

Homosexuality in Hetero-sexist and Collectivist Context: From the Experience of Homophobia and the Anxiety of Socio-cultural Rejection to Identity Strategies

Tamo Fogue Yannick

Assistant-Lecturer at the Department of Specialized Education,
University of Yaoundé 1, Cameroon

Tsagho Tchimeji Alex Djibril

PhD student at the Department of Philosophy-Psychology-Sociology,
University of Dschang, Cameroon

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Abstract

This study raises the problem of failures in the construction of identity strategies among homosexuals in a homophobic and collectivist cultural context. It is guided by the models of identity strategies of Bajoit (2000) and Mellini (2009), and aims to understand their mechanisms of socio-cultural adaptation. Through the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (API), we analyzed the speeches of two 24-year-olds and one 25-year-old, from Bamileke culture, encountered in a care structure for PLHIV and LGBTI at the West-Cameroon. Uninfected, they totaled scores of 10 to 11 on the Kinsey homosexual orientation scale translated by Tsagho (2014), and self-identify as homosexuals with genito-anal investment. It shows that they internalize a potentially vulnerable hetero-normative cultural signifier, due to their socialization in a culture that claims to be vitalist and whose cohesion and durability through procreation take precedence over personal aspirations/orientations. What reveals in their experience, a strong valence of anxiety of socio-cultural rejection. To manage these anxiety-provoking effects, they implement identity strategies such as hiding, denial, repair and avoidance. Indeed, because of the culturally hetero-sexist denial pact to

which they have unconsciously subscribed, they camouflage themselves mainly in facade heterosexual unions, where they conceal their homosexual relations/relationships on the basis of friendship, without being discovered. What keeps them safe from suicide, abundantly noted in the literature (Firdion & Verdier, 2007) on psychiatric epidemiology in homosexuals.

Keywords: Homosexuality, hetero-sexist context, homophobia, socio-cultural rejection anxiety, identity strategies

Introduction

Despite the relatively favorable climate on the question of homosexuality, the experience of this orientation remains difficult in several societies. However, developmental difficulties and disorders, as well as psychopathological decompensations in people with a homosexual orientation, attribute to homophobia perceived as hostility towards them (Borillo, 2014; Fraïsse & Barrientos, 2016) and which seems more accentuated in collectivist cultures, a proven etiology. Indeed, the rejection of homosexuality in these contexts is underpinned by ethno-theories or anthropomorphic beliefs to which every individual has been precociously conditioned, and which have transformed their basic identity. It is in such a context that the homosexual must develop his felt, desired or committed identity, by deconstructing that which is socio-culturally assigned to him, because of internalized heterosexism. This is liable to rejection by otherness taken as a collective subject, synonymous with death (Assohoto, 2002), inducing the mobilization of defense mechanisms, which express a devaluation of the self and a relatively severe identity crisis. To build his homosexual identity and develop his bond with the other, the individual caught in a paradoxical cultural system, must necessarily deconstruct this internalized homophobia, via a psychic reorganization which creates identity tensions whose analysis is essential in any collectivistic cultural context.

1. Problem statement

The scientific literature on personality development demonstrates that several biological, psychological and socio-cultural factors significantly determine the construction of both individual and group identity of the subject. Indeed, every individual, during his development in the family, at school, internalizes cultural norms that guide his personality, his orientations and his basic aptitudes (Retschitzki, 2011; Scali & Guichard, 2008; Simonnot, 2014, January 30). In most African cultures, and particularly the Bamiléké culture, values being heterosexist, are only grasped in relation to developmental ethnotheories and anthropomorphic practices that furnish the imagination or collectivist thought specific to the sociocultural environment

to which the individual is precociously conditioned and which transforms its basic identity (Supper & Harkness, 1986). Thus, we find ourselves in a polynuclear relational network that transcends earthly existence to include the ancestors (Menick, 2013), and whose preservation is beneficial for the harmony and survival of a lineage obeying the generational round (Stam, 1995).

In this context, homosexuality is at the antipodes of social heteronorms, by denying the difference of gender culturally linked to the sexes (Plus, 2014; Tournier, 2011). Apprehended as a sterile sexuality without any nominative, or qualifying or even cultural symbolic name (Tsagho, 2014), it is opposed to the African cosmogonic conception in general which wants to be vitalist and dynamic (Sow, 1978), and is perceived by the community as a cosmic disorder likely to cause serious damage to its unity and cohesion (Latoki, 2010).

