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Dialectics between Splitting and Integrating in the Lives of Heterosexually Married Gay Men

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ABSTRACT

Mixed-orientation marriage is usually an invisible phenomenon, but its frequency is not insignificant. The present paper describes and examines the experiences of 13 heterosexually married gay men, seven of whose wives were aware and six who were unaware of their husbands' homosexuality. We take the insiders' perspective as a point of departure to develop a conceptual model that may contribute to our understanding of the constructed reality of this relatively unexplored phenomenon. The findings show that life in a mixed-orientation marriage can be understood along a continuum running between two poles: splitting and integrating. This continuum corresponds to the fundamental question in the lives of heterosexually married gay men: Is integration between homosexuality and heterosexual marriage possible, and if so, how?

KEYWORDS

Qualitative Research, Mixed-Orientation Marriage, Disclosure, Gay Men, Integrating, Splitting

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