

HOW MEXICANS DEFINE MALE HOMOSEXUALITY:

LABELING AND THE BUGA VIEW

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[A] major element in every aspect of the drama of deviance is the imposition of definitions — of situations, acts, and people — by those powerful enough or sufficiently legitimated to be able to do so. A full understanding requires the thorough study of those definitions and the processes by which they develop and attain legitimacy and taken-for-grantedness [Becker 1963:207].

Many of the problems homosexual people face are not caused by homosexuality itself, but by the way homosexuality is defined and the resulting societal reaction that occurs when it is discovered. Thus, the accuracy of definitions and validity of the means used in arriving at them are of particular concern to anthropologists and other social scientists. In this article, we will address these concerns by examining common Mexican assumptions about male homosexuality and the consequences of what Mexican people can be expected to know or are socially entitled to know about the topic. In the homosexual slang of Mexico City, this perspective is often called the Buga view, and those who believe it (heterosexual and homosexual alike) are called Bugas. In Ambiente (urban Mexican homosexual social life) the term is neither derogatory nor complimentary and in ordinary Spanish it has no meaning at all.

In many ways, our approach to Mexican definitions of homosexuality reflects the orientation of sociologists who take a labeling or interactionist perspective of deviance. For example,

Interactionist theories of deviance, like interactionist theories generally, pay attention to how social actors define each other and their environments. They pay particular attention to differentials in the power to define; in the way one group achieves and uses the power to define how other groups will be regarded, understood, and treated [Becker 1963:204].

However, it differs in some ways, mostly in emphasis. For example, in

addition to the defining activities of agents of control and social welfare, we will be concerned with folk definitions, popular representations in myth, tradition and literature, homosexual self-definitions and culture patterns which foster deviancy treatment.

The Mexican Buga perspective of homosexuality lends itself particularly well to understanding the problems of labeling which all homosexual people face in Western Civilization. For example, it boldly highlights structural conceptual stereotypes and illuminates infrastructure by providing variation and contrast to related versions in other Western societies (i.e., in the United States, the "straight" view; Rogers 1972: 90).¹ This shadow effect further provides a measure of cognitive dissonance which enhances detachment and objectivity.

BUGA LABELING METHODOLOGY

Students of behavior defined as deviant have noted that in the daily execution of their duties, agents of control and social welfare form stereotypic concepts of what constitutes the "normal case" of deviance (Sudnow 1973:173-179; Scheff 1973:128-131). Ordinary Mexicans, Bugas, in their everyday lives also come to form stereotypic concepts of what homosexuality is about and what homosexuals are usually like. This we will call "normal Mexican homosexuality."

Unlike agents of control and social welfare, ordinary Bugas form their conception of "normal Mexican homosexuality" without knowingly having social intercourse with homosexuals. Indeed, Buga labeling methodology largely consists of social rules which exclude empirical examination of homosexuality.

Like other forms of highly stigmatizing behavior, homosexuality is considered generally too unpleasant, embarrassing or dangerous to be dealt with by ordinary Mexicans in polite society. It must be handled by agents of control and social welfare. Even such stigma experts are not expected to have knowledge beyond the circumstances of cases or crimes brought to their attention or assigned them for treatment. Consequently, there are almost no Mexican studies of homosexual populations outside control and treatment agencies.

Though Mexicans are more relaxed about homosexuality in informal situations, the stance they consider most proper in polite society is to assume that no one present is homosexual and that all nice people are heterosexual (the "heterosexual assumption," Ponce 1976:6). In essence, there is a social collusion in which homosexual people are expected to engage in various strategies to conceal their homosexual orientation, and in which everyone else is expected to ignore inadvertent homosexual cues. Common euphemisms for homosexuals illustrate and emphasize the heterosexual assumption. In polite conversation, homosexuals are often referred to as los otros ("the others") and del otro lado ("from the other side"). A courtesy stigma emphasizes the rule that respectable people are to be ignorant of what homosexuals are really like. Those suspected

of being homosexual are said to "know about the other group" (conocen del otro grupo).

Even if it is fairly well established that a person is homosexual, the rules of polite interaction demand that everyone pretend it is not the case. This type of mutual pretense has been called "counterfeit secrecy" in the United States (Ponce 1976:18).

A theory of contagion also bolsters social rules which exclude direct knowledge of homosexuality in Buga circles. There is a saying that if a non-homosexual has homosexual friends, within seven years he is likely to be one. This conflicts, of course, with the notion that a macho inserter is not a homosexual and will not become one. However, the Mexicans seem neither to notice nor be concerned.

As a result of excluding empirical observations, Bugas generally must arrive at their concept of "normal Mexican homosexuality" by relying upon secondary sources for analysis and deduction. Their resulting conception is, of course, only as valid as their sources are accurate and representative. The following examples are a general sample of the information from which ordinary Mexicans who follow the social rules form their opinions of "normal Mexican homosexuality."

COMMON TERMS FOR HOMOSEXUALS

Mexicans learn something about homosexuality when they acquire common Buga terms for it and how to use them. Though the terms have different shades of meaning, and in context are used to express sentiments from approval, humor, and interest to ridicule and opprobrium, terms for homosexuality generally are derogatory. In part, this coincides with the opinion of many people, but it also seems to address a social rule. For in ordinary polite conversation it is assumed necessary to assert one's disapproval of homosexuality in order to discuss it. Otherwise, one may fall suspect of being homosexual, or at least nonconformist. In addition to an initial derogatory meaning, the rule is attended by encoding an extra stigma into most common terms. This allows a margin of social safety no matter how favorable the contextual meaning. For example, although the feminine form (puta) means "whore," the common term puto is equivalent to our own term "queer." It can be used to express humorous approval as in the rustic saying, es buena suerte tener un puto en la familia (It's good luck to have a queer in the family); or it can be used to express a grave insult as when Rogelio shouts puto asqueroso (filthy queer) before murdering his father-in-law's lover in an autobiographical novel Chin-Chin El Teporocho (Ramirez Rodriguez 1974:174-176). Regardless of how it is used, puto has the additional meaning of "dumb" or "stupid", as in the graffiti, Beto puto buey, (Beto is a dumb ox), or since buey also means "homosexual," "Beto is a stupid queer").

Though current terms used in reference to homosexual people are far too numerous to be listed here,² a few more will be given. Carrier notes

that "Maricón and raro are the only popular reasonably polite words used in Guadalajara to designate a homosexual male" (1972:73). Maricón has the additional meaning "sissy," and raro means "strange" or "odd." Joto, another common term for homosexual (Foster 1966:57), also means "knave" or "rogue." Mayate, in addition to meaning masculine homosexual (Novo 1972:12), means "dung beetle."

BUGA ETIOLOGY OF NORMAL MEXICAN HOMOSEXUALITY

Mexicans learn several theories about the origin and cause of homosexuality based upon Western religious and scholarly sources. However, they have not developed any formal etiological theories of their own. A search of Mexico City libraries revealed that Mexicans have produced singularly few works on homosexuality, and that holdings from other nations seldom go beyond those written in the 1950's. Though holdings in private libraries are considerably more complete, these are not available to most Bugas. In terms of what can be learned from scholarly public sources, Mexicans are at the brink of the post-Kinsey Era.

From Catholic religious training, Bugas learn that like all forms of sexual expression outside traditional monogamous marriage, homosexuality is sinful. As sin, the etiology of homosexuality lies in a willful disobedience to the law of God.³ From the secular works at their disposal, Bugas are presented with three major etiological explanations. From Spanish translations of European authors who wrote at the turn of the century (i.e. Magnus Hirshfeld (1914) and Richard von Kraft-Ebing (1894)), Mexicans learn to regard people who are homosexual as a third sex, perhaps the product of genetic drift or a hereditary degeneration of the central nervous system. From authors like Charles Socarides (1968) and Irving Bieber (1962), Mexicans come to view homosexuality as a mental disease amenable to treatment. Finally, from a few sources, primarily Donald Webster Cory (1956) and George Weinberg (1973), Mexicans are presented with the etiological theory that homosexuals are a socially stigmatized minority group. This view is further bolstered by occasional translations of popular magazine articles from the United States, France and other Western societies. These major etiological theories of sinfulness, genetic taint, mental disease and to a lesser extent, minority behavior have been assumed accurate by public media and the general population.

Obviously, the theories are in serious conflict. However, Bugas generally overlook such conflicts when arriving at an understanding of an individual's homosexual behavior or when labeling a person homosexual. For example, in Chin-Chin El Teporocho, conflicts are resolved to form a meaningful whole in the following discussion between Rogelio, his wife, Michele, and sister-in-law Agnes:

- It is true, answered Agnes trying to appear simply interested — but we ought to pardon him. God made him that way, with this disease.

- But he married mama, and caused us, his daughters, to be born.
- Yes, that's right, he married mother with the intent of curing himself, but almost nothing prevails against this disease.
- But he can't be, for if he were, we wouldn't be his daughters.
- Yes, he is, and you also are his daughters, for God's sake understand, one can be homosexual and have children — say something to make Michele understand the truth.
- Yes, Michele, he married mother, whom he didn't love but whom he needed. However, in a weak moment, he met Ruben, with whom he fell in love, and whom he induced into this vice [Ramirez Rodriguez 1974:173].

In a country of considerable marginal literacy, comic books are of great importance in diffusing theories of homosexual etiology to the masses. One of the few comics which dare present the topic openly, Los Supermachos (The Superstuds) summarizes a commonly encountered Buga viewpoint in Las Perversiones Sexuales (The Sexual Perversions):

No theory has been able to adequately explain this aberration. That determined to cause one subject to be converted to homosexuality is of dubious value with respect to another. Nevertheless, the majority of homosexual subjects manifest sexual immaturity, neuroticism, infantilism, are starved for love and frustrated. Homosexuals are inclined to fear the opposite sex. It is as though in the process of the development of their "libido" it was not possible to reach the final step. The sexual conduct of homosexuals represents a regression to infancy, an escape from the biological necessities which heterosexual individuals have to assume [1975:14-15].