With this cultural signifier, knowing that one's sexuality deviates from the culturally pre-established heterosexual pact in the collective unconscious, generates an intrapsychic conflict which requires a readjustment between one's homosexual identity, felt, desired, engaged or not by the subject, and the identity assigned to him by his collectivist homophobic entourage to which he unflinching seeks to conform (Bajoit, 2000). Indeed, the need for social recognition being fundamental in every human being, the homosexual strongly seeks family acceptance to erase the shame felt (Ryan, s.d.). Because an ambivalence characterized by intra-oriented or extra-oriented "tensions" (Mellini, 2009) can arise between these different identity components, even if his homosexuality is committed for himself or for others (similar). Intra-oriented tensions concern the individual in his relationship to himself (subjective level of identity), and are resolved when he accepts his felt identity, desires it and commits to becoming homosexual for himself. On the other hand, the extra-oriented tensions concern the individual in his relationship to others (objective level of identity) and will remain if the latter refuses to tell his homosexuality to the "more significant others" who are people of his heterosexual entourage, which counts the most for him in terms of "identity recognition and social valorization" (Mellini, 2009). These people, since they have no information about his desired and/or committed identity, will continue to assign him a heterosexual identity imposed on him by the negative pact to which he has unconsciously subscribed, because of his membership in the community whose cohesion take precedence over personal aspirations (Baecque, 2010). Thus, the work of constructing personal identity consists in reconciling what he is and has been, on the one hand with what he would like to be and on the other hand with what he believes that others would like him to be.

However, the notion of identity implies being oneself while being similar to others. As a planning strategy, it “oscillates between radical otherness and total similarity” (Bajoit, 2000), and aims to adapt to a very specific context. Thus, we distinguish: clandestinity or camouflage, where the subject who discovers his homosexual orientation, agrees to become so for himself, but not for other different people (Mellini, 2009). He interacts actively with the homosexual milieu while continuing to appear as heterosexual outside the gay world; the arrangement, where one undertakes to tell one's homosexuality to other different people who are in most cases family members (Demczuk, Dorais, Peers, & Ryan, 2010); posting, where disclosure of orientation is more extensive, the subject publicly adopts the homosexual lifestyle by fully identifying with the gay subculture and developing hostility towards heterosexuality, or engaging in the defense of gay rights; denial where despite the significance of his impulses and attraction towards people of the same sex, the subject does not define himself as homosexual, refuses to become so both for himself and for others.

In doing so, one can develop other strategies such as avoidance based on reaction formation, redefinition which consists of living one's homosexuality underground, reparation based on the search for ways and means to become heterosexual, self-cancellation underpinned by suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, suicide, substance use (Mellini, 2009). These identity strategies are actions that the homosexual develops there to defend his psychic integrity. They are oriented according to the interaction and the context in which they occur. Thus, how can a young homosexual adult remain different while seeking recognition from others in a Bamileke cultural context that claims to be collectivist, and which assigns him an identity without taking into account his personal aspirations? In other words, how can he build his individual and social identity in a cultural context where everyone is presumed to be heterosexual, and where, unable to find real identification and transference leverage, he will feel obliged to keep his homosexual orientation secret?

1.1. The present research

The management of the anxiety-provoking effects linked to the experience of homosexuality in the dynamics of the link to the other, requires the resolution of the tensions between different identities, through the implementation of effective identity strategies. These defense mechanisms aim to deal with hostilities, stigmatizations and discriminations, systematically manifested towards them by the socio-cultural environment and which constitute potential risks of developmental asynchrony and psychopathological decompensations. In the Bamileke cultural context, social integration constituting a vital need and where exclusion is

synonymous with death (Assohoto, 2002), these contextual difficulties that homosexual people encounter in their identity journey are due to the homophobia that expressed in several forms (Konig, 2017). In the literature, we distinguish: the homophobia of language which is manifested by insults; personal homophobia expressed through feelings of avoidance and verbal abuse; institutional homophobia manifested by laws discriminating against them (Amnesty International, 2013; Cameroonian Penal Code, Article 341-1, 2016); socio-cultural homophobia, which is expressed by socio-cultural norms favoring heterosexuality (Latoki, 2010); internalized homophobia, which refers to the internalization of heterosexist prejudices and social norms by homosexuals themselves (Beck, Firdion, Legleye, & Schiltz, 2011; Rezo Santé, 2013).

In the present study, we approach the development of the socio-adaptive aptitudes of young adults with a homosexual orientation, both in the phase of "coming in" and "coming out", within the perspective of the deployment of the different strategies of self-identification declined in the literature (Scali & Guichard, 2008), and by setting in motion the heterosexist and collectivist socio-cultural context in which they live. By analyzing the psychic mechanisms and identity strategies following the homosexuality felt, desired or not by a subject, we subscribe to the logic of scientific work which, since the 1990s in France and 2000 in the Anglo-Saxon world, accounts for the emotional and socio-adaptive developmental difficulties in homosexuals (Charbonnier & Graziani, 2011; Firdion & Verdier, 2007; Velter, 2004). They induce psychopathological problems dependent on the anxiety of rejection, an extension of the anxiety of abandonment arising from the narcissistic problem doomed to failure and resulting in a difficulty of control, negating the feeling of helplessness in the patient. subject during its development. Faced with this anal drive blockage against a backdrop of scotomization and sadomasochism (Freud, quoted by Jean-Claude, 2016), the failing ideal ego exposes the homosexual subject to permanent depressive anxiety, linked to a feeling of abandonment considered here as rejection. socio-cultural, leading to a failure/diffusion of the constructed identity and requiring the deployment of identity strategies specific to its heteronormative cultural environment. However, with regard to the factors influencing the theoretically established identity, the issue of the cultural signifier has not yet been explored as a potential source of self-devaluation and identity diffusion among young homosexual adults in an African cultural context. This research therefore raises the problem of failures in the development of identity strategies in young homosexual adults of Bamileke cultural origin who want to be heterosexist and collectivist.

1.2. Research objective

This research aims to analyze the subjective experience of young homosexual adults in the hetero-existent and collectivist Bamileke context, and to identify their mechanisms of identity construction and regulation of intrapsychic conflicts in connection with the unveiling of their homosexuality to a more significant and/or wider.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The choice of the three (03) participants of this research obeyed the logic of the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (API) which recommends that the size of the sample be generally small in order to favor the idiographic analysis (from 03 cases – maximum 10) (Ribau et al., 2005). They are all of Bamileke culture, including two aged 24 and one aged 25. They were met in a care structure for PLHIV and LGBTI, located in West Cameroon, where we identified six uninfected people with homosexual orientation, including three adolescents who totaled scores of 8, 9 and 11. on the Kinsey sexual orientation scale translated by Tsagho (2014), and having not “comed in”, and three young adults selected for this study because they had homosexual relationships with affective and genital investment, self-identifying as such, one having totaled a score of 10 and two others of 11 on the scale. This ensured that our participants did not practice homosexuality for profit or magico-ritual ends, but did so as a psychically established mode of libidinal investment. We excluded adolescents because of the problematic nature of homosexuality at this important period of development (Ryan & Frappier, 1994). In addition, the majority of people with a homosexual orientation declare their sexual identity at the end of adolescence, particularly between the ages of 19 and 21 (Gueboguo, 2007).

2.2. Material and procedure

The participants were first subjected to the Kinsey sexual orientation scale translated by Tsagho (2014), which we adapted to 9 items with an internal consistency between $\alpha = .84$ and $\alpha = .91$, in order to ensure the effectiveness of their sexual inclination. Coded on the Likert scale with variant scores, it makes it possible to know what position one occupies on the continuum of sexual orientation, by evaluating: how much one is attracted to people of the opposite sex (Item 1: 0 = very strongly; 1 = moderately; 2 = not at all); attraction, dreaming of a sexual encounter, aroused fantasies and voluntary sexual contact by or with people of the same sex, sexual arousal when witnessing a sexual encounter between them (on a video); readiness to have homosexual relations (Item 8: 0 = no; 1 = maybe; 2 = yes); the frequency of fantasies or dreams, as well as homosexual relations

(Items 6 and 9: 0 = never; 1 = rare or occasional; 2 = frequent). The scores obtained from 0 to 1 = exclusively heterosexual, from 2 to 3 = predominantly heterosexual, from 4 to 5 = predominantly heterosexual with homosexual tendencies, from 6 to 7 = both heterosexual and homosexual, from 8 to 9 = predominantly homosexual with heterosexual tendencies, from 10 to 11 = predominantly homosexual and from 12 to 13 = exclusively homosexual.

Given the temporal, historical and personal character of homosexuality that we approach in a purely phenomenological and cognitive-behavioural dynamic, the speeches were collected through semi-directive interviews favoring free expression and respecting the "epochè". , with an interview guide developed for the specific needs of this study, organized around the subject's life story, the experience of his homosexuality, his relationship with similar or different, significant or large others, and with his culture. , its identity building strategies. The data are processed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), for the simple reason that it essentially applies to data collected by interview and gives meaning to the experience of homophobia. in the young homosexual adult, his perceptions, his biography, his history, and allows us to enter into his subjectivity to describe his "phenomenal field" (Giorgi, 1975), relating to the cultural signifier of his homosexuality, anthropologically perceived as sterile. It took place in three sections, and on the basis of case studies: (1) identification of units of meaning; (2) Descriptive Protocol and Content Development; (3) data analysis or synthesis of significant themes.

