

VOCABULARY FROM A WEST-INDIAN MEN'S ROOM

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In September 1991 one of us (CKS) noticed an extensive series of vocables on a stall wall in a men's washroom at the University of the West Indies (UWI). The series consisted of eight columnar lists of synonyms for various body parts and functions.

The washroom is so situated that it is mainly utilized by staff and students in the Department of Life Sciences. Almost 90% of these students are native to Trinidad and Tobago (UWI administration statistics). There is indirect evidence that members of the technical staff, all native Trinidadians, also contributed to the lists.

One informant estimated that the lists had been initiated about five years earlier, and another confirmed that they were several years old.

Given this background, the lists seemed to us to proffer an unusually complete and unbiased data set. They approximate the sum of vocables representing eight impolite concepts known to educated young men of Trinidad and Tobago.

In order to estimate growth of the lists, for one year beginning 5 September 1991 we recorded at frequent intervals any additions or amendments. In that time 20 vocables were added to the initial 257 (in all quantitative data we disregard repetitions). In the months after we stopped rigorous monitoring, only one novel vocable appeared: "box" was added to list E. Cleaning of the wall has since largely effaced the lists.

The eight lists are presented in the table. Half of the lists

appeared to have started just above a heavy line marked across the wall, proceeding upwards, the others starting just below the line and proceeding downwards. As transcribed here, the putative beginning is at the top in each case. Within each list the sequence is only approximately chronological, as some writers inserted new vocables between earlier ones. Additions and amendments are dated in square brackets, in which the month is indicated by a Roman numeral.

Many writers contributed more than once to the lists. Vocables followed by the same superscripted letter or pair of letters appear to have been written by one person, not necessarily all on the same occasion. We infer these connections conservatively, based on idiosyncratic handwriting features.

We adopt as a convenient heading for each list the supposed standard term indicated by one writer (*see* Footnote 1). It is evident from the complete recognition of each of these by all informants that they are indeed a sort of standard.

In order to compare the currency of the terms, we asked three male and three female students—all lifelong residents of Trinidad—to review our transcript of the lists and indicate which they had heard or seen used in the sense given. For each vocable we indicate in the table how many recognized it. Where a vocable was amended, recognition figures are for the original form. On average, the men each recognized 62% and the women 50% of all vocables. A breakdown of these figures by list is given in the table.

Our main purpose here is not to reach conclusions but simply to make available to the maledictology community an exceptionally clean, self-generated data set. We will content ourselves with noting a few points:

1. As expected, vocables were on the whole more familiar to male than female informants. However, the recognition figures for men and women are more similar than we expected. We hypothesize that the differences are more due to

the fact that the data set was male-generated than because young men in Trinidad have more maledicta in their vocabularies. A test will require a comparable female-generated data set, which we have not yet located.

2. A salient feature of list G (*Penis*) is the prominence of weaponry metaphor, while passive terms dominate list E (*Vagina*). Consistent with this is are the many violent terms in list D (*Intercourse*). Comparison of female-generated lists would be especially interesting in this respect.

3. List H (*Homosexual*) seems somewhat enigmatic. Tolerance of homosexuality is low in Trinidad, and overt male homosexuals are rare. This may account for the shortness of the list.

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A. **Girlfriend** (n = 32)

Recognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
bone ^a [30.V.1992]	1	0
girlfriend ^{b, 1}	3	3
client ^b	1	1
skirt ^b	1	0
babe ^b	3	3
chick ^b	3	3
woman ^b	3	3
sweetheart ^b	3	3
half ^b [amended to "better half"]	3	1
dearest ^b	3	3
squeeze ^b [amended to "main squeeze"]	3	3
gul ^b [more standard spelling "gyul"]	3	3
sweets	3	3
wifey	3	3
baby	3	3

A. **Girlfriend** (n = 32) cont'dRecognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
'oman [<i>sic</i>]	3	3
thing ^c	3	3
item ^c	1	1
ting ^c	3	3
weakness ^{b, 2}	1	0
strength ^b	0	0
comfort ^b	1	0
worries ^b	1	0
trouble	1	1
sweets	3	3
ball and chain ^d [5.X.1991]	2	0
jamit [4.XI.1991]	3	1
bitch [4.XI.1991]	3	1
flesh ^e [17.III.1992]	1	2
bitch ^e [27.III.1992]	3	1
beast [27.III.1992]	0	1
craft [27.III.1992]	0	1
love [28.IV.1992]	3	3
Mean	2.1	1.8

