

Chapter 10

Queering Psychology or Psychologists? Retrospective Reflections of a Performative Autoethnographic Intervention in the Costa Rican Psychology Association



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10.1 Introduction

In this chapter, “psychology” is not simply conceived as a professional practice, neither as a scholar field; it encompasses a *system of knowledge* more extensive than those schematic arrangements. I understand psychology is part of what Foucault defines as a “dispositif.” According to Macey (2019), for Foucault, “the term refers to a heterogeneous body of discourses, propositions (philosophical, moral philanthropic and so on), institutions, laws and scientific statements; the *dispositif* itself is the network that binds them together, that governs the play between the heterogeneous strands. It is a formation which, at a given historical moment, corresponds to a dominant strategic function” (p. 355).¹

From a Foucauldian genealogical perspective, psychology is inscribed in a strategic and ubiquitous function called the *psy-function*, which, arising from the psychiatric power, is “the function of the intensification of reality, [that] is found wherever it is necessary to make reality function as power” (Foucault, 2006, p. 189). Going a step further, Foucault asserts that “the fundamental role of the psychological function, which historically is entirely derived from the dissemination of

¹I take the definition provided by Macey (2019), which is based on an interview conducted with Michel Foucault, published in 1977 by the journal *Ornicar* and later in *Dits et Écrits*. The text in its original version is as follows: “un ensemble résolument hétérogène, comportant des discours, des institutions, des aménagements architecturaux, des décisions réglementaires, des lois, des mesures administratives, des énoncés scientifiques, des propositions philosophiques, morales, philanthropiques, bref: du dit, aussi bien que du non-dit, voilà les éléments du dispositif. Le dispositif lui-même, c’est le réseau qu’on peut établir entre ces éléments” (Foucault, 2001, p. 299).

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psychiatric power in other directions beyond the asylum, is to intensify reality as power and to intensify power by asserting it as reality” (p. 190).

Historically, *psy-function* has been the core of psychology and, consequently, the *matter* that underpins its intelligibility and nourishes its functioning; in other words, it has been what deeply *matters* in terms of the sociocultural implications of psychological practice. Due to the power relations acting in-between, the *psy-function* is inevitably embedded in psychological knowledge and its practitioners. In the same way, I affirm that this function is part of any staging of psychology, and the act of affiliation to its professional guild is no exception.

Thus, I propose a critical reading of the embedding that enacts the sex and gender binary system in professional psychology. For this purpose, I analyze a performative intervention made some years ago in my titling event at the Costa Rican Professional Psychologists Association, CPPCR (for its acronym in Spanish: Colegio de Profesionales en Psicología de Costa Rica).

Methodologically, the research process combines *autoethnography* with *ethnographic performance*, linked with the epistemological perspective of the *archival queer*. Theoretically, this work is supportive of queer theory’s critique of the field of psychology. In this way, the performative intervention is inscribed in the logic of *the auto-guinea pig principle* described by Preciado (2013), “as a mode of the production of ‘common’ knowledge and political transformation” (p. 352), the body represents a privileged experimental platform, whereby it is not only desirable, but imperative, to try to (re)think power and discourses. To subvert the ways in which knowledge is created implies “the academic might be the archivist, a coarchivist, a full-fledged participant in the subcultural scene that the scholar writes about” (Halberstam, 2005 p. 159), and in terms of method, in this chapter, it implies to use my own body as data collection instrument about the discourses of the body.

As Hook and Hüning (2009) point out, the effect of Foucauldian genealogy is to destroy the individual psychological subject as the primary focus of explanation. My purpose is, following the preceding statement concerning the principle highlighted by Preciado (2013), to try to exemplify, through a retrospective reflection of a performative intervention, how the body could be a source of elucidation of *psy-function*. Considering that the body is reflected in the social mirror (Le Breton, 2018), the body we are aiming at here is not an individual body but a collective one and, therefore, the center of a possible common knowledge. That is to say, the reactions that are directed toward that individual body (my body) that appears on stage concern the collective conception of what a feminine and masculine body is.

