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MEASURING OF HOMOPHOBIA: FROM TRADITIONAL TO MODERN INSTRUMENTS FOR MEASURING PREJUDICES TOWARD GAY PEOPLE

Abstract: Due to increasing demands for equal civil rights, followed by the positive public attitudes toward sexual minorities in the past decades, this paper tracks changes in instruments measuring and explaining attitudes toward gay people while examining their value predispositions. The overview of several traditional and modern homophobia scales give a general insight in various predictive variables explaining why, and to what extent people hold certain attitudes towards homosexuality in view of their acceptance.

Key words: Homophobia, attitudes, homosexuality, gay people, acceptance.

Introduction

The term "homophobia" has been coined by George Weinberg (1973) to define the rejection and contempt that people mainly heterosexual feel about people with homosexual orientation. Homophobia involves a prejudice and an attitude of discrimination towards a person based on their sexual identity (Rodríguez-Castro, Lameiras-Fernández, Carrera-Fernández and Vallejo Medina, 2013) and can range from mild feelings of discomfort to strong feelings of fear and hatred toward homosexual persons (Herek, 1984a, Weinberg, 1973). It can be said that there are two types of homophobic attitudes: 1) explicit and hostile, such as verbal, physical or psychological aggression toward

homosexual persons; and 2) latent or subtle, such as cultural or medical discourses about the pathological nature of homosexuality or the incapacitation of homosexual couples for adoption, among other issues that restrict living and homosexual expression (Rodriguez-Castro, et al. 2013). In the other case, those who hold such views, as well as those who represent misogyny, racism or anti-Semitism, they both consider that their attitudes and views should be tolerated (Prnjat, 2012).

Theorists have argued that prejudice against lesbians and gay people, has typically been described in terms of an individual "phobia" and that a social perspective is often absent (Hall, 1997). Thus, personal discomfort regarding homosexuality is described as the need to avoid contact with gays and lesbians because of a feeling of discomfort about being in the presence of these people and / or the belief that men and women Homosexuals are sick and perverted (Raja and Stokes, 1998).

Blumenfeld (1992) suggests that homophobia is generally manifested in three levels: 1) personal, which has to do with the beliefs or prejudices of an individual about gays and lesbians; 2) interpersonal, which occurs when individuals act on their prejudices (discrimination); and 3) institutional referring to the practices and policies of governmental organizations that exclude homosexual people.

Measuring of homophobia

The increasing tolerance and social acceptance of this minority group, as well as studies dedicated to attitudes towards homosexuality in reception processes have achieved in the past decades significant relevance in the area of social sciences (Herek, 2006, 2007; Kelley, 2001; Raja & Stokes, 1998; Soto-Sanfiel, Ibiti and Palencia, 2014).

The growing visibility of persons with homosexual orientation may lead people to think that rejection and discrimination due to sexual orientation is no longer a problem. However, as affirmed by Gato et al., (2012) "If a homosexually oriented identity is eventually considered to be a possible and healthy orientation, on the other hand, there is still persistent prejudice, misinformation and discriminatory behaviour

directed towards gay people with different outcomes and consequences” (p. 11).

The complexity of the subject lies in the fact that the evolution of prejudices toward gay men and lesbians had almost the same theoretical background as those studies of racism and sexism (Bierly, 1985; Ficarrotto, 1990; Henly & Pincus, 1978).

The racism (Pereira, Monteiro & Camino, 2009), and sexism (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995; Castillo, Betancor et al., 2003; Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Morrison & Franklin, 2009; Morrison & Parriag, 1999; Rowe, 1990), were widely studied and elaborated as separate concepts.

In contrast, as it will be presented later, Morrison and Morrison (2002) combined both, modern racism and sexism, as inspiring models with the principal aim to introduce a new concept of modern homonegativity.

On the other hand, attitudes toward gay people had been usually associated with sexual conservatism (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; Smith, 1971) and religious fundamentalism (Agnew, Thompson, Smith, Gramzow, & Currey, 1993; Fornstein, 1988; West, 1977).

In addition, the reduced and stereotypical representation of gays and lesbians in television was also extensively investigated (Fejes & Petrich, 1993; Streimater, 2009). Usually very negative representation and clichés were ranging from ugly and aggressive, to dangerous and insane (Collins, 2007).

