Validation of the Index of Attitudes toward Homosexuals in a Caribbean Sample

J. Gromer1, M. Campbell2, D. Maynard3,  
1Florida State University, School of Social Work, Tallahassee, Florida, USA  
2Faculty of Medical Sciences, 3School of Education, Cave Hill, Barbados

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

THE 9TH CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL TEST COMMISSION
JULY 2-5, 2014

Objective: The aim of the present study is to assess the psychometric properties and factor structure of the Index of Attitudes toward Homosexuals (IAH; Hudson & Ricketts, 1980) in a sample of university students in Barbados.

INTRODUCTION: The subject of sexual diversity continues to be controversial in Barbados and throughout much of the English-speaking Caribbean. Research on homophobia in the region is needed, but existing measures have not been validated using Caribbean samples. This has likely contributed to the dearth of literature on this topic in the Anglophone Caribbean. What scholarship does exist tends to portray the region as intolerant of any deviation from the heterosexual norm (Criclow, 2004; Golden, 2012; Gutsmore, 2004; Kempadoo, 2004; Mohammed, 2003; Walters & de Groulaard, 2012). However, the presence and conditional tolerance of sexual diversity in the English-speaking Caribbean has also been documented through qualitative investigations and analyses of societal trends, and in Caribbean art and literature (Glave, 2008; Kempadoo, 2004; Murray 2002, Murray, 2009; Weller, 2006). Introducing valid measures of homophobia could help social scientists in the region to explore attitudes about sexual diversity and their impact on social and psychological phenomena.

The IAH: The Index of Attitudes toward Homosexuals (IAH; Hudson & Ricketts, 1980) is a measure of homophobia. It is a 25-item self-report instrument that uses a 5-point Likert-type response format. It includes items such as “I would feel uncomfortable if I learned that my neighbour was homosexual,” and “I would feel that I had failed as a parent if I learned that my child was gay.” It was designed as a one-dimensional measure, and an EFA performed by the authors revealed a single factor accounting for approximately 40% of the total variance. An overall index for the IAH is achieved by summing the responses to the items and then applying Hudson and Ricketts’ (1980) formula to transfer these scores onto a scale ranging from 0 – 100. Higher scores indicate greater homophobia.

The psychometric properties of the IAH have been established in the United States (Siebert, Chonody, Rutledge, & Killian, 2009) and Australia (Pain & Disney, 1996).

Siebert et al. (2009) administered the IAH to a convenience sample of 331 American college students. They found the IAH to be internally consistent (α = .92) and found evidence of convergent validity with another measure of antigay bias (r = .77, p < .05). Siebert et al. (2009) performed an EFA, which revealed two factors. The first factor was comprised of items measuring general attitudes toward homosexuals. The second factor was comprised of 5 items that involved attitudes about homosexual attraction directed at the participant. Pain and Disney (1996) administered the IAH to a sample of 150 Australian college students and observed similar results. They found evidence of strong internal consistency (α = .94) and convergent validity with another measure of homophobia (r = .84, p < .01). They also conducted an EFA and found a 2-factor solution. The first factor accounted for 44% of the variance and the second accounted for 9%. These authors were unable to identify conceptual similarities among the items comprising the second factor and, noting that the second factor did not explain much more variance than a single item, concluded that the IAH was likely a unidimensional measure.

Sampling: A convenience sampling strategy was employed to obtain participants from a university in Barbados. First, the deans of each of the five faculties at the university were approached for permission to survey students within their faculties. Only three gave their permission. Next, the researchers approached individual lecturers from the approved faculties to ask for appointments to administer surveys during class time. Participants from those lecturers’ classes were then approached directly during the regular class meeting time.

Participants: Participants were 428 university students. They were predominantly women (n = 322), undergraduates (n = 396), and of Barbadian nationality (n = 335). Mean age of the participants was 23.6 (SD = 7.4). The participants’ major fields of study were many and varied, but psychology (n = 166) and medicine (n = 66) majors were especially well-represented.

Procedure: Participants were administered the IAH, a demographic questionnaire, and the Sexuality Prejudice Scale (SPS, Chonody, 2009). The SPS is a measure of antigay bias. Reliability analyses were conducted, as well as an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using maximum likelihood estimation and oblique rotation. Missing data (< 2%, MAR) were imputed using maximum likelihood estimation.

Results: Scores on the IAH ranged from 2 to 98, with a mean of 58.51 (SD = 20.56). Higher scores on the IAH indicate greater homophobia or sexual prejudice; Hudson and Ricketts (1980) interpret scores above 50 to indicate homophobia. For purposes of comparison, we assume a mean score of participants (n = 300) in the original validation study of the IAH was 53 (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980). The mean score of a contemporary US sample (n = 331) was 52.57 (Siebert, Chonody, Rutledge, & Killian, 2009), and the mean score of an Australian sample (n = 150) was 60.9 (Pain & Disney, 1996).

The IAH was internally consistent (α = .93) and was strongly correlated with both subscales of the Sexual Prejudice Scale (r = .83, p < .01; r = .72, p < .01), providing evidence of concurrent validity.

A two-factor solution was found using the Kaiser Criterion and scree plot. The first factor accounted for 37.6% of the variance and the second accounted for 6.5%. The second factor was comprised of 4 items and did not appear to have an overarching conceptual theme. However, two of the items did measure feelings about homosexual attraction directed at the participant.

Conclusions: The IAH has sound psychometric properties. The results support the continued research use of the IAH in the English-speaking Caribbean. The EFA revealed a factor structure similar to that reported in US and Australian samples, suggesting that the construct of homophobia may be similar in these nations. Although more research is needed, it may follow that interventions aimed at reducing sexual prejudice in the US and Australia could be modified for Barbadian participants.

References: