

Veale's (2014) Critique of Blanchard's Typology Was Invalid

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Published online: 6 September 2014
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It has been 25 years since Blanchard (1989) proposed his typology of male-to-female (MtF) transsexualism based on sexual orientation. Blanchard identified two mutually exclusive types of MtF transsexuals: *homosexual* MtF transsexuals, who are sexually attracted exclusively to men (*androphilic*), and *nonhomosexual* MtF transsexuals, who may be sexually attracted to women (*gynephilic*), attracted to women and men (*bisexual*), or not strongly attracted to other persons of either sex (*analloerotic*: from *an*—"without" + *allo*—"other" + *erotic*). Blanchard additionally proposed that transsexualism in nonhomosexual MtF transsexuals develops as an outgrowth of their sexual attraction to the thought or image of themselves as women, a paraphilic interest that he called *autogynephilia*. Blanchard's typology thus theorized that all homosexual MtF transsexuals are nonautogynephilic and that all nonhomosexual MtF transsexuals are autogynephilic: His two MtF transsexual types were exclusively defined by sexual orientation and the presence or absence of autogynephilia.

Although Blanchard's MtF transsexual typology offered significant descriptive, predictive, and heuristic value (Lawrence, 2010), it has been the subject of several critiques and attempted refutations. In the latest of these, Veale (2014) claimed to have demonstrated that the composition (*latent structure*) of a group ($N = 308$) of MtF transsexual informants she studied was *not taxonic* with respect to self-reported autogynephilia and other supposedly related measures: Using these measures, Veale was unable to identify the existence of two distinct groups (*taxa*)

among her informants, which allegedly called Blanchard's typology into question. In this commentary on Veale's article, which incorporates a reanalysis of some of her data, I will argue that her critique of Blanchard's typology was invalid, because:

1. Veale's measures of sexual orientation and autogynephilia were not well constructed, which probably interfered with the accurate identification of participants' sexual orientations and artificially lowered estimates of their autogynephilic arousal.
2. In her taxometric analysis, Veale employed several measures that were unrelated to the defining features of Blanchard's typology. This rendered her analysis invalid as a confirmation or disconfirmation of Blanchard's typology: Whatever typology Veale was examining, it was not Blanchard's typology.
3. Even if Veale had used well-constructed measures of sexual orientation and autogynephilia and had conducted her taxometric analysis utilizing the defining features of Blanchard's typology, the number of genuinely androphilic participants she was able to recruit—probably 18 (5.8 %) at most, and possibly even fewer—was too small to be reliably detectable through taxometric analysis. If the structure of Veale's data appears to be dimensional rather than taxonic, this is because her participants consisted almost exclusively of only one of the two MtF transsexual types: nonhomosexuals (or *nonandrophiles*).

An important limitation of Veale's (2014) analysis—not its most significant shortcoming, but one nevertheless worth noting—derives from its use of poorly constructed measures of sexual orientation and autogynephilia. This is a limitation that Veale (2014) herself acknowledged (p. 1184). All eight of her items measuring sexual orientation (Androphilia and Gynephilia), eight of her nine items measuring Core Autogynephilia, and

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three of her four items measuring Autogynephilic Interpersonal Fantasy asked informants about the *amount of time* during which they had experienced sexual attraction to a particular category of person or sexual arousal to a particular image of themselves (i.e., *never, rarely, occasionally, often, almost all the time, or all the time*), rather than about the *strength or intensity* of that sexual attraction or sexual arousal when they were experiencing it. Even the most intensely androphilic, gynephilic, or autogynephilic persons are unlikely to experience sexual attraction to or sexual arousal by their preferred sexual stimuli “all the time.” Consequently, it is likely that Veale’s measures of sexual orientation and autogynephilia underestimated the intensity of sexual attraction or arousal that at least some of her participants experienced: Some of them probably experienced intense attraction or arousal to their preferred stimuli but did not experience this “all the time” or “almost all the time.”

