

## Further Validation of Blanchard’s Typology: A Reply to Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, Mason, and Hwahng (2010)

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Published online: 25 February 2011  
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Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, Mason, and Hwahng (2010), in their response to my Letter to the Editor (Lawrence, 2010a), again attempted to demonstrate that age and White ethnicity were important independent predictors of transvestic fetishism (TF) in male-to-female (MtF) transgender persons. What they actually demonstrated—beyond a penchant for misrepresenting my views—is that they can offer no plausible theoretical basis and little empirical basis for believing that age and White ethnicity are important factors in accounting for TF. I will address the following issues:

1. Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. inaccurately characterized my position concerning the value of distinguishing between different subtypes of nonhomosexual MtF transgender persons.
2. Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. mistakenly concluded that I had declared their multiple regression analysis (in Nuttbrock, Bockting, Mason, et al., 2010) to be invalid. What I actually declared—and still do—was that the results of their multiple regression analysis were ambiguous and uninterpretable without recourse to theory.
3. In my Letter, I predicted that “the change in adjusted  $R^2$  value [if]... ethnicity and age were added to gynephilia as predictors of TF... probably would be small” (Lawrence, 2010a, p. 1014). New data provided by Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. confirmed my prediction, providing further validation of Blanchard’s (1989) typology of MtF transsexualism.

4. Despite my objections, Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. continued to argue that applying the “underlying principles” of Bem’s (2000) exotic-becomes-erotic theory could account for the supposed influence of age and ethnicity on the prevalence of TF. I will attempt to more clearly explain why their argument is fallacious.

In their response, Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. (2010) made the astonishing statement that:

Lawrence, following Blanchard, claimed that a dichotomous measurement of sexual orientation (homosexual vs. nonhomosexual) is a basic divide that fully classifies and sufficiently describes this [MtF transgender] population. This broad dualistic typology necessarily assumes that differences across categories of non-homosexuals (heterosexual, bisexual, and asexual) are not empirically and theoretically significant. (p. 1018)

Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. are writing pure fiction here. Although I do consider the distinction between homosexual and nonhomosexual MtF transgender persons to be fundamental, I have also consistently stated that it is sometimes desirable to further subdivide nonhomosexual MtF transgender persons into heterosexual, bisexual, and analloerotic or asexual subtypes. As Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. should be aware, I demonstrated the descriptive value of this subdivision in my research (e.g., Lawrence, 2005) and affirmed it in a recent review of typologies of gender identity disorder (Lawrence, 2010b). In my Letter (Lawrence, 2010a), I noted that *autogynephilic interpersonal fantasy* (Blanchard, 1989), which Nuttbrock, Bockting, Mason, et al. (2010) neglected to assess, was especially characteristic of the bisexual subtype and that Nuttbrock, Bockting, Mason, et al.’s decision to examine only one manifestation of autogynephilia, TF, was a limitation of their study. Indeed, the willingness of Nuttbrock, Bockting, Mason, et al. to treat TF as an adequate proxy

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for *all* types of autogynephilia reveals that it is they, not I, who appear to believe that differences in erotic preferences among nonhomosexual subtypes need not be taken into consideration.

In my Letter (Lawrence, 2010a), I argued, following Licht (1995), that the bivariate correlations between the predictor variables used by Nuttbrock, Bockting, Mason, et al. (2010) were high enough that the results of their multiple regression analysis could not reasonably be interpreted without recourse to theory. I did not claim that their multiple regression analysis was *invalid*, only that its results were *ambiguous*. Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. (2010) apparently misunderstood my argument and so devoted a multipart table (p. 1018) and 350 words of text to defending the statistical validity of their multiple regression analysis, a point I had never disputed.

Commenting on the importance of a theoretical analysis in interpreting the ambiguous results reported by Nuttbrock, Bockting, Mason, et al. (2010), I wrote:

Gynephilia probably accounts for most of the observed variance in TF, and age and White ethnicity appear in Nuttbrock et al.'s...multiple regression equation as statistically significant predictors primarily because they are correlated with gynephilia. Nuttbrock et al. did not describe the change in adjusted  $R^2$  value that occurred when ethnicity and age were added to gynephilia as predictors of TF, but I would predict that any such change probably would be small. (Lawrence, 2010a, p. 1014)

Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. (2010) confirmed my prediction with the data they provided in their Table 2 (p. 1019). In a model that gave precedence to gynephilia, their data revealed that gynephilia alone accounted for 22% of the variance in TF, whereas age and White ethnicity together added only an additional 8%. Why did age and White ethnicity account for *any* additional variance in TF? Part of the explanation is that their measure of gynephilia was poorly designed: Among other things, it almost certainly underestimated gynephilia in autogynephilic participants who experienced both TF and autogynephilic interpersonal fantasy, some of whom probably reported that their *current* sexual attractions were toward men. Because autogynephilic participants were mostly older and White, age and White ethnicity could sometimes account for their history of TF when Nuttbrock, Bockting, Mason, et al.'s flawed measure of gynephilia could not.

In Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al.'s (2010) alternative model, which gave precedence to age and White ethnicity, these two variables together accounted for 26% of the variance in TF, whereas gynephilia added an additional 4%. The two competing models are essentially equivalent in statistical explanatory value. Consequently, as I observed in my Letter, statistical considerations alone cannot determine which one more plausibly explains variance in TF.

Obviously, I favor the model that gives precedence to gynephilia, because it has strong theoretical and empirical underpinnings. Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. (2010) dismissed

this model as a “highly speculative conceptualization” (p. 1019), but it is derived from Blanchard's (1989) typology of MtF transsexualism, a formulation that has substantial descriptive, predictive, and heuristic value (Lawrence, 2010b). The model is also supported by over 100 years of empirical observation linking erotic cross-dressing to gynephilia, beginning with Hirschfeld (1910/1991). In contrast, the model that Nuttbrock, Bockting, Mason, et al. (2010) favor, which attributes most of the variance in TF to age and White ethnicity, has no theoretical or empirical pedigree whatsoever: It is merely an ad hoc creation by Nuttbrock, Bockting, Mason, et al., based on the particular characteristics of their unusual sample of MtF transgender persons.

In their reply to my Letter, Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. (2010) continued to argue that applying the “underlying principles” (p. 1020) of Bem's (2000) exotic-becomes-erotic theory could provide a satisfactory theoretical explanation of the observed associations between TF and older age and White ethnicity. Specifically, they proposed that:

the more “secretive” nature of transvestic fetishism in the older generation of MTFs and among White MTF[s], suggested in a preliminary study (Hwahng & Nuttbrock, 2007), may lead to greater levels of emotional arousal and ultimately higher levels of transvestic fetishism in these demographic groups. (Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al., 2010, p. 1020)

There is little or no evidence for the premise underlying this explanation; moreover, the explanation itself does not make sense.

It is true that Hwahng and Nuttbrock (2007) described secretive cross-dressing in middle-aged White MtF transgender persons and did not describe such secretive behavior in younger or non-White MtF transgender adults. But erotic cross-dressing typically begins in childhood or early adolescence, not in adulthood (for a review, see Lawrence, 2009). Neither Hwahng and Nuttbrock nor Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. (2010) offered any evidence that childhood cross-dressing is more secretive in persons of White versus non-White ethnicity or in older versus younger age cohorts.

Moreover, although the theoretical mechanism proposed by Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. (2010) could plausibly explain why cross-dressing conducted in secret might be more sexually arousing than cross-dressing conducted openly, it does not explain why either type of cross-dressing should be sexually arousing in the first place. The observation that superimposed emotional or physiological arousal is sometimes associated with greater sexual arousal in response to erotic stimuli (e.g., Wolchik et al., 1980) might account for the intensity or persistence of sexual arousal associated with cross-dressing, but it cannot account for the development or existence of such arousal: Individuals do not, after all, suddenly develop new erotic interests whenever they find themselves in novel, emotionally or physiologically arousing situations.

It is far more plausible to theorize that TF, like other manifestations of autogynephilia:

- is erotic in character not because it is a secretive behavior, but because it is a variant form of a more conventional erotic preference, gynephilia;
- is probably found exclusively or almost exclusively in gynephilic males (Blanchard, 1989);
- is, as an underlying erotic preference, probably about equally prevalent in all ethnic groups and age cohorts;
- is likely to be expressed more openly, and therefore be more available to ascertainment, in gynephilic men in more individualistic ethnic cultures (e.g., White Americans) than in their counterparts in less individualistic ethnic cultures (e.g., non-White Americans), as suggested by Lawrence (2010c);
- is likely to be expressed more openly, and therefore be more available to ascertainment, in older gynephilic men than in their younger counterparts (Docter, 1988).

This explanation is grounded in Blanchard's (1989) typology of MtF transsexualism, which has recognized descriptive, predictive, and heuristic value. The new data reported by Nuttbrock, Bockting, Rosenblum, et al. (2010) further validate this powerful theory. As more such supporting evidence accumulates, opposition to Blanchard's typology is likely to become an historically fading phenomenon.

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