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Heterosexual Aversion in Homosexual Males
A Second Experiment

By KURT FREUND, RON LANGEVIN and YAROSLAW ZAJAC

A substantial part of Freud's (1925, orig. 1905; 1926, orig. 1922) theorizing on the causes of male homosexuality* was the assumption of a fear of the female genitals, and according to Radó (1969) "fear of the genitals of the opposite sex is the *basic* dynamic of the individual who wants a sexual relationship with a member of the same sex". Radó's stress on the phobic component in the causation of male homosexuality is shared by many theorists and practising clinicians.

The outcome of an earlier experiment (Freund *et al.*, 1973) did not support this theory. Androphilic† males who had been pre-aroused by pictures of male nudes did *not* respond with greater penile detumescence when presented with pictures of female nudes than when sexually neutral pictures were shown. However, there was significantly greater penile detumescence when pictures of skin diseases were exposed. Heterosexual controls, pre-aroused by female nudes and then shown male nudes, the same sexually neutral pictures and the same pictures of skin afflictions, responded analogously. The subjects also rated the impact of the pictures on a four-point scale of disgust. The homosexual subjects rated the skin affliction slides significantly more disgusting than all the other pictures, but there was no significant difference between their ratings of female nudes and of sexually neutral slides. The heterosexual subjects, on the other hand, rated the skin affliction pictures as significantly more disgusting than the male nudes, which in turn received a nificantly higher rating than the sexually n al slides.

Homosexuality is the sustained erotic preference for same-sexed persons, when there is a free choice as to sex and other attributes of a partner which may determine erotic attractiveness.

† Erotic preference for physically mature males.

Although homosexual males did not respond to female nudes aversively, on a verbal level or in terms of penile detumescence, the possibility had not been ruled out that they would respond aversively when confronted with the fully exposed vulva. This was the reason for replicating the above-described experiment in a modified version, namely exposing parts of the bodies of physically mature females, in particular the vulva, to androphilic males who had been pre-aroused by presentation of male nudes' pictures.

In the earlier study two kinds of sexually neutral slides had been used, landscapes and linear drawings. The latter had been responded to with greater detumescence than the landscapes, although this difference was not significant. In an attempt to make the present experiment as sensitive as possible, the line drawings were omitted. The pictures of skin diseases were also omitted in the present experiment, because it was felt that such a clearly aversive stimulus might somewhat obscure the aversive quality of less potent stimuli.

The main experiment is described in Part Two of the present report. The purpose of Part One is to show that both androphilic and heterosexual males respond with penile tumescence to isolated parts of the body of their preferred sex.

PART ONE

Method

Subjects

An androphilic group, composed of 28 subjects, was recruited through a homophile club in Toronto. The mean age was 24·9 years, range: 18–47 years. The heterosexual group was composed of 48 subjects, two thirds of them recruited through a notice placed on a

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University bulletin board, one third through a local employment agency. The mean age was 29·1 years, range: 19–54 years. Five additional subjects from both the androphilic and the heterosexual group were not included because their total response output did not reach criterion level (mean response: 650 ml.). All subjects were paid volunteers.

Procedure

The subjects were shown slides of various isolated parts of the physically mature body of their preferred sex, namely face, chest, pubic region and legs, in front view, and the rear end. Landscapes were used as sexually neutral stimuli. Each stimulus category was represented by 9 slides. In other respects, the procedure was similar to that in an earlier study (Freund *et al.*, 1973).

Results

In comparing penile volume responses to the various stimulus categories, z-scores were derived from all the responses of each subject separately. Analysis of variance and the Newman-Keuls test were employed.

There were significant differences in responses to the various stimulus categories for heterosexual, as well as for homosexual, subjects ($F = 107{\cdot}732$, d.f. $= 5$; 2,438; $P < {\cdot}001$, and $F = 27{\cdot}541$, d.f. $= 5$; 1,474, $P < {\cdot}001$, respectively). For both groups the responses to the sexually neutral slides were significantly smaller than those to anything else. For the heterosexual group, the responses to the female pubic region were significantly larger than those to anything else; the responses to breasts and rear end were not significantly different from each other, but responses to the breasts were significantly larger than responses to the legs, whereas the responses to the rear end were not larger than the responses to the legs. For the homosexual subjects the responses to the male pubic region were significantly larger than those to everything else; there was no significant difference between responses to face, chest and rear end; the responses to the legs were significantly smaller than those to the face and rear end but did not differ significantly from those to the chest. In summary, the results indicate that isolated parts of the body of the preferred sex do elicit differential erotic responses.

PART TWO

Method

Subjects

Twenty androphilic males (mean age: 26·9; range: 20–48 years; mean educational level reached: at least 12 grades completed but no college), recruited through a homophile club in Toronto, served as paid volunteers. Three additional subjects had to be excluded because they were not prearoused to criterion level (see below).