The first development of instruments to measure anti-homosexual prejudice intended principally to verify its homophobic and sexist nature (Allport, 1954; Herek, 1986; Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; Kite & Deaux, 1986; Riddle, 1973). On the other hand, as occurred with other groups that were objects of discrimination, prejudice against lesbians and gay men also became more dissimulated.

As a result, new measuring approaches and evaluation instruments were designed (Morrison, Kenny & Harrington, 2005; Morrison & Morrison, 2002; Park, 2001; Raja & Stokes, 1998; Zivanovic et al., 2014).

Consequently, there are currently various types of instruments measuring negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Instruments evaluating degrees of homophobia thus range from the most traditional to the most modern ones, depending mostly on theoretical approaches and backgrounds of the researchers.

Traditional measurements are mostly characterized by avoidance of intimacy with the members of other groups, and perception that other groups are a threat. On the other hand, as Gato et al., (2011) enhance, modern measurement is mainly based on beliefs such as: a) “Gay people demand unnecessary social changes, b) prejudice and discrimination are phenomenon of the past, (c) lesbians and gay men put too much emphasis on their sexuality and in doing so, they become responsible for their own marginalization” (p.12).

Traditional measurements of homophobia

With regard to traditional measurements, one of the earliest modern instruments defining and measuring specific components of homophobia was the scale developed by Dorothy Riddle (1973). The Riddle scale of homophobia is a very simple eight-item scale where each item is interrelated with a set of attributes and beliefs; respondents are assigned a position on the scale based on the attributes they exhibit and beliefs they hold.

The Riddle scale of homophobia is commonly divided into two four-item sub-scales, the homophobic levels of attitude (first four items) and the positive levels of attitude (last four items).

Table 1. *The Riddle homophobia scale 1*

ITEMS - Homophobic Levels of Attitudes

1. *REPULSION*: Same-gender sexuality is seen as a “crime against nature.” Lesbians and gay men are sick, crazy, immoral, sinful, wicked, etc. Anything is justified to change them: imprisonment, hospitalization, aversion therapy, electroshock, etc.
 2. *PITY*: Heterosexual chauvinism. Heterosexuality is seen as preferable.
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Any possibility of “becoming straight” should be reinforced, and those who seem to be “born that way” should be pitied.

3. *TOLERANCE*: Same-gender sexuality is considered just a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most people “grow out of.” Thus, lesbians and gay men are less mature than heterosexuals and should be treated with the protectiveness and indulgence one uses with a child. Lesbians and gay men should not be given positions of authority because they are still working through their adolescent behavior.

4. *ACCEPTANCE*: Still implies that there is something to accept. It is characterized by such statements as “You’re not a lesbian to me, you’re a person!”, “What you do in bed is your own business,” or “That’s fine with me as long as you don’t flaunt it!”

Source: Dorothy Riddle (1973)

Table 2. *The Riddle homophobia scale 2.*

ITEMS - Positive Levels of Attitudes

1. *SUPPORT*: The basic civil liberties position. People at this level may be uncomfortable themselves, but they are aware that homophobia is wrong and they work to safeguard the rights of lesbians and gay men.

2. *ADMIRATION*: Acknowledge that being lesbian or gay in our society takes strength. People at this level are willing to truly examine their homophobic attitudes, values, and behaviors.

3. *APPRECIATION*: Value the diversity of individuals and see lesbians and gay men as a valid part of that diversity. People at this level are willing to combat homophobia in themselves and others.

4. *NURTURANCE*: Assume that lesbians and gay men are indispensable in our society. People at this level view lesbians and gay men with genuine affection and delight and are willing to be allies and advocates.

Source: Dorothy Riddle (1973)

Subsequently, Hudson and Ricketts (1980) created a new scale defining it as *Index of Homophobia (IHP)* that consisted of 25 items and

primarily was focused on measurement of respondents' fear and discomfort with homosexuality.