B. **Cunnilingus** (n = 21)Recognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
cunnilingus ^f	3	3
fellatio	3	3
give head	3	2
drink ξ	1	0
ingest	1	0
imbibe	0	0
feast	1	1
munch	1	0
nibble	1	1

B. Cunnilingus (n = 21) cont'd	Recognition by	
	Men	Women
lap up <i>f</i>	1	1
chew <i>f</i>	0	1
bite	1	0
eat	3	3
lick <i>b</i>	3	3
suck <i>b, l</i>	3	3
mouth treatment <i>i</i>	0	0
tongue it <i>i</i>	2	2
oral <i>i</i>	3	3
munch <i>i</i>	1	0
jort <i>g</i> [slang for "eat"]	1	0
dine <i>g</i>	1	0
Mean	1.6	1.2

C. Bottom (n = 32)	Recognition by	
	Men	Women
posterior	3	3
elevation <i>b</i>	1	0
bum <i>b</i>	3	3
buttocks	3	3
anus	3	3
batee	1	2
bati <i>b</i>	1	1
next face	0	0
buns	3	3
rear <i>j</i>	3	3
behind <i>j</i>	3	3
rectum <i>j</i>	3	3
chasee <i>j</i>	3	2
bottom <i>k, l</i>	3	3
bumsec <i>k, 3</i>	3	2

C. **Bottom** (n = 32) cont'dRecognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
batam ^k	1	1
ass [not "arse"]	3	3
backside [amended to "backside cat"]	3	3
cacahole	3	2
bumbum	3	2
rump	3	2
fanny	3	3
tail ^b	3	3
tailpiece ^b	1	0
cheeks ^l	3	2
laurel ^l [Laurel cars have the largest trunk]	0	0
hump	1	0
seat ^m	3	3
butt ^m	3	3
bumbulum ^b	2	3
gluteus maximus	3	3
tosh [16.XII.1991; more commonly "tush"]	3	2
Mean	2.4	2.2

D. **Intercourse** (n = 68)Recognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
give the award [apparently inserted late]	0	0
intercourse ^{j,l}	3	3
sex ^j [amended to "sex it" as of 30.V.1992]	3	3
throw down ^j	3	1
hit ^j	1	0
cover ^j	0	0
fick [1.V.1992]	0	0
jam ^j	3	3
screw ^j	3	3
bull ^j	3	3

D. Intercourse (n = 68) cont'd

Recognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
fock <i>j</i> [amended to "fuck"]	3	3
bang	3	3
pipe ⁿ	3	1
blaze ⁿ	2	2
lick-up ⁿ	3	2
floor ⁿ	0	1
lay ^o	2	3
lash ^o	1	0
damage ^o	0	1
pierce ^o	0	1
pounce	1	1
beat up	0	1
mate <i>p</i>	3	3
penetrate <i>p</i>	3	2
copulate <i>p</i>	3	2
roast [5.IV.1992]	0	0
thread <i>p</i>	1	0
inseminate	3	3
inject	1	1
ride	3	3
interfere	1	1
lick-up ⁿ	2 ⁴	2
know ^q	2	2
went into ^q	2	1
invade ^r	1	1
intrude ^r	0	1
crack it ^r	1	0
breed	3	2
mount	3	3
lace	1	1
pump	2	3
plug	1	2
wet	1	0

D. Intercourse (n = 68) cont'd

Recognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
molest	3	0
rip	0	0
eat	2	1
buss up	2	2
sleep with	3	3
bed ^s	2	2
puncture ^s	1	0
poison	0	0
full	1	0
enlarge ^b	1	0
widen ^b	1	0
probe ^b	1	1
ram	1	2
apply semen ^b	0	0
sauté ^b	0	0
crack	1	1
open up	1	0
ride ^t	3	2
explode in ^t	2	0
bomb	1	0
quiet	0	0
cool ^u	0	0
soak ^u	0	0
split ^t	2	0
sober ^t	0	0
Mean	1.5	1.2

E. Vagina (n = 40)

Recognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
estate	0	0
cunt ^j	3	3

E. **Vagina** (n = 40) cont'dRecognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
tun tun <i>j</i>	3	3
pussy <i>j</i>	3	3
cat <i>j</i>	3	3
peggs <i>j</i>	0	0
nanny <i>j</i>	3	3
vagina <i>j, l</i>	3	3
palay <i>v</i>	3	3
treasure <i>v</i>	1	1
pum pum [Jamaican term]	3	2
slit <i>b</i>	3	2
receptacle <i>b</i>	2	2
honey	1	1
the girl	0	0
she <i>w</i>	0	0
crack	3	1
beaver [25.VI.1992]	2	1
mound	3	3
meow	2	2
hillock	1	0
flesh <i>x</i>	3	2
crevice <i>x</i>	3	1
hole <i>x</i>	3	3
midsection	0	0
sugar walls	3	3
opening	2	1
peehole <i>y</i>	0	0
peyahw <i>y</i> [possibly a Jamaican term]	0	0
spefhim [possibly a Jamaican term]	0	1
crotch	3	3
punanny	3	2
pit	0	1
front end	1	1
chin rest	2	0

E. **Vagina** (n = 40) cont'dRecognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
femininity ^z	3	2
sweetness ^z	2	2
orifice ^{a, a}	2	2
pokey ^{a, a}	3	0
burr [possibly "brrr", as in shivering]	0	0
Mean	1.9	1.5

F. **Breasts** (n = 27)Recognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
headlights ^d [5.X.1991]	2	0
mammaries	3	2
bouncers	3	1
breadfruits	0	1
silicone	2	1
upper section	2	1
bosom	3	3
milkers ^b	1	0
glands ^{a, b}	3	1
totties ^{a, b}	0	0
fruits ^b	1	0
portugals ^b [a citrus fruit]	1	0
melons ^b	3	1
tottots	3	3
top	3	2
chest	3	2
boobies	3	3
boobs	3	3
domes	1	0
jock [3.XII.1991; norm. used for "masturbate"]	0	0
teats	2	2
pair	2	1

F. **Breasts** (n = 27) cont'dRecognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
udder	2	2
tits	3	3
breasts ^l	3	3
knockers [1.XI.1991]	3	3
breakfast ^a [20.V.1992]	0	0
Mean	2.0	1.4

G. **Penis** (n = 41)Recognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
scud	2	0
boner ^a [26.V.1992]	3	1
penis ^a [26.V.1992]	3	3
toolee ^a [28.V.1992]	3	2
prick ^j	3	3
wood ^j	3	3
tool ^j	3	3
toto ^j	1	1
iron ^j	1	2
penis ^{j,l}	3	3
gun	1	0
coco	2	1
dung [<i>sic</i>]	0	0
lolo ^{a, c}	2	2
colo ^{a, c}	1	1
he ^w	0	0
the boy	2	0
loley ^{a, c}	2	2
tolee ^{a, c}	2	2
instrument	1	2
meat	2	1
shaft	3	2

G. Penis (n = 41) cont'd

Recognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
bone	3	2
flange	0	0
dick	3	3
wiggy	1	1
manhood	3	2
private	3	3
extension ^b	2	0
organ ^b	3	2
equipment ^b	3	1
package	0	0
tolo ^{a, c}	1	1
maleness ^{a, d}	3	2
weapon ^{a, d}	1	1
ammunition	1	0
six shooter	0	0
phallus	2	2
massive ^{a, e}	0	1
blessing ^{a, e}	0	0
monster	1	0
wel [1.XI.1991]	0	0
Mean	1.7	1.3

H. Homosexual (n = 16)

Recognition by
Men Women

	Men	Women
mick [5.XII.1991]	2	0
homosexual ^l	3	3
gay	3	3
queer	3	3
queen	3	2
bi ^b	3	2
bullerman ^b	3	3

H. Homosexual (n = 16)

Recognition by
Men Women

batiman ^b	2	1
fag	3	3
mantaker ^{a, f}	1	1
hen ^{a, f}	3	3
mudpusher	0	0
boysting [i.e. "boy's t'ing"]	2	0
batologist [see "batee" and "bati" in list C]	0	0
acdc	3	2
faggot	3	3
Mean	2.3	1.8

FOOTNOTES

1. Each of these terms (one per list) was circled by the same person. The implication is that these are the standard terms.

2. This and the following three were evidently written by the same person on two different occasions to comprise two couplets, i.e. weakness/strength and comfort/worries.

3. Alternatively "bamsee", as in "[a certain professor] only likes bamsee lickeres" [sic] on the same wall, written by someone who appears not to have contributed to the lists.

4. Why one of our male informants should recognize "lick-up" once and then not recognize it a few seconds later is uncertain. We tentatively assign it to maledicta-fatigue.



In this panel © 2003 by J.C. Duffy of "Fusco Brothers" fame, the cartoonist sneaked a Dutch vulgarity past the "family newspaper" censors. Among the names of card games is *klootzakken*, lit. 'ball-sacks' (scrota), 'foolish, stupid, clumsy persons; assholes; dickheads.'