

Aspects Regarding the Reliability of the Translated and Adapted Version of the Gay/Lesbian Identity Scale

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Abstract

Introduction: Sexual identity has been studied during the last years as a complex dimension of human sexuality, referring to how a person constructs and defines his or her Sexual Self. Sexual identity includes not only the person's sexual orientation, but also social, interpersonal and intrapsychic dimensions. Specialists in the field of human sexuality consider sexual identity to be a subjective and individualized pattern of attractions, erotic desires and fantasies, sexual values and socio-cultural norms regarding the expression of sexuality and the role-sex identity. Sexual identity comprises multiple dimensions, therefore in the structuring, development and consolidation of identity multiple factors are involved, such as: biological factors; the micro-social context; social norms related to gender identity; culture; religious or spiritual beliefs and homonegativity and sexual prejudice. Researching the mechanisms and dynamics involved in the development of homosexual identity, several authors have described theoretical models centered on the formation of a homosexual/lesbian identity (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1993; D'Augelli, 1994; Fassinger, 1998).

Methods: Objectives - The main objective of this paper is to test the reliability of the gay and lesbian identity scale (LGBIS scale) (Mohr & Kendra, 2011), which has been translated and adapted according to the purposes and specific of our study of the gay and lesbian identity. Also, another objective is to evaluate whether there are significant differences between lesbian women and gay men regarding the psychological and social mechanisms involved in the development and assumption of one's identity.

Participants: 148 people participated in this study, 89 lesbian females and 59 gay males, aged between 18 and 56 years old, having diverse educational backgrounds (from high school graduation to PhD degree) and living in the Romanian social and cultural context. **Instruments:** The Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Scale (LGBIS Scale) developed by Mohr & Kendra (2011) was the methodological instrument used. The items of the scale had been translated and adapted so that the instrument could serve the purpose of our research on the mechanisms and dynamics of homosexual identity. **Procedure:** Participants were invited to complete an online version of the scale and had to carefully read each item and then score it on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – Strongly

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Disagree to 5 – Totally Agree. The participants' responses were recorded at the end, by pressing the "submit" button and without offering any other additional personal information or contact details.

Results: *The LGBIS scale proves to have a very high internal consistency, the value of the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient ranging from a lowest value of 0.739 (concealment motivation subscale) to a highest value of 0.942 (identity uncertainty). In addition, every item of the scale justifies its presence within the scale. In consequence, we didn't have to eliminate any item from the scale, as the value of the internal consistency coefficient could not be increased more. Also, it has been confirmed that there are significant statistical differences between lesbian women and gay men regarding the following identity dimensions: acceptance concerns, internalized homonegativity and identity affirmation.*

Conclusions: *The adapted and translated version of the LGBIS scale proved to have a high reliability, as measured by the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, which means that we can use the scale in order to investigate the psychological and social mechanisms of gay and lesbian identities. We intend to further use the scale in order to deeply investigate and evaluate the way in which gay and lesbian identities are structured and integrated in the person's self-concept and overall identity. The LGBIS scale can help us better understand the relationship between the personal and public aspects of gay and lesbian identities and the way in which these aspects coexist in the lives of gay men and lesbian women. Also, understanding individual differences in the development of sexual identity will provide us with a broader perspective over the specific challenges faced by gay and lesbian persons both at a personal and social level.*

Keywords: *gay, lesbian, sexual identity*

I. Introduction

Sexual identity has been studied during the last years as a complex dimension of human sexuality, referring to how a person constructs and defines his or her Sexual Self. An individual's sexual identity includes one's sexual orientation, gender identity, role-sex identity, sexual behavior, as well as the person's feelings and emotions together with personal beliefs and values (Yarhouse & Tan, 2004). The sexual identity includes not only the person's sexual orientation, but also social, interpersonal and intrapsychic dimensions. Specialists in the field of human sexuality consider sexual identity to be a subjective and individualized pattern of attractions, erotic desires and fantasies, sexual values and socio-cultural norms regarding the expression of sexuality and the role-sex identity (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1994). The process through which a person constructs a sexual identity is based on a conceptualization of one's sexuality, identity and sexual values. We can say that sexual identity reflects the way in which the individual defines himself in time and after having experienced certain life situations, as having sexual, emotional and relational connections with persons of the same sex, of the other sex or of both sexes.

