentary and all of them destroy or diminish the possibility of its application. This is because the management and assessment techniques that are adopted move the balance towards reassignment and deny the transcendence that is sought¹⁸. The commitments and relationships which have already been made are challenged by a social transition. They may be destroyed by it and often they cannot be restored. People are driven more strongly towards the thought of pursuing gender reassignment and it removes any balance that might have been kept.

This emphasizes the need for early understanding. Any credible approach must also be practical, theoretically sound and be seen to be capable of delivering results. The method uses transcendence as a management tool to calm the demands. A threshold may be crossed where the conflict may seem to disappear. However there is a limited period during which the ability to use transcendence as a way of distancing the conflict remains valid. For some it will never be possible to gain this viewpoint. Other transsexuals may not see psychiatrists until after that opportunity has passed. The capacity to attain this threshold also changes with time. Nevertheless the use of transcendence as a management tool still remains valid, since methods which calm the conflict's dynamics enable considered decisions to be made. This can eliminate much of the trauma, keeping commitments and relationships alive that would have been harmed by the runaway drive.

Transcendence only allows people to follow the correct path. This may lead towards gender reassignment or it may not. The balance it sets will alter with circumstances and age, and keeping the freedom to change is essential for success. Equally when the decision to seek gender reassignment is made, the possession of transcendence allows the changes required to be pursued in an orderly way.

¹⁶ See sections 1:1 and 12:4 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*

¹⁷ See: Gilchrist, S. (2011a): *"LGB and T People: Labels and Faith"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/002B-LabelsFaithText.pdf>

¹⁸ See section 12 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*

5:0: Vanishing Demands

Some religious groups and others claim that through the salvation which they offer, a cure can be found. The reasons for this belief and the limitations on it are discussed.

This analysis differs from the others by identifying the scapegoat mechanism as a primary driver in creating the compulsive demand. The driving force is seen as the rejection of the originally assigned gender rather than the desire for the new. It also classifies the conflict as one that arises from a lack of coherence of self identity, so that gender dysphoria is the consequence or symptom rather than the cause. Girard has shown that this type of conflict is driven by self reinforcing dynamics where the cause may not seem significant and the awareness of it is often lost (Girard 1996 etc.). It follows that an approach which aims to manage the dynamics of the conflict can have a significant effect. When this approach eliminates the need for the scapegoat mechanism it has been found that the conscious awareness of the conflict may disappear¹⁹. It also maximizes the freedom of choice.

The euphoria of certain types of religious belief can be used to suppress the dynamics of the conflict. This is because the psychology of religion, most notably that of Christianity, deals with the scapegoat mechanism in similar ways. It persuades people who promote this course to believe that they can provide a cure²⁰. However the roots of the conflict still remain and these may erupt at a time of crisis or when the euphoria is lost. The attitudes of such people to transsexuals when this type of euphoria disappears can cause enormous distress.

Another approach which aimed to manage the dynamics of the gender conflict took the author across a threshold where the demands of the conflict disappeared from conscious awareness for nearly fourteen years (Gilchrist 2011). This gave the confidence and freedom to make any permanent relationships that were wished for in the male role without any concern. It was also necessary to distance the conflict by abstaining from any expression: The strategy and its implications are discussed later in the paper. However at the end of this time a crisis was encountered which had nothing to do with the conflict. The failures it brought exposed the feelings that were hidden inside.

In one sense this approach worked almost too well, for it had hidden from conscious awareness the changes in life that had occurred. The experience of the crisis then also showed that this can only succeed for as long as there is a true belief in the hope of fulfilment of life in the original role. Traumas which lead to the exposure of the gender conflict often have nothing to do with the conflict itself²¹. Instead they are usually driven by the failure to bring the extra fulfilment to life that is needed to compensate for the inner demand.

This threshold can only exist if it is honestly believed that the value of life that can be achieved in the birth assigned role truly outweighs what transition can bring. The motivation that is required to succeed is crucially dependent on the ability to have and to rejoice in sufficiently strong relationships and mutual commitments with other people. For some, reaching this threshold may never be possible. It must come rather than be created. The enforcement of it leads to collapse and the ability to achieve or maintain it changes with time. There is therefore a limited window of opportunity during which time the threshold can be reached. When that has passed the conflict must be managed in

¹⁹ See sections 1:5 and 9:1 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*

²⁰ See section 12:10 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*.

Also: Gilchrist, S. (2011b): *"Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

²¹ See section 5:4 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*

other ways. These qualifications do not mean that the threshold should never be sought. It means that the limitations must be known.