There is no homosexual press in Mexico, and homosexuality is considered far too scandalous for most publications to present a homosexual point of view. Thus, Bugas (including many homosexuals) seldom have an opportunity to know what homosexual individuals really think about their etiology. Though the column is certainly of questionable reliability, for the readers of the popular scandal newspaper, Alerta,⁴ there is "Anatomía del Homosexual" ("Anatomy of the Homosexual"), a regular feature which prints letters represented as having been sent by homosexual readers. One might expect Mexican homosexuals to present a more original or positive self-explanation, but their letters to Alerta generally reflect a

self-fulfilling prophecy of cultural expectations. For example, J. S. from Queretaro writes:

I am almost 18 years old, and as you may have guessed, Señor Del Villar, it is my disgrace to have been born homosexual. Perhaps because of my oddity (modo raro) nobody wanted me and my childhood passed sad and lonely as an omen of what the rest of my life would be.

On occasions, I think it is to my childhood that I owe my homosexuality. However, I think that I was born feeling homosexual. In trying to conquer my deviation, I have done everything possible, for women like me, but it is useless. I don't desire them sexually and I will never be able to romantically love any of them [March 15, 1975, p. 26].

On the other hand, A. G. G. from Mexico City feels that most other homosexuals who write to the column are using the excuses that they were born homosexual to justify their fault or disease (mal). He writes:

It is necessary that such people understand that those who have dedicated themselves to the study of homosexuality have arrived at the brilliant conclusion that to be homosexual is to have a neurotic disease, the fruit in general of cases of anguish, and that each case of homosexuality should be treated like all the rest. The false theories to the effect that homosexuality is caused by a deficiency of various hormones fortunately has passed into history [November 23, 1974, p. 27].

A. G. G. explains his own failure to obtain a cure to a lack of Mexican psychiatrists as talented as those in countries like the United States.

The predictable inclination of Bugas (regardless of sexual orientation) to answer questions about homosexual etiology with lists of pathological childhood experiences or recourse to unfortunate circumstances of birth is in dramatic contrast to common explanations of extra-marital consensual heterosexual activities. Heterosexual promiscuity, adultery and other activities are often teleologically viewed as obedience to an overwhelming procreative drive which causes natural attraction of opposite sexes regardless of the civil religious state of the participants. The equally teleological view that people are so interesting, erotic and aesthetically appealing that they are naturally sexually attracted to one another regardless of age, race, ethnicity, appearance or gender is seldom voiced (and then only among friends).

A BUGA TYPOLOGY OF NORMAL MEXICAN HOMOSEXUALITY

Though homoerotic activities occur in all societies, the homosexual as a type of person with primary and secondary characteristics and a distinct social role does not exist in all societies and where it does, it is not always the same (McIntosh 1968:182-192). However, Mexicans, like a majority of Westerners, do not seem to doubt the existence of such creatures and have very definite ideas about what they look like, how they act and what constitutes their ordinary or "normal activities."

Some Bugas feel that as a third sex, homosexuals can in no way be real men. Others commonly state that there are two kinds of homosexual males, masculine ones and effeminate ones. The preferred sexual activity of "normal Mexican homosexuals" is sodomy. Masculine homosexuals are expected to desire and perform an exclusive insertive role (to be activo) and effeminate homosexuals are expected to be exclusively insertees (pasivos). Other combinations are not "normal Mexican homosexuality" and are considered particularly ludicrous. This typology is shared by Mexican homosexuals. As a homosexual journalist stated:

There is a strong division between active and passive people which is really very traditional and reactionary. Those who are less obviously homosexual seem to esteem their lack of obviousness, to assign it a sort of value. The image that the buga world has constructed has been adopted by homosexuals. Though it is changing, five or ten years ago, it was very, very difficult to find a homosexual who held a different point of view.

Indeed, among Mexican homosexuals, those with no clear sex role preference are commonly called internacionales (internationals), imputing both variety and foreignness.

Some Mexicans say that anyone having homosexual relations is a homosexual. Others say that inserters are bisexual (de ambos lados, "on both sides"). Others say that inserters are just hyper-sexed heterosexual males motivated purely by hedonistic pleasure not by desire for men per se. That is, there is a feeling that the "masculine" homosexual sex role simply reflects a surfeit of sexual potency and thus is a dubious complement to a man's machismo.⁵ However, effeminate homosexuality is always opprobrious. As Octavio Paz writes, "masculine homosexuality is regarded with a certain indulgence insofar as the active agent is concerned" but "the passive homosexual is an abject, degraded being" (1961: 39).⁶ This double standard of homosexual sex roles and attitudes dates back in Western thought at least to 342 A.D. when Constantius and Constans promulgated a law providing exquisite punishment to the man "who marries" with other men and offers himself "in a womanly fashion" but indicated no punishment to those who offered themselves to other men in a "manly fashion" (Bailey 1975:70-71).

Of course, Mexicans have difficulty in divining a person's homosexuality or role preference. Indeed, before going to bed for sex,

Mexican males commonly ask each other whether they are activo (an inserter) or pasivo (an insertee). In addition, people are sometimes said to dissemble or pass. However, there are some cues which Bugas say are hard to suppress. In some instances, these cues are related to characteristics attributed to homosexuals in United States society, i.e., "the limp wrist," an "effeminate" walk, or a high voice. But in other instances, they are quite different. For example, in the United States, fondling one's genital area in public is bad manners. It is thought to indicate uncleanliness, or an overt sexual invitation to whomever is present. But in Mexico, such behavior is permissible and generally does not convey sexual overtones. As Dean writes:

They all grope themselves and scratch themselves and rearrange themselves, quite boldly and unselfconsciously, in public. (Everybody realizes the difference between male and female, so why be hypocritical about it?) [1973:13].

Likewise, at least until recently, it was considered homosexual behavior in the United States for men to put their arms around each other's shoulders and remain that way for extended periods of time. This is ordinary Mexican male behavior.

Many cues thought to indicate homosexuality are simply behavior reserved for women, props for the female role. For as in other Western cultures (McIntosh 1968:185) homosexual males are thought to have an innate desire to behave like women. Bugas think this "irrepressible urge" can be used to advantage in identifying homosexuals. As Los Supermachos observe in Los Homosexuales (The Homosexuals):

The mannerisms of the males, the looks, gestures and attitudes, above all the hands, can be ways of opportunely diagnosing homosexuality. These mannerisms do not correspond exactly to those of women; better said, they are stylizations, at times characterizations [1972:2].

Some of the mannerisms have names. What Bugas consider a general effeminacy in movement is referred to as palmera cimbrante ("a palm swaying in the breeze"). As noted, buga taxonomy recognizes the "limp" or "broken wrist" (manita caída) as a sign of male homosexuality (Fig. 1). They also recognize a position called cacha granizo ("catching hail," Fig. 2) and mesero sin charola ("a waiter without a tray," Fig. 3). One whose hands are flighty and animated in a manner sometimes referred to in United States homosexual slang as "shaking her bracelets" is said to be un jugador de tenis sin requeta ("a tennis player without a racket"). That these gestures are merely props to emphasize the female sex role is illustrated by the position of the prostitutes' hands in Figure 4. All men must avoid such behavior and other acts (such as tightly crossing the legs as women in dresses are taught to do or placing the hands on the hips) or face being labeled homosexual. However, the more general indicators like palmera cimbrante and jugador de tenis sin requeta are sufficiently vague that any idiosyncratic body movements can be seen as indications of homosexuality.



Fig. 1 The Limp Wrist (*Manita Caida*). Left caption - "In a certain number of homosexuals, the inverted appearance is accentuated by the adoption of clothes, adornment and details which correspond to the opposite sex." The cowboy says, "It's the purse that gives me away" (*Los Supermachos* 1972:13).



Fig. 2 Catching Hail (*Cacha Granizo*). Referring to an imputed narcissism, the caption reads: "For this very reason, psychiatric treatment of homosexuals is very difficult. For in spite of the fact that they suffer from a sexual aberration, they neglect to consult a doctor. The figure says, "It couldn't be that the doctor also catches hail" (i.e., is homosexual). In executing *catcha granizo*, the hand is rapidly opened and closed (*Los Supermachos* 1975:16).



Fig. 3 Waiter Without a Tray (*Mesero Sin Charola*). Common portrayal of homosexual parties in magazines and photonovelas, the caption reads: "Men dressed in women's dresses abounded, and the 'Discretos' (Discrete ones) they only ventured to use false eyelashes." Note the crossed legs and the musical notation indicating female inflection. Figure on the left says, "You look real good. . . . What made you do it, dearie?" Figure on the right replies, "The Good Life, sweetie, what else?" However, since homosexuals are supposed to be a third sex, "she" uses the homosexual form "chulis" (sweetie) instead of the masculine "chulo" or feminine "chula" (*Casos de Alarma!* 1972:24).



Fig. 4 Behaviorisms attributed to homosexuals are props for the female role. The prostitutes here exhibit several of these. Title says, "And [homosexuality] exists among men and women. That is to say, it is not limited to the masculine sex, but also feminine homosexuality is very common and is called Lesbianism." The prostitute says, "Well, my dear, you'd be better off changing your name, Lesbia doesn't sound good" (*Los Supermachos* 1975:16).

These gestures are traditional components of folk, professional and homosexual camp humor and generally are not taken seriously. However, they take on morbid aspects among young people and more credulous Bugas. For example, in a Mexican poem published in the United States, Bañuelos Enríquez writes of his childhood (diacritics missing in source): ⁷

Lo agarraron a golpes
por se que la caia la mano;
y yo asustado, aterrado,
miraba aquella escena
con una de las mias
en el bolsillo.

They beat the hell out of him
because he had a limp wrist.
Scared, terrified,
I looked on with my own hands
crammed deep in my pockets.

No se que sera de el,
pero antes cuando le pegaban
lloraba.

I don't know what may have become
of him
But when they hit him then he
cried.

Se quedaba
limpiandose la cara
sobre los pupitres de salon
solo.

He stayed behind
cleaning up his face
among the desks in the classroom
alone.

Y yo como los golpeadores,
me iba.

And I like one of his tormentors
walked away.

Yo asustado;
asustado de pensar que ellos
descubrieran el calor de me
mirada

I was afraid
they might discover the warmth
in my gaze too.

Ellos contentos de reprender
a un joto [1975:10-11].

And they were proud of themselves
for having taught a queer a
lesson.

And in Five Families, Oscar Lewis paraphrases Agustine Gomez' reflections on his son Hector:

That bastard! People were calling him a homo-
sexual because of the way he walked and talked.
To have an effeminate son was a deep blow to
Agustin and he could hardly bear the sight of
the boy . . . [1959:69].

Lewis further adds:

His parents denied the rumors that Hector was
a homosexual but they did believe that his
testicles had been damaged when he was thirteen
by a severe kick during a street fight. Hector
cared little what was said about him and
devoted himself to dancing, fine clothes, and

gaiety. As a matter of fact, he regularly had sexual relations with women . . . [pp. 77, 78].

Of course, since most Mexican homosexual males do not exude stereotypical cues, neither they nor Bugas really have a very good idea of who is homosexual or what homosexual people really look and act like. There are very few exclusive homosexual gathering places in Mexico, thus aside from personal acquaintances, and people seen cruising or having sex, sources of information about what homosexual people are like is limited to those caught who have versions of their "crimes and cases" presented in the news or to homosexual character sketches in magazines and photonovelas (mixed media illustrations and photographs), which describe the moral careers of various people labeled as deviant by Mexicans (i.e., the homosexual, the cripple, the divorcee, the marijuana smoker). The following synopsis of El Joto (The Queer) is a photonovela El Perro Mundo (The Dog's World) is a typical of the usual themes one can find about homosexuality in popular magazines and further demonstrates the connection thought to exist between homosexuality and the female role.

Advertised as a case from real life, Felipe is an adolescent heterosexual whose mother is bedridden with a chronic illness. Felipe fulfills the role of "the good son" (el buen hijo) by cleaning house, shopping and cooking. His behavior causes everyone to think he is a joto. The neighborhood boys taunt him for not playing soccer and for walking down the street with the type of plastic bag used by women shopping. When challenged to fight to prove he is not homosexual, Felipe refuses because he fears that if injured, he could not perform familial duties. This only confirms their suspicions. His girlfriend tells him that her parents have forbidden her to talk with him because they say he is de los otros. Felipe goes to a priest for advice. At first, even the priest expects him to confess that he is a joto. But when he understands the situation, the priest exhorts Felipe to continue his role as the good son and ignore the evil thoughts of others. On his way home, Felipe is frightened when a known joto (and not one of the harmless, amusing kind) appears and assumes that indeed Felipe is another joto. The neighbors see Felipe with the joto and take it as further evidence of his inclination. His father goes to a bar and gets drunk over the matter with two macho friends. With the father's permission, they decide to find out once and for all what Felipe's sexual orientation is by trying to have sex with him. In their drunken stupor, since the inserter role insulates a macho from being considered a joto, this seems a logical solution to the problem. At home, Felipe is startled and horrified at the attempted rape. He cries out for help and his mother staggers

from her bed to see what is the matter. She is promptly raped with her husband's blessing and dies. A fight ensues in which the father and one of the machos kill each other. The neighbors are aroused by the noise. When they ascertain what has happened, they hang the remaining macho on the spot. An orphan, Felipe is last viewed at church praying. The caption reads: "Yes, the guilty parties died . . . paid for their crimes . . . But what did the unfortunate little boy gain? To this day, they still call him El Joto."

CENSORSHIP AND THE BUGA PERSPECTIVE

Just as with homosexuality, there exists considerable defamatory literature and news on heterosexuality in Mexico. However, these are compensated for with religious teachings, movies, songs, novels and visible examples from which to draw highly positive conclusions about heterosexuality. Indeed, there is a tradition which praises heterosexual conduct contrary to prevailing overt norms. But homosexuality is only attributed to villains or is carefully hidden and denied. This is particularly well illustrated by the treatment in Los Supermachos of the sexual stigmata of Mexican national heroes in Los Heroes y el Sexo ("The Heroes and Sex"). After listing the concubines, paramours and so forth of famous men in Mexico's past, the editors state:

The citizens, the common people, not only admit, but also desire that their heroes be as fearless, strenuous, and extravagant in love as they are in war We do not want heroes who are homosexuals and cowards [1973:13].

Regardless of what people might actually wish to know, or what balanced news reporting dictates ought to be presented, homosexuality, as we have noted, is considered too opprobrious to be reported at all in family-oriented publications and is heavily monitored in most others. This does not seem to discourage people from having relations with those of the same gender, it merely maintains Buga ignorance and creates stigma. As Bañuelos Enríquez writes (1975:10):

Y me empece
a dar cuenta
de que era diferente,
cuando
en las caricaturas
ningun nino
se enamoraba
de su amigo.

And I began
to realize
I was different
when I noticed
that none of the boys
in the comic books
ever fell in love
with their friends.

Information on homosexuality which is not defamatory is regularly censored by editors and public agents of control. Any judge can, at his

discretion, declare material on homosexuality an apology for vice (apoyo de un vicio). Those convicted can be punished with six years in jail. If the material gets into the hands of minors, additional charges can be made. Editorial and judicial censorship promote an anti-homosexual bias and contribute to a process in which public opinion is controlled and traditional categories of deviance maintained both unquestioned and outside the arena of democratic politics. As Horowitz and Liebowitz observe, "deviance is handled by experts instead of being debated by the very publics who are supposedly menaced" (1968:281).

Censorship creates a bias in which citizens are generally limited in exposure to the following sort of reports:

HOMOSEXUAL REVENGE

Irapuato, Gto. — A homosexual, guilty of various crimes and two homicides, after killing his lover with eight stab wounds in the stomach, tried to delude police by placing the body of his victim on the train tracks. However, by a trick of destiny, the body of the "man" was horribly mutilated, but the face did not receive even a scratch. This made his identification easy and soon the demonic afeminado (effeminate homosexual) was captured . . . [Alerta August 28, 1976, pp. 1-2].

HE DIDN'T LIKE TO SEE HIM DANCE WITH ANOTHER MAN
AND . . . SO HE STABBED HIM

Santa Cruz Tlapacoya, Estado de Mexico — Rene Moreno Maya, 18 years old received two deep stab wounds in the stomach, from which he died; he was attacked by a man in a pulque bar for dancing with another man Yesterday, he entered the bar to drink and when he was tipsy (muy alegre) took the hand of another patron, with whom he began to dance. This angered a fat, dark complected man about 40 who said: "Here in my town we are all machos and those who are not — then off with them." Then he attacked . . . [El Sol de Mexico, February 4, 1975].

200 HOMOSEXUALS ARRESTED AND WEAPONS AND DRUGS
CONFISCATED

Mexico City — A homosexual reunion was routed by police in the meeting hall at 71 Salamanca (colonia Roma) and 200 of them were arrested, almost all dressed as women They confiscated arms, drugs, wine and mountains of pornographic magazines When they were surprised by the

police, they were found dancing and drugging themselves . . . [El Sol de Mexico, June 23, 1975].

Not only are citizens limited to news with a censorship bias, but also, they are presented with highly distorted forms of journalistic reporting. For example, respondents who attended the party above stated that the report of pornographic magazines, drugs and weapons were just as false as journalistic accounts of homosexual raids at the turn of the century which claimed that homosexuals baptized dolls and raffled off children (i.e., El Popular, November 24, 1901). Certainly, the report was nothing like Mexican homosexual parties the author has attended.

To illustrate a massive street sweep early in 1975 which netted 190 individuals, described as orphans, vagrants, homosexuals, prostitutes and drug users "infesting" Mexico City's glamorous Zona Rosa, a newspaper (Grandes Reportajes, February 18, 1975) used a comic illustration from Los Supermachos (Fig. 5) as an authentic photograph of homosexuals arrested (Fig. 6). Such ludicrous presentations and illustrations of the morbid (Fig. 7) are essentially the only depictions of homosexual people Mexicans are presented with in the media, though in actuality few homosexual people fit such stereotypes. Perhaps the most graphic example of how censorship affects Bugas and non-Bugas alike is that neither the raid of 200 people at a homosexual party nor the arrest of 190 people in the Zona Rosa were carried by Mexican newspapers aside from El Sol de Mexico and a few scandal sheets.

There are abundant other examples with which to illustrate homosexual news censorship and distortion. However, one is so striking that it is presented in its entirety here. In an attempt to address the most abusive activities of Buga agents of social control, eighty-one leading citizens and professors from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México sent an open letter to the city's newspapers. The letter was ignored by most publications, but covered by two of Mexico City's most prestigious dailies. Novedades (July 16, 1975) published the entire letter as reader opinion; but Excelsior (July 16, 1975) published a synopsis deleting the portions on homosexuality (its regular editorial policy). The underlined passages in the following translation from Novedades were omitted from the version in Excelsior:

NATIONAL FORUM

An Open Opinion From Our Readers

AGAINST CERTAIN POLICE ATTACKS

Dear Editor: As a permanent operating procedure with occasional intensive periods, some of the metropolitan police have specialized in truly indiscriminate attacks against citizens in which they have brutalized the most elemental civil rights. The frequent pretexts are political or



Fig. 5 An illustration from the comic book Los Supermachos (Los Homosexuales);1972, p. 5), depicting homosexuals as they supposedly looked when raided at an infamous party of "41 Maricónes" in 1901. After stating that the Bible says homosexuals ought to be stoned because they are sinners, Los Supermachos suggests treatment because homosexuals are "actually sick." Caption reads, "The above does not mean that they should be allowed to engage in their occasional scandalous deviations." The figure says, "Oamn those cops who entrapped us 41."



Fig. 6 Reporting a massive street raid of "malvivientes" (people who live a life of vice), Grandes Reportajes (No. 131, Feb. 18, 1975, p. 9) used the same photo as authentic news coverage. Caption reads, "When a homosexual of those who proliferate in the Zona Rosa is captured, he pays 75 pesos fine and then returns to his haunts."

CIEN PUÑALADAS A UN HOMOSEXUAL

ALARDE DE SADISMO
 Con la sangre de su víctima, el asesino escribió en la pared del cuarto del hotel: "MUERTO POR SER GAY". La policía piensa que se trata de un maníaco y teme que vuelva a cometer otro asesinato. (Información en la página 31.)

DOS PESOS

"EL SANTO" ES SUPLANTADO

VER PAG. 4 CON FOTOS DE LOS IMITADORES

Alerta

NUM. 487 - NOV. 2 DE 1974

Fig. 7 "100 STAB WOUNDS TO A HOMOSEXUAL." Alerta regularly features pictures of homosexual victims and carries stories of various homosexual crimes. Caption (left) reads, "A Boast of Sadism — With the blood of the victim, the killer wrote on the wall of the hotel: 'HE DIED FOR BEING QUEER.'" The police think that it is the work of a maniac and are afraid he will return to commit another murder."

sexual deviance: for being "subversives" or homosexuals.
The most frequent abuse in the latter case is to accuse
passers-by of homosexuality, intimidate and exploit them.
In either case, there is hardly an opportunity to denounce
such abuses to the officers' superiors who could put an end
to such activities or at least repay damages, because such
complaints are seldom reviewed. Thus the legal instruments
created for the defense of the individual against police
power are almost a dead letter. The complacency with which
the authorities accept the conduct of their subordinates
(when they do not participate directly in these numerous
violations of the law), has maintained a dangerous climate
of instability which necessarily affects the exercise of
civil liberties; liberties whose protection is proclaimed
inviolable in higher governmental spheres; so much so, that
they even urge and propose to other nations [which break
them] that they "respect democracy." It can never be repeated
sufficiently that abuses of authority affect all citizens and
not simply those who directly suffer. It is evident that the
illegal arrests (the citizens held ransom), the police raids,
the illegal entry into homes, the beatings (and/or tortures)
to those detained and the assassination of some, the common
extortion, and police instigated violence in public places
with the consequent arrests undermine and ridicule the
guarantees which the public power recognizes as due society.
Such acts are the undoing of the citizens conscience, and as
there is no evil which given favor, does not increase, they
multiply the excesses and abuses of the police. The results
are: suspicion, hatred, and lack of confidence in the repre-
sentatives of authority. From there, it is not even a step
before citizens take matters into their own hands and enforce
what each person takes for justice. If arrests without due
process can never be justified, much less can one accept
the exacerbating practice of jailing those who have not
committed any crime whatsoever, but who are suppressed
(generally for the immediate intent of blackmailing them)
for exercising a sexual option. In Mexico, homosexuality
is not a crime when it is consumated in private between
consenting adults. From this it can be concluded that it
is possible to accuse a person of rape or corruption, but
not for being homosexual, (just as one cannot be accused
of being blond, tall, left handed or good looking, condi-
tions perhaps less frequent than that of homosexuality).
On the other hand, police repression produces an evil
perhaps even greater in the social body; an increase in
civil insecurity, an increase in anti-communist paranoia,
or, frequently in homophobia, the irrational hatred against
those who practice (or who are assumed to practice, in
order to more easily rob them) a minority sexual conduct.
Moreover, there is ample proof that homophobia is conducive
to crime and violence. A recent case of intolerance was
seen in the entrance of the auditorium where the sessions of

the International Women's Year were held. This time, there was only a paid group which carried insulting and calumnious placards against homosexual women, but it is an easy step to arrive at other actions: the step from verbal or written aggression to physical can be instigated by authorities who permit, and bring to a head the continued violation of citizens' rights. It is this very participation and complicity which helps to promote such crimes, which they then claim to prosecute. This vicious circle breaks down more rights, guarantees and constitutional liberties each time. From this, we can conclude that whoever justifies such police actions when they do not directly affect personal interests, also open the door to the repression of other vulnerable groups, like those who participate in the creation of a political party, an independent union, or whatever other democratic option. For these groups, in actuality, will always be minorities and persecuted. Mexico, D. F., July 1975.

 Juan Rulfo, Arturo Azuela, José Revueltas, Elena Poniatowska, Salvador Elizondo, Gustavo Sáinz, Hector Valdés, Luis Rius, José Blanco, Arnaldo Cordova, Carlos Pereyra, Carmen Fabregat, Eliezer Morales, Pablo Pascual, Pablo Gómez, Joel Ortega, Seccion Psicología del Sindicato del Personal Académico de la UNAM (SPAUNAM), Selma Beraud, Neus Espresate, Carlos Monsiváis, Germán Castillo, Sergio Jiménez, René Villanueva, Paul Leduc, Manuel Felguérez, Margarita Peña, César Bono, James Fortson, Guillermo Mendizábal Lizalde, Luis Gonzalez de Alba, Jorge del Valle, Santiago Ramírez, Jorge Castell, Norma de los Ríos Méndez, Luis Carrasco, Rolando Cordera C., Héctor Manuel Cappello, Beatriz Bueno, Emilo Carballido, Ernesto Bañuelos, Gustayo Torres Cuesta, Dr. Alberto Cueyas Novelo, Ofelia Guilmáin, Mario Oropeza, Juan Antonio Yáñez, Antulio Jiménez Pons, Guillermo Barclay, Roberto Escudero, Margarita Garcia Flores, Jorge Estévas, Héctor Aguilar Camín, José Ma. Pérez Gay, Jorge Molina A., German Alvarez, Karin Wriedt R., Luis Cáceres A., Jose Joaquin Blanco, Eduardo Hurtado M., Héctor Bonilla, Gabriel Zaid, Nancy Cárdenas, Ofelia Medina, Ma. Luisa (China) Mendoza, Marcela Fernández, Pilar Souza, Alejandro Luna, Carmen Salinas, Juan Cejudo Gómez, Maka Strauss, Josefina Solares, Ricardo Regazzoni, Ignacio Hernández, Rafael López Miarnau, Ema Teresa Armendáriz, León Singer, Mario Castellón Bracho, Luisa Huertas, David Ramón, Mauricio Peña, Miguel Flores, Gustavo Vasconcelos, María Luisa Garza.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In our exposition, we noted that stringent social rules define homosexual people as an out-group and prohibit ordinary Mexicans from basing their conceptualization of homosexuality upon direct observation. We noted that enforced homosexual social invisibility tends to keep

homosexual Mexicans uninformed about themselves and to promote feelings of guilt and inferiority. Further, that homosexual Mexicans can expect little professional help in this regard, since most Mexican stigma experts limit their studies to homosexual crimes and pathological case histories. Our analysis of popular beliefs and media coverage demonstrated that Buga notions are based upon false anatomical analogies further confused with ethnocentric elements of female role playing and gender identity. Finally, we noted there is strong censorship of information contrary to the view that homosexuality is deviant. In all these regards, Mexican homosexual labeling practices demonstrate an aspect of prejudice aptly stated by Berger:

. . . prejudice is acquired through contact with the attitude of prejudice itself, and not through contact with the groups that are objects of prejudice [1952:185].

It also calls to mind Bogardus's study of "social distance" in which college students consistently indicated more prejudice against Turks than against any other ethnic, national or racial group, though not one had ever known a Turk personally (1933).

It should be pointed out that in some ways the Buga perspective functions to enhance individualism, for traits attributed to homosexuals in Mexico are so bizarre and conflicting that few people actually fit the label no matter what their sexual orientation. Thus males can flow into and out of homosexual experiences without becoming stuck in the homosexual role or having an aspect of their erotic life become a master status. Such resistance to roles is an important aspect of Mexican and Latin American ethos. As one respondent stated:

I don't want to be a homosexual or a heterosexual or a bisexual. I want to be all selves. I know the roles of homosexual, bisexual, heterosexual, how to treat a girl, how to treat an interested man, how to be a poor person and how to associate with high society. But most of all, I am and know how to be myself.

Though some may benefit by present labeling practices, those who do embody Buga homosexual stereotypes have little chance of escaping prejudice regardless of their actual sexual orientation (e.g., Hector in Five Families or Felipe, El Joto).

Having reviewed how Mexicans define homosexuality, it is obvious that there is great structural and conceptual replication of the theme that homosexuality is deviant. It remains here, in our conclusions, to account adequately for this phenomenon. There is a tenacious assumption in the social sciences that activities labeled as deviant, such as homosexuality, go through predictable stages of development, "the natural history of social problems" (Fuller and Myers 1940:320-329). That when "social problems" are discovered, they are discussed with articulate

deliberation, and that a rational policy or solution is formed and then implemented. Lemert has attacked this assumption noting that it is almost purely deductive (1967:217-223). Certainly the "natural history" approach to explain Mexican labeling of homosexuality is inadequate, for historically there has not been either a scholarly or popular Mexican study of ordinary Mexican homosexuality from which to construct such a model. Rather, the uniformity of Mexican homosexual labeling practices seems more like the application of a rule or cultural directive to treat homosexuality always as deviance. Viewed in such a perspective, Mexican homosexual labeling practices are similar to structural and conceptual replication observed by Vogt among the Maya Indians of Chiapas, Mexico.

It is as if the Zinacantecos have constructed a model for ritual behavior and for conceptualization of the natural and cultural world which functions like a kind of computer that prints out rules for appropriate behavior at each organizational level of the society and for the appropriate conceptualizing of phenomena in the different domains of the culture [1965:342-352].

In closing, it is appropriate to bring into focus the relationship of folk taxonomies and the activities of Mexico's professional classes. In that both are based upon unobjective criteria, they must be regarded as what Becker calls "common sense generalizations". Becker summarizes the inherent problems of such generalizations and indicates activities more appropriate for social scientists:

Common sense generalizations resemble those of social science in formal structure; they differ largely in their immunity to contradictory observations. Social-science generalizations, in principle and often in fact, change when new observations show them incorrect. Common-sense generalizations don't. This kind of common sense, particularly because its errors are not random, favors established institutions [1963:189-190].

NOTES

¹"Straight" is sometimes equated with heterosexual. However, while buga can mean heterosexual, it more closely means "naive about homosexuality."

²For other word lists and definitions, see Carrier (1972:73-76) and Dean (1974:60-62).

³For more on religious beliefs and how Mexican Catholics negotiate the meaning of homosexual behavior in the process of their religious treatment, see Carrier (1972:236-239).

⁴Alerta and Alarma are very popular weekly newspapers with a similar format. Carrier notes that Alarma "focuses on grisly murders, rapes, scandals, and highway accidents occurring all over Mexico. I saw copies of it in practically every home I visited in Guadalajara" (1972:78). His statement is equally true for Alerta.

⁵Macho and machismo are very widely used terms both in Mexico and the United States. In general, they refer to maleness, especially sexual virility and robustness. The macho is the social type opposite the effeminate homosexual. Indeed, machos are expected to hate homosexuals, though as inserters they have the option of enjoying homosexual acts without becoming labeled.

⁶This division of sex roles, how it is established and what it means to participants is a major thrust of Carrier's work (1972).

⁷Translated by Erskine Lane.

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