More significantly, three of the four indicator variables that Veale (2014) used in her taxometric analysis lacked content validity with respect to the fundamental typology that Blanchard (1989) described. Consequently, Veale’s analysis was invalid as an examination of Blanchard’s typology. Two of the four indicator variables that Veale employed, Attraction to Transgender Fiction and Attraction to Feminine Males (called “Attraction to Femininity in Males” in Veale’s abstract), did not measure the defining elements of Blanchard’s MtF transsexual typology: that is, they did not measure either sexual orientation or Core Autogynephilia (the basic, unelaborated type of autogynephilia). Another of Veale’s indicator variables, Autogynephilic Interpersonal Fantasy, did measure a specialized type of autogynephilia, which involved arousal to the fantasy of being admired as a female by another person; but this was a type of autogynephilia that previously had been shown to be characteristic primarily of bisexual MtF transsexuals, not all nonhomosexual MtF transsexuals (Blanchard, 1989). Consequently, Autogynephilic Interpersonal Fantasy would predictably be incapable of distinguishing heterosexual or analloerotic MtF transsexuals from their homosexual MtF counterparts (Blanchard, 1989). Content validity with respect to the defining elements of a proposed typology is a fundamental requirement for the indicator variables used in taxometric analysis (Ruscio, Haslam, & Ruscio, 2006; Widiger, 2001), and three of Veale’s four indicator variables failed this test.

Veale attempted to obfuscate this situation by alleging that the “Attraction to Transgender Fiction and Attraction to Feminine Males scales ... are measuring phenomena closely related to autogynephilia” (p. 1184), but she offered no evidence in support of her contention, and, in fact, no such evidence exists. As Lawrence and Bailey (2009) observed in their critique of a related analysis by Veale, Clarke, and Lomax (2008), there is no basis for “including Attraction to Feminine Males and Attraction to Transgender Fiction in the ... analysis, because neither scale bears any theoretical or intuitive relationship to the concept of autogynephilia” (p. 173). The scales Attraction to Feminine

Males and Attraction to Transgender Fiction are clearly measuring something: I hypothesize that they may be providing an indication of the degree to which nonhomosexual MtF transsexuals are willing to candidly acknowledge some of the less politicized paraphilic features of their sexuality, as opposed to denying these features. But whatever MtF transsexual typology these two variables might define—if any—it is not the typology that Blanchard (1989) proposed.

Moreover, even if Veale’s (2014) taxometric analysis had employed appropriate indicator variables, it is doubtful that it could have confirmed the taxonic latent structure that Blanchard postulated if such a structure did indeed exist, because Veale’s androphilic (nonautogynephilic) taxon was almost certainly too small to be reliably detectable via taxometric analysis. The limited number of informants whom Veale recruited ($N = 308$), combined with an unusually small number of persons in her supposed androphilic taxon ($n = 36$; 12 %) resulted in a data set that was, at best, marginally adequate for reliable taxometric analysis (Meehl, 1995, p. 274; Ruscio et al., 2006, pp. 66–67). It is highly unlikely, however, that there were 36 genuine androphiles among Veale’s informants: As I will demonstrate, it is fairly easy to disqualify at least half of them.

For this demonstration, I rely on data supplied by Veale (personal communication, May 9, 2014) regarding the sexual orientation, Core Autogynephilia, and Autogynephilic Interpersonal Fantasy scores of her 308 MtF transsexual informants. In a few instances, non-integer data values provided by informants and supplied by Veale have been rounded to the nearest integer for ease of presentation. For information on the phrasing and scoring of items in the inventories generating these data, see Veale (2005, pp. 129, 133–135). Veale (2014) collected her data in two waves: initially from 184 original informants and subsequently from 124 additional ones. It is revealing to note that all 36 informants she categorized as androphilic were recruited during the first wave of data collection: The fact that Veale could recruit 124 additional informants from “online forums and mailing lists and New Zealand transgender social and support groups” (Veale, 2014, p. 1178) without enlisting a single informant whom she could classify as androphilic testifies to the rarity of androphilic MtF participants in such forums, lists, and groups. This is consistent with Lawrence and Bailey’s (2009) earlier suggestion that androphilic MtF transsexuals were likely to be uncommon in such settings.

