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In the U.S. Versatility Reigns: Gay Masculinities and the Transformation of Intimacy among Gay Peruvian Immigrant Men in New York City

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This paper examines the diverse ways in which migration shapes intimacy and the sexual lives of gay Peruvian immigrant men in New York. Based on ethnographic research over more than four years in New York and Lima, this paper shows the complex process that gay men face in dealing with their homoerotic sexual desires, hegemonic masculinity, and struggling with the stigma associated with homosexuality. It also analyzes the diverse hierarchies of masculinities presented among gay men, and the performances these men activate in the context of multiple dislocations produced by migration. Some gay assume powerful positions and perform as “straight gay”, which help to dispel “doubts” about their homosexual sexual practices, while others feel as if they failed the social expectations for “real” Peruvian men and face the challenge of constructing their gender identities in the apparent contradiction of being gay and “masculine”. In terms of the traditional top-bottom dichotomy, for some of these men this distinction is still a valid factor in the building of their gender and sexual identities. They reinforce their identity as “non-gay men” incorporating the top identity; while other men expand their sexual roles in the land where “versatility” reigns

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