

From invisibility to homophobia *continuum*: Socio-cultural barriers for LGBTI families in Colombia

De la invisibilidad al *continuum* de homofobia: Barreras socioculturales para las familias LGBTI en Colombia

Clara Pantoja Bohórquez^{1*}, Karen Martínez Grisales¹, Juliana Jaramillo Jaramillo², Jair Restrepo Pineda¹

1 Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios (UNIMINUTO), Bogotá, Cundinamarca, Colombia

2 Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Cundinamarca, Colombia

* cpantoja@uniminuto.edu

Received: August 12, 2019

Aceptado: January 25, 2020

Background

Over the last decade, Colombia has made significant progress in recognizing the rights of LGBTI people. However, regarding the family issue, a strong political debate persists, motivated by the opposition against the possibility that same-sex couples can raise children. In recent years, the literature has made considerable progress in investigating the transformations of contemporary families that are far from the traditional nuclear model of the modern era. Regarding the LGBTI population, some of the most studied topics are the trajectories and relational dynamics of LGBTI families, the experience of motherhood and fatherhood, the meanings associated with the notion of family, the social support networks that LGBTI families have, and the challenges that these families pose to the notion of kinship.

Aims

The objective of the article is to address the major sociocultural barriers faced by families characterized by their sexual diversity and gender identity.

Method & Procedure

This is a qualitative, exploratory and descriptive study, with an interpretative approach. Through non-probabilistic sampling, semistructured interviews were conducted with 44 LGBTI activists who lead social organizations and work with LGBTI families in seven departments of the Colombian Andean region. Data analysis was developed through content analysis.

Results & Discussion

Participants of this study have a conception of family based on aspects of bonding and relational order. No important differences were identified regarding the organization, roles, and functions that occur in LGBTI families, compared to heteronormative families.

These conceptions are related to the concept of non-traditional kinship (Butler, 2004); Regarding parentality, authors agree with other researchers who argue that sexual orientation is not a central aspect for these families, being more important the establishment of emotional bonds and the provision of the fundamental resources that their children require for the construction of their subjectivity.

Social stigmatization is recognized as the main barrier that LGBTI families currently face in the regions studied. In Colombia, the binary vision of gender and compulsory heterosexuality prevail as the norm. LGBTI families continue to experience stigmas related to abnormality, mental illness, instability in relationships, among others. Results also show the presence of self-stigmatization, which influences participant's self-recognition as a family and their decision to become parents.

Participants point out that LGBTI families exist regardless of the social recognition they may have in the country. Many families prefer to become invisible and conceal their affective ties, their relationships, and parental relations, as a protection mechanism. In addition, external invisibility appears when the existence of these family typologies are silenced, their legitimacy is denied under the discourse of acceptance and tolerance, but without recognition.

When individuals decide to be open about their sex-affective bonds, they must face a continuum of homophobia, discrimination, and violence. These practices act as forms of control in the daily life of the subjects, from the families of origin, in the school-job context, and state institutions, reproducing the hegemonic cultural and religious burdens, which prevents sociocultural openness to these diverse family conformations.

These concrete practices of hostility and sexism are manifestations of heteronormativity as a regulator principle in the construction of gendered subjectivities and a strategy of normalization of those gender manifestations that distance themselves from the hegemonic model. They also define the conformation and legitimization of families from compulsory heterosexuality. This brings as a consequence, social isolation, concealment, ignorance and violation of their rights in family, social, and institutional spaces.

Conclusion

This article addresses the frames of possibility where the collective action of resistance carried out by families and social organizations in the territories is developed. The barriers identified allow us to conclude that the materialization of rights at the legal level must be accompanied by transformative actions on symbolic aspects, both in microsocial spaces such as family and school, as well as in macrosocial areas such as state institutions and policy implementation. It is in these scenarios where are produced and reproduced both hegemonic power and counter power and resistance exercises.

Politicizing and making visible LGBTI families in these scenarios contributes to desessentialize and challenge the hegemonic family models associated with reproduction and procreation, and opens the possibility of thinking about the establishment of new forms of affective relationships and expressions.

Keywords: compulsory heterosexuality, family, LGBTI, stigma

References

- Butler, J. (1990/2007). *El género en disputa: el feminismo y la subversión de la identidad*. Paidós.
- Castro, B. (2016). *La homoparentalidad como opción de familia: reflexión en torno a estudios de caso en Popayán, Colombia* (2014). Editorial Universidad del Cauca.
- Foucault, M. (1987/2001). *Historia de la sexualidad* (Vol. 3). Siglo XXI.
- Jong, E. (2010). *Familia: representaciones y significados; una lucha entre semejanzas y diferencias*. Espacio Editorial.
- Vargas, E., Ripoll, K., Carrillo, S., Rueda, M., & Castro, J. (2011). *Experiencias familiares de madres y padres orientaciones sexuales diversas: Aportes de la investigación*. Ediciones Uniandes-Universidad de los Andes.

Acknowledgements: To the leaders of all the social organizations that voluntarily accepted to participate in this research.

Financial support: Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, Bogotá, Cundinamarca, Colombia.

How to cite this article: Pantoja Bohórquez, C., Martínez Grisales, K., Jaramillo Jaramillo, J., Restrepo Pineda, J. (2020). De la invisibilidad al *continuum* de homofobia: Barreras socioculturales para las familias LGBTI en Colombia. *Psicoperspectivas*, 19(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.5027/psicoperspectivas-vol19-issue1-fulltext-1758>



Published under license [Creative Commons Attribution International 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)