In a social and cultural context dominated by heterosexual models and norms, the process of developing a gay or lesbian identity becomes a task of constructing one's self concept and stimulating the person's feeling of belonging (Ritter & Terndrup, 2002). In the development of sexual identity individual psychological mechanisms cannot be separated from the social processes and dynamics. Sexual identity comprises multiple dimensions, therefore in the structuring, development and consolidation of identity multiple factors are involved, such as: **biological factors**, which refer to the internal biological processes connected to sexual development (e.g. the physical maturation process) (Perper & Cornog, 1999); **the micro-social context**, which refers to the way in which sexual identity development is influenced by the values and beliefs of the members of the micro-social context in which the individual is living (Worthington, Savoy, Dillon & Vernaglia, 2002); **social norms related to gender identity**, which can help us better understand the role of gender identity in the development of sexual identity (Gilbert & Schrer, 1999); **culture**, because human sexuality is defined within a cultural context and therefore there are different variations regarding the sexual behaviors and values specific to the different cultural environments (Worthington Savoy, Dillon & Vernaglia, 2002); **religious or spiritual beliefs**, which contribute to developing a certain context with specific

values in which the individual accepts his sexuality (Parrinder, 1987); **homonegativity and sexual prejudice**, which dictate certain social behaviors considered acceptable and which add social pressure to socialize and interact with same sex people in such a way that is not perceived socially as "gay" (Fassinger, 2000). Researching the mechanisms and dynamics involved in the development of homosexual identity, several authors have described theoretical models centered on the formation of a homosexual/lesbian identity (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1993; D'Augelli, 1994; Fassinger, 1998).

The Cass Model (1979) describes the formation of sexual identity through a developmental perspective, because the way in which an individual perceives himself and the way in which he expects to be perceived by others around him influence the formation of sexual identity. This model consists of six developmental stages, followed by a process of socialization that the gay and lesbian persons undertake in order to positively integrate their sexual identity in their overall self-concept:

1. Identity confusion. This is the moment when gay people become aware that the so called "heterosexual portrait" doesn't correspond with who they are. This stage is characterized by a strong identity crisis and inner turmoil, as the person starts labelling his/her thoughts, emotions and fantasies as being possibly gay while maintain publicly the belief that he/she is heterosexual. There is a discrepancy between what the person was thought is "right", "good" or "normal" and how he/she feels, which is why the inner conflicts and tensions, anxiety and confusion are specific of this stage.

2. Identity comparison. In this stage, people feeling attracted to members of the same sex accept consciously the possibility of not being heterosexual, like the majority around them. This decreases the anterior confusion, but increases the person's feelings of alienation, as in this stage one feels that he/she doesn't belong to society and might feel the only person in the world who experiences such feelings. In order to cope with their strong feeling of alienation, people in this stage may use four possible strategies:

- a) Debasing the importance of other people and publicly displaying a heterosexual image;
- b) Diminishing the importance of being gay or lesbian;
- c) Diminishing one's fears towards others possible negative reactions;
- d) Repressing one's sexual behavior while devaluing homosexuality and overestimating heterosexuality.

3. Identity tolerance. In this stage, people start tolerating the existence of a gay or lesbian self-image, although we cannot talk yet about acceptance. This tolerance towards one's self-image decreases feelings of alienation and helps people become more aware of their sexual, emotional and social needs. Being tolerant with one's own sexual orientation indicates a commitment towards forming a new sexual identity and redefining the self-concept. In this stage, there is a high discrepancy between how the person perceives herself (probably gay or lesbian), the way in which he/she is perceived by others (heterosexual) and the way in which he/she expects to be perceived by others (heterosexual).

4. Identity acceptance. Acceptance is underlined by the expansion of the person's social network with other gay and lesbian people. Meeting and relating to other homosexual people validates and normalizes the person's gay/lesbian self-image, this way helping the person to move from tolerating one's identity to accepting it. The groups within which the individual starts socializing with other gay and lesbian people have a very powerful influence over the way in which people will progress towards assuming and integrating their homosexual identity. Cass (1979) identified three strategies that help people to partially validate their identity in social contexts:

- a) Passing as heterosexual;
- b) Limiting one's contact with heterosexual people;
- c) Selective disclosure.

