

Sociocultural Changes and the Construction of Identity in Lesbian and Gay Elderly People in Argentina

The International Journal of Aging
and Human Development
2019, Vol. 88(4) 341–357
© The Author(s) 2019
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/0091415019836928
journals.sagepub.com/home/ahd



Ricardo Iacub¹ , Claudia J. Arias²,
Mariana Mansinho¹,
Martín Winzeler¹, and
Rocio Vazquez Jofre¹

Abstract

In the last two decades, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender + elderly people in Argentina have experienced considerable transformations with respect to social policies and laws as well as in the media and public opinion. This article aims to analyze the levels of acceptance and expression of identity (“coming out”) in lesbian and gay seniors based on the political and legal changes that have occurred in Argentina but also in their relationship with others. Focus groups were conducted with 10 older gay and 10 older lesbians. The results indicate that sociocultural changes are seen as something positive although doubts arise about the in-depth and authenticity of the changes. The same-sex marriage and gender identity laws are considered as a symbol of an era of greater tolerance and diversity in which they have achieved the exercise of their rights as citizens.

Keywords

gays, lesbians, old age, identity, legal frameworks, sociocultural changes

¹Universidad de Buenos Aires, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina

²Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Corresponding Author:

Ricardo Iacub, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Email: ricardoiacub@gmail.com

Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the levels of felt acceptance and expression of identity in lesbian and gay seniors against the backdrop of the political and legal changes that have taken place in Argentina. There have been dramatic shifts in the cultural understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) + persons in Argentina. These impressive changes beg the question of how such transformations manifest (if at all) in the narratives and identities (and their construction) of LGBT+ persons—particularly those of an older generation who lived at a time in which homosexuality was seen as a pathology, perversion, and crime, generating situations of discrimination, mistreatment, and invisibility.

The research reported herein is conducted from the perspective of the life course, as it articulates social facts with subjective changes, and also from a narrative perspective where the meaning of life experience is understood from a generation that shares historical, cultural, and social context (Cohler & Hammack, 2006). It is this interplay between social changes in Argentina and the building of gay and lesbian sexual identity that is explored.

Political and Legal Changes

There are several important and recent events that have addressed, reinforced, or extended the rights of LGBT persons in Argentina. These are enumerated as follows. First, the *Instituto Nacional contra la Discriminación, la Xenofobia y el Racismo* (INADI), created in 1995, was aimed to develop national policies to fight against all forms of discrimination, xenophobia, and racism. It promotes and carries out federal and transversal public policies aimed at achieving a diverse and egalitarian society. By 2003, the application of this policy in the defense of LGBT + rights became clear leading to a high level of social integration and public recognition of LGBT issues.

Second, the Same-Sex Marriage Law passed in 2010 (Ley de Matrimonio Igualitario. Ley N° 26.618, 2010) made Argentina the first country in Latin America to recognize the right to marriage of same-sex couples. After a significant level of debate that took place within the LGBT+ organizations, judicial battles were fought until reaching a positive consensus with the establishment, the media, and finally with most political parties.

Finally, the Gender Identity Law was passed in 2012 (Ley de Identidad de Género. Ley N° 26.743, 2012). This law allows the person to have the name and gender of choice on their personal identification cards, without requiring a change of sex. In addition, the law mandates that all gender reassignment therapy be free of charge. The debates that arose from this law, and the consequences of the law, greatly improved the social outlook of transgender Argentines.

A Narrative Perspective on Identity

We begin with the theoretical assumption that identity is constructed in complex psychosocial environmental contexts and based on prevailing social and personal narratives (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, Shotter & Gergen, 1989, Thorne, 2000). Identity is shaped as a narrative structure from which meanings emerge and are constructed. This construction then, like all aspects of human development, occurs within prevailing historical, social, and cultural context (Elder, 1974, Elder & Caspi, 1990, Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003). Shared understandings of meaning (e.g., self-referents) emerge among members of a cohort generation who share this context of historical, cultural, and social development (Cohler & Hammack, 2006). This narrative possibility allows individuals to find coherence and meaning in the different facts and situations of life paths (Lacelle & Baars, 2014) from adolescence to old age (Bruner, 1990; Gergen, 1994).

The narratives of sexual identity represent shared stories. One such example is the coming out story (Savin-Williams, 1998, 2001), which is often represented as a choice or completion of intrinsic processes (Whisman, 1986) and historical moments of social transformation. As such, the stories of gay men and lesbians of different ages reflect changing narratives of identity that are rooted in cohort-based cultural processes, customs, and language and organized in identity frameworks.

The importance of analyzing identity narratives lies in detecting, for example, the scars and wounds produced by intemperate language (taking language as a cohort-tempered force in shaping identity). Giribuela (2014) in a study with older adults carried out in Argentina, detected three types of intemperate language “wounds”: (a) nonverbal speech (LGBT persons silences so as not to be discriminated against or understanding that certain information would be discriminated against or fear of receiving aggressive language) and from non LGBT persons, (b) insinuated discourses (assuming that the person knows the sexual orientation of the interlocutor and behaves unfavorably), and (c) aggressive language (to insult and be cruel with someone). Each of these three types of language resulted in “wounds:” a remembered experience of being treated differently, unfairly, as less than another. What is evident is how silence, insinuated, or targeted language shape the way gay and lesbian persons move around in daily life, the way to think and act, and of constructing one’s identity (Giribuela, 2014).

Barrientos and Cárdenas (2013) in a study conducted in Chile considered that such behaviors and language have a significant impact on the quality of life of people belonging to sexual minorities. Supported by a bibliographical review, they describe an increase in the probability of suffering psychiatric disorders

greater than heterosexual population, greater psychological stress (where they describe the minority psychosocial stress pattern, as proposed by Meyer, 2003), and victimization experiences as well as consequences in their self-esteem, among others.

Hammack, Frost, and Meyer (2018) show the relationship between the historical contexts and the life trajectories of gay men in the United States. Hammack et al. describe five generations of gay men living in the United States at present and highlight how the broader social context, events, and discourse during those years manifest in differing health-care practices and in vital trajectories. Their research highlights two guiding principles for subsequent investigations: time and historical place and the particular relevance of an event on a particular stage of development of the individual (Hammack, Frost, Meyer & Pleta, 2018).

Daniel and Butkus (2015) point out that state or federal laws can affect the quality of life of LGBT+ people. For example, discriminatory policies toward this group reinforce and feed into the environmental and social factors that negatively affect the mental and physical well-being of the LGBT+ group.

The Present Study

For the purposes of the research presented herein, gay and lesbian identity can thus be understood in narrative terms articulated, both historically and culturally, through social practices (McLean et al., 2017)—that is, the political and social changes capable of transforming attitudes and practices. Consequently, we can ask ourselves how the political and legal changes of a nation have affected gay men and lesbians, particularly a generation which suffered abuse and mistreatment and today witnesses the more open and positive way in which homosexuality is formally endorsed by the current government. This is the guiding research question addressed.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology was used in this study. This choice was due to the desire to obtain spontaneous comments and stories as well as to encourage further reflection by and of the participants themselves. Likewise, the intention was to capture the different current and multiple perspectives of the dimensions explored. With this purpose in mind, a focus group approach was selected as the data collection technique since, in addition to participants' opinions, information may be revealed through their interaction. It was agreed to have two focus groups: one for lesbians and another one for gay men in order to articulate more clearly gender-based sexual identities.

For this purpose, the research team produced an interview that included the following thematic areas: (a) Changes that occurred in Argentina that provided

greater well-being to LGBT + people; (b) effect of same-sex marriage laws and gender identity; (c) perception of changes in society and in the mass media; (d) changes in the expression of identity in LGBT+ people; (e) effect of these changes in the relationships with their partner, family, friends, neighbors, school, and work mates; (f) changes in self-perception, from the point of view of their self-esteem and well-being; and (g) what it means to be an LGBT+ older adult at present. The questions/topic areas were developed to explore the possible bases and current meanings of sexual identities in each focus group. Focus groups were conducted of elderly gay and lesbian people (60 years old or older), who were permanent residents in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (Argentina).

Both groups were convened through organizations that bring together gay and lesbian people and through snowball technique. In this way, two groups of people were formed with both those who actively participate in these organizations as well as those from outside the organization. Ten people participated in each of the two groups. In the lesbian group, the average age was 68.7 years (standard deviation: 4.5). Half of them lived alone and the other half with their partner. Only two of them lived with a partner and children. Two thirds had tertiary or university educational level.

In the gay male group, the average age was 72 years (standard deviation: 3.6). Only one of them was not retired. Half had university education. Five of them lived with their partner, one with a partner and children, three lived alone, and one with his mother.

Once people were contacted and given the necessary information to help them decide on their participation, the focus groups were organized. Both were carried out in a private office, during evening hours, between 8 and 10 p. m. They were coordinated by one of the researchers who requested prior written consent from each of the participants. The coordinator then introduced the exploration areas one by one in question form. The focus groups discussions lasted approximately 1.5 hour each. The groups were audio recorded for subsequent transcription.

After the focus group recordings of the material were transcribed, they were thoroughly read by the authors looking for common and unique elements in order to reach a general agreement on how data were coded. A qualitative strategy was used to analyze the collected data, generating categories for data conceptualization and comprehensive abstractions/themes. We sought to differentiate the theoretical categories—the etic approach—from the meaning categories that arise from the data—the emic approach (Pike, 1967).

Topics and concepts were identified through the ways in which certain questions were answered and questions that arose when reading the interviews. The goal of the coding was to transform the data into more abstract themes articulating how social and political changes manifest in the ways in which lesbians and gay men identify.

Results

The following are the broad themes derived from the narrative analysis of the focus group transcripts. The themes from the lesbian focus group are presented first followed by those from the gay male focus group.

Themes From the Lesbian Focus Group

The coding of the transcripts of the lesbian focus group yielded eight broad themes through which the lesbians described their social and developmental experiences and the impact of these experiences on their sense of self.

A dubious zeitgeist. The older adult lesbian group discussions noted that there were positive changes in society with respect to LGBT + understandings, but their belief is that these changes have not been so profound. They associate this to a *zeitgeist* characterized by formal declarations of being open to diversity, although they considered that people's personal, internal beliefs have not been modified that much. This group states that they continue facing substantial discrimination and they have doubts about the continuity of the changes. Hence, the use of the terms *seem*, *appearance*, *modern*, or *old* refers to situations that are not credible or sustainable over time, as can be seen in the following narratives:

One seems old-fashioned if he/she speaks against homosexuality and that is not good. It's just to be modern. There are people who say, "For me it's the same, for me it's the same" and then they make a terrible joke about homosexuals.

It's a macho and patriarchal context, although nowadays they want to look more open, I think it's because of the spirit of the time and not because they've changed their minds. So, personally, I think it did not change anything, but because the context has not changed.

The protection of rights and cultural transformations. The mechanisms established for the protection of rights were highlighted, including the antidiscriminatory state organization, which had a strong social impact, and the same-sex marriage and gender identity laws. As mentioned earlier, controversies arose in relation to the importance and fundamentally to the magnitude of the changes that these mechanisms have introduced. Some of the women reported that they valued them as an agent of cultural and political change that made it possible to become visible and feel recognized as "citizens," having the same rights as others. The fact that a public debate was held which made them feel supported and valued was also appreciated.

The same-sex marriage law marked a before and an after.

And in fact, at least for us, as S. said, this feeling of being a citizen, citizens like others. In our case, that happened after the same-sex marriage and gender identity law.

Another group of lesbians saw the mentioned laws as having improved “practical issues,” such as guaranteeing health insurance or inheritance, but that did not substantially change the hostility of the environment.