Following the tendency imposed by chronologically earlier scales to measure, both explicit and subtle homophobias, Herek (1988), developed *The Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG)* Scale as a concise instrument for measurement of heterosexuals' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Herek's scale consisted of twenty diverse statements, 10 of them were with reference to gay men (ATG subscale) and the other 10 referred to lesbians (ATL subscale), to which respondents specified their degree of agreement or disagreement to given statements.

Table 3. *Herek's scale of The Attitudes Toward Lesbians (ATLG)*

ITEMS

1. Lesbians just can't fit into our society.
 2. A woman's homosexuality should not be a cause for job discrimination in any situation. (Reverse-scored)
 3. Female homosexuality is bad for society because it breaks down the natural divisions between the sexes.*
 4. State laws against private sexual behavior between consenting adult women should be abolished. (Reverse-scored)
 5. Female homosexuality is a sin.
 6. The growing number of lesbians indicates a decline in American morals.
 7. Female homosexuality in itself is no problem unless society makes it a problem. (Reverses cored)
 8. Female homosexuality is a threat to many of our basic social institutions.
 9. Female homosexuality is an inferior form of sexuality.
 10. Lesbians are sick.
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Source: Herek (1988), Revised Long Versions (ATLG-R)

Table 4. *Attitude Toward Gay Man subscale (ATG)*

ITEMS

11. Male homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples. (Reverse-scored)
12. I think male homosexuals are disgusting.
13. Male homosexuals should not be allowed to teach school.
14. Male homosexuality is a perversion.
15. Male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in men. (Reverse-scored)
16. If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything he can to overcome them.
17. I would not be too upset if I learned that my son were a homosexual. (Reverse-scored)
18. Sex between two men is just plain wrong.
19. The idea of male homosexual marriages seems ridiculous to me.
20. Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be condemned.

Source: Herek (1988), Revised Long Versions (ATLG-R)

Furthermore, in 1991 Paulhus and Reid (1991) introduced a more extensive scale that consisted of 40 items. This scale was named *The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR)* and tended to measure "self-deception enhancement," described as deformation that the respondent applies to feel better about himself, as well as "impression management" viewed as the tendency to present oneself in a positive way to others.

Modern measurements of homophobia

Using traditional experiences Raja and Stokes (1998) created a scale capacitated to evaluate attitudes toward lesbians and gay men independently, as well as to cover the individual and institutional mechanisms of homophobia. Based upon the previous scales measuring homophobia, Raja and Stokes (1998) expected that homophobia

measured by their Modern Homophobia Scale (MHS) would be consistent with other homophobia scales and also with attitudes articulated toward lesbians.

In summary, Modern Homophobia Scale (Raja & Stokes, 1998) explores three subtle dimensions referring to both gay men and lesbians:

1) *Personal Discomfort* which is defined as the need to avoid personal contact with gays and lesbians, because of a feeling of discomfort when gays and lesbians are present and, the belief that gays and lesbians are sick and are in a certain way perverted.

2) *Deviation and/or Changeability* are related to the belief that gays and lesbians can change their sexual orientation when they want, or if they want.

3) *Institutional homophobia* is the third dimension referring to the organized or systematic practice of excluding gay people and lesbians from governmental, entrepreneurial, religious or professional institutions. Institutional homophobia does not measure the acts of discrimination itself, but the degree to which people believe that institutional policies and practices should be freed of deviations related to socially unacceptable sexual orientation.

The Modern Homophobia Scale also consists of two subscales: 1) subscale of attitudes toward gays (MHS-G) with a total of 22 items, and 2) subscale attitudes toward lesbians (MHS-L) with a total of 24 items.

Each subscale measures the abovementioned three factors (personal discomfort personnel, deviation and institutional homophobia) corresponding with measures of homophobic attitudes toward gays and lesbians to a personal level (the first two factors) and institutional level (the third factor). Responses are evaluated with a Likert response format from 1 (strongly agree) to type 5 (strongly disagree). Higher scores are interpreted as more positive attitudes toward homosexuality.

