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Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale

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The Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG) Scale is a brief measure of heterosexuals’ attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. The original scale consisted of 20 different statements, 10 about gay men (ATG subscale) and 10 about lesbians (ATL subscale), to which respondents indicated their level of agreement or disagreement. Shorter versions have subsequently been developed, consisting of ATG and ATL subscales with parallel versions of 3, 4, or 5 items. These shorter versions have been found to be highly correlated with the original, longer subscales (e.g., rs > .95 between 5-item versions of the ATG and ATL and their 10-item counterparts), and their use is now recommended instead of the original subscales.

Response Mode and Timing

The ATLG can be self-administered (presented on paper or on a computer) or administered orally (as in a telephone survey). When presented visually, scale items are typically accompanied by a 5-, 7-, or 9-point Likert-type scale with anchor points of Strongly Disagree and Strongly Agree. When administered orally during telephone or face-to-face interviews, four response options are usually offered (Strongly Disagree, Disagree Somewhat, Agree Somewhat, Strongly Agree), and respondents are allowed to volunteer a middle response (e.g., “Neither Agree nor Disagree”). Completion time is roughly 30–60 seconds per item.

Scoring

Scoring is accomplished by assigning numerical values to the response options (e.g., for a 7-point response format, 1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree) and summing across items for each subscale. Some items are reverse scored as indicated below. For ease of interpretation, the sum of item values can be divided by the total number of items to yield a score that matches the response scale metric. The possible range of scores depends on the response scale used.

Scores on the original ATL and ATG subscales, which are based on responses to differently worded items, were not directly comparable. Researchers wishing to compare respondents’ attitudes toward gay men with their attitudes toward lesbians were advised to use parallel forms of one subscale (usually the ATG items). The use of such parallel forms (with each item presented once in reference to gay men and once in reference to lesbians) is now recommended for all ATLG scale users, as shown in the Exhibit.

Reliability and Validity

The ATLG subscales have high levels of internal consistency. When self-administered, α > .85 with most college student samples and α > .80 with most nonstudent adult samples. For telephone surveys with oral administration to adult samples, α > .80 for 5-item versions and α > .70 for 3-item versions. Test-retest reliability (rs > .80) has been demonstrated with alternate forms (Herek, 1988, 1994).

Scores on the ATLG subscales are reliably correlated with other theoretically relevant constructs (e.g., Herek, 1994, 2009; Herek & Capitanio, 1996, 1999a). Higher scores are associated with high religiosity, lack of interpersonal contact with gay men and lesbians, adherence to traditional gender-role attitudes, belief in a traditional family ideology, and endorsement of policies that discriminate against sexual minorities. In addition, ATG scores are reliably correlated with AIDS-related stigma. The ATLG’s discriminant validity also has been established. Members of lesbian and gay organizations scored at the extreme positive end of the range, and nonstudent adults who publicly supported a gay rights ballot measure scored significantly lower on the ATLG than did community residents who publicly opposed the initiative (Herek, 1988, 1994).

Administration in Other Languages and Outside the United States

Although the ATLG was originally developed for administration to English-speaking heterosexual adults in the United States, it has also been used in research conducted in England (Hegarty, 2002) and Canada (Mohipp & Morry, 2004), and translated versions have been administered in the Netherlands (Meerendonk, Eisinga, & Felling, 2003), Singapore (Detenber et al., 2007), Brazil (DeSouza, Solberg, & Elder, 2007), Chile (Cardenas & Barrientos, 2008; Nierman, Thompson, Bryan, & Mahaffey, 2007), and Turkey (Gelbal & Duyan, 2006). In addition, a Spanish-language version was created for a study of California adults of Mexican descent (Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006). In these studies, scale reliability has been consistently acceptable (typically, α > .80), and the patterns of correlations between ATLG scores and theoretically related constructs have been similar to those obtained with U.S. English-speaking samples.
Other Information

Item order effects have been observed among heterosexual males in telephone surveys, which may indicate a gender-linked pattern in heterosexuals’ attitudes (Herek, 2002; Herek & Capitanio, 1999b). For more information about the ATLG’s development and usage, see Herek (1994, 2009). Researchers need not obtain the author’s permission to use the ATLG in not-for-profit research that is consistent with the American Psychological Association’s Ethical Principles of Psychologists.