The same-sex marriage was like a breath of hope as far as legal matters. I have medical insurance/health care coverage and I can include my partner in it. If I passed away, she would have a pension, and at least in spite of the pain, she will be able to cope with it. It is clearly a legal change. Socially, what I’ve told you before, I take good care of myself; it must be personal homophobia; I don’t think so, but there are always several factors involved.

Visibility and rejection. Related to the aforementioned discussion, the women spoke of a lack of confidence in the social changes that have taken (and were taking) place. This lack of confidence was seen to generate a fear of visibility and ultimately a fear of rejection.

They look at you as if you were from another planet. You are on guard; I look after myself and my current partner, so we don’t have unpleasant moments.

Governments come and go. Some do more, others less. I agree that the law did a lot and I admire those who make themselves visible. In my experience, I would not dare to go to a conference, I am afraid of exposing my partner; it is like a ‘scratch’ that I can feel from society.

The fear of rejection was represented through conflicts with their family, their work mates, or their age peers and as the record of their own consequent difficulties in self-acceptance.

You ask me if society is ready (. . .) from personal homophobia, which is cultural at 60-something, personal experiences, plus the good or not so good things that the State does, we still have not arrived, in my opinion.

I was traumatized, because of maternal experiences, because of a bad experience that I had at school and because society condemned me.

Concealment in public environments. The fear of both visibility and rejection was associated with concealment—a protective factor from the source of stress (often produced by families, and mainly mothers in the examples provided, school, and work). Making themselves a less visible target—invisibilization—and not talking about it are forms of concealment.

I share my thinking with X and I can tell you about my personal experience as a teacher, I worked many years in silence. And that was frustrating as a person, because I had to go to therapy because I couldn't be happy as I wanted to be because I would be totally discriminated; that's the way it was in public school and don't let me get started with confessional school.

In addition, the fear of being hurt, expelled, sanctioned, rejected, pointed out, or judged often has a far-reaching impact in their lives. For this reason, among the most liberating moments were milestone markers including the death of close relatives or their own retirement.

When everyone died (*laughter*), Yes! When everyone died, I talked with my friends, my cousins. And they told me “we knew” and I said, “Darn it! Why didn't you save me . . . why didn't you give me a chance to talk about it . . . ?”

Social support figures. Facing general distrust in their environment, there was a strong need for this group to trust in similar others that are in similar condition. As such, social support groups or spaces where they are safely recognized become important.

It seems that I have all the freedom one would want, and the group helps me, the girls (*referring to the lesbian group*) make me think, they make me feel safer.

I always covered it. For my family, they were my “friends,” a very close friend, who was in everything I did. However, S.'s words shocked me; it changed my behavior so much that I talked about it with my therapist and my friend.

Role models in the media. Role models were seen to give legitimacy when the forms of representation coincide with valued roles and depictions or became a rejection factor when they were seen as more stereotypical. LGBT+ fictional characters are considered in different ways. Even if it is good to visualize them and naturalize them, there is doubt as to the effectiveness of their influence. They are part of what is considered the “zeitgeist,” and this reinforces the idea of something that is exaggerated and unnatural—even temporary.

I remember the 90s on television; I had one positive and the other tremendously negative experience. There were two shows: one where the person who represented a lesbian introduced herself by saying: “I am the president of the lesbians” and she was very masculine. I saw it and said to myself “I am not that way,” it really shocked me. It gave me doubt, at that moment I did not know if I was or was not. I thought “I am not” and then I started to venture on the other side. On the other hand, I watched Ilse Fuskova¹ on Mirtha Legrand’s² TV show saying, “I am a grandmother, who has fallen in love with a woman. I am an average person and I want my rights.” She was a lady, really a grandmother like any other, and that seemed highly positive for me. From then on, I started looking for some sexual diversity. With the role models on television shows, sometimes you can identify yourself with them and sometimes you can’t.

What came to my mind were Sandra and Celeste³ in that poster “Woman against woman.” That was very healing for me.

We watch a TV show on Mondays, a reality show, which shows a family which has a transgender adolescent . . . If that happened on TV, in the movies, in reality it will become more natural, I think that would help to make it something more natural . . .

