

Feminism and masculinities: Political and existential transformation in the narratives of antipatriarchal male activists

Feminismo y masculinidades: Transformación política y existencial en la narrativa de hombres activistas antipatriarcales

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Background

Theoretical and political ruptures of feminism opened the door to think critically about masculinity. Together, these theoretical efforts promoted the creation of groups of men who meet and act to transform masculinity and propose alternative forms of subjectivation in accordance with the values of justice, equality, and non-violence. However, this relationship is not without criticism. From different sectors this approach of men with feminist theories has been celebrated, but it has also been pointed out how many of these appropriations tend to put men back at the center of the discussion and to make the political critique of feminisms invisible.

Aims

In this work we analyze the narratives of men who participate in these anti-patriarchal collectives. Our interest is to understand the relationship between men and feminist theories, to emphasize the ways in which feminist ideas are articulated in the narration of their experience and what function this has within their experience of activism.

Method & procedures

We have carried out a qualitative investigation. The study included twelve Latin American men who actively participate in groups of patriarchal men. In-depth narrative interviews were conducted. They inquired about their experience of activism and transformation; about the situations that led them to embark on this process. For the information processing, a functional analysis of the narrative was carried out, specifically in relation to the mentions of feminism. With this procedure we seek to ask ourselves and hypothesize about the role that feminism plays in the global narrative.

Results & discussion

The results are organized in two sections. The first gives an account of feminism as a theoretical and conceptual framework of action. The relationship of feminism appears as an instrument that allows naming and structuring a framework of intelligibility that places the problem of masculinity in a critical context and provides the instruments to guide transformation processes. In this sense, feminism emerges in its political condition and offers a theoretical framework to make a reading of masculinity in a context of power relations. In the second section there is a variability in the narrative. The role of feminism in the transformation process is presented in a more intimate context and is related to the existential options that the participants find from their proposal. In this section the link with feminism focuses on men's own relationship with the patriarchal structure, its limitations, and the possibilities of being and acting that they find in feminist ideas.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, we conclude that in their narratives the relationship with feminism is presented both in its critical perspective, as well as in its personal and intimate perspective. As a conceptual framework for action, the relationship with feminism allows us to return to the political positions of feminisms and focuses attention on the social structure that organizes gender relations. However, feminism is also narrated within a more intimate context that allows us to understand how feminist ideas also have a personal influence on these men. These ideas allow us to conclude that

the question of masculinity and the relationship of men with feminism must respond to an ethical-political approach. By this we mean the potential for personal transformation that feminism has for men, without forgetting the criticisms and political potential behind these ideas.

Keywords: feminism, gender studies, new masculinities

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