When these strategies are applied successfully, the inner pressure is either reduced so that one's sexual identity doesn't feel like a conflictual state or maintained at an acceptable level in order to diminish the person's feelings of alienation and discrepancy.

5. Identity pride. This stage is characterized by a disharmony between the positive way in which the person has come to perceive herself and the negative or prejudicial way in which society, in general, perceives gay and lesbian people. Although the inner conflicts are much reduced in this stage, dealing occasionally with stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination situations, arises feelings of anger towards the society perceived by the individual as being homophobic and heteronormative. In addition, in this stage the person might feel the need to come out to as many people as he/she can. According to the different social circumstances, coming out can serve two functions in this stage: first of all, by coming out to others, the person increases the number of situations in which her identity is socially validated and secondly, disclosing

one's sexual identity unifies the person's private and social identity into a congruent and unitary self-concept.

6. Identity synthesis. This is a stage of assuming and integrating the identity in which the public and private characteristics of the self are synthesized into an integrated identity, which includes not only the individual's sexual orientation, but also the social context in which he lives, together with his feelings, expectations, possibilities and needs. The anger feelings towards the notion of "privileges specific to heterosexual people" decrease and gay and lesbian people become more aware of what they have in common with heterosexual people and of what differentiates them from heterosexual, as well as from other gay and lesbian people.

The Troiden Model (1993) views the development of homosexual identity as a lengthy process, which takes place in a context of stigma, so every stage has its own characteristics and challenges. Just like in Cass's model, the identified identity formation stages are conceptualized by Troiden, not in a linear way, but rather in a "staircase" way.

1. Sensitization – the early feelings of feeling different from the others. The author considers that this stage appears usually before puberty, when boys and girls feel different from the other boys and girls in their group (they dress differently, have different interests or lack the romantic interest in members of the opposite sex).

2. Confusion. Beginning with adolescence period, youth who are attracted of same sex people start asking themselves questions regarding their sexual orientation and thinking about the possibility of being gay or lesbian. If in the anterior stage the person felt different socially from others, now she also feel different sexually, which determines a state of inner conflict.

3. Assumption – the early process of acceptance, which is considered to start in the late adolescence period. One characteristic of this stage is the person's need to interact with other gay and lesbian people, to sexually experiment with same-sex partners and to explore the gay culture. Troiden considers that the person defines his/her identity in the context of sexual and romantic experiences with same-sex lovers and that once the person assumes a gay or lesbian identity, he/she must find ways to cope with the social stigma of homosexuality.

4. Commitment – the acceptance of being gay and coming out to others. The person is committed to herself, which means that he/she acts and lives consonantly with what he/she feels and needs and experiences an inner state of comfort towards his/her sexual identity and sexual self.

Troiden (1993) asserts that sexual identity itself is not emergent and is never fix in an absolute manner, but is always influenced by subjective and significant life experiences and that is why it is a continuum process.

D'Augelli (1994) proposes a model of sexual identity development based on the concept that the identity is structured, developed and consolidated according to one's vast life context and resources together with social and cultural factors. All of these influences interact dynamically during the life span and the way in which a gay or lesbian person develops his/her identity cannot be separated from his/her life context.

While trying to understand fully the process, the author emphasizes the importance of culture, history, family of origin and other significant interpersonal relationships in one's gay or lesbian identity development. The sexual identity development does not follow ordered stages but rather independent identity processes:

1. "Getting out" from heterosexuality, process that consists of becoming aware of the fact that one's attractions and feelings are different from those of heterosexuals, the person feeling ready to label his/her attractions and feelings as being "gay" and to share them with the significant people in their life.

2. Forming a personal identity statute. This process is based on evaluating the different model referring to what it means to be gay or lesbian in the cultural and historical context in which the person is living and then adhering to one or more such models.

3. Forming a gay/lesbian social identity. According to the author, this process takes place within the gay community, being based on the interaction with other homosexual persons or on the interaction in flexible social context, in which the significance of a gay or lesbian identity can be renegotiated or redefined.

4. Affirming one's sexual identity within the family. This process relies on two stages: disclosing the person's gay or lesbian identity to family members and redefining the person's relationships with the family members after this disclosure.