10.2 Queer Theory and Psychology

In Costa Rica, the development of professional psychology dates to the 1970s, with the creation of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Costa Rica. The fact that the training in psychology was from the beginning linked to the social sciences and not to the health sciences historically gave it a humanistic and critical

character (Flores, 2010). However, the influence of positivism, largely associated with the development of neoliberal policies, has meant that since the beginning of the new millennium, critical approaches have been less and less present (Cordero & Salas, 2003).

In terms of gender and sexuality, it is undoubtedly the feminist debates and theorizations that have contributed the most to the development of a critical vision of Costa Rican psychology. In this sense, in the country there has been a long tradition of studies in psychology on gender violence, which provide critical views about machismo and patriarchy (Rodríguez & Akoka-Rovinski, 2019). On the other hand, in the last 20 years there has been an increase in research in psychology on LGBTIQ+ populations, which has implied a greater presence of the discipline in this field.

Queer theory has been gradually gaining ground in academia, a presence that has been particularly permeated by the psychoanalysis of the *École Lacanienne of Psychanalyse* (ELP), especially by the work of French psychoanalyst Jean Allouch. In 2005 the ELP organized a seminar with the participation of the American literary theorist Leo Bersani, after which the debates around queer theory began to increase. Psychology, on the other hand, remained on the sidelines of queer discussions for a longer period. It seems to coincide with a generalized tendency (Downing & Robert, 2011), since the social mandate of mainstream psychology has been more on the side of reproducing the status quo.

Psychology shares with psychiatry a long history of pathologizing sexual diversity, especially of homosexuality and transsexuality (Di Segni, 2013). This background has caused that “queer theory is often positioned in opposition to psychology”. (Johnson, 2015, p. 172). Despite the gender role stereotypes that permeate the DSM diagnostic criteria, in the Costa Rican context, adherence to the DSM diagnostic criteria is still very present today (Fernández, 2012). This suggests the reasons why the queer vision still has little impact on local psychological practice.

Otherwise, as Ellis et al. (2020) point out, “psychology has been slow to engage with queer theory, and until recently psychological studies employing this approach have been rare” (p. 24). This is equally valid with respect to the academic field of psychology in Costa Rican universities. Although references to queer theorists are increasingly frequent in psychology dissertations, such mentions are not really integrated into the theoretical field of psychology.

The discursive hegemony of the so-called evidence-based practice in psychology has been another constraint to the development of critical perspectives that integrate the theoretical grounding of queer theory in psychological knowledge, which in turn has considerable practical implications, such as the devaluation of any type of knowledge that does not fall within the narrow margins of what is considered evidence. Following Riggs (2011), “the history of the application of ‘evidence-based practice’ to LGBT people would suggest that what counts as ‘evidence’ (and the practice that follows from it) will always be historically and contextually specific, and that this can result in extremely negative outcomes for individuals who do not conform to a particular set of societal norms” (p. 89).

There are some initiatives that have been able to generate a better integration of these knowledge fields (Clarke et al., 2010; Burnes & Stanley, 2017). The article of Henry Minton, “Queer Theory: Historical Roots and Its Implications for Psychology,” is usually quoted as an incipient and unavoidable reference concerning the relationship between queer theory and psychology. In his work, Minton (1997) identifies the incorporation of emancipatory interest, identity politics, social ethics, and participatory research as four post-positivists trends in psychology that, according to his view, reflects aspects of queer theory and therefore establishes a link between them:

Queer theory has relevance for psychological theorizing and practice because it adopts a position of inquiry that is decentered from the norm. Consequently, it is concerned with the agency of identities that reinvent themselves to effectively resist to social regulation. Queer theory thus directs psychological inquiry toward issues of subjective agency. (Minton, 1997, p. 349)

In this sense, I fully agree with the approach of Johnson (2014), for whom “queer theory challenges psychological understandings of sexuality” (p. 1620). In the current Costa Rican context, to speak of a “queer psychology” is perhaps a rather hasty formulation. The present moment can be described as a stage of gradual integration of queer notions into the field of psychology. In this sense, queer analyses represent a critical pillar of the more orthodox versions of traditional psychology, but they do not yet constitute an integrated field of research.

As Hegarty (2011) suggests, even if it is clear that currently there are important developments in which psychology and queer theory are becoming closer fields, it is necessary to not lose the sense of *unfamiliarity* that subsists between them. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight these disparities to discern some possible analytical crossroads to keep building a common ground.

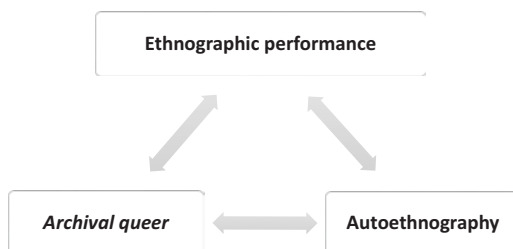
10.3 Methodological Approach

A common claim about methodological arrangements that take queer theory as the axis of inquiry process is their nonconformity with traditional research approaches and a clear refusal of epistemological orthodoxy. To a certain extent, to speak of queer methodologies may look as a contradiction itself and to transfer this conjunction to the field of psychology could seem almost an oxymoron. Such divergence is that:

Scholars in the social sciences, their argument goes, emphasize the systematic, coherent, orderly, modal, normative, positivist, and generalizable while queer theorists in the humanities champion the fluid, flux, disruptive, transgressive, interpretivist, and local knowledges. Hence, conjoining “queer” with “method” can present a paradox. (Ghaziani & Brim, 2019, p. 4.)

Even though, a growing number of scholars have undertaken the task of bringing the two perspectives closer together. Taking care not to subsume one viewpoint into another and following again Ghaziani and Brim (2019), I agree with the

Fig. 10.1 Methodological triad



proposition that queer methods can offer critical and pedagogical ways of studying social phenomena, including those that mainstream psychology can only conceive under the aura of evidence-based practice, a notion that paradoxically is often equated with speculative notion of “truth.” Having this purpose as a teleological orientation in mind, we will describe the components of the methodological triad (Fig. 10.1) that underlies the present paper.

Archival Queer I put this notion in the first line, since the performative intervention on which this chapter is based took place 10 years ago, so that some reflections that are derived from it are the product of a retrospective analysis. Indeed, “the significance of being ‘archival queers’ is deepened further when we acknowledge the stakes in recognizing, engaging, accumulating and speaking these traces, these holdings, *these embodiments of queer pasts for self and communities*, for transformation” (Morris & Rawson, 2013, p. 79). In my view, taking these traces of self-performativity is a procedure to cross-examine the reception of queerness by psychologists and such a way to interrogate the relation between past and present.

Ethnographic Performance Plummer (2005), starting from the Butlerian propositions in which gender is seen as performative construction, points out that much of the work in queer theory has been *playing around with gender*, in some cases as subversive interventions with the aim of generating curiosity, critical reflection, or desires of emancipation. The performance under study is precisely a ludic intervention that aims to generate an impact on an audience and thus to generate different types of reactions in order to discuss the relationship between queerness and psychology.

Autoethnography As Holman and Adams (2010) assert, autoethnography and queer theory have considerable similarities, as their interest in subjectivity and the contextual analysis of particularities. However, resemblances do not make autoethnography a queer method itself; it is necessary “a differential, oppositional, performative and above all transformative, queer approach to autoethnography is one which recognizes that bodies are immersed in, and fixed by, texts, but also recognizes these bodies as doing, speaking and understanding beings, forthrightly incomplete, unknown, fragmented and conflicting” (Holman & Adams, 2010, p. 211). Emphasis on the link between texts and bodies will be decisive for the analysis of the reactions generated by the performance.

Thus, this chapter develops an analysis of a performative intervention, bringing together two different methods with a specific epistemological perspective. The application of the methods as well as the inclusion of such perspective was carried out at different times and with different paths. Hence, the *ethnographic performance* represents the basis from which the fieldwork started, while the *autoethnography* constitutes a complementary perspective that seeks to emphasize the autobiographical character of the intervention. Meanwhile, the *archival queer* view provides an epistemic basis for retrospective analysis.

10.4 In-Corpo-Rating Me as Psychologist

“Anyone wishing to be a political subject will begin by being the lab rat in her or his own laboratory.” (Preciado, 2013, p. 353)

This section will be written combining the description of the performance itself with theoretical and methodological personal considerations about the experience. Due to the autoethnographic nature of the experience, the writing of the chapter emphasizes the use of personal pronoun “I,” in the same political and ethical realm of what Pollock (2007) calls the “performative I,” in which, by “performing displacement by error, intimacy, others, it moves beyond the atomization, alienation, and reproduction of the authorial self toward new points of identification and alliance” (p. 252).

This part of the text is the synopsis of what could be described, to a *certain extent*, as a process of *participant observation*, a research process that, according to Taylor and Bogdan (2009), involves social interaction between the researcher and informants in the milieu (social setting, environment, or context) of the latter and during which data are collected in a systematic and nonintrusive way. It is worth weighing the illocutive value of the expression “to a certain extent,” since it is necessary to discern what being an “observer” implies in this case and what else the qualifier “participant” entails. Meanwhile, I’ll leave this problem in abeyance and turn to the main results of the fieldwork. But, before I begin, I will give some contextual data, first, characterizing myself and who I was at the time of the intervention that will be analyzed. Secondly, we will describe the place and the context in which the performance took place.

Me Inevitably, making an autoethnography entails referring to the person who writes it. In this case, this would imply at least alluding to those biographical aspects that have a clear relationship with the intervention carried out. Like Fournier (2015), I consider that this exercise constitutes an intersectional task, necessary to make interlocution with readers.

I define myself as a cissexual man, even though in some parts of my life, especially in childhood, femininity was not an issue without implications for me. The fantasy of being a girl and erotic games related to cross-dressing were recurrent as

a young boy and in adolescence. Later, as an adult, many of these feelings began to surface again, this time linked to certain readings of gender studies, queer theory, and psychoanalysis.

At the time of the CPPCR performance, this feeling of inadequacy with respect to sexual identity, as well as the rejection of the cissexual canon, manifested itself especially through my research interests, as well as through political actions, which included collective apostasy and participation in the media. I can say in this sense that the trans/cis opposition is a subject that crosses me at different levels; hence it is not only an object of academic reflection but also a personal one.

Psychology The Costa Rican Professional Psychologists Association (CPPCR) is the institution that certifies and regulates the work of the psychologist in the country. To be accredited as a psychologist, it is necessary to make a workshop of professional ethics in the CPPCR and then to participate in a ceremony to formalize the affiliation; usually both activities take place the same day.

In Costa Rica, several politicians, especially those associated with evangelical sectors, have promoted “restorative therapies” for sexually diverse people. Even though these interventions clearly contravene human rights, when the performance took place, the response from the CPPCR was quite passive and could even be classified as supposedly “apolitical.”

In the same way, the university training I received to become a psychologist in the University of Costa Rica (from my point of view, the university that offers the psychology career with a more critical vision in the country), I cannot say that it actively promoted any kind of discrimination, it was still conservative, concerning sexual and gender diversity. At that moment (and frequently even today), my perception was that psychology is not a real diversity allied discipline, especially concerning queerness and sexuality.

Observation Log:

- Day: September 27, 2011
- Time: From 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
- Place: Costa Rican Professional Psychologists Association (CPPCR)
- Activity: Incorporation Process to the CPPCR

I use the form “Incorporation Process,” in order to capture a particular meaning derived from the Spanish expression, even knowing that it does not necessarily correspond to the most appropriate way to express the same idea in English, which could be said using the words “affiliation” or “membership.” I want to emphasize a pun with the term “incorporación” (incorporation). The Latin root of the word, *corpos, corporis*, means body, while the prefix “in” means “inward.” In this sense, the word means to put anything inside a body or structured whole and make it form a body/corps with it. In this case, “incorporation” has another meaning, insofar as the body constitutes a privileged object of attention, an object *rated* by others’ glance, and therefore – and this is part of my retrospective reading – the act of *incorporation* becomes a queer subjective embodiment.

Events The activity began with a breakfast at 8:00 o'clock. I arrived at the facilities of the CPPCR earlier, accompanied with a friend of mine, who was responsible for containing my anxiety during the first minutes. Research ethics demand to report as accurately as possible everything that happened during the observation process, and that is why I must confess that the product of the first minutes of my field work must be considered diffuse, because a certain agitation did not stop accompanying me for a certain period.

As a result of this initial nervousness, the handling of the 10 cm of heels became more difficult than usual, revealing a certain clumsiness of body movement in general and of the hips, which ended up causing that part of my breakfast to fall on the floor. Concerned about picking up the fruit scattered on the floor, I left my purse in the middle of a passageway (about 2 m), while a future colleague stood in front of the bag and said to me in a tone that denoted her obvious annoyance: "That bag is in my way!" Since this was the only direct interpellation I received during the whole activity, it is appropriate to affirm that it was an exhortation in which the bag becomes a metonymic figure of the nonconformity produced by the sex ambiguity, an interpellation orchestrated with the rhythm of the sex/gender binary system.

After this slight outburst, deontological training begins. Several talks and dynamics were held with the main emphasis on the following question: *How to be a good psychologist?* Among the main possible answers, aspects such as the following were highlighted: Reminders of the importance of adhering to the more positivist versions of psychology and DSM logics, an apology of the so-called social doctorate,² an emphasis on the importance of adhering to the minimum fees as a way of not "vulgarizing" the profession, as well as the instructive presentation of the appropriate ways to advertise yourself in the new competitive world.

Throughout these presentations, my presence in that place was not received as something "normal"; from the beginning, multiple glances made a stealthy – and at times strident – scrutiny of my figure. So it was that a young girl colleague walked from the opposite side of the auditorium to stand next to me and stare at me for some time. A moment later, she returned to her original location to engage in conversation with her companions amidst laughter and murmurs, which seemed to confirm that she had an emissary function, which consisted of bringing information about that silent person sitting at the back of the auditorium.

These reactions, coming from a group of cis women, in my opinion, foreshadow the reaction of nonconformity in the face of the subversion of bodily limits. The effect of a woman's likeness on a body that was not rated as a woman's body. A liminal appearance that functions based on what Butler (1999) recognizes, analyzing Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, as the revalorization of something that was

²In Costa Rica, it is common to refer to a physician as "doctor," even though he/she does not have the corresponding academic degree (PhD). For this reason, the CPPCR enabled the option of placing the acronym "Dr." on the identification card of psychologist, with the aim of homologating the social denomination used for those who practice medicine. This option, in addition of being meaningless in relation to academic degrees, reflects the persisting desire of many psychologists to acquire the social status of medicine, also evident in the act of wearing white coats everywhere.

originally part of the identity in a dishonorable alterity. A gaze that marks an effect of “expulsion” from which emerges a “repulsion” that establishes and reinforces hegemonic identities on axes of differentiation.

The same pattern was maintained throughout the activity, except for the stay in the bathroom in which the scrutinizing glances became particularly insidious. This makes sense if we understand that the bathroom constitutes a privileged instance for the labeling of bodies; the normativity that continually governs our actions in these aseptic enclosures operates on a basis that cancels out the slightest hint of ambiguity, which is reinforced by a series of spatial arrangements, institutional regulations, as well as implicit agreements and tacit arrangements (Fernández & Pluchino, 2019).

In general terms, I can identify three types of reactions: those in which I was thoroughly scrutinized with the gaze, those in which I was just perceived as any other girl, and those in which I was erased or suspended from the visual field. As for the last type of reaction, the empty chair next to me throughout the day in a completely full auditorium served as a spatial metaphor for the abjection produced by diffuse corporeality. Here the *empty chair* is no longer an artifact on which a disturbance of the past is acted upon but rather an object in which a discomfort of the present is manifested.

Afterward, one of the speakers, who had been observing me for a long time in the workshops, seems to have personified the same reaction of abjection. While giving a talk in which she recalled the importance of professionals in psychology having the ability to provide adequate care to their patients, she stated that “it is dangerous for an unstable person to practice psychotherapy,” a phrase she uttered “fortuitously” directing her gaze toward me. A subtle but emphatic message that I summarize in these terms: Transgender people should be patients but not psychotherapists.

The crowning moment was the final presentation of the diploma that certifies me as a psychologist in this professional association. In the same way as in a university graduation, one by one the future members of the great psychology family were called in alphabetical order. I experienced the passage from letter A to letter F with great expectation, since I did not know the reactions that the representatives of the institution might have upon discovering the incongruity that my name produced in relation to my physical appearance. I reached the podium at the same time as another guy, reason why the person in charge of handing out the certificates got confused, awarding my diploma to the one who seemed more in accordance with the enunciated name. Subsequently, the following dialogue took place:

Guy: No, I am not Daniel.

Me: I am Daniel.

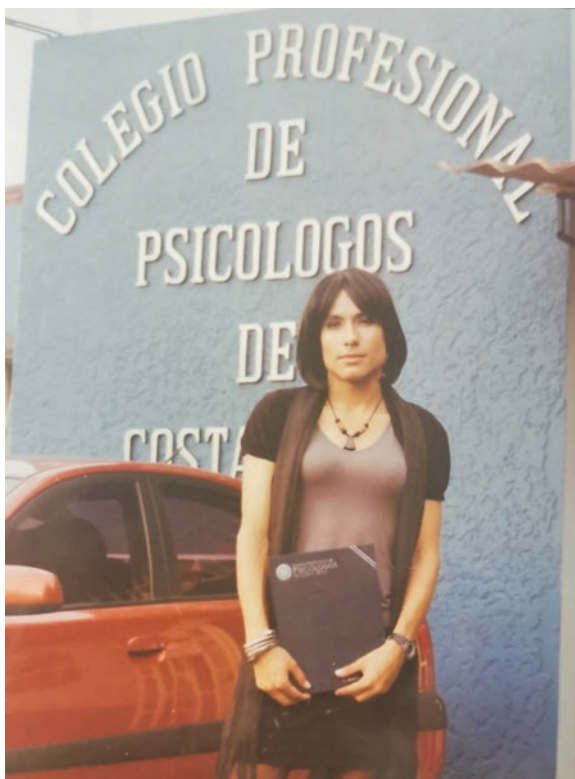
Certificate clerk: Ah!?!?!?! Are you Daniel?

Me: Yes, I am Daniel.

Certificate clerk: Ah...congratulations...

Despite the doubts and uncertainties, I finally joined the professional association that enables me to practice psychology. In my case, the subsequent toast was more related to the possibility of incorporating something of me in an institutional

Fig. 10.2 Photo of me after the CPPCR incorporation ceremony



framework that either by action or omission resolves to proscribe that “something” by systematically adhering to the cissexual un heterosexual normativity. Once again, this “something” to which I refer does not only involve me, but all those people who, due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, have been discriminated or psychopathologized by conservative psychology (Fig. 10.2).

10.5 Performance Post-reactions

“There is never one geography of authority and there is never one geography of resistance.”
(Pile, 2009, p. 23)

A few days after the incorporation, I wrote a press release,³ narrating the experience in similar terms to those used in this chapter. At the time, this text had a good

³ *Boletín Costarricense de Psicología de la Liberación*, a self-managed publication that no longer exists but was a collective effort to promote a critical and committed psychology. The title of the text was “Incorporando(se). De la observación participante al deseo” (Incorporating[itsself]. From participant observation to desire).

reach, especially among people related to psychology. If we consider that generating discussion and positioning the issue of sexual diversity was an essential part of my initial objectives, it must be said that the goal was achieved successfully.

In this section, I propose to discuss some of the reactions produced by that text, especially those that allude to the *speaking body* that was identified as part of the performance. Perhaps a point that may seem too obvious is to say that this text and the performance itself were provocations from the beginning, since they were aimed at the encounter of certain discursivities, especially those more reluctant to diversity. It is convenient to anticipate that reactions generated by the intervention come from opposing paths in principle, an aspect that, beyond astonishing, reveals how difficult it is to untangle certain knots of truth, regardless of where they come from.

These appreciations are in some cases the product of informal conversations with colleagues, friends, and family, and others perhaps were even more informal, because they were captured by third parties and subsequently discussed with the author of this chapter. In other words, these brief notations arise from informality and from an unpublished informant figure that I will call “Keys-Ears,” whose heuristic potential is based on a research method no less novel, known as *nonparticipant listening*.⁴

Most of the negative reactions were in favor of describing the intervention at best as the product of some emotional imbalance and others even as the result of a psychiatric disorder. In the same direction, I will now emphasize a conversation in which two university psychology professors participated. The incident took place on a bus between two university psychology professors and was recorded by the key-ears of a colleague who was there at the time. One of them pointed out that the person subscribing the text was a certain “Daniel,” to which his interlocutor suddenly say: “that guy is split,” “he is a psychotic.”

Hearing such a diagnostic opinion is an extraordinary milestone commemorating almost 70 years since the first version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-I) was published. Just as the US military associated psychosis with “homosexuality” (Briki, 2009) – at the time a generalizing category that included various “sexual deviations,” including transvestism – this clinical opinion seems a reminder of psychologists’ opposition to sexually diverse people being part of the “psychology regiment.” This diagnostic furor is a clear indication that the misrepresentation that turned psychoanalysis into a prosaic ensemble of psychopathologic labels in the United States and subsequently elevated psychiatry as the supreme deity of normalcy is more prevalent than ever.

The key that marks the term “split” reveals a static vision of identity, supported by the essentialist reason that sustains the sex/gender binary, quite close to religious dogma. As Da Silva (2008) points out, this identity, which opposes good and evil, good and bad sexuality, seeks to sustain itself in a binary interpretation of the world

⁴“Nonparticipant listening” and “Key-Ears” do not refer to data collection methods per se but are allegorical allusions to the figures of “participant observer” and “key informant” which are used here to explain that the reactions analyzed in this section were collected thanks to the report of third parties who were able to capture (to listen) them.

and of gender relations. It has its borders established, delimited, and allows the controlled coexistence between the masculine and the feminine, a controlled and subordinated coexistence, in which the mixture between the masculine and the feminine can never be imagined. In the face of such a blunt “clinical” verdict as “he is psychotic,” it is not surprising that at that time and even today there are “restorative” psychological therapies for sexually diverse people.

In another field, I had some conversations with different people, especially psychologists, from whom I received certain questionings (some of them with more theoretical consistency than others) that took queer theory as a reference. In general terms, some of these people argued that my performative proposal was normative, arguing two types of reasons, which I will highlight below:

1. *Misrepresentation of Queer Identity*

Supporting reasons:

- Use of the self-designation “Gigi,” instead of the legal name that appears on my identity card.⁵
- Use of an overly stylized dress, conceived as a type of “transsexual cliché”.⁶

2. *Forgery Queer Identity*

Supporting reasons:

- My proposal was not valid, because this does not represent my everyday life experiences, unlike transgender people who are “on the street,” whose experiences are truly queer.⁷

Both types of objections allow to discuss two important aspects, the first concerns the question of authenticity, that is, distinguishing what is an originally and truly queer representation from what is fallacious or adulterated one. Concerning this allegation, I consider that turning queer into an identity, if it is not a contradictory operation, is at least problematic one. In this sense, many of the objections referred were based on the factuality of this presumed identity.

The second aspect is an allegation of consistency with respect to “queer militancy” and the need for authentic and coherent activism. These invectives (especially the one corresponding to the second objection), in my opinion, configure a

⁵The text I published after the performance was signed with the nickname “Gigi,” which is a reference to the main character of an anime series of the Mahō shōjo genre called *The Adventures of Gigi*, created in 1982. The main feature of this character is that she could transform into different characters. Undoubtedly, a more in-depth discussion regarding nomination policies is still pending. I would like to suggest that the question of “Am I that name?” (Norris & Tanesini, 2005) is pertinent not only with respect to identity categories but also, and perhaps more pressingly, with respect to one’s own name.

⁶In the photo that appears in the publication, I wore a black evening dress and pink feather boas.

⁷The certainty that emerges on this point is striking, since the text did not provide more information about what I do or do not do daily.

kind of *queer panopticon*, a form of gender court, which, paradoxically, dictates a certain queer axiological code. An idea that could be summed up this way: Be queer, but do it the right way!

It should be made clear that I do not intend to say that my proposal is exempt from criticism, since, as the term “proposal” indicates, it is an unfinished product, an incomplete execution, open to a future never fixed in advance, and perhaps it is not superfluous to say that it is a proposal without any aspiration to be coherent. One of my main interests is to visualize the blurred lines that often divides discourses with a critical vocation from those that clearly do not, as in the case of religious fundamentalism or the conservative psychopathology we have just seen.

10.6 Final Considerations

I would like to close this chapter by returning to some methodological aspects, which I consider relevant to understand the relationship I propose between psychology and queerness. Going again to the discussion on *participant observation*, it is worth asking how this performative approach differs from other traditional research work. There seems to be a certain consensus (Delgado & Gutiérrez, 1999; Taylor & Bogdan, 2009), regarding the fact of conceiving participant observation as a practice in which:

- The researcher must be a stranger or foreigner to his or her object of research.
- The researcher must coexist as an integral part of the system to be studied.
- This system has its own definition of its boundaries.
- The integration of the researcher will be maximized and functional while remaining an external analyst.

In this case, the researcher becomes an object of study, carrying out a self-immersion in a system with well-defined boundaries. Therefore, the system becomes an object of observation thanks to the actions of the researcher. In other words, the action of the others who observe the researcher becomes what the researcher observes. This disposition can be understood by referring to the concept of *reflexivity* (Dobles, 2018), insofar as the research per se affects and modifies the context in which the process takes place and those who act in it. The main difference with reflexivity inherent to any research process is that most researchers try not to alter the environment they pretend to comprehend, while in this case, an intentional alteration is produced.

Thus, we are confronted with a tension between interiority and exteriority, which reveals an epistemic position in which corporeality and subjectivity are implicated as active platforms in the process of construction of thought. Following Preciado (2013):

“a philosophy [and I add: a psychology] that doesn’t use the body as an active platform of technovital transformation is spinning in neutral. Ideas aren’t enough. (...). All philosophy

is intended to be a form of autovivisection—when it isn't a form of dissection of the other. It is an exercise in self-cutting, an incision into subjectivity.” (p. 359)

In this case, my case, as a researcher I was not a stranger to my object of research, first because of the obvious fact that my own body was the epicenter of the study, and then, because for me, the performance was not only a research exercise or a political praxis but also – and perhaps more predominantly – an *incorporation* of desire, where makeup, heels, petticoats, lingerie, and hip movements were the raw material of my own subjectivation process.

The tacit question that initially mobilized this intervention, as well as the elaboration of this chapter, is: How permeable is psychology to diversity when diversity ceases to be an object of study to become a critique emanating from its own core? If we consider the fact that discursive formations determine, at a certain moment and state, what can and cannot be said, it is because they imply a moment of suture (centering) of meaning (Figari, 2009). The task of a queer psychology, therefore, is to intervene not only in relation to what is considered diversity but also in the terms that define diversity itself.

The existence today of various hegemonic discourses that seek to subsume the sex-gender pair in the restrictive male/female binary is a persistent fact. While facing this unflattering panorama, it seems the attempts to subvert the gender binarism should not be subordinated to rigid schemes of action. To choose diversity implies understanding that there are also diverse ways of sustaining such a choice. Interrogating how our psychological practice relates with diversity is a fundamental key to elucidate what kind of psychologists we are and how our practice can influence the maintenance or subversion of the *status quo* of gender and sexuality.

In a traditional context such as that of Costa Rica, which is not very different from that of other countries in the region, the development of a critical and committed psychology is essential. The proliferation of conservative discourses that take as their emblem the so-called gender ideology makes it necessary to develop practices of resistance and transformation, regarding different forms of oppression.

Although the CPPCR currently seems to have a more active role in the promotion of human rights, the fact is that its impact is still limited. On the other hand, the performative experience analyzed in this chapter shows how certain stereotypes about gender and sexuality are reproduced within an institution that is supposed to counteract them. In this sense, I conceive that to generate changes, it is necessary to act on oneself, so that to queerize psychology, it is necessary to queerize the place one occupies in this disciplinary field, and from my point of view, it requires a queer approach to queerness.

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