

Observing Homosexual Encounters: The Joseph M. Carrier Papers at the ONE Archives

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Abstract: Joseph Carrier is a pioneer anthropologist in the field of Mexican homosexuality studies. His groundbreaking book *De los otros: Intimacy and Homosexuality among Mexican Men* assembles ethnographic data about same-sex relations between men in Mexico as well as Latino men in Southern California gathered from 1968 through the 1980s. His papers, found at the ONE Gay and Lesbian Archives in Los Angeles, include correspondence, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, research notes, and conference materials documenting Carrier's anthropological field research. This presentation highlights materials from this collection, especially ephemera, and contextualize these items in terms of Carrier's work.

Resumen: Joseph Carrier es un antropólogo pionero en estudios sobre la homosexualidad en México. Su libro innovador *De los otros: Intimacy and Homosexuality among Mexican Men* recopila datos etnográficos acumulados desde 1968 hasta finales de los 80s sobre relaciones sexuales entre hombres en México y también entre hombres latinos en el sur de California. Sus papeles, localizados en la institución ONE Gay and Lesbian Archives en Los Angeles incluyen correspondencia, cuestionarios, encuestas, notas de investigación y materiales de congresos que documentan sus investigaciones antropológicas. Esta ponencia destaca materiales de esta colección, especialmente materiales efímeros y contextualiza estos materiales dentro del trabajo de Carrier.

Joseph M. Carrier, is an American anthropologist who has been a pioneer in using ethnographic methods for the study of masculinity, homosexuality, and later HIV/AIDS, paving the way for the ethnographic study of men who have sex with men in Latin America. Carrier's papers are a fascinating historical record of intimacy among Mexican men in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. His papers are at the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives in Los Angeles which holds one of the most significant collections on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered heritage and concerns in the world.¹

Carrier had originally been working as a counterinsurgent specialist in Vietnam for the RAND Corporation when in 1967 he found himself out of a job, fired he later found out, because he was believed to be a homosexual and therefore thought of as a security risk. In his 40s, rather than turning away from these accusations he applied to the anthropology doctoral program at the University of California, Irvine campus where he wrote one of the first anthropology dissertations on homosexuality, completed in 1972 and titled *Urban Mexican male homosexual encounters: an analysis of participants and coping strategies*. Over the next three decades Carrier went on to observe and document homosexual behavior among urban Mexican men, gathering longitudinal data about cruising patterns, sexual preferences, attitudes about masculinity and homosexual sex, family life, migration and its effect on self, political involvement, and preventative knowledge and attitudes about HIV and AIDS among Mexican men.

His papers include correspondence, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, research notes, journal reviews, conference materials, and published reference materials documenting Carrier's anthropological field research, in the years 1970 through 1990, on homosexual behaviors of men in Mexico and of Hispanic and Vietnamese males in Southern California and his work with the Orange County Health Agency AIDS Community Education Project (ACEP). The processed

¹ Joseph M. Carrier Papers, Coll2007-001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California

collection at ONE is about 3 linear meters. In addition there are about 3 linear meters of unprocessed materials. For the purposes of this presentation I will not address materials related to Carrier's time with the Rand Corporation. The Carrier papers dealing mostly with his counterinsurgency work with Rand are at UC Irvine and those will not be addressed. Nor will I address papers related to his work with the Vietnamese immigrant community in southern California in the ONE collection.

Queer studies in the last 20 years has grown incredibly and the current study of LGBT people and sexuality throughout Latin America is a particularly vibrant branch of study, but in the early 1970s when Carrier began gathering his data only a handful of American contemporary social scientists had been working on exclusively gathering data on the behaviors of homosexual men. Carrier's initial intent was to study the behaviors of working class Black, White and Latino men in southern California. However after further revision Carrier decided his study would take place in Mexico where ethnographic data gathering would be groundbreaking.

While most of his research was done in Guadalajara his book *De Los Otros: Intimacy and Homosexuality among Mexican Men*, which gathers 25 years of data, also describes other study sites throughout northwestern Mexico along federal highway 15 where Carrier conducted his research. In general terms his main question in that book, and one that reappears throughout his work is "how do mestizo Mexican men-men of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry-who have sex with men cope with their homosexuality in their everyday lives in a society that censures such behavior?"²

The ways in which this censure manifested itself can be seen in some of the archival material. The first illustrations are from the Mexico City publication *Alarma!* A popular tabloid that was distributed throughout Mexico, and that is currently published as *El Nuevo Alarma*.

