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The measurement of homonegative reactions with physiological and subjective reports

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RE: 3rd Annual Symposium on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Issues

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TOTAL P.02

The measurement of homonegative reactions with physiological and subjective reports.

Karen Wilson, Sandra Neumann, B.A., Lou Ann Wieand, PhD., Eden Opsahl, M.A.

Humboldt State University, Department of Psychology

Shields and Harriman (1984) conducted a study to measure the physiological responses of males. These males had previously scored either high or low on a homonegative continuum. The relationship between levels of homonegativity and physiological responses typical of a phobic reaction was examined. It was found that high homonegative males were more likely to exhibit a defensive response (DR) to male-male sexually explicit slides while low homonegative males did not produce the DR. The DR is evoked through fear-provoking stimuli, whereas an orienting response (OR) occurs in response to novel stimuli.

The current paper will examine physiological measures of homonegativity in conjunction with subjective measures of homonegativity. Physiological and subjective measures will be taken from a random sample of both male and female students from a small West Coast university. Heart rate, skin conductance activity and vasomotor activity will be used to measure the DR versus OR to video stimuli. Each subject will be exposed to short video segments depicting sexually explicit and non-sexual material between couples of varying sexual orientations. The video segments will be counterbalanced across conditions.

Subjective responses will be measured by the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men scale (ATLG; Herek, 1988) and the Sexual Opinion Survey (SOS; Fisher, White, Byrne & Kelley, 1988). Data will be collected from all participants on both physiological and subjective measures.

It is expected that overall heterosexual males will be more likely to exhibit the DR to male-male sexual activity than females. In addition, heterosexual males will be more likely to exhibit the DR to male-male sexual activity.

Approximate length: 15 minute presentation
Visual aids needed: overhead projector