LEXICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ELABORATION:
THE 'SPECIES HOMOSEXUAL' IN GUATEMALA*

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0. As Taylor (1973) showed, separate, specialized institutions for homosexuals have not developed in the Western Hemisphere's largest city as they have in Anglo-America (cf. Murray 1979c; Lee 1979; Harry and Devall 1979). Carrier (1975; 1976a, b) and Lacey (1979) have further argued that despite the ubiquity of homosexual behavior the 'species homosexual' does not exist in Mesoamerica and that 'homosexual object choice' is not a basis for the formation of identity there. Recurrent homosexual behavior does not automatically produce a sense of gay identity even in Anglo-America (Reiss 1961; Humphreys 1970; Weinberg 1978; Miller 1978), where homosexuality clearly forms a possible basis for identity (and even collective action as evidenced by the gay liberation movement of the past decade).

Apparently under the symbolic interactionist assumption that the self is a choice among existing roles in a particular society, discussion of homosexual identity in Mesoamerica has focused on whether there is a conception of 'the homosexual' in the majority culture rather than on the self-conceptions of those engaging in recurrent homosexual behavior. Even on such a basis, however, there is disagreement. Taylor (1978: 201) argues that although

> popular Mexican conceptions of homosexuality are deduced
> from largely erroneous secondhand information. . .based
> upon false anatomical analogies further confused with ethno-
> centric elements of female role playing and gender identity. . .
> Mexicans conceive of homosexual people as a type of person
> with primary and secondary physical and social characteristics.

In contrast, Lacey (1979: 23) argues that the only distinction made through-out Latin America is between male and female behavior:

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> If the homosexual acts socially (in public) like a man, then
> he is a man and will be treated as such, whatever he may do
> sexually in private (that is his own business); similarly, if
> he acts socially like a woman, whatever he may do sexually,
> he is, and will be treated like, a woman.

That is, he suggests that public behavior rather than either biological gender or preferred/typical sexual performance role is salient in a very simple, two-category system.[1]

This paper does not bear on the question of the conception of a homosexual species in majority Guatemalan culture,[2] but with how people are classified by homosexually involved men in Guatemala (City). Although not as elaborated as the lexicon in Anglo-American gay ghettoes (cf. Rodgers 1972), distinctions beyond masculine/feminine are made by homosexually involved Guatemalans.

1.1. Most (eight of ten) informants approached the investigator while he was loitering in settings where homosexual cruising was common and struck up conversation with him.[3] Below the informants are numbered in order of ascending age, and such social detail as was elicited about each is included.

1: 17, city native, lives with family of origin, reported having homosexual friends

2: 19, city native, lives with family of origin, reported having homosexual friends but no participation in subculture, being penetrated

3: 23, city native, lives with family of origin, reported having no homosexual friends and not participating in subculture, but knew name and address of gay disco, reported having performed fellatio once and not liked it, never having been penetrated, and preferring sex with men to sex with women

4: late 20s, lives on Salvadorean border, married with two children, reported preferring men, participating in subculture when in capital, and liking to be penetrated

5: late 20s, city native, lives with family of origin, extravagantly dressed, participant in subculture, has visited US, reported preferring men and liking to be penetrated

6: 27, city native, lives with family of origin, reported no homosexual friends, no participation in subculture, and liking to be penetrated

7: 30, born in US, co-ordinate bilingual resident in Guatemala 7 years, lives with Guatemalan lover, participant in subculture, reported preferring men

8: 30, born in Cuba, co-ordinate bilingual who had lived in US, lives with unrelated others, participant in subculture, reported preferring men

9: 35, born in Chichicastenango, lives with relatives in capital, reported no participation in subculture, nor homosexual friends, reported being penetrated

10: 55, city native, married, father of four, had lived in US, co-ordinate bilingual, reported friends but not participation in subculture

1. 2. After rapport had been established, informants were asked questions of the form, "Existe una palabra para decir _____(a circumlocution) ?" This form seemed more productive than the more usual "Como se dice ____?", perhaps because it is more impersonal and hence less likely to imply the informant would use the word. Once the informant finished volunteering terms, the investigator suggested additional ones, which were either accepted or not. In the list of terms, informants who suggested the term are listed first. Those who assented to it are listed after a semi-colon.

2. The vernacular Spanish terms are listed by etic category, followed by a listing of informants who knew the term, a vernacular English translation, and, finally, any comments.