References


Exhibit

**Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale, Revised 5-Item Version**

**Attitudes Toward Gay Men (ATG-R-S5) Subscale**

1. Sex between two men is just plain wrong.*
2. I think male homosexuals are disgusting.*
3. Male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in men.* (Reverse scored)
4. Male homosexuality is a perversion.
5. Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be condemned. (Reverse scored)

**Attitudes Toward Lesbians (ATL-R-S5) Subscale**

1. Sex between two women is just plain wrong.*
2. I think female homosexuals (lesbians) are disgusting.*
3. Female homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in women.* (Reverse scored)
4. Female homosexuality is a perversion.
5. Female homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be condemned. (Reverse scored)

*This item is included in the 3-item version (ATLG-R) of the subscale.

**Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale: Spanish-Language Version**

**Attitudes Toward Gay Men (ATG)**

1. Las relaciones sexuales entre dos hombres simplemente están mal. [Sex between two men is just plain wrong.]
2. Yo pienso que los hombres homosexuales son repugnantes. [I think that male homosexuals are disgusting.]
3. La homosexualidad masculina es una expresión natural de la sexualidad del hombre. [Male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in men.]

4. La homosexualidad masculina es una perversión. [Male homosexuality is a perversion.]

**Attitudes Toward Lesbians (ATL)**

1. Las relaciones sexuales entre dos mujeres simplemente están mal. [Sex between two women is just plain wrong.]

2. Yo pienso que las lesbianas son repugnantes. [I think that lesbians are disgusting.]

3. La homosexualidad femenina es una expresión natural de la sexualidad de la mujer. [Female homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in women.]

4. La homosexualidad femenina es una perversión. [Female homosexuality is a perversion.]

*Note. The Spanish-language version was adapted for use by Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera (2006).*

**Component Measure of Attitudes Toward Homosexuality**

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Researchers have demonstrated that attitudes toward gay men and lesbians are multidimensional and that, to fully understand antigay prejudice, these different aspects of people’s attitudes and perceptions should be considered (see Kite & Whitley, 1996; LaMar & Kite, 1998). Because attitudes toward homosexuality can serve different functions for different people (Herek, 1986), antigay prejudice can best be understood by considering these differing perspectives. One attitude component reflects the general belief that homosexuality violates traditional values, for example, whereas another component reflects the possibility that people fear contact with gays and lesbians in general or sexual advances from a same-sex other specifically. These attitudes are separate from the stereotypic beliefs people hold about gay men and women and from people’s tendency to support or deny gay men and lesbians’ civil rights.

**Description**

To construct this measure, established measures of attitudes toward homosexuality, summarized in Beere (1990), were reviewed. Initially, 174 items were selected that conceptually represented five components of attitudes toward homosexuality: Civil Rights, Condemnation/Tolerance, Contact, Morality, and Stereotypes. These items were categorized by component, and overlapping items were eliminated. For those categories not well represented by previous measures, new items were written.

A sample of 270 college students completed the measure, and their responses were analyzed using a varimax factor analysis. Results revealed five factors that accounted for 56.8% of the variance. Most parallel items for lesbians and gay men loaded on the same factor; the exception was that the gay male and lesbian contact items emerged as separate factors. Contrary to expectations, civil rights did not emerge as a separate factor. Rather, those items loaded on the Condemnation/Tolerance factor, thereby resulting in four final components.

The final measure consists of 91 items assessing attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Of these, 42 items address attitudes toward gay men and 42 parallel items address attitudes toward lesbians. An additional seven items refer to homosexuality or same-sex interactions (and do not vary by sex of target). Number of items per subscale and Cronbach’s alpha, based on LaMar and Kite (1998), are as follows: Gay Male Condemnation/Tolerance (11 items; alpha = .92); Lesbian Condemnation/Tolerance (11 items; alpha = .89); Gay Male Morality (10 items; alpha = .92); Lesbian Morality (10 items; alpha = .93); Neutral Morality (3 items; alpha = .80); Gay Male Contact (14 items; alpha = .96); Lesbian Contact (14 items; alpha = .95); Neutral Contact (4 items; alpha = .75); Gay Male Stereotypes (7 items; alpha = .78); Lesbian Stereotypes (7 items; alpha = .75). This measure was developed using a college student sample; however, it can be used with any population.

**Response Mode and Timing**

Participants evaluate these items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1, *Strongly Agree*, to 5, *Strongly Agree*. ¹Address correspondence to Mary E. Kite, Department of Psychological Science, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306; e-mail: mkite@bsu.edu