It looks like a pendulum movement (*in relation to the LGBT+ characters in TV soap operas*) before nobody could talk about it and now everybody talks all the time. When it becomes something natural in society, it becomes something natural in the media too.

Psychotherapy as social support and repression forms. There were varied experiences of psychotherapy among the focus group women—all directed to their same-gender loving expressions. For some, psychotherapy at an early age was described as spaces of exclusion and of negative interpretations about their sexual orientation. However, for others, these spaces became a place for self-understanding and for coming out of the closet. Still, for others, going to therapy sessions to change their sexual orientation may have hindered their therapeutic work.

When I was young, I obviously felt bad about this issue but I did not even realize this. I had a therapist who did not understand me, who told me that I was not a lesbian.

I went to the psychoanalyst who was really a psychiatrist. I went thinking that I was going to change, I wanted to change, I wanted to be the same as the rest. I could not be different; it was very hard for me. I had to do a lot of treatment

to overcome this, many years. In general, I could say it did not help me in the important issues.

It helped me that after the 90's [lesbianism] was not considered as an illness anymore and that's when things started to change. Imagine, I cannot, I cannot, I still cannot (accept myself). Coming to the therapy group, for almost a year now has been an extraordinary step, to be able to share many activities with my peers. For me it was an ordeal even after doing two psychological therapies.

A moment of diversity acceptance. The reverse of the critical reading about the previously mentioned "zeitgeist" is that of a context that makes it possible for LGTB+ people to come out of the closet and do and be what they could not before. This group and saw this self-affirmation experience as a joyful moment, which shapes their self-acceptance. Thus, it has been noted that younger people are more open to diversity.

At least I will turn 80, if I get there, saying that I could speak and express myself, but I cannot say I express myself freely as I wish I could.

Having fallen in love like that with all the freedom . . . I think it was positive and let me tell you that it moves me because I had other partners, but I lived censored. They limited my happiness, that's been terrible!

I have younger nieces and nephews and they accepted me and my partner; I have a female partner.

I do see the freedom of the younger girls. I believe that one represses oneself. I repress myself. I will reach my old age with or without a partner, but happy of being able to choose.

Young people are more open-minded (. . .). They are closer to what could be less discrimination, more acceptance, everything is more . . .

Themes From the Gay Male Focus Group

From the narrative analysis of the gay focus group, the following six themes were uncovered in which similar social-cultural and identity issues were addressed.

The construction of rights. The group of gay men presented a historical reconstruction of the changes in society and in customs that took place from the arrival of

democracy in Argentina (1983) to the present. These included changes occurred in the INADI, dropping minor offences in police regulations and laws passed, and in World Health Organization's new criteria on homosexuality. The men spoke of how such transformations generated an impact on equality and the possibility of building and defending gay rights.

I believe, first is the same-sex marriage law because society was prepared for that change, right? That was a very important change in my life . . . let's say, fundamentally it meant being within the rule of law. We did not have any rights.

(. . .) the dropping of minor offences. Do not forget that in the past, two men together meant you got a petty offence. They sent you to prison, beat you, tried to abuse you, etc.

I believe that the main thing, the fundamental thing of INADI is knowledge. It provided knowledge about discrimination complaints. People said, "I am going to go to INADI, I am going to make a complaint."

Let me tell you that within this line that you are developing, you would have to mark the World Health Organization's change of criteria, which was fundamental, because before we were considered as sick persons and later we were not sick anymore.

Tensions between the legal and social discourse. Despite the welcomed changes associated with the law, the gay men found that the culture changed more slowly. That is, the existence of the law guarantees protection but not a change of mind.

But there is no one, no law that forces you to accept what you do not accept, what it does is protect you.

(. . .) for some professionals WHO's declassification was fundamental, but not all of them considered it. There are some psychologists who continue treating us like sick people.

I believe that laws do not modify family's education. If your family is homophobic, no matter the existing laws, it will keep on being homophobic and families that were not homophobic would accept gays regardless of the law.