5. Forming an identity statute based on an erotic-affective intimacy. This process is based on forming sexual and romantic relationships with same-sex persons, which is not an easy process. Because society lacks models and social scripts specific to homosexual couples, gay and lesbian people often feel uncertain and unsafe and experience emotional blockages in forming relationships based on intimacy and trust.

6. Affiliating to a gay community. This process consists of developing, up to a certain point, a

social, communitarian or political commitment towards the gay community and the causes for which this community fights and advocates.

Fassinger (1998) elaborates a staging model of the homosexual identity development based on two parallel processes: one focused on **individual identity** and another one focused on **group identity**.

The individual process deals with **the awareness and acceptance of one's sexual orientation** while the group process focuses on **what being gay/lesbians means from the social point of view and one's role as a part of the community**. Both processes develop based on four specific phases: **awareness, exploration, deepening/commitment and internalization/synthesis**.

Individual identity development:

- Awareness of one's self and the differences from other people.
- Exploration of feelings and attractions towards same-sex persons.
- Deepening/Commitment of the feelings of being gay/lesbian.
- Internalization/Synthesis of attractions and romantic feelings for same-sex persons into one's identity.

Group identity development:

- Awareness of the existence of other people having different sexual orientations.
- Exploration of relationships with members of the gay/lesbian community.
- Commitment to the gay/lesbian community including the possibility of negative consequences.
- Internalization of the group identity across various contexts.

II. Method

Objectives: The main objective of this paper is to test the reliability of the gay and lesbian identity scale (LGBIS scale) (Mohr & Kendra, 2011), which has been translated and adapted according to the purposes and specific of our study of the gay and lesbian identity. Also, another objective is to evaluate whether there are significant differences between lesbian women and gay men regarding the psychological and social mechanisms involved in the development and assumption of one's identity.

Participants: 148 people participated in this study, 89 lesbian females and 59 gay males, aged between 18 and 56 years old, having diverse educational backgrounds (from high school graduation to PhD degree) and living in the Romanian social and cultural context.

Instruments: The Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Scale (LGBIS Scale) developed by Mohr & Kendra (2011) was the methodological instrument used. The items of the scale had been translated and adapted so that the instrument could serve the purpose of our research on the mechanisms and dynamics of homosexual identity. Because our research investigates only the psychological and social dimensions of the gay and lesbian identity, we had to bring some changes to the original version of the scale, more precisely we had to give up references regarding the bisexual identity. But this hasn't brought any major modification regarding the items' significance or value.

The Lesbian and Gay Scale (LGIS) scale consists of 27 items designed to assess eight dimensions of sexual identity, that have been largely discussed in the theoretical and clinical literature, some of the discussions and theories being presented in the introductory part above. The eight identity subscales that are assessed using this scale are: **acceptance concerns** (concerns regarding the stigma associated to a gay or lesbian identity), **concealment motivation** (concern with and motivation to protect one's private identity as a gay or lesbian person), **identity uncertainty** (uncertainty regarding the person's sexual orientation and identity), **internalized homonegativity** (rejection of one's gay or lesbian sexual identity), **difficult process** (perception the one's gay or lesbian identity development process was difficult), **identity superiority** (favoring views of gay and lesbian people over heterosexual people), **identity affirmation** (affirmation of the person's gay or lesbian identity) and **identity centrality** (view of the person's gay or lesbian identity as being central to his/her overall identity and self-concept).

Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses have been conducted by Mohr & Kendra (2011) in order to underline the validity and reliability of the LGBIS subscales scores. The data provided suggested that the instrument is an efficient mean to gather

information regarding the gay/lesbian/bisexual identity and that the subscales' scores appear adequate for most research purposes.

Procedure: Participants were invited to complete an online version of the scale, being assured that their privacy and anonymity will be fully respected. Before starting to complete their answers on the identity scale, the respondents were asked few demographical questions, such as their age, gender, sexual identification/identity, educational background and the domain in which they currently work or study. The responses of gay or lesbian subjects under the age of 18 have been excluded from the study.

As we have mentioned earlier, each item has been translated and adapted to correspond only to a gay or lesbian identity. The participants had to carefully read each item and then score it on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Totally Agree. The participants' responses were recorded at the end, by pressing the "submit" button and without offering any other additional personal information or contact details.

III. Results

Because the LGBIS scale has not been adapted on Romanian population, it was necessary to translate and adapt the instrument and also to validate it at a minimal level. In this case, the standard procedure consists of calculating the subscales' internal consistency, which should show us if the items measure the same psychological reality, which in this case would be the same eight dimensions of sexual identity. The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was calculated for each of the eight subscales and the results are listed below:

Table 1 – Reliability of Acceptance concerns subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.809	.813	3

Table 2 – Reliability of Concealment motivation subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.739	.740	3

Table 3 – Reliability of Identity uncertainty subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.942	.944	4

Table 4 – Reliability of Internalized homonegativity subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.847	.855	3

Table 5 – Reliability of Difficult process subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.875	.875	3

Table 6 – Reliability of Identity superiority subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.759	.769	3

Table 7 – Reliability of Identity affirmation subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.850	.853	3

Table 8 – Reliability of Identity centrality subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.781	.797	5

As it can be noticed in the above inserted tables, the LGBIS scale proves to have a very high internal consistency, the value of the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient ranging from a lowest value of 0.739 (concealment motivation subscale) to a highest value of 0.942 (identity uncertainty). In addition, every item of the scale justifies its presence within the scale. In consequence, we didn't have to eliminate any item from the scale, as the value of the internal consistency

coefficient could not be increased more.

The internal consistency of the whole scale is high (Cronbach Alpha = 0.757), which underlines the fact that the LGBIS scale is a uniform construct and that the sample is unitary regarding the investigated dimensions (Table 9). Also, the standard deviation for each item has low values, ranging between 0.857 and 1.757, which highlights the fact that the subjects' responses are homogenous (Table 10).

Table 9 - Reliability of the LGBIS scale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.757	.755	27

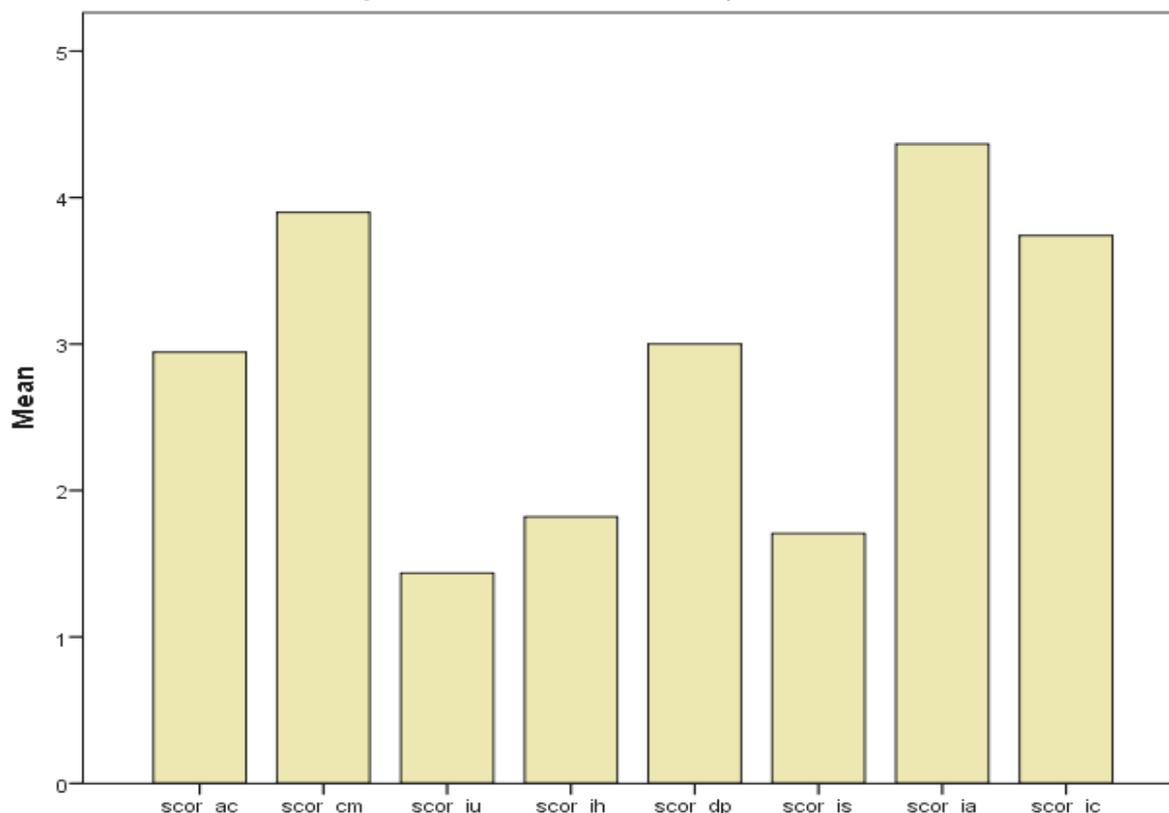
Table 10 - Descriptive statistics of the LGBIS scale items

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
i1_lgbis_n	3.98	1.500	148
i2_lgbis_n	2.16	1.379	148
i3_lgbis_n	1.80	1.390	148
i4_lgbis_n	3.58	1.530	148
i5_lgbis_n	3.20	1.633	148
i6_lgbis_n	4.70	1.209	148
i7_lgbis_n	1.64	1.031	148
i8_lgbis_n	1.66	1.111	148
i9_lgbis_n	2.97	1.616	148
i10_lgbis_n	1.51	.907	148
i12_lgbis_n	2.84	1.642	148
i13_lgbis_n	4.03	1.487	148
i14_lgbis_n	1.75	1.298	148
i15_lgbis_n	3.70	1.541	148
i16_lgbis_n	2.78	1.431	148
i17_lgbis_n	3.07	1.737	148
i18_lgbis_n	2.03	1.175	148
i19_lgbis_n	4.26	1.322	148
i20_lgbis_n	2.03	1.350	148
i21_lgbis_n	3.09	1.458	148
i22_lgbis_n	1.68	1.208	148
i24_lgbis_n	3.81	1.225	148
i25_lgbis_n	4.14	1.240	148
i26_lgbis_n	4.26	1.341	148
i27_lgbis_n	1.41	.857	148
i11_lgbis_nr	3.69	1.710	148
i23_lgbis_nr	3.20	1.681	148

The differences between the means of the subscales have shown that the mean of the identity affirmation scale has a higher value than the mean of the identity uncertainty scale, these two being the extreme values recorded, suggesting that at the level of

the sample there is a higher tendency for identity affirmation and a lower tendency towards feeling uncertain or confused regarding one's sexual identity (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 – The items' means for every subscale



Differences between lesbian women and gay men regarding the investigated identity dimensions

The Mann – Whitney test was used to underline the existing differences between the means of

the instrument's subscales, according to the gender variable. We mention the fact that we have chosen the Mann – Whitney test because the scores don't follow a normal distribution and because there were extreme values, which restrict the using of test for parametric data.

Table 11 - Descriptive Statistical Data of the Mann-Whitney Test

	Sexual_orientation	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
score_ac	gay	59	77.66	4582.00
	lesbian	73	57.48	4196.00
	Total	132		
score_cm	gay	59	72.34	4268.00
	lesbian	73	61.78	4510.00
	Total	132		
score_iu	gay	59	66.76	3939.00
	lesbian	73	66.29	4839.00
	Total	132		
score_ih	gay	59	76.87	4535,50
	lesbian	73	58.12	4242.50
	Total	132		
score_dp	gay	59	69.96	4127.50
	lesbian	73	63.71	4650.50
	Total	132		

score_is	gay	59	73.18	4317.50
	lesbian	73	61.10	4460.50
	Total	132		
score_ia	gay	59	52.54	3100.00
	lesbian	73	77.78	5678.00
	Total	132		
score_ic	gay	59	67.82	4001.50
	lesbian	73	65.43	4776.50
	Total	132		

Table 12 - Results of the Mann-Whitney Test

	scor_ac	scor_cm	scor_iu	scor_ih	scor_dp	scor_is	scor_ia	scor_ic
Mann-Whitney U	1495.000	1809.000	2138.000	1541.500	1949.500	1759.500	1330.000	2075.500
Wilcoxon W	4196.000	4510.000	4839.000	4242.500	4650.500	4460.500	3100.000	4776.500
Z	-3.024	-1.586	-.078	-2.905	-.937	-1.854	-3.791	-.358
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.113	.938	.004	.349	.064	.000	.721