Procedure

The subjects were pre-aroused to 2 ml. penis volume increase with slides of male nudes, and at this point were shown either a landscape or a slide of the face, the breasts or the fully exposed vulva of a seated, physically mature female. After four trial runs this procedure was repeated 7 times for each of the four categories of stimuli, using a different picture each time. Penis volume was recorded at start of exposition of each slide (R_0) and at the end, 20 seconds later (R_1). Each slide was rated after R_1 on a four-point scale of disgust (not at all disgusted, mildly disgusted, quite disgusted, very disgusted). Details of the procedure are identical with those reported in the 1973 study.

Results

There were no significant differences between the various categories of potentially aversive pictures, in penis volume, at start of presentation (for R_0, $F < 1{\cdot}0$). Multivariate and univariate analyses of variance and the Newman-Keuls test (Winer, 1962) were used for comparing the effect of the various categories of potentially aversive slides on penile volume changes and on verbal ratings. The volume changes (R_1–R_0) were evaluated in terms of z-scores derived from all the responses of each subject separately. There was a significant effect of slides in the multivariate analysis (approx. $F = 59{\cdot}821$, d.f. $= 6$; 1,118, $P < {\cdot}001$). The effect was produced by the verbal ratings (univariate

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$F = 124 \cdot 063$, d.f. = 3; 537, $P < \cdot 001$). On the four-point scale of disgust, the vulva (2·45) was rated significantly more disgusting than the breasts (1·76), which in turn were rated significantly more disgusting than the face (1·21) or the sexually neutral pictures (1·09). The difference for penile volume changes (R_1–R_0) to the various stimuli was not significant ($F = 2 \cdot 18$, d.f. = 3; 537, $P > \cdot 05$). The correlation* between penile volume changes and verbal ratings of disgust was significant, $r = -\cdot 1388$, $P < \cdot 001$). However, this correlation only explains 2 per cent of the regression variance. Thus penile volume changes and disgust ratings were virtually unrelated.

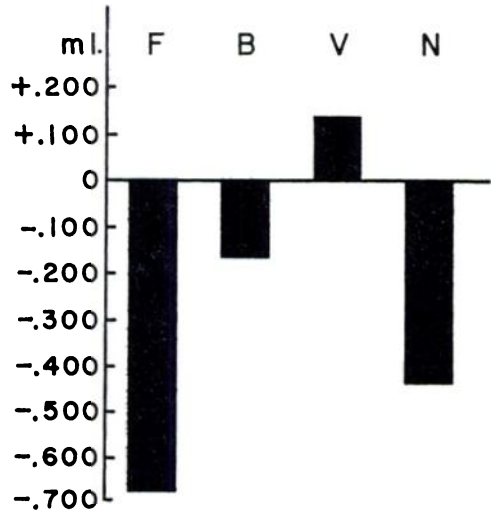


FIG.—Detumescence responses of sexually prearoused males, to stimulus slides.
Key: ml— millilitres; F—the face; B—the breasts; V—the vulva; N—landscapes.

DISCUSSION

The phobic theory of homosexuality only makes sense if homosexual males show an aversion to females and heterosexual males do not show an aversion to males. Penile responses in the present and earlier studies do not support the phobic theory. Neither homosexual nor heterosexual males showed significant penile detumescence to the non-preferred sex. Verbal ratings indicated the homosexual males were not disgusted by the sight of full figures of female nudes, but were disgusted by the fully exposed vulva. This latter result seems to support the phobic theory, but the heterosexual subjects finding even full figures of male nudes disgusting, argues against the theory.

In the earlier study there was concordance between verbal reports and penile responses to pictures of skin diseases. The verbally expressed disgust to pictures of the vulva was not accompanied by corresponding penile detumescence, and there was a similar but less pronounced discrepancy between verbal and penile responses to pictures of the breasts. The present result and that of the 1973 study suggest that for androphilic males generally the female body does not appear to be a phobic stimulus.

* The correlation was derived from the variance-variance matrix of the within-subject error term in the multivariate analysis of variance.

SUMMARY

Part One of the study showed that homosexual and heterosexual males respond with penile tumescence to pictures of isolated parts of the body of their preferred sex. In Part Two, homosexual males who had been pre-aroused by pictures of male nudes did not respond to pictures of the vulva, the face or the breasts of the mature female with penile volume changes different from those in response to sexually neutral slides. However, in terms of ratings on a four-point scale for disgust, the vulva was rated significantly more disgusting than the breasts, which in turn were rated significantly more disgusting than the face and the sexually neutral pictures.

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Kurt Freund, M.D., D.Sc., *Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto, and Head, Section of Social Pathology,*
Ron Langevin, Ph.D., *Research Psychologist,*
Yaroslaw Zajac, B.A., *Research Assistant,*
Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, 250 College Street, Toronto, M5T 1R8, Canada

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