

The Lived Experience of Religious Homosexual Men in Heterosexual Marriages

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Religious homosexual men in heterosexual marriages are a minority who are twice marginalized because of their distinctiveness – in general and in religious societies, and within the homosexual community. On one hand, their religious faith (in the Pentateuch) forbids them from engaging in homosexual relations. The broadest of the currently-accepted interpretations of this religious sanction prohibit, and despise, any outward sign of “homosexual identity”. On the other hand, most of these men avoid LGBT meeting places, which they perceive as fundamentally different from, if not opposed to, their faith and lifestyle. Living as members of a collectivist, traditional society that sanctifies the values of marriage and family, these men experience an intensified identity conflict, which is played out in the gulf among their religious faith and affiliation, their heterosexual marital status, and their inherent same-sex orientation. This study opens a first window on the lived experience of these men, who live in fear of been exposed and alienated by their community. It focuses on how they cope with their complex reality. This study is being conducted according to the qualitative perspective. It is based on the findings of an analysis of twenty narrative interviews, which were conducted with homosexual men who define themselves as religious and who are (or were) married to a woman. The findings reveal that, to relieve their dissonance, these men choose to change the subjective meaning and value of one of the three angles of their triangular reality: their attitude regarding their same-sex orientation, their attitude regarding their religion and faith, or their attitude towards their marriage and wife. In this way, they attempt to balance their emotional experience, and thereby cope more effectively with their unique conundrum. By allowing for an understanding of their perspective and behaviors, this study may facilitate the formulation of a model of intervention that will ease their emotional distress.

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