Table 5. *Items of Modern Homophobia Scale-L*

ITEMS

1. Employers should provide health care benefits to the partners of their lesbian employees.
 2. Teachers should try to reduce their student's prejudice toward lesbians.
 3. Lesbians who adopt children do not need to be monitored more closely than heterosexual parents.
 4. Lesbians should be allowed to be leaders in religious organizations.
 - (R)
 5. Lesbians are as capable as heterosexuals of forming long-term romantic relationships.
 6. School curricula should include positive discussion of lesbian topics.
 7. Marriages between two lesbians should be legal.
 8. Lesbians should not be allowed to join the military. (R)
 9. I would not vote for a political candidate who was openly lesbian. (R)
 10. Lesbians are incapable of being good parents. (R)
 11. I am tired of hearing about lesbians' problems. (R)
 12. I wouldn't mind going to a party that included lesbians.
 13. I wouldn't mind working with a lesbian.
 14. I am comfortable with the thought of two women being romantically involved.
 15. It's all rights with me if I see two women holding hands.
 16. If my best female friend was dating a woman, it would not upset me.
 17. Films that approve of female homosexuality bother me. (R)
 18. I welcome new friends who are lesbian.
 19. I don't mind companies using openly lesbian celebrities to advertise their products.
 20. I would be sure to invite the same-sex partner of my lesbian friend to my party.
 21. I don't think it would negatively affect our relationship if I learned that one of my close relatives was a lesbian.
 22. Physicians and psychologists should strive to find a cure for female homosexuality. (R)
 23. Lesbians should undergo therapy to change their sexual orientation.
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(R)

24. Female homosexuality is a psychological disease. (R)

Source: Raja and Stokes (1998). Note: (R) Indicates that item is reverse scored.

Table 6. Items of MHS-G

ITEMS

1. I wouldn't mind going to a party that included gay men.
 2. I would not mind working with a gay man.
 3. I welcome new friends who are gay.
 4. I would be sure to invite the same-sex partner of my gay male friend to my party.
 5. I won't associate with a gay man for fear of catching AIDS. (R)
 6. I don't think it would negatively affect our relationship if I learned that one of my close relatives was gay.
 7. I am comfortable with the thought of two men being romantically involved.
 8. I would remove my child from class if I found out the teacher was gay. (R)
 9. It's all right with me if I see two men holding hands
 10. Male homosexuality is a psychological disease. (R)
 11. Physicians and psychologists should strive to find a cure for male homosexuality. (R)
 12. Gay men should undergo therapy to change their sexual orientation. (R)
 13. Gay men could be heterosexual if they really wanted to be. (R)
 14. I don't mind companies using openly gay male celebrities to advertise their products.
 15. I would not vote for a political candidate who was openly gay. (R)
 16. Hospitals shouldn't hire gay male doctors. (R)
 17. Gay men shouldn't be allowed to join the military. (R)
 18. Films that approve of male homosexuality bother me. (R)
 19. Gay men should not be allowed to be leaders in religious
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organizations. (R)

20. Marriages between two gay men should be legal.

21. I am tired of hearing about gay men's problems. (R)

22. Gay men want too many rights. (R)

Source: Raja and Stokes (1998). Note. (R) Indicates that item is reverse scored.

Developing the Modern Homophobia Scale, Raja and Stokes (1998) anticipated that “men would have more homophobic scores than women, and that men and women would be more homophobic toward gay people of their own sex than toward the opposite sex” (p. 117). Argument proposed by Raja and Stokes (1998) justifying the idea to measure attitudes toward homosexual men and attitudes toward lesbians separately was the fact that some researchers (Smith, 1971; Kurdek, 1988) had earlier detected a correlation between the sex of the respondent and the target (lesbians vs. gay men) of prejudicial attitudes.

Another reason justifying the importance of measuring separately discriminatory attitudes towards lesbian and gay people is the fact, as several posterior studies suggested, men evaluated less negatively lesbians than gay men (Morrison & Morrison, 2011), because men attach a high value to erotic female homosexuality, and specifically by observing or imagining sexual activities between two women. What's more, Kite (1985) suggests that men are commonly more homophobic than women, even though heterosexuals are generally likely to be more homophobic toward gay people of their own sex.

Furthermore, Raja and Stokes (1998), inspired in earlier findings of Herek (1988), predicted that respondents who had gay or lesbian friends or acquaintances would report less homophobia than those who were not familiar with a lesbian or gay man.

