

Reply to Lawrence and Bailey (2008)

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Lawrence and Bailey (2008) were critical of our inclusion of scales that were said to be “unrelated to autogynephilia” in our cluster analysis to classify transsexual participants into two groups. These scales, Attraction to Transgender Fiction and Attraction to Feminine Males, were included because in the taxometric analysis performed by Veale, Lomax, and Clarke (2007) these scales were able to differentiate between latent taxa (two fundamentally distinct categories) greater than the level of $d = 1.25$ recommended by Ruscio, Haslam, and Ruscio (2006) if these taxa do exist. That is, if there do exist two distinct categories of male-to-female transsexuals in this sample, then the Attraction to Transgender Fiction scale would be able to distinguish between these groups at $d = 2.06$ and the Attraction to Feminine Males scale at $d = 1.90$. The corresponding d scores for the Core Autogynephilia and Autogynephilic Interpersonal Fantasy scales were 2.15 and 1.47, respectively, and none of the other sexuality related scales in the Veale, Clarke, and Lomax (2008) study reached the $d = 1.25$ threshold. Although the sample size was smaller than what is recommended for a taxometric analysis, generally a sample size of 169 should be considered sufficient for calculating Cohen’s d scores for the difference between two groups.

Lawrence and Bailey claim that neither the Attraction to Feminine Males nor the Attraction to Transgender Fiction “scale bears any theoretical or intuitive relationship to the

concept of autogynephilia.” Admittedly, the Attraction to Feminine Males scale would not have been our initial choice of a scale to differentiate between transsexual subtypes—this is probably a correlate rather than a core component of autogynephilic sexual attraction—nevertheless, our reasons for including this variable were based on methodological reasons outlined above. On the other hand, we believe that the Attraction to Transgender Fiction scale is measuring a core component of autogynephilic sexual attraction—in its manifestation in erotic narratives. As evidence for this was the notable correlation coefficient between Core Autogynephilia and Attraction to Transgender Fiction of $\rho = .52$ reported in Veale et al. (2008). In the original study, which used a Likert response scale for the Core Autogynephilia scale, this correlation coefficient was $r = .67$ (Veale, 2005).

Lawrence and Bailey also suggest that “this might have been the only way they could create two groups out of what is actually one relatively homogenous, autogynephilic group.” However, as we will describe below, finding a way to create two groups was not the difficulty—a conclusion of whether splitting the sample into two groups is valid or not was more difficult.

Lawrence and Bailey were critical of our labeling the transsexual group that scored lowest on the four variables as “non-autogynephilic.” Indeed, as they point out, this group scored comparably to Blanchard’s (1989) “nonhomosexual” (autogynephilic group) on the Core Autogynephilia scale and, as they don’t point out, this group scored significantly higher than the biological female group on this scale on the ANCOVA in our study, suggesting that they were not actually “non-autogynephilic” at all.

We would like to give an explanation of the history of our use of these labels. The origin of this grouping of transsexuals into “autogynephilic” and “non-autogynephilic” came from the master’s thesis this Journal article originated from (Veale,

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2005). In this thesis, transsexuals were classified in Group 1 if they self-identified that they believed Blanchard's theory applied to them and Group 2 if they did not believe this after being given a brief description of his theory. Using this method, 89 out of 169 transsexuals were classified in Group 2. Working on the assumption that biological females do not experience autogynephilia (cf. Blanchard, 2005), it was decided that the labels "autogynephilic" and "non-autogynephilic" were appropriate because Group 2 did not differ significantly from the biological females on Core Autogynephilia and Autogynephilic Interpersonal Fantasy and Group 1 scored significantly higher on these variables.

After our first submission of Veale et al. (2008) to this Journal, it was correctly pointed out to us by a peer reviewer that "homosexual" transsexuals (as categorized using Blanchard's typology) would also recognize that Blanchard's theory applies to them and might also be classified as autogynephilic on this basis (if Lawrence and Bailey's claim that this sample does not contain many of these persons is true, then this criticism of the original findings would have minimal relevance). Following this comment, we decided to change the way we classified the transsexual groups, and for the second submission of this article we performed a hierarchical cluster analysis using squared Euclidian distance on the Core Autogynephilia scale *only*. This procedure assigned two clusters, and 59 out of 212 transsexuals were classified as non-autogynephilic as they scored lower on the scale. On the ANCOVAs, this subgroup scored significantly lower than biological females on the Core Autogynephilia, Autogynephilic Interpersonal Fantasy, and Attraction to Feminine Males scales and did not differ significantly from biological females on Attraction to Transgender Fiction. The autogynephilic subgroup scored significantly higher than the other two groups on all four of these scales.

It was the advent of the first author learning of the taxometric method and finding that the four scales differentiated these groups sufficiently that led us to alter the cluster analysis to operate using the four scales instead of one for our final submission of this article.

Although we know some participants who completed the questionnaire would fit Blanchard's definition of homosexual (non-autogynephilic), Lawrence and Bailey's claim that the vast majority of participants who completed our questionnaire fit Blanchard's nonhomosexual (autogynephilic) category is entirely plausible based on (1) our own experiences of the demographic background of transsexuals who frequent online social and support groups and (2) the amount that our findings differed from Blanchard's (1989) on the sexual orientation of participants. However, if this is the case, then this raises the interesting question of why about half of these transsexuals scored comparably to the biological female group on the wide range of sexuality-related variables we measured. Three possibilities come to mind here:

1. These participants were consciously or unconsciously distorting their responses to appear more socially desirable (a possibility we discussed in our original article).
2. These participants scored lower on these scales because of lower testosterone levels due to hormones or surgery (although the Core Autogynephilia and Autogynephilic Interpersonal Fantasy scales asked if participants *had ever* had these sexual attractions).
3. These transsexuals genuinely experience a sexuality that is typical of biological females.

Obviously, it is entirely possible that more than one of these is at play here. Further research is clearly required.

We were well aware of the fact that Blanchard never measured the relationship between recalled feminine gender identity and autogynephilia; however, we stand by our expectation to find a relationship between these two variables. The Recalled Gender Identity/Gender Role questionnaire is a valid measure; in our own study, we found adequate internal consistency, and Zucker et al. (2006) provided further reliability and validity data.

We suggest that the observed phenomenon for "non-homosexual" transsexuals to be intensely interested in computers and the internet stems from the ability to socialize anonymously, obtain information, and help with social identity issues early in transition. We have a wide range of acquaintances in the transsexual community in New Zealand who are employed in a wide array of professions—most of these are not prostitutes or in computer-focused professions, as seems to be suggested would be so by Lawrence and Bailey.

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