² Joseph M. Carrier, *De los otros: Intimacy and Homosexuality among Mexican Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), xvii

Figure 1 from June 1970, “Epidemia de Desviados Sexuales,” shows some of the common themes of popular portrayal of homosexuals.³ There is first a theme of the transgression of gender roles. The article asks: “Que le pasa a los hombres? Muchos quieren ser mujeres!”⁴ The background story here is that “la Felipa” had entered a cantina dressed as a woman with the intent to deceive men, procure them as prostitution clients, and when discovered as a man, caused a brawl in the cantina. There is also a second smaller story about degenerate homosexual orgies.

Figure 2 from February 1971 deal with the murder of a florist entitled: “los homosexuales se aman, se celan y al fin se matan”⁵ and tells about a gruesome murder where the weapons seemed to have been a hammer and scissors, with the florist’s circle of acquaintances and lovers as suspects. *Figure 3* entitled “Degenerados “mujercitos” venden amor y sucias caricias,”⁶ once again links homosexuality with prostitution and the criminal world.

And just so we get a more historical view of “same-sex unions” in Mexico there are a few stories like the one in *figure 4* from July 1971 “Atrevimiento de degenerados! Boda de dos homosexuales.”⁷ Continuously in these headlines and articles homosexuals are spoken of as deviants, degenerates, and criminals, upsetting the social order.

There is also in the collection an interesting undated fotonovela “El Joto”⁸ (*figure 5*) probably published in the mid 1970s. In it Felipe is an adolescent whose mother is bedridden with an illness that causes Felipe to fulfill a lot of the domestic roles like cleaning house, shopping, and cooking. This causes everyone in the neighborhood to think that he is a “joto.” His father drowns his shame at a cantina with two friends. One intoxicated friend suggests to

³ All illustrations from Joseph M. Carrier Papers, Coll2007-001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California (Some of these materials are currently unprocessed).

⁴ “Epidemic of sexual deviants: What is wrong with men that so many want to be women”

⁵ “Homosexuals love each other, become jealous of each other, and kill each other.”

⁶ “Degenerates: “little women” sell love and their dirty caresses. “

⁷ “The nerve of degenerates: a wedding of two homosexuals.”


⁸ Fag

¿QUE LES PASA A LOS HOMBRES?
¡MUCHOS QUIEREN SER MUJERES!

EPIDEMIA DE DESVIADOS SEXUALES!

LOS DOS ÚLTIMOS CASOS:
1- SE VESTIA DE MUJER Y AMABA EN CABARETS!
2- UNIAN SUS PLACERES FALSOS EN LAS ORGIAS!

ESA ES "LA FELIPA"
Acoge al travestido la pasarela por donde Felipe se dice "Felipe", porque en esta ocasión está en su otro sexo y quiere vivir como una mujer que ama en los cabarets.



TODOS SON "BARITOS"
Otro día desfiló y algunos de sus discretos "veritas" se arrojaron a su paso. Siguen siendo víctimas de degeneración y violencia. En el hotel Barón se agitan y sus desviados se ven desahuciados.

NUM. 371 • MEXICO, D. F.
ALARMA!
JUNIO 10, 1970 • \$ 1.00

Figure 1



MARTILLAZOS!
Juan Manuel Escudero es uno de los que fueron "pasados" por el Tribunal Federal. En su haber el reportero asegura: "Él es la medida que se toma... ¡Qué amor!"

TUERETAZOS!
Fernando Delgado Reyes, otro de los "pasados" por el Tribunal. Siempre al borde de la vergüenza que una relación de amorosa con él. Y cuando se los "Pervertidos!"

"LO QUERIA, ¿Y QUE...?"
DICE: JESUS MANUEL

"SOLO MIO O DE NADIE!"
AFIRMA EL FERNANDO

ASI DEJARON AL PADRE MANUEL CABRAL SOTO!
El cadáver de Manuel Cabral Soto, se encontró flotando por días en aguas sucias y sucias como él. Se dice que los vecinos de las pasadas que leparó a varios ebrietas. (Información completa en las páginas 2, 3 y 4.)

EL DIFUNTO ERA FLORISTA Y TENIA SUS "AMIGUITOS!"

LOS HOMOSEXUALES SE AMAN, SE CELAN Y AL FINAL SE MATAN!

PERVERTIDOS! ALARMA! DEGENERADOS!

NUM. 408 • MEXICO, D. F., FEBRERO 24, 1971 • \$ 1.00

Figure 2

EN LAS CALLES Y CABARETS..!

DEGENERADOS "MUJERCITOS" VENDEN AMOR Y SUCIAS CARICIAS!

HASTA LOS EXPERTOS SE CONFUNDEN
Una nueva muestra de degeneración: Juan Carlos López "Mujercito", una muestra a la "Luchadora" que, en forma que se degenera sus actividades.

CON SILICONES SE HACEN FORMAS! MAS FEMENINAS QUE MUCHAS DAMAS!

2 OCT 75
ALARMA! NUMERO 648
\$2.00 EN TODO EL PAIS

ACUDEN A LAS PEORES ORGIAS Y HASTA EL FINAL SE DESCUBREN
Este sinnúmero de "mujercitos" requieren a veces transformarse que acudan a la "Gran Casa". La policía los conlleva a autoridades superiores luego que descubra sus pervertidas actividades. Son: "Aljondra", "Martín", "Marisa" y "Sandra". (Información completa en páginas interiores).



Figure 3

LA NOVIA Y MADRINAS SON "MUJERCITOS!"
La sociedad homosexual de Cuernavaca. Ver: "Según el orden de los acontecimientos el cadáver una hora, entre otros, se encuentran en pedregales, pedregales y más. En la foto vemos a la "novia" (Hanna María) y a Manuel Nieves y el "novio" (Sergio Carbajal), padrinos de Manabial. Los "madrinas" son Mariana Victoria, Rafael Sánchez, Luis Ferrer y otros degenerados. (Información completa en las páginas 2, 3 y 4.)

7 de 1971

ATREVIMIENTO DE DEGENERADOS! BODA DE DOS HOMOSEXUALES!

CEREMONIA "EN SERIO": HUBO JUEZA Y SACERDOTA!



"TODAS" COQUETAS! HUBO "VIAJE DE NOVIOS!"

Y VIVEN EN SU NIDO DE AMOR!
Con todo el alboroto de que se ha venido a don Manuel Nieves en el momento de "suavizar matrimonios" con Sergio Carbajal. Los homosexuales celebraron una "boda" con toda una delegación y después que se les despidió.

NUM. 427 • MEXICO, D. F.
JULIO 7, 1971 • \$ 1.00

Figure 4

Felipe's father that the only way to settle the rumor is if the friend tries to sleep with his son. The father agrees, they go back to the house, and Felipe is startled and horrified at the attempted rape and screams out for help. Felipe's mother staggers to help him at which point the father gives the second friend permission to rape her, and soon after she is killed. A fight ensues in which one of the friends and the father kill each other. The neighbors hear the noise and come in, ascertain what has happened and decide to hang the third man. In the last panel Felipe is seen and the caption reads "si...los culpables murieron, pagaron su crimen, pero que gano el chiquillo infortunado, hasta la fecha le siguen diciendo el joto."⁹

How are we to take these tabloids and fotonovela? Clearly their first purpose is to shock. And we should remember that censorship around the theme of homosexuality created a certain bias for materials like these linking homosexuality with deviance, and crime. This was really not so different from other homophobic contemporary portrayals of homosexuality throughout the early 1970s in other parts in the West. But the particular theme that that occurs again and again is the transgression of gender norms and the dangerous consequences this is supposed to have for society. Unlike the United States with its sodomy laws, Mexico in the 70s did not have legal sanctions against consenting adult males having sexual congress in private. But police, following cultural norms, often regulated homosexuality through the harassment of congregating or solitary effeminate males in public places citing public decency laws and criminalizing effeminacy among males and transgressions of sex roles.¹⁰

The data collected by Carrier with painstaking effort documents how his subjects deal with this kind of sanctioning in their everyday lives, though not only through the lens of the popular media or the criminal system. The bulk of the third series in the collection are numerous boxes containing surveys and mostly cover Carrier's original notes and research in Guadalajara from

⁹ Yes, the guilty ones died and paid for their crimes, but what did the unfortunate kid gain, until this date they keep calling him a fag.

¹⁰ Joseph M. Carrier *De los otros*, 15-18

1968 through 1971. For me, as general reader, what is probably initially striking in this series is the research diaries because one sees from the beginning the anthropologist in the field being challenged by the ethical problems of unconventional participant-observant ethnographic data gathering in the rather private sphere of sexuality. Elsewhere in an article published in the journal *Culture, Health, and Sexuality*¹¹ Carrier was very forthcoming in talking about the “dilemma of deciding to what extent his private sex life should be separated from his field research” and he formulated some rather baroque rules about who he should have sex with while in the field that he was never able to adhere to rigidly. Like many researchers who studied sexuality before him and after him (We need only to reflect on the famous examples of Kinsey and Masters and Johnson) the boundaries between research and personal life often became rather blurry, and while at first striking, this is mitigated when we come to believe that sexuality deserves as much attention as any other social phenomena, and realize that sex research, regardless of the methodology is always controversial, and scrutinized for immorality in ways that other topics are not.¹²

As for the larger component in this series a trained anthropologist might have a clearer idea of what to say about the surveys, of which there are many. They are extensive, coded, and contain a wealth of information. He gathered information on family life, methods of initiating sexual encounters, and general perceived societal attitudes about homosexuality. Carrier also spent a great deal of time mapping men’s sexual preferences. He wanted to know about practices and perceptions of anal and oral sex and masturbation, and of the correlations between perceived masculinity and femininity with sexual roles played, specially active and passive anal intercourse, and why taking on the anal passive role was seen as the more culturally stigmatized position. There are a multiple of variants Carrier looked at when analyzing

¹¹ Joseph M. Carrier “Reflections on ethical problems encountered in field research on Mexican male homosexuality: 1968 to present” *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 1:3 (1999), 211

¹² Ralph Bolton “Tricks, friends, and lovers: erotic encounters in the field” in *Taboo: Sex, Identity and Erotic Subjectivity*, ed. M. Willson and D. Kulick (Boston: Routledge, 1995), 151

the data, and his book *De los otros* contains a lot of this work. In the 1970s this analysis might have seemed like a study in contrast to sexual behaviors documented earlier by Kinsey's group in the United States, and as interesting analytical exercise about cultural perceptions of homosexuality, but in the 1980s the mapping of sexual preferences and roles became an extremely relevant tool in looking at both the spread of HIV and the development of HIV prevention programs.

Some of the more interesting ephemera in the collection are HIV/AIDS informational materials that Carrier picked up along the way. *Figure 6* is an image of a folleto developed by the "Grupo Orgullo Homosexual de Liberacion," a pioneering gay liberation group in Guadalajara, whose founder, Pedro Preciado, is one of the subjects Carrier talks about extensively in his book *De los otros*.

The triptych in *figure 7*, produced by the same group, is actually one side of a small folded cardboard that would have contained a condom in its wrapper. We can tell from the guy's haircut in the upper left that this was circa 1987.

It is interesting to note that, like his American counterparts Clark Taylor and Steve Murray who also conducted anthropological research on homosexuality in Mexico and Central America through the 1970s, Carrier labored outside of the academy, never obtaining a faculty position, and supporting his research by part time work as a consultant and applied anthropologist. It was not until the late 1980s, with funding around HIV/AIDS projects increasing, that his research interests and professional work as an anthropologist coincided when he began working for the County of Orange Health Care Agency where he worked on gathering ethnographic data on immigrant men.

While working for the agency Carrier was also studying heterosexual behavior. The fotonovela "Tres Hombres sin Fronteras" (*figure 8*) was developed as an informational tool by



Figure 5



Figure 6

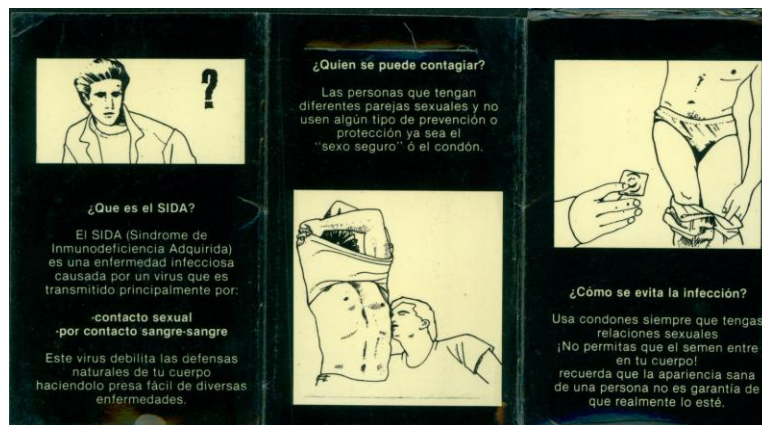


Figure 7



Figure 8

the agency. This fotonovela was developed as a response to ethnographic data gathered by Carrier and his colleague Raul Magaña of undocumented laborers and their sexual encounters with female sex workers, some of whom were IV drug users, and addressing undocumented laborers irregular use of condoms. In this study Carrier and Magaña wrote “Latino males reported a fear that if they tried using condoms, prostitutes might think they have syphilis or gonorrhea and reject them; and prostitutes reported a similar fear that they might be rejected by customers if they insisted on using condoms.”¹³ This fotonovela addresses some of these issues and ends up with one of the laborers going back home to Mexico and finding out when his child is born that he has transmitted HIV to his son and wife.

The fotonovela “Cara a Cara con el Sida” (figure 9) focuses on IV drug use. All of these were trying to reach a broad audience that was inclusive of people with low literacy levels, which is probably why the Fotonovela format was so popular. And while heterosexual encounters were being portrayed in some of this preventative literature, it was also trying to educate men who have sex with men but would not necessarily identify as gay or homosexual and pick up educational literature targeted as such.

Because Carrier was a pioneering figure in the study of homosexuality in Latin America, there is quite a lot of correspondence with contemporary and subsequent scholars in the field. Which is interesting in and of itself, and because he was a mentor to so many young scholars, one of the results for this in the collection besides some lively correspondence which tracks a lot of research developments, is the inclusion of materials from other Latin American countries besides Mexico. The pamphlet in *figure 10* “Que sabemos del Sida” is from Bolivia and was in one of the unprocessed boxes. It probably came via Timothy Wright who wrote on homosexuality and HIV in Bolivia.

¹³ Carrier and Magaña “Use of Ethnosexual Data on Men of Mexican Origin for HIV/AIDS Prevention Programs” *Journal of Sex Research* 28:2 (1991), 194



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

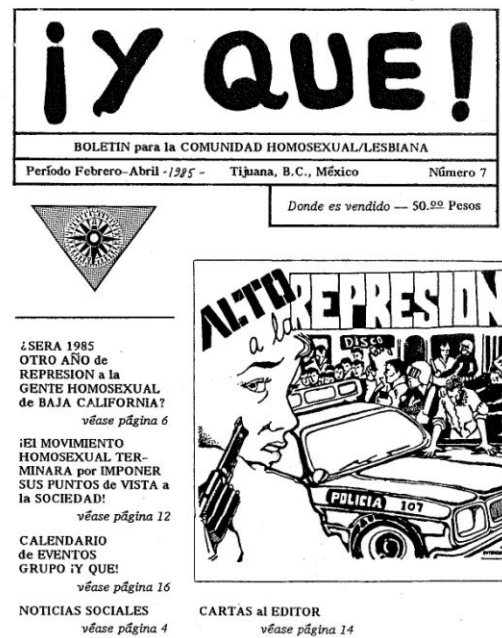


Figure 12

Along with informational material on HIV and AIDS some of the other interesting ephemera are those related to social organization around LGBT rights. There are single sheet manifestos passed out during some of the first pride marches in the 80s in Guadalajara and pamphlets for meetings and discussions of various groups. *Figure 11* is one of the first issues of “Uno sobre Otro” published by Preciado’s “Grupo Orgullo Homosexual de Liberacion.” The boletín was a forum for articles on local politics, health, original art, poetry and even cooking recipes. The boletín was a splinter publication of *Crisálida*, an earlier publication. There are also some issues of the boletín “Y Que” (*Figure 12*) from Tijuana. I did quite a bit of searching in WCAT for a lot of these items and they mostly seem to be items that, at least according to WCAT are at the most found in one other library while a few are unique, but what is great and useful about this collection to future researchers besides their provenance is how much of this material is gathered in one place, and how much contextual information there is for so many of the items.

Martin Nesvig in a historiographical review of male homosexuality in Latin America said, “Carrier’s work is rich in observation and description. He has dedicated some 30 years to studying homosexuality in contemporary Mexico and his attention to detail is admirable”. He is to be “commended for breaking the lengthy code of academic silence that shrouded this subject for so long. And while he is not strictly a historian, his groundbreaking work helped to open the door for historians in North America who wished to pursue this subject in Latin American historiography.”¹⁴ I’d like to add that his papers serve as a testament to this dedication, and are a fertile source for future historical reflections on homosexuality in Mexico and Latin America.

¹⁴ Martin Nesvig “The Complicated Terrain of Latin American Homosexuality” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81:3-4 (2001), 721