Indeed, posterior studies consistently reported that people are significantly more likely to hold negative attitudes if they are male (Herek 1994; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Simon, 1995), have a religious affiliation (Berkman & Zinberg, 1997; Seltzer, 1992), are of an ethnic minority (Klaman et al., 1999), and have few lesbian or gay acquaintances (Newman et al., 2002).

Finally, the Report of the Council of Europe (2010) confirms that people, who know other persons with homosexual orientation, have more positive attitudes towards them. The fact that they were open minded is a way that they achieved contact with other minority groups was considered one of the factors that positively influence the attitudes of heterosexual persons.

Modern Homonegativity Scale

According to Morrison and Morrison (2002), public manifestations of homophobia are getting reduced as people become more familiar with the phenomenon of homophobia. Nevertheless, people’s private attitudes may still have signs of homo-negativity due to popular stereotypes and other factors.

One of the most recent scales is The Modern Homonegativity Scale (MHS) developed by Melanie and Tod Morrison (Morrison & Morrison, 2002). This scale as well as other modern scales that we presented above is divided into two subscales. One subscale refers to attitudes towards gay men, and the other one is related to attitudes towards lesbians. These two sub-scales are forming an integral 13 item-scale which is rated on a 5 point Likert-type scale. The purpose of this scale is to detect and measure the level of homo-negativity (i.e. negative attitudes towards gay people) principally among the heterosexual population. As a validated and reliable psychometric tool, Modern Homonegativity Scale is mainly developed to explore cases of discrimination toward gay men and lesbians.

Table 7. *The Modern Homonegativity Scale (MHS)*

ITEMS

1. Many gay men and lesbians use their sexual orientation so that they can obtain special privileges
 2. Gay men and lesbians seem to focus on the ways in which they differ from heterosexuals and ignore the ways in which they are the same
 3. Gay men and lesbians do not have all the rights they need
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4. The notion of universities providing students with undergraduate degrees in Gay and Lesbian Studies is ridiculous
 5. The media devote far too much attention to the topic of homosexuality
 6. Celebrations such as “Gay Pride Day” are ridiculous because they assume that an individual’s sexual orientation should constitute a source of pride
 7. Gay men and lesbians should stop shoving their lifestyle down other people’s throats
 8. Gay men and lesbians still need to protest for equal rights
 9. If gay men and lesbians want to be treated like everyone else, then they need to stop making such a fuss about their sexuality/culture
 10. Gay men and lesbians who are “out of the closet” should be admired for their courage
 11. Gay men and lesbians should stop complaining about the way they are treated in society and simply get on with their lives
 12. In today’s tough economic times, American’s tax dollars shouldn’t be used to support gay and lesbian organizations
 13. Gay men and lesbians have become too confrontational in their demand for equal rights
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Source: Morrison and Morrison (2002).

In conclusion, as it has been presented, we might notice that all the aspects of homophobia that we explained are actually very tightly related to a broader construct substantially underlying the concept of homophobia. It is attitudes. What are attitudes? What is their function? What are they made of? Are they emotional or cognitive constructs? Are they stable or they can be changed? If they can be changed, how they are changed? What are the mechanisms influencing the attitude change? What are the theories explaining attitude change? As being vital, further works should attempt to answer all these questions.

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**MERENJE HOMOFBIJE: OD TRADICIONALNIH DO
MODERNIH INSTRUMENATA ZA MERENJE PREDRASUDA
PREMA GEJ OSOBAMA**

Apstrakt: S obzirom na sve veće zahteve za jednakim kako građanskim pravima, tako i pozitivnim stavovima javnosti prema seksualnim manjinama u posljednjih nekoliko dekada, ovaj rad prati promene u instrumentima za merenje homofobije i objašnjava stavove prema homoseksualcima ispitivanjem vrijednosnih predispozicija. Pregled nekoliko tradicionalnih i modernih instrumenata za merenje homofobije daje nam opšti uvid u različite prediktivne varijable i objašnjava zašto i do koje mere ljudi imaju određene stavove prema homoseksualnosti u svetlu opšte prihvaćenosti i tolerancije prema gej osobama.

Ključne reči: Homofobija, stavovi, homoseksualnost, gej osobe, tolerancija.