An approach which is based on transcendence remains valid even when this threshold cannot be reached. Condemnation by others for any failure to cross or to keep it is the worst possible action that can be taken for that will destroy all control. A management strategy must deal with three things, one is to calm the conflict's dynamics; the second is to create self acceptance and self esteem and the third is to allow for the need for extra fulfilment of life. It must also be clear about the objectives it seeks, the nature of the balance it is required to keep, and the robustness of its approach.

6:0: Management

The key elements in management are acceptance, understanding, inclusion, inversion, transcendence, expression, hope and belief. Having the freedom to change is fundamental to the approach. It aims to create an inclusive identity so that decisions on the future can be appropriately made.

There are six steps; and acceptance that the conflict cannot be fought is an essential first step. The second is the absolute acceptance and the personal recognition of the gender allegiance possessed. The third is to acknowledge that willpower cannot be used to control its demands. The fourth is not to try to impose an outcome for the future, but to live life each day at a time. The fifth is to use inclusion and transcendence to calm the compulsive dynamics and their drives. The sixth requires the belief that it can succeed. It is essential to accept that the aim of this approach is not to deny or prevent change. Instead it aims to make a smooth change possible so that if it is needed it can come at the right time and for the right reasons, in a way that minimizes the trauma it creates.

Understanding how the scapegoat mechanism drives the dynamics of the conflict is a key requirement. Girard shows that the more strongly a battle is fought the more the two sides imitate each other. Removal of the scapegoat is required before the similarities can be seen and that can have an enormous effect (Girard 1996). This explains the vanishing demand but this only removes the conflict from conscious awareness and not the conflict itself. That must also be managed since the underlying disputes are too deep seated to eject.

Inclusion requires the creation of a self identity which encompasses the whole of life. Instead of fighting the battles of gender identity, all of these experiences have to be treasured and the outcomes embraced. When this succeeds it removes a major impediment which prevents the creation of a secure sense of self identity. It also neutralizes the scapegoat mechanism and the conflict's drive.

Inversion asserts the absolute need to accept the truth of this inner identity and to use this as the foundation upon which to build life. The aim is to create a firm base so that the storms of the conflict then strike at the top instead of the base that willpower had tried to command. This changes the nature of the battle but it does not remove the fight. The creation of self confidence and self esteem that come from this give power to handle compulsive demands

Transcendence demands an attitude which seeks to bring the necessary richness to life. There are many things that prevent this, these involve issues such as guilt, anger, fear, rejection and humiliation imposed by others as well as oneself. Transcendence would be impossible if all of these had to be resolved before anything could be achieved. Instead what is most needed is the willingness to follow its path. Willpower or repression cannot be used to enforce control so transcendence must work with a welcoming mind.

Belief that this can succeed is essential for no management process can work without it. Previous approaches did not allow for the principle that calming the conflict's dynamics can also calm the demands.

Success supports an objective outlook. Instead of preoccupation with the surgery of gender reassignment the primary need for transsexuals is one of successfully making the transition so that people can truly be themselves in the gender role their allegiance demands. Removing the need for the scapegoat can allow the focus of the conflict to be rediscovered. The need for surgery still remains an important priority but it can then be seen as correcting an abnormality by tidying up the bits left behind.

Self identity develops all the time and it is formed from every experience in life. Each builds on the other so they may be imagined to create a tower of thoughts and emotions that make identity complete. Crucial to creating a firm base is recognizing that gender allegiance is only part of the selfhood possessed. Part of the management process is one of not becoming embroiled in the conflict, in place of being bound by gender stereotypes one of the aims should be to celebrate the fullness of experience this brings to life. Nevertheless the sense of gender does not disappear. The tower may feel secure but it still has an incorrect base. If the hope of fulfilment in the original role is lost, the base may collapse and the tower will tumble down.

This determines the nature of the balance that is kept. When everything is in equilibrium the balance may be easy to maintain and with the right approach the awareness of the conflict can disappear. However the balance is also unstable for, if anything upsets the equilibrium there is no natural way to return to the position that was obtained. Without other means of control the consequence is a runaway drive.

7:0: Balance

A similarly useful analogy is to imagine that the balance to be kept is like a ball at the top of a hill. If there is any perturbation the ball will roll down either side. When the ball is at the bottom of a valley after any perturbation the ball will roll naturally back into place. The balance of life in the original role must always be worked for. Those who make the transition can relax.

This makes too general an assumption and a more detailed examination is required. For management to succeed it must be able to find a point of balance between the need to be fully oneself in the life that gender allegiance demands and the loyalty to the commitments and relationships that have been made in the life that has been built. However these demands act at different levels of the psyche and a compromise or truce may be a more accurate way of describing any balance that is obtained.