The data presented in Table 1 are from the 36 purportedly androphilic informants that Veale (2014) denoted using the symbol x in the lower right-hand corner of her Fig. 1 (p. 1180). I have reorganized these supposedly androphilic informants into three groups, based on their self-reported gynephilia before age 16 (“degree to which, *until the age of 16*, you felt sexually attracted to females”; Veale, 2005, p. 129) and within each of these groups, based on their self-reported androphilia before age 16 (“degree to which, *until the age of 16*, you felt sexually attracted to males”; Veale, 2005, p. 129). My reasoning

Table 1 Sexual orientation and autogynephilia scores of Veale's nominally androphilic informants

Reference number	Veale's informant number	Gynephilia until age 16	Androphilia until age 16	Androphilia (total)	Gynephilia (total)	Core autogynephilia	Autogynephilic interpersonal fantasy
1	47	5	0	15	8	20	10
2	30	2	0	12	4	9	5
3	104	2	1	13	4	14	9
4	27	2	2	17	5	42	18
5	83	2	2	10	3	5	2
6	84	2	2	15	2	22	11
7	6	2	3	17	2	34	16
8	25	2	3	16	6	18	8
9	71	2	3	15	5	42	17
10	111	2	3	17	2	42	12
11	14	2	4	15	7	12	9
12	119	2	4	19	3	28	14
Means, 1–12				15.1	4.3	24.0	10.9
13	7	1	0	11	2	37	12
14	62	1	0	11	1	18	5
15	60	1	1	12	1	39	15
16	61	1	1	14	4	7	4
17	57	1	2	13	2	0	1
18	98	1	2	9	1	0	0
19	1	1	3	13	5	0	0
20	135	1	3	16	1	10	8
21	151	1	3	14	4	24	9
22	117	1	4	18	2	5	17
23	118	1	5	19	7	0	10
Means, 13–23				13.6	2.7	12.7	7.4
24	33	0	0	10	3	9	3
25	34	0	0	13	2	0	0
26	155	0	2	9	0	0	2
27	43	0	3	10	0	0	0
28	16	0	5	20	0	0	4
29	37	0	5	20	0	5	18
30	38	0	5	18	8	37	13
31	97	0	5	20	0	0	0
32	109	0	5	18	0	0	0
33	121	0	5	20	0	16	11
34	123	0	5	20	0	0	2
35	124	0	5	19	1	7	12
36	127	0	5	20	0	5	17
Means, 24–36				16.7	1.1	6.1	6.3

is that some of Veale's purported androphiles were probably actually pseudo-androphiles or bisexuals—that is, their fundamental sexual attraction was towards females, but at some point they developed a secondary sexual interest in males as a consequence of their autogynephilic sexuality—and that the easiest way to detect these persons would be to look for informants who

reported moderate or greater levels of gynephilia or very low levels of androphilia or both during adolescence.

First, consider the 12 informants with Reference numbers 1–12 in Table 1: All reported sexual attraction to females at least “occasionally” before age 16, even though their total Androphilia scores were high and their total Gynephilia

scores were low. Not surprisingly, however, their mean Core Autogynephilia score—24.0—was also high, compared to a mean of only 19.0 in the 272 informants whom Veale categorized as nonandrophilic. Moreover, the mean Autogynephilic Interpersonal Fantasy score of these 12 informants—10.9—was also high, compared to a mean of only 8.2 in Veale's 272 nominally nonandrophilic informants. Based on their early history of gynephilia and their high mean Core Autogynephilia and Autogynephilic Interpersonal Fantasy scores, I believe there is good reason to conclude that these 12 informants were actually pseudo-androphilic or bisexual, rather than genuinely androphilic as Veale alleged.