3. Results

3.1. Identification of units of significance

The interview with case no. 1, whom we nicknamed "Paul", who is 24 years old, a working student, single and father of a 4-year-old daughter, lasted 39 minutes. He defines himself as bisexual with homosexual predominance and is "exclusively active" (Mayi, 2007), totaling a score of 11 on the sexual orientation scale. The only boy to his parents, he experienced his first homosexual relations at the age of 16 with his classmate. The support of his parents, who he says are well aware of his sexual orientation, contributed to his self-identification as homosexual. With case no. 2 nicknamed "José", a 25-year-old student, single and childless, the interview lasted 43 minutes. He defines himself as bisexual with homosexual predominance, active and passive and also totals a score of 11 on the sexual orientation scale. He, he says, "felt same-sex attraction from a very young age," but had his first sexual encounter with a man when he was 22. He lives his homosexuality in total secrecy and maintains heterosexual relations just to camouflage his orientation. As for case no. 3 nicknamed "Jean", also a 24-

year-old single student without children, the interview lasted 36 minutes. The latter is unaware of his sexual role, because having become aware of his homosexual orientation when he was in third grade; he has sexual relations with men on a very occasional basis, and at the same time maintains heterosexual relations. He has not yet "come out" to his family because he fears "being driven out of the family". He nevertheless totals a score of 10 on the sexual orientation scale and says he has already had suicidal thoughts, but immediately gave up out of concern for his mother and aunt who raised him and expect a lot from him.

3.2. Descriptive protocol and content development

With Paul, case number 1:

"My uncles landed with us and saw this. In the evening, the phone calls rang out from everywhere, I learned that you are this, I would no longer want to see you with my children, you no longer set foot in my house. I say, no problem, it is true that it was very hard to bear (...) I felt rejected at the time, it was not easy. I was thinking where am I going to go now, so if I have a problem, I'm not going to call, I can't go eat. The sentences that consoled me are my parents live. When I'm in the west, I'm not clear like in Yaoundé or Douala, I'm not clear. The Bamileke sees it as sect, sect, sect (...) I was told about the association in Bafoussam, I get there, they welcome me, I find them full in the room, I say haaah! West ! I expected to see that in Douala or Yaoundé, not in the West. With straight people, I feel stigmatized. (...) First of all, I couldn't accept it. In my beginnings, I did fasts, I did everything to get out of it. Afterwards, I decided to stop with homosexuality and get back with girls, I didn't even want to hear about that anymore, nor to see homosexuals. I didn't even want to hear about it anymore, or see homosexuals. I saw homosexuals as sectarians. I used to tell myself that when they sleep with a man, they take his chances. I was a little embarrassed to see a man wearing the skirt, dressing as a woman. Even if we legalize same-sex marriage in Cameroon, I will never marry a man. We are going to keep our relationship tightly knit, but go sign a document to say that we are getting married, never. I met a girl, she came to my house, she did small tasks. Then I got together with a boy. My attention was drawn

more to the boy. Afterwards, I decided to stop with homosexuality and get back with the girls (...) I still get back with the girl, I pregnant her, she gives birth, but I was more attracted to a man . I am already African, with my homosexual status, I plan to marry a woman, start a family with children, but my partner's place will always be there. Even as my parents have accepted me, I remain discreet. My parents supported me a lot so that I did not end up committing suicide. "

This subject reveals the anxiety-provoking nature of the cultural context in which he finds himself and where he must express his homosexual orientation, which is collectively rejected there. Given that he owes his survival to his Bamileke cultural group, that he represents himself as homophobic because attached to heteronormative educational ethnotheories, any possible expulsion is synonymous with annihilation, experienced as potentially anxiety-provoking, therefore a source of narcissistic conflict and devaluation self. There is a family stigma that leads to behaviors of isolation and introversion as well as depreciation, but nevertheless, the narcissistic comfort of his biological parents through the flexibility of their judgment, contributes to his almost permanent psychic balance. He accepts his homosexuality, which is however accompanied by a feeling of unease and isolation when he is in the presence of "different others", which reminds him of the potential maladjustment of his felt and desired identity. This attitude corresponds well to the stage of "comparative identity" by Cass (1984) or the exploration of possibilities by Demczuk, Dorais, Peers and Ryan (2010), during which the homosexual person seeks to establish contact with similar" to satisfy his need to belong.

