Fear of AIDS and Homophobia Scales in an Ethnic Population of University Students

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ABSTRACT. This replication extended R. A. Bouton et al.'s (1987) Fear of AIDS and Homophobia Scales to an ethnic sample of university students in an attempt to understand the relation between the expression of fear of HIV/AIDS and homophobia in ethnic groups. The results of the present study suggest that ethnic groups have a greater fear of HIV/AIDS, as they were more homophobic than the sample surveyed by R. A. Bouton et al. Although the correlation between fear of AIDS and homophobia was significant, results suggest the relation between them is weaker than it was 20 years prior to the present study. The ethnic populations represented in this study did not have greater fear of AIDS by gender. Considering ethnicity, female and male participants showed significant differences in homophobia. As in the original study, male participants were more homophobic than were female participants.

Keywords: ethnicity, Fear of AIDS and Homophobia Scales, HIV/AIDS

THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC; 2006) reported several successes in the prevention of HIV/AIDS in the United States through increased counseling, testing, and referral of those people at high risk for infection. Among the remaining challenges cited by the CDC is that racial and ethnic minorities...
are disproportionally at risk for infection. In the present study, we replicated and extended attitudes toward HIV/AIDS and homophobia in ethnic populations using the Fear of AIDS and Homophobia Scales (Bouton et al., 1987).

Bouton et al. (1987) constructed two brief measures assessing the overall fear of HIV/AIDS and homophobia. Bouton et al.’s goal was to understand the relation between the expression of fear of HIV/AIDS and homophobia. We hypothesized that 20 years after the initial study, increased information about and awareness of the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the heterosexual population would translate to lower correlations between the fear of HIV/AIDS and homophobia in the population of interest. Although the CDC reported success in referral, counseling, and testing, we were interested in the impact these efforts may have had on the perceptions of undergraduate university students when considering ethnicity.

Participants were 709 undergraduate students from a midsized Midwestern university with a self-identified ethnic origin (female students = 382, male students = 306; African Americans = 234, Asian Americans = 147, Hispanic Americans = 120, Native Americans = 35, Caucasians = 164). The average age of participants was 21.5 years ($SD = 4.2$ years). Respondents either completed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire ($n = 652$) or an equivalent version online ($n = 57$).

We presented the 14 items in the Fear of AIDS measure and 7 items in the Homophobia Scale on 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The correlation between fear of AIDS and homophobia was significant, $r(690) = .36$, $p < .001$, accounting for $13\%$ of the shared variance between fear of AIDS and homophobia, which is lower than the significant correlation found in the original study ($r = .55$, $p < .0001$, $r^2 = .30$).

When compared with the original study, our sample showed an increase in the fear of AIDS ($M = 37.93$, $SD = 7.02$; Chronbach’s $\alpha = .70$ vs. $M = 31.83$, $SD = 8.78$, $\alpha = .80$; $d = .09$, $\eta^2 = .13$) and homophobia ($M = 18.93$, $SD = 7.37$, $\alpha = .90$ vs. $M = 14.82$, $SD = 7.02$, $\alpha = .89$; $d = .58$, $\eta^2 = .37$). As in the original study, our study showed that, overall, male students ($M = 19.66$, $SD = 7.57$) were more homophobic than were female students ($M = 18.31$, $SD = 7.03$), $t(670) = 2.38$, $p = .017$, $d = .20$, $\eta^2 = .01$; whereas no significant difference was found between male students ($M = 38.01$, $SD = 7.13$) and female students ($M = 37.88$, $SD = 6.90$) regarding fear of AIDS, $t(676) = .240$, $ns$.

Controlling for ethnicity because of poor generalizability from the limited number of respondents who indicated Native American for ethnicity ($n = 35$; $M =$

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18.97, SD = 8.18), our sample results showed a significant relationship between ethnicity and homophobia, $F(3, 648) = 9.49, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$. African Americans ($M = 20.83, SD = 6.86$) were significantly more homophobic than were Hispanics ($M = 17.53, SD = 6.81$), Asians ($M = 17.35, SD = 6.53$), and Caucasians ($M = 18.59, SD = 7.96$). When included in the analysis, there were no significant relations found for Native Americans and other ethnic groups.

Controlling for gender, African American women ($M = 20.06, SD = 6.96$) were significantly more homophobic, $F(3, 353) = 5.20, p = .002, \eta^2 = .04$, than were Asian women ($M = 16.10, SD = 5.73$) and Hispanic women ($M = 17.48, SD = 6.55$). African American men ($M = 21.69, SD = 6.96$) were significantly more homophobic, $F(2, 275) = 4.02, p = .008, \eta^2 = .04$, than were Asian men ($M = 18.53, SD = 7.04$) and Hispanic men ($M = 17.68, SD = 7.61$). We found no significant difference between the ethnic groups and Caucasians on the basis of either ethnicity ($M = 18.59, SD = 7.96$) or gender (Caucasian women, $M = 18.15, SD = 8.05$; Caucasian men, $M = 18.15, SD = 8.05$). Including Native Americans in the analysis showed no significant differences for gender and homophobia (Native American women, $M = 19.27, SD = 6.33$; Native American men, $M = 19.06, SD = 9.56$). There were no significant differences controlling for either ethnicity or gender for the Fear of AIDS measure.

Our purpose in this article is to report results from extending the Fear of AIDS and Homophobia Scales (Bouton et al., 1987) to ethnic populations, a limitation of the original study. The results of our analyses show that, as a whole, the ethnic groups represented in our sample have a greater fear of HIV/AIDS and are more homophobic than the sample that was surveyed 20 years prior. In support of the findings of Bouton et al., the results of this study show that the ethnic populations represented in our study did not have a greater fear of AIDS by gender but that male participants were still more homophobic than were female participants; and the female sample showed significant differences in homophobia. The correlation between fear of AIDS and homophobia was lower than that found by the previous researchers, suggesting that HIV/AIDS was perceived less as a disease of homosexual origins than it was in the past. These results extend the literature by showing there are no significant differences in the fear of AIDS given the ethnicity and gender of respondents. The results also provide important information for those researchers interested in using the two scales with ethnic groups or for those researching similar groups and homophobia or HIV/AIDS.

**AUTHOR NOTES**

Wesley C. Long is an assistant professor in the Human Relations Department at the University of Oklahoma. His research interests include HIV/AIDS, teen violence, family violence, and substance abuse issues. C. A. Millsap is a doctoral student in the Educational Psychology Department at the University of Oklahoma. His research interests include motivation, future time orientation, HIV/AIDS, and violence issues in schools.
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