Next, consider the six informants with Reference numbers 13–16 and 24–25 in Table 1. Although these informants reported little sexual attraction to females before age 16, they also reported “rarely” or “never” experiencing sexual attraction to males before age 16; this suggests that they developed significant sexual attraction to males rather late in life. The mean total Androphilia score of these six informants—11.8—was also somewhat lower than that of the rest of the nominally androphilic group that reported little gynephilia (Reference numbers 17–23 and 26–36; $n = 18$), with a mean total Androphilia score of 16.4. Again not surprisingly, the mean Core Autogynephilia score of these 6 informants was 18.3, nearly equal to that of the 272 nominally nonandrophilic informants, 19.0, and substantially higher than that of the rest of the nominally androphilic group that reported little gynephilia ($n = 18$), 6.1. However, the mean Autogynephilic Interpersonal Fantasy score of these six informants, 6.5, was similar to that of the rest of the nominally androphilic group that reported little gynephilia ($n = 18$), 6.9. Although the case here is not quite as strong as for the 12 informants who reported significant gynephilia before age 16, I believe that most or all of these 6 informants who rarely or never experienced sexual attraction to males before age 16 were also pseudo-androphilic or bisexual, rather than genuinely androphilic as Veale alleged.

There are also a few other specific supposed androphiles whose androphilia seems questionable. For example, consider the informant with Reference number 30, whose total Gynephilia score of 8 reflected her being aroused by females in her current sexual fantasies “almost all the time,” currently feeling sexually attracted to females “occasionally,” and having been conscious of sexual arousal to females while in physical contact with them “occasionally”: Given her Core Autogynephilia score of 37 and Autogynephilic Interpersonal Fantasy score of 13, one might suspect that she was actually pseudo-androphilic or bisexual. Or consider the informants with Reference numbers 18 and 26, whose total Androphilia scores of 9 both reflected the identical pattern of only “occasional” attraction to males before age 16 and currently, sexual arousal to males in their current sexual fantasies only “sometimes,” and having been conscious of sexual arousal to males while in physical contact with them only “occasionally”: Here one might suspect mild pseudo-androphilic or bisexual

ideation in fundamentally analloerotic individuals. The Core Autogynephilia scores of zero reported by these two informants need not give us pause, because previous research has demonstrated that denial of autogynephilic arousal is not uncommon in genuinely autogynephilic persons. For example, Blanchard, Racansky, and Steiner (1986) observed using penile plethysmography that heterosexual cross-dressing men who denied any history of sexual arousal with cross-dressing often displayed significant physiologic sexual arousal while listening to recorded descriptions of cross-dressing scenarios, in comparison to their response while listening to descriptions of neutral stimuli. More recently, Zucker et al. (2012) reported that almost half of the adolescent boys referred to a gender identity clinic because of transvestic fetishism denied any sexual arousal associated with cross-dressing on every item of a 10-item assessment scale, even though this was precisely the problem for which they were clinically referred.

Although Veale's (2014) attempted refutation of Blanchard's typology was invalid—a consequence of her poorly constructed sexuality measures, inappropriately chosen indicator variables, and inability to recruit an adequate number of genuinely androphilic informants—it is not clear that *any* approach that relied primarily on self-report measures would fare much better. Denial of autogynephilic sexual arousal by demonstrably autogynephilic persons has been repeatedly documented (see Lawrence, 2013, pp. 11–13), as have reports of newly arising but dubious androphilic attraction among formerly gynephilic MtF transsexuals (e.g., Lawrence, 2005, p. 153). These phenomena would seem to pose insurmountable difficulties for the accurate assessment of sexual orientation and autogynephilic arousal in MtF transsexuals by means of self-report measures. Validation or invalidation of Blanchard's typology may require the development of simple and reliable objective methods for the assessment of sexual orientation and autogynephilic arousal in MtF transsexuals.

Meanwhile, we should at least be grateful to Veale (2014) for collecting data that can assist future investigators in deciding where to look if they hope to recruit MtF transsexual populations that are diverse with respect to sexual orientation. Soliciting participants exclusively from “online forums and mailing lists and . . . transgender social and support groups” will not guarantee this diversity: Veale recruited 124 consecutive informants from these sources without enlisting a single individual whom she considered to be androphilic. Investigators who want to identify MtF transsexual populations containing significant numbers of genuine androphiles must cast their nets more widely.

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