Same sex preference ('un person que prefiera los hombres')

entendido (all informants) in the know (in contrast to buga not in the know about homosexual activity)

de ambiente (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10; none) participant in homosexual environment

homosexual (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10; 1, 2, 9) homosexual

gay (2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10; 1) gay (borrowed from US along with assertive, proud connotation)

hueco (2, 7, 8, 10; 1, 4, 5, 6, 9) empty hole (not used in self reference)

raro (1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10; 3) queer

joto (2, 3, 5, 6, 9; 10) sissy

puto (2, 10; 5) someone who cannot take care of himself and is therefore an object for sexual penetration (emphasis more on being penetrated than on financial transaction)

otro (de los otros, del otro lado) (9, 10; 3) queer (literally, other, one of the others, from the other side)

maricon (none; 7, 8, 10 specified the term as 'Mexican') queer

de manita caida (none; not asked) limp wrist (Carrier 1975: 75 reports this used among exclusively homosexual, young residents of Guadalajara)

Typical sexual performance role

activo/pasivo (all informants) active/passive

mayate/hueco (2, 3, 4, 5) trade/hole, i.e., insertor/insertee (mayate orig-inally referred to a bright-colored dung beetle, then was applied to flashy dressers (Carrier 1975: 74))

picador, chichifo, vajador, padrote (none) terms for active male elicited by Carrier (1975: 74)

papacito (1, 2) daddy (although used more to convey being financially supported than sexual performance role, informant 2 used the term as meaning someone who keeps a young boy and takes the activo role toward him)

internacional (2, 5, 9, 10) international (i.e., someone who does not even purport to take either the insertor or insertee role exclusively)

jaladore (0; 1, 9) swinger (insertor and insertee; does not mean bisexual)

de ida y vuelta (0; 1, 10) round-trip ticket (insertor and insertee with the same partner, not just over time with different partners)

Specialized preferences

Informants uniformly denied that there exist words for persons who pre-fer Indians, pure Castilians, blacks, foreigners, large penises, etc., or for those who wear leather, or who play S and M games. Informant 8 explained that for most Guatemalans there is little variety in available partners on variables such as skin color, penis size, etc., since Indian blood flows through the veins of nearly everyone in the city. Against this folk theory, Clark Taylor (personal communication) argues that such differences in preferences are attended to by others even if general terms are not coined (on interpreting the absence of terms, cf. below).

Feminine Dress

All native informants denied associating with men who dressed as women. Informants 7 and 8 further noted that transvestites consider themselves to be heterosexual women, keep completely apart from gay men, and never go to the gay bars. Loca was suggested by all informants as the term for men wearing women's clothes. Literally, it means crazy girl and conveys well the view of them held by Guatemalans involved in homosexual life. Informants did not regard transvestites as de ambiente, gay, or homosexual but were willing to have them termed rara, puta (note feminine endings), hueco, and, reluctantly, entendido in some instances.

Feminine behavior

loca (all informants) crazy girl (not just cross-dressed)

chilindrina (1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; 4, 10) someone camping it up (Las chilindrinas is a popular Mexican television program broadcast in Guatemala in which adults dress and act like children)

reina (4, 5, 7, 8, 10) queen

manflora (5) lesbian (also applied to effeminate man endeavoring to take activo role)

cf. also hueco, pasivo, raro, joto

Prostitute

chulo (1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10) for sale (also young and cute in the sense of trade rather than clearly available for economic transactions)

puto (4, 7, 8, 9, 10; 2) whore (promiscuous and pasivo are more common meanings of the term than prostitute)

chichifo (10; 5) thief (one who sells his body as a prelude or pretext for theft)

Given widespread economic need and diffidence about directly requesting it or alluding to need and what one might do to alleviate it, mention of receiving money is generally carefully avoided. Chulo is not a term of opprobrium at all, and the other two are derogations for other things than for taking money for sex. While not exactly approved, renting one's body for money is silently accepted.

Relationships

Lennox (1978) reports a lack of terms for romantic relationships. However, a number were elicited.

ficha (1, 2, 5, 9, 10; not asked of others) trick, literally a poker chip (i. e., partner in casual sex)

amigo, amante (all informants would apply these to a long-term relationship) friend

traido (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; 10) lover

novio (none; all understood application of term but reported would not use it for a male-male relationship) steady boyfriend

esposo(/a), marido(/a), (none; all understood application, but reported would not use it for a male-male relationship) spouse

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The reluctance to publicly acknowledge a lover is far from unknown in Anglo-America; many the lover who is referred to as 'friend' or 'roomate'.

3.1. "The categories of collective thought are not necessarily expressed in the categories of language," as Mauss (1922: 125) noted. Goodenough (1951) provided the classic example of a major social category (Truk property) without 'regular linguistic expression' and argued that in general there is no one-to-one correspondence between linguistic forms and culture. Dover (1978) provided another example of immediate relevance: the lack of words specifying whether love objects were male or female in a culture (ancient Greek) valuing same-sex relations. It is, therefore, not valid to conclude the non-existence of a phenomenon such as property or homosexuality from the absence of terms (as Gluckman 1974 does in regards to homosexuality among the Maori). In general, "Cultural categories are lexically expressed not automatically, but selectively. . . In a particular culture a language serves as a sort of 'metalanguage,' a cultural way of communicating about much, not all, of the culture" (Hymes 1964: 167, emphasis added).

There is, however, clearly a conception of a phenomenon for which there are six terms. It seems safe to conclude that at least for homosexually involved Guatemalans (both 'insertors' and 'insertees') there is a conception of a man with a preference for sex with other men. 'Sexual orientation' may not be an emic domain in the majority culture (cf. note 2), but there is recognition of more than masculine and feminine behavior, even among those without contact with such North American-influence gay subculture as there is there.

Whether there are conceptions of recurrent personal preferences for types (cf. Murray 1979e) is not clear in the absence of general terms. Taylor (personal communication) calls attention to the phenomenon of such character-istic 'tastes' being marked in nicknames, and he strongly disagrees with the accuracy of the folk model of little possible variability advanced by informant 8 (above). While one cannot conclude the inability to register a cognitive distinction from the absence of a term for it, absence of a term is certainly not evidence that such a distinction is made.

3.2. "Since before Boas first mentioned four Eskimo words for 'snow,' anthropologists have taken elaboration of vocabulary as an indication of the interests of particular cultures and differences among them" (Hymes 1964: 167). However, caution needs to be exercised in inferring cultural importance from proliferation of terms, just as it does in concluding a cognitive discrimination cannot be made or a social institution does not exist from the absence of terms. Mauss (1922: 125) continued his methodological cautions quoted above by noting, "Those social categories which are expressed by language are not necessarily those which are most conscious or most important."

With this caution in mind, I can note that in contrast to nine Guatemalan terms, I could elicit only five (gay, homosexual, faggot, queer, fairy) from men involved in the gay subculture of San Francisco, the city in the Western

hemisphere with the most gay institutional completeness (Harry and Devall 1979; Murray 1979a). There were also seven Guatemalan terms for on-going same sex relationships in contrast to only five in gay San Francisco (lover, roomate, husband, friend, boyfriend).[4] One should not conclude from this that these phenomena are more important in Guatemala than in San Francisco, nor should one forget that the classification systems are not general in either place to everyone, not even to all persons engaging in frequent homosexual behavior. There is not conclusive evidence of any relationship between institutional elaboration and lexical elaboration. The proliferation of gay lexicon in Anglo-America occurred before the gay institutional elaboration of the late 1970s.[5] Mount (1972: 9) noted 'the large number of homosexual slang terms which were coined in the 1950s' and related the lexical elaboration to the simultaneous 'rapid growth of gay bars and ghettos in many of the larger American cities'. The lexical elaboration has not continued apace with the institutional elaboration (Hayes 1976), even if Mount's correlation is accepted. Neither homosexual lexicon nor separate homosexual institutions are very developed in Guatemala, which bolsters the plausibility of this correlation, but does not conclusively establish its necessity.

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NOTES

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1. Given the notorious good/bad woman (madonna/whore) dichotomization of women, it is difficult to conceive that only a masculine/feminine distinction is made. The submissive mother who doesn't like sex is certainly not regarded as masculine, for all the self-control she exercises. On the other hand, anyone who likes to be penetrated may be regarded as a bad woman (chingada, hueco, puto).

2. I am inclined to apply Taylor's already-quoted statement to Guatemala as well, but have not gathered data on this.

3. Standard disclaimer: there cannot be a random sample of an unenumerated population such as homosexuals.

4. In both cities the gender of the one who penetrates is deemed irrelevant by some to masculine self-image.

5. These processes were more advanced earlier in San Francisco, where Rodgers'(1972) data were gathered, than elsewhere. 1969 is not the kind of watershed there it is in other North American cities. I am indebted to Deborah Wolf for cautioning me in applying a pre-1970/1970s dichotomy to San Francisco gay self-assertiveness (cf. also Murray, 1979a).