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DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION ABOUT “BEING A MAN” IN USERS OF GROUP THERAPY SUED FOR INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE. ANALYSIS FROM DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract: From a discursive constructionist framework, the identity narratives of “being a man” were analyzed in the speech of users of a group psychotherapy service in a state government institution for perpetrators of intimate partner violence. Users’ speech fragments were selected when they reported intimate partner violence events and when they referred to a self-description of being a man. The fragments were categorized and analyzed using the methodology of Discursive Psychology. The results indicate two identity discourses about “being a man”: an individual description, nuanced by the dominant discourse of the culture of being a man without a situational referent, and the description of “being a man” when they narrate a violent event with their partner. The individual description was characterized by a distant position, describing themselves as products of nature/society/teaching and with little capacity for personal agency. On the other hand, when they report events of violence in the couple, they attribute their acts as triggered by the actions of their partners/wives, they minimize the impact and responsibility of their actions. The relevance of considering a social, constructionist and discursive approach instead of a social/biological deterministic approach to identity is discussed.

Keywords: Man, identity, couple, violence, narratives.

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (2013), 35% of women have been victims of violence by their partner, emphasizing that violence against women is a public health problem that requires the health sector offer services to victims of violence, with new guidelines in clinics. Making a geographical approach to the subject in Mexico, the National Institute of Statistics

and Geography (INEGI) carries out every five pipes the National Survey on the Dynamics of Relationships in Households (ENDIREH) which is the main source of information that allows capturing the areas of occurrence of violence experienced by women in Mexico, the last results of the ENDIREH were in 2016 in which it is made visible that the violence exerted by the partner has been a widespread phenomenon, since in the country approximately 44 out of 100 women have experienced violence throughout their relationship.

The psychological discourse on family and gender violence has recently permeated the social sphere. This is shown by the diversity of care or community service programs developed in Mexico by the federal and state governments, the creation and modification of laws, dissemination campaigns through the media, the formation of non-governmental organizations aimed at helping women and so-called vulnerable groups, and the development and publication of statistics that provide data on various forms of expression of gender, marital, family violence and in other areas.

The presence of studies investigating the discourses or narratives developed by men identified as generators of violence has been scarce but progressive in recent years. This situation is probably associated with the relatively recent implementation of government programs aimed at care and prevention of violence, which has allowed direct access to users. As a consequence, some studies have been carried out aimed at the characterization of men, the dynamics of violence or the evaluation of treatment programs, among others. In Latin America, for example, there is the study developed by Belo and Freire (2005) who, from a qualitative methodology with a descriptive scope, identified through a semi-structured interview

the forms of expression of violence in the marital relationship, as well as the causes of its occurrence according to the thematic analysis of the responses of 10 married or recently divorced men from a Brazilian community.

Although it is true that studies have been published that quantify and characterize the problem of male violence, there are no studies that analyze the discourses of men and their relationship with the context of production, that is, with the situation in which they live. unfolds the discourse, and for the purposes of this document, the discourse of men who are in a legal process accused of exercising violence towards their partner is particularly analyzed. In a search carried out in this vein, only two studies were found in Brazil (Boira, Carbajosa and Marcuello 2013; Reis de Sousa, Pereira, Matheus, do Nascimento, Pereira and Menezes, 2018) that carry out inquiries with this specific population but that do not include as part of its analysis is the context of production, that is, the time and place where the information is obtained.

In accordance with the above, it can be added that research in Psychology has been predominantly approached from the paradigm of inherited science, however, there are a series of questions that cannot be answered with the methods derived from this paradigm and that are related with those that derive from problematizing spoken interaction in everyday life contexts and institutional speech (Heritage, 1997; Pomerantz, 2002). This way, discursive constructionism has been developed as a theoretical and methodological alternative to study different contexts of speech. Discursive constructionism emerges as a reflection from discursive psychology and social constructionism, to account for the relevance of the role of language in the construction of human experience. A fundamental assumption of this perspective consists in assuming that speech is factualizing,

that is, that it creates facts.

In this sense, according to Potter (1998), one aspect that differentiates discursive constructionism from other analytical approaches is that it focuses its interest on the study of the way in which psychological themes and concepts of different kinds are constituted in speech. (and the text) under the consideration that these processes are managed in an interactive-situated way. The analysis of the interaction considered in fine detail (micro analytically) is emphasized and attempts to offer a novel perspective to approach the study of the uses that people make of the description of psychological phenomena. This ranges from the study of psychological terms in people's everyday speech to the study of the use (and constitution) of psychological terms and specialized psychological studies that include the theories and practices of academic psychology.

Therefore, the research question arises: ¿What are the identity discourses that are constructed by men identified as generators of violence in group therapy sessions? Starting from a discursive constructionist framework, the identity narratives of "being a man" were analyzed in the speech of users of a group psychotherapy service for perpetrators of intimate partner violence, in a state government institution.

METHODOLOGY

The unit of analysis was the identity narratives of "being a man" in the speech of 14 users of a group psychotherapy service for generators of intimate partner violence, in a state government agency in Mexico City, where complaints are handled. family and gender violence. For this, field work was carried out requesting authorizations to be able to attend and record the therapy sessions. It must be noted that the men who attend these spaces do not come voluntarily, but are asked

to attend as a first preventive measure and as a way to mitigate the exercise of justice since it encourages the user to take it as a initiative on your part to solve the problem.

For the present investigation, two sessions were analyzed in which there were “trigger” themes by the therapist. In one session the question that started the group psychotherapy was “why am I a man?” and in the other session they were asked to narrate an event of violence that they had with their partner. Therefore, 22 fragments of their speaking turns were obtained as a corpus when they referred to a self-description of being a man and when they reported events of partner violence, these fragments were categorized and analyzed using the methodology of Discursive Psychology (Potter, 1998). Aspects related to psychological intervention are not reported here.

RESULTS

The results indicate two identity discourses about “being a man”: an individual description, nuanced by the dominant discourse of the culture of being a man without a situational referent, and the description of “being a man” when they narrate a violent event with their partner.

The descriptions that users give about being a man are made from a distant position, which means that they do not see it as something that depends on them, but as something that was given externally, as products of nature, society or teaching “I am man because::by nature, that is how I was born” “I am a man because that is how God wanted it” (see examples of their speech in table 1), therefore, they consider that in their biological nature there is something that allows them to constitute themselves as being a man. In this sense, it must be noted that from this position the notion that they can decide how to be a man or why to be a man is not present, which would imply that there is

little or no capacity for personal agency.

Single description
“I am a man because:by nature, that is how I was born”
“I am a man because God wanted it that way”
“because for sex...well, because it would be...because I support my family”
“I am a man because I support my family because I have children”
“I had to be of the masculine gender, I am a man by the way I am”

Table 1. Fragments categorized within the individual description of “why am I a man?”

Regarding the description that users make of “being a man” when they narrate an event of violence with their partner, it is identified that their identity is constructed in their story as “operative” in the sense that they describe what they suppose they have to do. in their normative social role (maintain, work, duty, the one who draws the line, who provides economic sustenance) for example: “I’m already tired of maintaining, of working, of worrying about being the one I must. Because they taught me (), they told me that it had to be that way.” Although it is observed in some of the examples that users use words to refer to their person as “violent”, “briago”, “drogo”. “little man” they do so by pointing out that they are the ones who call them that using literalness (quoting their words using the active voice).

In this group of fragments, who he is, what he is like or what he does results from the description he makes of the violent event with his partner. Although their position is close in the description of said experience, they omit to speak or describe or define their behavior as violent, and only allude to it as a way of reacting to something that is foreign to them “suddenly your income goes down and that’s why maybe your wife sues you for family violence” (see examples of her speech in

table 2). This implies that they attribute their actions as triggered by something associated with their partner's actions, they do not take responsibility for their violent reaction, but describe their behavior as a response to something they say or do (for example, as a reaction to her doing it). accuses of being violent, that he takes drugs, that he commits excesses, that he does not contribute enough money, that he compares her) or because of his "destiny" (dominant narrative of being a man that does not fit his experience) in such a way that they end up victimizing themselves in a story that, however, evidences them.

Description in violent event
"because I'm fed up with being accused of being violent, that I turn around, that: I arrive bria:go, that I take drugs, that I'm causing chaos out there in the street, that they stop me from the living room of my house because she is doing the housework"
<i>"I'm already tired of maintaining, of working, of worrying, being the one I must because they taught me that they told me I had to be like that "</i>
"I want e- that they tell me e-e "there you have it bastard" that is, today you did not get the complete line but you worked hard all week [...] but you do not give her what she is used to or or- or she wants more and they screw you or the fight starts aggression pa-pa-pa (and she tells you) "Fucking little man, that's what you were good for, I would have better married someone else"
"Suddenly your income drops and that's why maybe your wife (just starts screaming) files a lawsuit against you for family violence."
"right now even the comparisons say that it is violence, well at least I was not aware of the fact that you had to live with your wife and the vanity of a woman "

Table 2. Fragments categorized within the description of the violent event¹

In this analysis, the situation that gives context to their statements is considered relevant: speaking in front of a group of men who attend psychotherapy in an institution where they attend "forced" by a lawsuit filed by their partners, they do not present a voluntary

¹ Some symbols that appear in the fragments indicate forms of expression in oral discourse that follow transcription conventions proposed by Gail Jefferson (Bassi, 2015). The original transcript is completely coded, however, in this document it was decided to remove a good part of the coding to facilitate reading for those who are not familiar with these codes.

request for said service and although it is an open group, which any man can attend, it ends up being homogeneous (men who generate violence). Likewise, it was observed that their narratives of experiences of violence generated consensus and corroboration on the part of the other users who listened to them (laughs, affirmations, attribution of blame to the partner), expressing disagreement with the "mandate" of being men, and the who is a minority remains silent.

DISCUSSION

The relevance of the use of the methodological approach used to analyze the institutional discourse generated in the practices of Psychology, and particularly in Psychotherapy, is highlighted, because it highlights aspects that some people mistakenly consider to be private, but which actually result from a complex network of processes to consider when addressing the issue of gender violence. Therefore, considering a constructionist and discursive approach in the study and care of violence makes it possible to make visible structural aspects of human practices that are usually not very visible or are silenced. Analyzing the users' discourse allows articulating the narrated experience and the lived experience as cultural stories (masculine?) that need to be considered to address the problem of violence both at the level of clinical intervention and social-cultural intervention.

Therefore, the analysis of the fragments allows us to identify the complexity of the processes involved in the construction of stories about violence. In this case, the role of the interaction between the users is highlighted as a fundamental aspect in the construction of the narrated plot, which turns out to be a joint production, pertinent to the situation for

which the interlocutors meet and that at the same time gives account of the institutional framework of their interaction (and therefore of their positions). On the other hand, consideration of the joint construction of experience reports related to violence makes it possible to identify dominant discourses from different frameworks in which the interlocutors can be situated and the ways in which their positions are undermined, confirmed or negotiated.

The relevance of considering a social, constructionist and discursive approach instead of a social/biological deterministic approach to identity is discussed. Psychological

interventions from the first approach enable the development of alternative narratives that allow users to reflect on social mandates, free themselves from them and build discourses closer to their relational experience of “being a man” where the demands and demands of living as a couple can be assumed by them from an ethic of responsibility in their actions.

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