The media and cultural changes. The gay men expressed that mass media influences had been positive not only in the support provided to the laws but also in changing the stereotypes that placed the gay person as someone effeminate and

ridiculed. The frequent appearance of LGBT + characters and the position of equality with heterosexual people in the media were well appreciated by this group.

The media has helped us a lot with the same-sex law. They were openly in favor, right? A few not, but in general they were in favor, I believe that the media has made a great change.

On TV soap operas, the gay topic was treated not through gay stereotypes, showing the famous queer, the effeminate type, but as an ordinary male who had as sexual object other males, without any stereotyped activity or attitude

The personal effects on the protection of rights. In this category, what was observed is the relationship between the changed rule of law and feeling able to show oneself publicly. Interestingly, in one of the previous categories, it was noted that even if the law existed, many people would not change their way of thinking. This could be seen as another edge in the tension of the legal–social discourses, although here the emphasis is on the perception that they have of themselves.

Being able to say this is “my husband,” either here or in Spain, is wonderful.

So, it helped to generate this change in society. Being able to hold your partner’s hand and no one is staring at you. This was enshrined through the same-sex marriage and freedom of gender, gender choice.

Now in 2018 (. . .) at the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires.⁴ I saw guys kissing. I passed by, I saw it and came back. I went back to tell them “I congratulate you, because I spent years trying to hide it from my parents who did not know what my situation and my reality was.”

The experiences of discrimination and its effects. The lack of rights and protections characterizing the pasts of these gay men led to hiding, staying on guard, defending oneself, rejecting oneself, or having to stand out. The experiences of bullying were associated with helplessness, fear, and the experience of marginality; self-shame and the inability to express themselves appear as central features—including the internal construction of homophobia.

Before your voice was a minority, you did not exist and if you dared to express yourself, many times you would have a social or professional boycott.

If you had a level of excellence, you would be respected, but if you were mediocre, you would also be a homo.

At the secondary school (. . .) I modified my mannerism to have a good time.

At a very young age one begins to hide in self-defense.

The experience of social and self-acceptance. Self-acceptance appeared to depend on many factors, from the gay men who never saw their sexual identity as an obstacle, particularly when the family environment was more tolerant, to those who refer to a constant construction process between the environment and themselves. On a personal level, psychotherapeutic work was highly valued as a means of self-acceptance. Finally, old age taken as a deadline appears as an enabler of assumptions.

I am 68 years old, and I do not remember “homosexuality,” I cannot see it as a great social obstacle, neither in the relationship with my family, nor with my friends.

For me it was an internal–external construction. I cannot live without the one next to me. I need to relate and accept myself first and then revalue myself. But if I do not live with the other, it does not work for me.

If someone does not accept you as you are, especially at this stage of life (. . .). Beat it! (. . .) If you find a wall, which you cannot go through, beat it. I will not be thinking too much about it because I have little time left.

Conclusion

Although this is a limited scope explorative study, the results allow us to identify thematic lines that both encourage further thought and future research. The interplay between social changes and life narratives in the building of gay and lesbian identity in older people is the foundation of the work reported herein. Diverse perspectives are offered about how acceptable or credible social changes can be in one’s life story. On the whole, both differences and similarities are noted in the men and women of this sample.

The two groups of interviewees highlight the importance of the changes in the protection of rights that occurred in Argentina based on the laws of same-sex marriage and gender identity and in the national antidiscrimination institution. The result at a personal level, particularly in the group of men who held greater trust that the transformations would be effective, has been an increase in the

perception of citizenship, feeling they are equal to others and that the authorities protect them. These results are consistent with the findings of McLean et al. (2017) who argue that gay identity can be understood as an articulated narrative, both historically and culturally speaking, linked to social practices, in this case, sociocultural changes. Likewise, the role of the laws was evident in the development of quality of life in both the lesbian and gay male samples, as Daniel and Butkus (2015) have pointed out. Both groups share an increased sense of citizenship and feeling of being protected by the state. With different levels in the results, both men and women have a positive expectation about the future.