For José, case number 2:

"The parents will learn it, they will say that it is an abomination, that their parents did not know that, that they themselves did not know. Who knows, maybe they will go to the village to perform rites. It was my aunt who told my mother that she dreamed that I was homosexual, that worried her a lot, she asked me, but I denied it. I denied her that it's not true and so far she knows it's not true. I don't tell him because I'm afraid I'll be thrown out and if that happens, I don't know where I have to go, I don't know what I have to become, that's the last thing. My father's reaction, I don't know, my father is unpredictable. But I know he will be very angry, compared to the reaction he had

with my big brother, I don't know, I don't know. With my father, as soon as you try to make a bad move, no one looks at you, I don't know if they will still be able to pay me my pension. But sometimes I get very stressed, and if you ask me why, I can't tell you. I sometimes have to drink yogurt to sleep, since it makes me feel good. There are times like that when it lasts a month, two months or three months when I successively drink yogurt to sleep. And when I do, during the day I don't eat and sometimes I feel tired. My brothers and I have a pure relationship, especially my cousins, but I don't really like staying with them when they are in the living room or in the bedroom (...), I prefer to go to bed in the other bedroom only (...). But they don't know why, I run away from them because by staying with them, I tend to tell them that I am like that. Since I have already tried several times. I never accepted, I never wanted to be what I am. I have always proved to them that I am not gay. Over time, since I felt bad, I told myself that I was the only one in the world to be like that, I felt remorse. I plan to get married. But homosexual marriage, no, even if we legalized it. I had always slept with girls (...) it is true that between the girl and the boy, it is true, there is a much more intense inclination for the boy. I can go a month without having sex with the girl, but the boy will always be like a habit. I felt bad since I had never done it. Since I had always slept with girls. I did a month without having any relationship with anyone. I tried to be able to forget that, but I couldn't. But that's how I met new people."

This subject manifests an anxious stupor, which underlies the fact that, fearing the reaction of those close to him, he develops a denial in the face of different others, without there being any denial of his homosexual orientation. It emerges from his speech, negative ruminations related to paternal reactions, with untimely dramatization of the almost totalitarian parental style to which he would be subjected. This justifies an excessive tendency to increase the slightest concern related to the disclosure of one's homosexuality, which even within the family unit, manifests itself in pessimistic questions about one's relationship future with parents and siblings. It expresses a fluctuating anxiety, with a high valence of emotional hyperactivity, somatic symptoms on a neurovegetative background, like the

sleep disorder, coupled with anorexia and selective bulimic addiction (to yogurt). Note also significant suffering against a background of altered socio-family functioning, inducing psychophysiological manifestations of anxiety. Based on Nouar (2007), these bouts of anxiety lead to significant embarrassment in the construction of identity in this subject and make his daily interactions difficult or even trying.

As for John, case number 3:

"I always feel condemned (...) I like to listen to the word of God. Only that I feel condemned because of my orientation (...) sometimes, on Sundays, when I think about it, I don't feel like going to church. And every time when I think about relationships with men, I say, heeeeh! If the parents hear that, since my mother already told me recently, there are things that if your child does, you consider that your child is already dead, you have your child who steals or who makes love with same-sex people, you buy your black you wear. I have been very scared since I came back from vacation. And since I have a friend who is like that, that I do (sleep) with him, I told myself that I will try again with him if I can, but since I got back there, I totally refused. I take precautions. When the phone is on speakerphone, I put the headphones on. I also avoid having my gay friends visit me. I also quickly delete the pornographic videos sent to me (...) since everyone has access to my phone. I also review my behavior so as to soften the gaze of others, like my gait, I try to walk like a man, not to greet like girls and I also take precautions when I sit down. If they are important people to me, I fear their reactions as if I feared God. (...). Lord what's wrong, do parents vaccinate their children to become like this? Please Lord, I don't want to be like this. I find myself going to church and praying more than ever to get it out of me. When I'm with the woman, I'm comfortable. But said that loving a woman, I feel more attracted to men. For marriage it is normal. Getting married to a man is not normal for me. To marry a woman, yes, I dream of doing it. When I'm with girls, I prefer vaginal penetration. I am African already, with my homosexual status, I intend to marry a woman. If society does not accept homosexuals, I myself do not accept either, although my brain is leaning towards it. I feel

uncomfortable when I am alone, but when I am with them I feel very comfortable. As soon as I'm with my girlfriend and I see homosexuals, I separate to be with them. I thought about suicide the first time when I failed my probation, the second time when I found out I was gay. My mother also tells me that I am a debt to her and that whatever I have to do, I have to think of her. "

By being part of a cognitive-behavioral logic, this subject highlights a painful intrapsychic tension, based on doubt and panic attacks with a valence of feeling of insecurity which underlies his structures of thoughts and behavioral patterns that have become dysfunctional. , because of the interference between his orientation and the homophobia he has culturally internalized. This forms the backdrop for the feeling and the anxiety of rejection that he expresses, because after the unveiling of his homosexuality to himself, there emerges from his discourse a profound difficulty of unveiling to other similar people and finally to other different. His ego ideal, which is dependent on the internalization of heterosexist socio-cultural beliefs or prejudices, contradicts his instinctual impulses which are harshly repressed. Hence a feeling of rejection characterized by a feeling of condemnation which leads to a hyperactivity oriented towards religious activities, coupled with a passive aggression against "God".

3.3. Synthesis of significant themes: identity strategies

We emerge from the verbalizations of our three participants, several identity strategies such as arrangement, denial, avoidance, repair, self-cancellation and redefinition or clandestinity or camouflage. The denial among these young adults is dependent on the identity conflict which pushes the homosexual subject to preserve the coherence of his identity through the suppression of one or more identity components among those in conflict, and thereby to regain a certain stability. They put it this way:

"First, I couldn't accept it. (Paul)"; "I never accepted, I never wanted to be what I am. I have always proved to them that I am not gay. Over time, since I felt bad, I told myself that I was the only one in the world to be like that, I felt remorse. (Jose)"; "If society does not accept homosexuals, I myself do not accept either, although my brain is leaning towards it. Lord what's wrong, do parents vaccinate their children to become like this, please Lord, I don't want to be like that (John)."

The three participants are part of the thought of Mellini (2009) who defines denial as the refusal and ignorance of one's homosexual orientation despite the significance of the drive. Maiffret and Vasconcello (2004) believe that this is the first resolution strategy that homosexuals adopt to deal with suffering. Because experienced as mourning, their sexual orientation is a reality that is foreign to the psyche and which requires mechanisms to protect against its anxiety-provoking dimension.

In the Bamileke context, homosexuals seek, through reparation, the means to become heterosexual. During the phase following the discovery of their homosexuality, they face this desire for transformation. "In my beginnings, I used to fast, I did everything to get out of it (Paul)"; "I find myself going to church and praying more than ever to get that out of me (John). This strategy is similar, in the words of the participants, to religious conversion therapy or cognitive-behavioral restructuring, which would aim to eradicate homosexual desires, contrary to internalized religious and socio-cultural heteronorms.

They also adopt avoidance, dodging anything related to homosexuality felt and unwanted by them. This strategy can take different forms, all involving the denial of homosexual tendencies deemed unacceptable by the subject (Maiffret & Vasconcello, 2004). These are: (1) the excessive investment of heterosexual gender characters to conform to the expected ideal of virility: "Afterwards, I decided to stop with homosexuality and get back with girls, I didn't even want to hear about it anymore, or see homosexuals. I get back together with the girl again, I get her pregnant, she gives birth (Paul)"; (2) the establishment of heterosexual relations in order to prevent the doubts of the entourage as to a possible homosexuality: "When I am with the woman, I am at ease. But says that loving a woman makes me feel more attracted to men (Jean)"; (3) the refusal of all knowledge relating to homosexuality. The subject uses the isolation of representations in order to prevent any confirmation of his reality in his life: "I didn't even want to hear about that anymore, nor to see homosexuals (Paul)"; (4) the adoption of a homophobic attitude: "I saw homosexuals as sectarians. I used to tell myself that when they sleep with a man, they take his chances. I was a little embarrassed to see a man wearing the skirt, dressing as a woman (Paul). This internalized homophobia is also manifested by the categorical rejection of same-sex marriage and even of the legalization of homosexuality which is reflected in the speeches of the participants:

"Even if we legalize same-sex marriage in Cameroon, I will never marry a man. We are going to keep our relationship tightly knit, but go sign a document to say that we are getting married, never (Paul). » ; "I plan to get married. But homosexual marriage, no, even if we

legalized (José). » ; “For marriage it is normal. Getting married to a man is not normal for me. To marry a woman, yes, I dream of doing it (Jean).”.