The sense of gender allegiance remains constant and unchanging from the earliest years of life²². However the commitments and relationships do not. Their quality and the ability to be loyal to them depend at least as much on other people as well as oneself. The requirement for change increases with age as the ideals for the future give way to the realities of the past. To calm the dynamics it is essential to truly believe in the balance that is kept and to be prepared to make any change it requires. Attempts to enforce a future direction will destroy this balance. Having the freedom to change is essential for success. This means that the commitment to keep to a particular course must be made each day at a time.

²² See section 5:7 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*

Only certain relationships and commitments have an effect. These are the ones that would be harmed or destroyed by giving in to the compulsive demands. Others which are indifferent to gender have no influence. There are many challenges to be met. Self acceptance is essential for the greater the fear of exposure, guilt, blame, humiliation and the need to hide knowledge of the conflict from others then the less movement there can be. To be able to tell other people on a “Need to know” basis is an important element in calming the conflict’s demands but obtaining the acceptance of others also changes the balance that can be kept. The greater the degree of acceptance and the more others know about the situation then the more the balance moves towards embracing the true gender allegiance. This leads increasingly towards gender reassignment - if that outcome proves to be correct.

This analysis defines the conflict as one between a compulsion to adopt the inner identity and the desire to keep the commitments and relationships that have been made. That is how it is perceived. However the deepest relationships are those which are created by the inner drive. At a more fundamental level the conflict can be seen as arising from the battles that are fought when gender allegiance and sexual allegiance conflict²³. Not everyone will complete the path towards gender reassignment. The objective of this approach is to reach an end point where the best compromise between all of these values is gained.

8:0: Determination

Determination and willpower when properly applied are essential elements of control. The strength of the determination to preserve life in the original role is a strong indication in transsexuals who most need to use transcendence of where the true balance lies. Transcendence is not about being neutral and having the freedom to change does not mean that change blindly has to be followed. A balance must always be sought but it is entirely appropriate to adopt any strategies which minimize its demand. It is also essential to have confidence that this approach can succeed.

Whatever point of balance is maintained it does not moderate deep seated desires. The balance still contains the conflict since the drive to reject is only held in check by the loyalty to the commitments and relationships made. There is also a need to distance the conflict from everyday thought and abstaining from expression is one way of achieving that result. It is important to recognize that abstention must not be a way of repressing the conflict nor can it be an attempt to enforce willpower’s control. It is simply a management tool and all of the other elements, acceptance, understanding, inclusion, inversion, transcendence, and hope and belief, must remain in place. When this was done the threshold described earlier in this paper was crossed. This is the point at which the conflict can disappear from conscious awareness and it leads some people to think that a cure has been found.

Success may last for a long time but success brings its own dangers. It is very easy for transcendence to turn into repression. Abstention also hides this from the conscious mind and when a relapse occurs it may have devastating results. Current theories do not allow for the existence of this threshold. As a consequence there is no existing recovery strategy to use that might help transsexuals who follow this approach to return to abstention. Indeed the reverse happens. Feelings of guilt and blame swamp transsexuals who are expected by others to drop this approach or to use willpower to regain it. With that the hope of any return is destroyed.

The move from abstention to expression need not alter the basic approach for the management techniques involved will still remain valid. The challenges become greater for it is no longer possible to distance the conflict and the demands it imposes must be dealt with on an everyday basis.

²³ See section 9 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); “*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*”

There are often very good reasons for transsexuals to try to continue to live in their birth assigned role but to do so it has to be given values worth seeking since the compulsions that drive towards transition give promises of fulfilment and peace. It is also essential to completely believe in the rightness of the balance that is sought. It may become unsustainable and change may be needed to avoid collapse. Crucially the ability to maintain it also depends on others as well.

A firm base may make it possible to carry on the battle but at what cost? The drive to reject the enforced allegiance can become overpowering. Acts of thinking about gender and the conflict can become an obsession that takes over every moment of life. Suicide rates are high. Guilt about letting other people down can be enormous. The need to maintain transcendence can also lead to the creation of an outward appearance of well being despite the fires that are burning inside. In many cases the permission of others to make the changeover is needed before one can give that permission to oneself.

9:0: Validity

For every person the development of gender identity proceeds in the same way. Transsexuals develop a gender allegiance which is contrary to their biological sex, but this is at least as firmly and accurately held as those for who gender identity and allegiance follow a normal path. Indeed it may be argued that the gender identity and allegiance for transsexuals is even more strongly fixed because it has to be fought for all along the way.

A full explanation is contained in the paper on “*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*”. The analysis principally examines the psychological development of personality and gender allegiance, but it also considers a number of physical parameters which include neuroplasticity, brain mapping and mirror neurons. It is argued that in the sense of first forming a tribal identity the psychological differentiations begin from birth. The dynamics are self reinforcing and once this development starts in a particular direction it becomes difficult to change.