However, both groups hold doubts about the depth of the changes, and they remain somewhat fearful of disclosing their identity. These groups consider the *zeitgeist* has helped in society's open-mindedness, though they prefer to be cautious so as not to be hurt. Both groups question the internalized homophobia that leads to disbelieve in changes, particularly in women. Younger LGBT+ people are admired for their ability to make their desire visible in public spaces about which the older respondents remained more fearful even as they stress that, thanks to legal changes, they feel able to express themselves more. These stories highlight the generational conditioning based on shared meanings and life experience (Cohler & Hammack, 2006). These are the "wounds" described by Giribuela (2014) both in nonverbalized or insinuated discourses and its most feared effect—that is, visibility.

Media played a prominent role in these narratives, albeit with ambivalent expressions. Lesbians and gay men referred to the media with pleasure/gratitude that homosexuality was more seriously considered, while at the same time expressing fear of becoming a visible target for victimization from such greater exposure. Both the women and men spoke of the positive role model figures with whom these groups can identify (and different from their youth), the socially acceptable stories about homosexuality, and also those that represent the stereotypes of homosexuality.

Thus, the media appear as exposure spaces, where LGBT+ persons have the possibility to see themselves. When images correspond to conventional gender representations, it is possible to identify oneself in a positive manner, as Laceulle and Baars (2014) have noted. Indeed, when a certain generation finds cultural support, it is possible to narrate and give coherence and meaning to the sense of self. At the same time, the risk exists wherein the presentation could be a humiliating display that feeds into broader stereotypes and makes the self-narrative incoherent. Coming out (SavinWilliams, 1998, 2001), or its plural ways ceases to be the mere realization of intrinsic processes but the narrative elaborations in which a subject, in a determined sociohistorical framework, finds available stories to narrate the relationship with his or her desire and sexual identity in new ways.

The impact of the building of identity is based on specific contexts from which the possibilities of change emerge—or are blocked. In the group of

women, family and work were the central obstacles were the school environments. Psychotherapeutic spaces are often related to negative experiences associated with the difficulties experienced by LGBT+ persons in accepting themselves. However, going to a psychotherapy session is frequently recognized as a liberating experience and a space where to find self-acceptance. This was seen most clearly among the lesbians in the sample.

Although being an exploratory study with a small sample, which does not allow a generalization of the results, the relevance of this article is to include a topic that has not been dealt with in Argentina and that helps to understand the effect of recent changes in the definition of identity in the older lesbian and gay people focus groups. In so doing, it may be possible to generate inclusive policy that will empower the cohorts. These results may help to develop public policy, which include the ways of visibility and communication this group requires. This should be implemented in different ways such as in cultural productions.

In future research, not only would monitoring the changes generated from the implementation of laws in the medium term be important but also to thoroughly study the development of LGBT+ seniors' identity including transgender, bisexual, and intersexual people.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Ricardo Iacub  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6863-6847>

Notes

1. Ilse Fusková Kornreich (Buenos Aires, June 11, 1929) is an Argentine activist, lesbian-feminist, and journalist.
2. Mirtha Legrand (Villa Canas, February 23, 1927) is an Argentine actress and TV presenter. With a 72-year career, Legrand is one of the most popular entertainment figures in Argentina.
3. Sandra and Celeste was an Argentine musical duo, composed by the singers Sandra Mihanovich and Celeste Carballo. Their second album was *Woman against Woman*.
4. The *Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires* is a secular public prep school that depends on the University of Buenos Aires. The school is one of the most prestigious school in Argentina. Its alumni include many personalities, including two Nobel laureates and four Presidents of Argentina.