a. Grouping variable: sexual_orientation

As it was shown by the results obtained (Table 13), it has been confirmed that there are significant statistical differences between lesbian women and gay men regarding the following identity dimensions: **acceptance concerns** ($U=1495$; $p<005$), **internalized homonegativity** ($U=1541.500$; $p<005$) and **identity affirmation** ($U=2017.500$; $p<005$). Therefore, the ranks mean for the acceptance concerns subscale is lower in the case of lesbian women, which suggests that they seem to be less preoccupied by being accepted by others, as compared to gay men. Also, the ranks mean for the internalized homonegativity subscale is significantly lower for lesbian women than for gay men, suggesting that gay men have a higher level of internalized homonegativity than lesbian women. In addition, lesbian women seem to have a bigger need to affirm their identity than gay men.

IV. Discussion

The adapted and translated version of the LGBIS scale proved to have a high reliability, as measured by the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, which means that we can use the scale in order to investigate the psychological and social mechanisms of gay and lesbian identities. We intend to further use the scale in order to deeply investigate and evaluate the way in which gay and lesbian identities are structured and integrated in the person's self-concept and overall identity.

Moreover, it has been shown that there are significant differences between lesbian women and gay

men regarding certain dimensions of sexual identity. Significant differences have been recorded on the following subscales: acceptance concerns, identity affirmation and internalized homonegativity. Lesbian women seem to have a bigger need to affirm their identity and to be accepted by others as compared to gay men. This result can be associated with the fact that lesbian women might feel more comfortable to express their identity publicly and might have a more positive self-image than gay men. As it was shown in Mohr & Kendra's validation study (2011), internalized homonegativity is negatively associated with identity affirmation, which in our case would mean that lesbian women are more likely to positively integrate their sexuality into their overall identity and might feel more comfortable to express their identity in social contexts. These results also suggest that lesbian women need a higher social validation of their identities than gay men.

Regarding gay men, the results indicated that they have a higher level of internalized homonegativity than lesbian women. This suggests that developing a homosexual identity in a stigmatizing social context might be more difficult for gay men than for lesbian women. Up to a certain point, society might be more tolerant towards lesbian women than gay men. It can also mean that there might be more negative stereotypes regarding gay men than regarding lesbian women or that society views homosexuality more in terms of "abnormal" relationships between men than between women, this way invalidating lesbian identities and stigmatizing gay identities.

In the future, we intend to use these results in order to investigate the mechanisms and dynamics of sexual identity in a more deeper and broader way and also to investigate these findings in correlation with other aspects, such as: how do gay and lesbian people consider to be perceived by society and how heterosexual people perceive gay and lesbian people. In addition, we also plan to investigate the mythologies, perceptions and attitudes of gay and lesbian people towards heterosexual and those of heterosexuals towards gay and lesbian men. This vast evaluation of our society's representations of gay men and lesbian women might provide us with an important insight regarding the way in which gay and lesbian identities are affirmed or concealed in public contexts and how gay and lesbian people cope with the inner conflict between their private and public self. All these results will help psychotherapists working with lesbian and gay persons not only to better understand the inner world of their clients, but also to find adequate ways to assist their clients, in a manner that is not biased, but centered on the person's unique identity.

V. Conclusions

The translated and adapted version of the LGBIS scale proved to be a valid instrument to assess the dimensions of sexual identity, as they have been conceptualized by Mohr & Kendra (2011): acceptance concerns (concerns regarding the social stigma associated to a gay or lesbian identity), concealment motivation (preoccupations regarding hiding one's gay or lesbian identity), identity uncertainty (confusion regarding the person's sexual orientation and identity), internalized homonegativity (the internalization of the prejudice and stereotypes regarding homosexuality and gay relationships), difficult process (perceiving one's gay or lesbian identity formation as a difficult process), identity superiority (viewing gay and lesbian people as superior to heterosexuals), identity affirmation (affirmation of the person's gay or lesbian identity) and identity centrality (view of the person's gay or lesbian identity as being central to his/her overall identity and self-concept).

The LGBIS scale can help us better understand the relationship between the personal and public aspects of gay and lesbian identities and the way in which these aspects coexist in the lives of gay men

and lesbian women. Also, understanding individual differences in the development of sexual identity will provide us with a broader perspective over the specific challenges faced by gay and lesbian persons both at a personal and social level.

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