According to Troiden's identity construction model (1988), which includes four stages including awareness, identity confusion, identity presumption and commitment, all the strategies developed by our participants correspond to the second (identity confusion). The fact that the individual discovers his sexual orientation creates in him a dissonance with the self-image that prevailed until then. This conscious dissonance between the homosexual drive and the value judgment relating to this attraction, which has been integrated into the basic identity of the subject during his cultural socialization, generates psychic suffering. The judgment of value or cultural significance conveyed by the parents, who are the guarantors of the culture, is explained in our participants by self-stigma: "If society does not accept homosexuals, I myself do not accept not so, although my brain is leaning towards it (Jean). This concern for conformity to heterosexist socio-cultural norms and desires reveals the strength of the negative pacts of which Kaës (2009) speaks, and which influence the formation of the “inevitably cultured” individual identity (Devereux, quoted by Paduart, 2004). Here, the individual must not only preserve them, but also and above all perpetuate or perpetuate them for the survival of the group. It is in this perspective that all our participants, despite their homosexual identity in construction, express the desire to marry and have children. Moreover, parents keep reminding their boys of this:

“My father always tells me, Know what tradition you are from, what country we are in (...) the others are all going to get married, the only person who will bear my name is you (Paul). ; "My mother also tells me that I am a debt to her and that whatever I have to do, I have to think of her (Jean).”.

Our participants thus find themselves caught between two paradoxical injunctions which push them to deny their drive and which generate a deep and costly split within their personality (Maiffret & Vasconcello, 2004):

“I feel uncomfortable when I am alone, but when I am with them I feel very comfortable. As soon as I'm with my girlfriend and I see homosexuals, I separate to be with them (Jean). » ; “I met a girl, she came to my house, she did small tasks. Then I got together with a boy. My attention was drawn more to the boy (Paul).”

To escape this double constraint, the individual sometimes chooses the strategy of self-cancellation which manifests itself in several forms. This strategy allows the homosexual subject to resolve his identity tension in a radical and definitive way. It is in this perspective that "the heterosexual pact" acts in families, sometimes like an unrealizable double bind whose only outcome would be self-annihilation.

While offering the young adult a place consistent with the "mission to ensure the continuity of the whole", from which homosexuals are paradoxically not excluded, the narcissistic contracts and unconscious alliances woven between the members of a Bamileke family can rush the subject into a definitively intermediate zone, a "trash space" where he does not exist, has never existed, and will never exist (Baecque, 2010). This translates into the perception of homosexuality as sterile, exposing the subject, once deceased, to acts with symbolic efficacy, where having failed in this anthropocosmic mission of ensuring the generational round by perpetuating the lineage, is buried with "pebble in the hands", symbol of the erasure of his earthly life stained with life and infertile sexuality, collectively experienced as a curse. The concern to preserve the interests of the group to the detriment of personal aspirations, obliges the young homosexual to "give up certain desires, erase some, reject some, repress others, if he does not want to be himself erased, rejected or repressed" (Baecque, 2010, P. 12). Thus, the repression of affects is a central factor of self-effacement which, in Freudian logic, highlights the role of instinctual repression in the formation of the superego and in the pressure exerted on the ego by the superego and the ego ideal. Indeed, the aggression of the superego directed against the ego in the form of blame, humiliation, punishment provokes feelings of worthlessness, lowers self-esteem (Freud, quoted by Perrenoud, 2012). This self-effacement is expressed in our participants by the repression or denial of their impulse, "I don't want to be like that (Paul)", the attempt to eradicate homosexual desires or reparation, "I was doing fasting, I did everything to get out of it (Jean)", avoidance or isolation, "I don't really like staying with them (...) I prefer to go to bed in the other room alone (...) I run away from them, because by staying with them, I tend to tell them that I am like that (José)". The overuse of these mechanisms, or their failure to cope with anxiety, can lead to suicidal ideation, suicide attempts or suicide. "I thought about suicide the first time when I failed my probation, the second time when I found out I was gay (Jean)."

However, the idea was not pushed further because of the love that the latter has for his mother who constitutes for him an identifying and transferential model: "My mother also tells me that I am a debt for her and whatever I have to do, I have to think about her. In some cases, parental

recognition and acceptance is a protective factor against suicide: “My parents supported me a lot so that I did not end up committing suicide (Paul).”

We also note the clandestinity or camouflage that the three participants in this study adopt for fear of being rejected, in order to continue living their homosexuality. Thus, those who have not yet revealed their felt, desired and committed homosexual identity for themselves, continue to hide from “different others”, whether they are the “more significant others” or the “larger others”. Anyone who has already taken this step remains discreet, he is not ready to be exposed to all comers, which shows that the experience of homosexuality remains anxiety-provoking even in a context favorable to coming-out: “Even as my parents accepted me, I remain discreet (Jean). Along with their homosexuality, all three have not only emotional relationships with the girls, but also sexual relationships with them:

“When I'm with girls, I prefer vaginal penetration (Jean)”; “I had always slept with girls (...) it is true that between the girl and the boy, it is true, there is a much more intense inclination for the boy. I can go a month without having sex with the girl, but the boy will always be like a habit (José)”; “Afterwards, I decided to stop with homosexuality and get back together with the girls (...) I'm still getting back together with the girl, I pregnant her, she gives birth, but I was more attracted to a man (Paul).”

However, their verbalizations of the desire to marry show not only that heterosexuality for them is factitious and results from sociocultural desirabilities and influences, but also that their bisexuality is only a strategy to camouflage their exclusive homosexuality whose heteronormative context and collectivist does not allow the display.

Discussion and conclusion

The objective of this research was to analyze the subjective experience of young homosexual adults in the heterosexist and collectivist context of Bamiléké (Western Cameroon), and to identify their mechanisms of identity construction and regulation of intrapsychic conflicts in connection with the unveiling of his homosexuality to “the other similar and the other different”, significant or broad. Thus, the study of three cases made it possible to identify a strong occurrence of the anxiety of rejection in the experience of homosexuality in a homophobic and collectivist cultural context. The analysis of the different speeches collected from our three participants confirms the “victimizationist” approach according to which it is homophobia and not homosexuality per se, which is the main factor favoring

developmental difficulties and disorders, as well as psychopathological decompensations in young homosexuals (Konig, 2017; Le Refuge, 2013). The experience of their sexual orientation highlights their feelings and anxieties of rejection driven by the heteronormative socio-cultural context in which they evolve. This highlights the link between psychic distress and homosexuality in a homophobic environment where the young homosexual must necessarily construct his sexual identity without having an identifying model around him (Velter, 2004).

Admittedly, this approach is called into question by other studies, underpinned by “pathologizing” and “communitarian” approaches that prevail in current theoretical and heuristic readings of decompensation systems in homosexuals, attributing respectively their mal- being to homosexuality per se or to its anxiety-inducing and suicidogenic lifestyle (Beck, Firdion, Legleye & Schiltz, 2011). This study reports on the defense mechanisms that homosexuals mobilize, mainly hiding, self-cancellation, denial, repair and avoidance. These mechanisms have already been noted in previous studies carried out in different cultural contexts (Mellini, 2009; see also Maiffret & Vasconcello, 2004). This shows that homosexuals encounter the same difficulties in all strongly heteronormative cultural contexts (Lado, 2011).

On the other hand, suicidal behaviors abundantly noted in the literature (Firdion & Verdier, 2007) as the main problem of psychiatric epidemiology in homosexuals and bisexuals, were not confirmed in the three cases. This research accounts for two explanatory factors of this epistemological rupture, such as the signifier and cultural beliefs. To cope with the anxiety that can be suicidogenic in the Bamileke cultural context, these homosexuals mobilize as a defense mechanism, the camouflage that allows them to satisfy their impulse without being discovered by the "more significant others". Also, it is reflected in the verbalizations of the participants, the taking into account of otherness in the definition and construction of oneself. The other refers here to the family or the community in a cultural context where collective identity takes precedence over individual identities, where the whole family is supported by a veritable "negative pact" whose function is twofold: on the one hand, it allows the identity of the group to be constructed and maintained, and on the other hand, it puts aside everything that in the link to the other threatens its integrity by passing it over in silence or by removing (Kaës, 2009). Instead of the cultural context through its anthropomorphist beliefs and ethnotheories being suicidogenic for homosexuals (Barrattini, Mazoyer, & Bourdet-Loubère, 2013), it seems rather to be a protective factor against the risk of suicide, because of the cultural signifier mentioned above. It is in this perspective that Gueboguo (2006) says that suicide in Cameroonian society

is badly perceived, since homosexual or non-homosexual individuals who commit suicide cast shame on themselves and their families, because in the socio-cultural imagination Bamileke, this is synonymous with a curse. However, the latter, for the most part, are anchored in these beliefs, since they have been socialized in this anthropological universe.

It is necessary to underline that this study, purely comprehensive, is limited to the qualitative method, because although it allows to explore the psychic processes of young homosexual adults, does not favor the generalization of the results. Thus, it would be important for research to be extended to a larger population and in a different cultural context, to deepen not only the issue of the cultural signifier as a potential source of developmental disorders, self-devaluation, but also to explore in a profound way the identity strategies of the homosexual faced with anxieties of socio-cultural rejection. Which strategies are not identical in time or space, and may vary according to environment and individual biographical moments.

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