References

- Barrientos, J., & Cárdenas, M. (2013). Homofobia y Calidad de vida de Gays y Lesbianas: Una mirada psicosocial [Homophobia and quality of life of lesbians and gays. A psychosocial view]. *Psykhé*, 22(1), 3–14.
- Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cohler, B. J., & Hammack, P. L. (2006). Making a gay identity: Life story and the construction of a coherent self. In D. P. McAdams, R. Josselson, & A. Lieblich (Eds.), *Identity and story: Creating self in narrative* (pp. 151–172). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Daniel, H., & Butkus, R. (2015). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender health disparities: Executive summary of a policy position paper from the American College of Physicians. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 163(2), 135–137.
- Elder, G., Jr. (1974). *Children of the great depression*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Elder, G., & Caspi, A. (1990). Studying lives in a changing society: Sociological and personological explorations (Henry A. Murray Lecture Series). In A. Rabin, R. A. Zucker, R. Emmons, & S. Frank (Eds.), *Studying persons and lives* (pp. 201–247). New York, NY: Springer.
- Elder, G., Johnson, M., & Crosnoe, R. (2003). The emergence and development of life course theory. In J. Mortimer & M. Shanahan (Ed.), *Handbook of the life course* (pp. 3–21). New York, NY: Springer.
- Gergen, K. (1994). *Realities and relationships*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Giribuela, W. (2014). *Vejez homosexual: las heridas del lenguaje*. Universidad Nacional de Luján, Departamento de Ciencias Sociales. Ponencia presentada en Las I Jornadas de Género y Diversidad Sexual, organizado el Área de Género y Diversidad Sexual, Facultad de Trabajo Social [Homosexual Old Age: the wounds of the language. National University of Luján. Sciences Social Department. Presented Speech in the I Meeting of Gender and Sexual Diversity, organized by Social Work Faculty]. Buenos Aires. Inédito.
- Hammack, P.L., Frost, D.M., Meyer, I.H. & Pleta, D.R. (2018). Gay men's health and identity: social change and the life course. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 47(1), 59–74.
- Lacelle, H., & Baars, J. (2014). Self-realization and cultural narratives about later life. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 31, 34–44.
- Ley de Identidad de Género. Ley N° 26.743 (2012). En Boletín Oficial 24 de Mayo de 2012. Congreso de la Nación Argentina [Gender Identity Law. Law No. 26,743 (2012). In Official Gazette May 24, 2012. Congress of the Argentine Nation].
- Ley de Matrimonio Igualitario. Ley N° 26.618 (2010). En Boletín Oficial 22 de Julio de 2010. Congreso de la Nación Argentina [Law of Equal Marriage. Law No. 26,618 (2010). In Official Gazette of July 22, 2010. Congress of the Argentine Nation].
- McLean, K., Lilgendahl, J., Fordham, C., Alpert, E., Marsden, E., Szymanowski, K., & McAdams, D. (2017). Identity development in cultural context: The role of deviating from master narratives. *Journal of Personality*, 86(4), 631–651.
- Meyer I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological bulletin*, 129 (5), 674–697.

- Pike, L. (1967). Etic and emic standpoints for the description of behavior. In D. C. Hildum (Ed.), *Language and thought: An enduring problem in psychology* (pp. 32–39). Princeton, NJ: D Van Norstrand Company.
- Rosenwald, G., & Ochberg, R. (1992). *Storied lives*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Savin-Williams, R. C. (1998). Parental reactions to their child's disclosure of a gay/lesbian identity. *Family Relations*, 47(1), 7–13.
- Savin-Williams, R. C. (2001). Suicide attempts among sexual-minority youths: Population and measurement issues. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 69(6), 983–991.
- Shotter, J., & Gergen, K. (1989). *Texts of identity*. London, England: Sage.
- Thorne, A. (2000). Personal memory telling and personality development. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4(1), 45–56.
- Whisman, V. (1996). *Queer by choice: Lesbians, gay men, and the politics of identity*. New York: Routledge.

Author Biographies

Ricardo Iacub is affiliated with Universidad de Buenos Aires, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Claudia J. Arias is affiliated with Instituto de Psicología Básica, Aplicada y Tecnología. Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Mariana Mansinho is affiliated with Universidad de Buenos Aires, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Martín Winzeler is affiliated with Universidad de Buenos Aires, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Rocio Vazquez Jofre is affiliated with Universidad de Buenos Aires, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina.