

Original article

Becoming another: Transformations in the therapist who works with gay and lesbian couples ☆,☆☆



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ABSTRACT

Objective: To recognise the changes experienced by the therapist who works with gay and lesbian couples.

Method: Qualitative with biographical-narrative method. Seven therapists were interviewed in Medellín.

Results: Three moments in the life trajectory of the participants were identified: *Before:* closeness and distances between families and the school were found (distances, makes reference, among others, to discourses about homosexuality). *During:* showed the conspiracy of silence in the undergraduate and postgraduate training of therapists, and in the clinical approach with homosexual couples they perceive in the reasons for consultation, a spectrum between everyday conflict and imposed exclusion. *After:* makes reference to the changes that this clinical work has generated in them, how they have become different, while others have been defined as: political subjects who resist normalisation and become learners of artistic territories and artisans of their own lives.

Conclusions: The task of becoming another is a poetic, aesthetic and ethical process like the beautiful creation of the own existence. These transformations are connected with presence, social, politic and artistic contexts, reflexive labour and criticism about themselves.

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Devenir otro: transformaciones del terapeuta que atiende a parejas lesbianas y gays

R E S U M E N

Palabras clave:

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Objetivo: Reconocer las transformaciones que han tenido los terapeutas a partir de la atención a parejas lesbianas y gays.

Método: Enfoque cualitativo con método biográfico narrativo. Se realizaron entrevistas a siete terapeutas de la ciudad de Medellín.

Resultados: Se identificaron tres momentos en la trayectoria de vida de los participantes: el antes, donde se encontraron cercanías y distancias en relación con sus familias de origen y la escuela (las distancias hacen referencia, entre otros, a los discursos sobre la homosexualidad); el durante, que evidenció el complot del silencio en la formación de pregrado y posgrado de los terapeutas y en el abordaje clínico con las parejas homosexuales que perciben en los motivos de consulta, un abanico que oscila entre el conflicto cotidiano y la exclusión impuesta; el después, que hace referencia a las transformaciones que dicha labour clínica ha generado en ellos, cómo van siendo diferentes en tanto han ido deviniendo otros como sujetos políticos que se resisten a la normalización y se hacen aprendices de territorios artísticos y artesanos de la propia vida.

Conclusiones: La labour de devenir otro es un proceso poético, estético y ético en tanto creación bella de la propia existencia. Estas transformaciones se vinculan con presencias, contextos sociales, políticos, artísticos, labour reflexiva y crítica sobre sí mismo.

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Background

Historically, lesbians and gays have been discriminated against as a subculture removed from the family nucleus because they have been viewed as more sexual than social beings.¹ They have been portrayed as eternal singles, going from one relationship to another. Until the 20th century, this condition was even classified as mental illness.^{2,3} Until the 1980s, homosexuality was a crime included in the Colombian penal code, punishable by imprisonment.^{4,5}

However, the recent Colombian policy of Sexuality, Sexual and Reproductive Rights 2014–2021⁶ advocates prevention of any form of discrimination or stigma of non-heterosexual forms. The law focuses on rights and creates mechanisms for people to exercise and demand their rights to overcome inequality and live their sexuality more fully. In terms of legislation, significant progress was made from 1991 to 2000⁷ in terms of educational, labour and patrimonial rights and health inclusion. However, in relation to the recognition of homosexual families and adoption, there have been historical obstacles based on the heterosexist practices and discourses of the Catholic Church and moralist and conservative sectors of society, among others. Against that kind of pressure, the Constitutional Court encourages progress while Congress refrains from legislating.⁸

In agreement with some court proceedings in Colombia relating to this subject, in 2003 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Catholic Faith considered that homosexual unions went against the natural law.

It must be pointed out that political, social, medical, legal and religious discourse has, throughout history, conducted a

campaign of antipathy, condemnation, aversion, fear and prescription of homosexual behaviour that, according to a term coined in 1960, can be defined as homophobia.^{3,5,9} One of the bases of this fear is to think that homosexuality disrupts the sexual and gender order and alters the natural, social, political, legal, ethical and moral order of society. Homophobia has close ties to other forms of social exclusion such as racism and anti-Semitism. To nurture these messages and ensure they remain socially active, a particular stereotype is cultivated that circulates in the social world and keeps these minorities excluded. Homophobia is much stronger with gay men, who are despised for acting like women. Throughout history there has been more tolerance towards lesbians; until recent times lesbianism was almost invisible. This may have to do with the lack of visibility traditionally experienced by women in general.⁹

Family therapy, psychiatry and mental health professionals have not been immune to these messages, as demonstrated by research and the teaching and training of researchers, teachers, students and therapists. According to a study by Clark et al.,¹⁰ articles on same-sex couples published in couple and family journals between 1975 and 1995 accounted for less than 0.006%. Research on homosexuality in the 1980s prioritised the conversion of homosexual identity into heterosexual identity. In 1996, a study conducted with 526 members of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy showed that about 50% of them did not feel competent to work with lesbians and gay men. In the therapeutic field, discriminatory practices such as conversion therapies are currently being performed in order to “repair” this “disorder”.¹¹ Some psychiatrists still consider homosexuality as a disease and associate it with comorbidities

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