Article: 297
Topic: 57 - Others

THE DIALECTICS BETWEEN SECRECY AND OPENNESS AMONG COUPLES OF MIXED-ORIENTATION MARRIAGES

A. Adler, *A. Ben-Ari*
School of Social Work, University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel

The phenomenon of homosexual men who are married to women (Mixed-orientation marriage) is usually invisible, but its frequency is not insignificant. In some cases the men discloses their sexual orientation to their wives, in other cases they choose to conceal it. Despite the fundamental differences between the two situations, both are experienced as complex and challenging and require different modes of coping. This presentation takes an insider's perspective and puts a spotlight on the dialectics between secrecy and openness - a major aspect characterizing the lives of spouses in mixed-orientation marriages.
Thirty eight in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with heterosexually married homosexual men. In 22 of the cases the wives were aware of their husband´s homosexuality and in 16 cases they were unaware. In addition, 8 interviews were conducted with women who are aware of their husband´s homosexuality.
Interviews revealed rich information regarding the dynamics of secrecy and openness in mixed-orientation marriages. The main finding challenges the conventional dichotomy between secrecy and disclosure. It appears that in both situations (when the wife is aware/unaware) there is a constant tension between secrecy and disclosure. When the wife is unaware, disclosure appears in one form or another. Similarly, when husband´s sexual orientation is known to the wife, secrecy remains an important aspect of the relationship and it is expressed in several different ways.
In our presentation we will discuss the concept of ´Dialectics´, in an attempt to better understand the dynamics of secrecy and disclosure in the context of mixed-orientation marriages.

https://doi.org/10.1016/S0924-9338(13)75720-1 Published online by Cambridge University Press