The pre-natal effects are also considered. Genetics may have a predisposing effect through their influence on the endocrine system of the foetus by acting to restrict the release of the appropriate sex hormones or by preventing their action, at the time when these are critical for brain development. However the action of the hormones influences behaviour and feelings rather than gender. Therefore they may be instrumental in setting the initial direction of tribal development. Although the genetic influences are likely to be important they may not be essential for the physical development of gender differentiation in the brain.

In early development psychology and physiology interact through the effects of neuroplasticity. There are many fewer neural pathways in a newborn infant than an adult, and the physical development of the brain depends on the ways in which the pathways and links become connected. It has been shown that neural pathways are stimulated by thinking about things as well as actions, and by observing the actions of others. However neural pathways cannot be mapped to a centre which has never been formed. When gender identity develops in an atypical way it is to this particular sense of gender allegiance that these pathways become linked. Transsexuals do not become consciously aware of the discord until they develop an adequate theory of mind and this occurs around the age of four years²⁴. By this time the gender allegiance is both physically and psychologically fixed.

²⁴ See section 4 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); “*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*”

When transsexuals are asked to explain their quandary a common answer is that of “Being a member of one gender who is trapped inside the body the other”. This is not literally true but the development process creates an identical effect. Forcing transsexuals to embrace a gender allegiance which is in accordance with their biological sex reveals a sense of emptiness inside. Critics of gender reassignment surgery argue that surgical procedures should not be used to resolve a psychological condition²⁵. However when the gender allegiance possessed is an accurate representation of what any born member of that gender would encounter, to make the appearance of the body conform as far as is possible to it must be a valid approach.

Refusal creates an intolerable situation and reassignment has been shown to resolve the conflict with gender allegiance at source. However successfully completing reassignment may bring other problems in its wake. There is a different end point for every individual who resolves their conflict with the gender they are assigned to. Conflict can also arise when gender allegiance and sexual allegiance conflict. Because of this not everyone will complete the path to gender reassignment. It is also why an outreach which calms the conflict’s dynamics is so important, as it enables an end point to be reached where the best compromise between all of these values is gained.

The drive for change increases with age as the ideals for the future give way to the realities of the past. The need for change also increases as commitments decrease. Keeping the freedom to change is essential for success. The greatest transsexual fear of all is that of being trapped in a role one rejects.

10:0: Public Acceptance

There is little public understanding of the condition. Even well meaning opinion can be counterproductive since advice which expects transsexuals to use willpower to control the conflict has the opposite effect and instead reinforces the runaway drive. Some of the worst are religious groups who heap guilt on transsexuals who cannot follow the path they prescribe²⁶.

The ability to manage the gender conflicts depends crucially on the attitudes of others as well as oneself and a correct public awareness of transgender issues is urgently required. The belief that transsexuals are men who just want to be women, and vice versa is prevalent in society at large. By making these thoughts and experiences available it is intended that the awareness they bring will remove the misunderstandings and promote the knowledge that is required.

The demands of the conflict and the dynamics of the scapegoat mechanism can lead transsexuals to be preoccupied with their own concerns. This can lead misinformed people to regard transsexuals who follow the path to gender reassignment as selfish people who abandon their responsibilities to follow their own desires. Nothing could be further from the truth. Transsexuality is not a lifestyle choice and the feelings of guilt and blame that transsexuals heap upon themselves when these are harmed, or from the fear that they might be harmed, can be enormous. The overwhelming strength of the conflict comes through the very desire to preserve all of the love and the commitments and the relationships that have been made. The edicts of others who reinforce the feelings of guilt and blame then compound the situation and with this condemnation in place it is almost certain that all control will be destroyed.

²⁵ See section 5:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); “*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*”

²⁶ See section 12:10 of Gilchrist, S. (2013); “*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*”. Also Gilchrist, S. (2011): “*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

11:0: Conclusion

Identity is about being who one is and everybody, including transsexuals, is capable of leading equally moral lives. The approach described in this paper is about creating the freedom to change and this must never be impeded. For some the change may lead towards gender reassignment and this enables it to take place in a way which maximizes the possibilities and minimizes the trauma involved. For others the knowledge and acceptance that they always have the freedom to change is equally important for, as this analysis argues, it is also the best way of ensuring that change may never be required.

Success in management must be used to anticipate and initiate change at the time when it is needed. However an approach which combines determination with transcendence and an understanding of the dynamics of the conflict is also the best way of creating a situation where the best outcome is reached and minimum changes are required.

12:0: Select Bibliography

For a full bibliography and completer references to sources see :Gilchrist, S. (2013); "*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*"²⁷. This paper may be accessed at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/201P-PersonalityDevelopmentAndLGBTPeople.pdf>.

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