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Chapter 9
The "Modern" Migrant Man

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Introduction

This paper draws on material from my doctoral dissertation at Columbia University, New York City (2008). For more than four years I conducted life history interviews and participant observation among Peruvian migrants in New York. I followed the lives of twenty seven migrant men and also interviewed their relatives and significant others in Peru. These men come from different backgrounds in terms of social class, race, sexual orientation, migrant status and age. This diversity in the sample helps to illustrate the plurality of masculinities within a particular migrant community. This paper offers insights into the interpretation of emergent forms of masculinity in the context of transnational migration.

The notion of "new" or "modern" masculinity has not been sufficiently studied within masculinity studies. This emergent form of masculinity presented among men who display more "softness" and "sensitive" behaviours is usually in contrast with traditional representations of "macho" or traditional men. Scholars such as Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1994) define the "new man" as an "ideological class icon": white, college-educated professional who is in touch with and expressive of his feelings, and egalitarian in his dealings with women. However, these new men are not necessarily interested in gender equality or the rights of less powerful men. In the case of migrant men, they have to confront "modern" models of masculinity that intersect with local and national representations of masculinity. Globalization and migration facilitate the circulation of ideas of modernity and "new masculinities" and "new men" across countries. Hirsch (2003) shows for Mexican male migrants that even though the media portrays "modern" masculinity as a more prestigious way of life, these men do not necessarily incorporate new trends into their lives, but rather they take strategic advantage of a temporary adoption of such practices while in the USA.

Being born male is only the beginning of a series of constant learnings, tests, failures and achievements that boys and teens have to undergo and experience in order to become men. Men have to reconcile the

paradoxes and contradictions inherent to masculinity. They have to integrate different spheres of social life, ideologies and experiences. Some men can comfortably perform multiple roles that might seem contradictory. Others struggle with the tensions and anxieties of not being able to fulfill social expectations, and thus feel as though they are "failing" as men. In concert with the classic framework provided by Connell, there is an ideal representation of being a man, around which men constitute their gender identity. This "hegemonic" form of masculinity acts as an "aspirational goal" rather than a lived reality for ordinary men, and it's sustained by conflicted hierarchies of power relations in constant struggles and negotiations with subordinated and marginalized masculinities (Connell, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

In the case of Peruvian men, most heterosexual and gay Peruvian men recognize not being able to fulfill male social expectations, and *failing* in some aspects of their manhood. Some of these men confront unemployment, fragile labor situations, uncertain migrant status, and multiple dislocations that jeopardize their abilities to fulfill the expectations of being household providers. They also incorporate, however, moral aspects to their manhood such as responsibility, decency and fatherhood. Fulfilling these moral values constitutes the "consecration" of manhood; they can be respected in society. Additionally, men have to reconcile the paradoxes and contradictions inherent to masculinity by integrating different spheres of social life, from boasting about heterosexual activity to gaining the respect of their peers. These two aspects of respect and respectability constitute the core of their "masculine capital", masculine skills and cultural competence to achieve legitimacy and social recognition as respected men. A man's journey implies acquiring, accumulating and successfully performing this masculine capital (Vasquez del Aguila, 2008).

Peruvian migrants in the USA

Peruvian international migration is part of a continuum of migration, which also includes relocation from the Peruvian provinces to Lima, the capital, which concentrates almost 30% of the country's population. For many Peruvian men, immigration constitutes a family project and an economic and emotional investment by the family; the migrant carries the family's expectation of a "return" for their investment (for example, economic remittances, etc.). Peruvian migrants in the USA are diverse: temporary visa-holders (as tourists or students); legal residents; and the undocumented population. Most Peruvian migrants continue to face challenges related to the usually fragile and unstable labor conditions in the host country, and their lack of English language proficiency. Peru-

vian migrants do not travel frequently to their country of origin; however, they maintain social, economic and emotional exchanges with their families and significant others in both countries. Peruvians develop intense kin and *paisano* (compatriot) networks that help newcomers in the process of adaptation, and also serve to obtain resources through trust, reciprocity and solidarity among the members. National events, such as the Peruvian National Parade in Paterson, New Jersey at the end of July, and religious processions in New Jersey and Manhattan during October, are occasions when Peruvian migrants usually meet other compatriots.

Socioeconomic, cultural and symbolic inequalities shape the way Peruvians experience their identities and citizenship. Inequalities in Peru are also expressed geographically. Lima is fragmented into a few residential areas where the *blancos* (whites) reside, and vast areas on the periphery of Lima, where the rest of Limeños live. In this sense the city is mapped between "safe" and "dangerous" social spaces. Neighborhoods and places frequented by *cholos* (people with indigenous features) are avoided by the *blanco* elite, and neighborhoods where *blancos* reside or congregate are considered safe terrain to inhabit and visit. These neighborhoods are also imagined sites of modernity, power, whiteness and money (Planas, 2007). Peruvian migrants recreate these racial and social class hierarchies in the USA context. For some men, the experience of migration challenges this rigid system while others struggle to preserve their privileges within the Peruvian migrant communities.

The modern migrant man

In the context of immigration to the USA, migrant status shapes the patterns of settlement and acculturation in the host country, and those migrants who are undocumented suffer barriers of movement inside the USA, and particularly travelling to their country of origin. Peruvian migrant men have to navigate through different forms of masculinity and reconcile their lives with their own expectations and those of the Peruvian and USA social contexts. A successful acculturation to the American life style is understood as achieving the imagined "American dream".

For some of these migrant men, displaying new technologies that are absent among their relatives in their country of origin or among the migrant communities in the USA, represents a sign of modernity and brings status as a successful man in both Peru and in the USA. Rafael, who resides in Manhattan, reproduces the same spatial discrimination that white middle class Limeños exercise against people who live on the outskirts of Lima. For him, anywhere outside Manhattan is a wasteland to be avoided. Rafael describes himself as an "Apple person", displaying his use of high and expensive technology. Rafael makes fun of how

"Latinitos" use "white headphones for their old CD player" to pretend they have an *iPod*. Rafael is also openly gay to his family in Peru and friends and co-workers in New York. Rafael uses his "open gayness" to make fun of the other Peruvian gay men, not as an indication of courage, but as another sign of his social status and successful acculturation into American society. Mario, a working class man in Lima ridicules his brother who resides in New York and his visits Peru in order to display his goods and technology:

> [My brother] travels like a modern *ekeko*[1], with laptop, electronic agenda, *ipod*, digital camera, and all kinds of toys [...] people think, 'oh yes, he is a complete winner, he triumphed there'. I ridicule him about this, but that works for him. [Mario]

The importance of work for male identity has been widely recognized within masculinity studies. Work grants migrant men the possibility, not only of providing for others, but also of holding authority over those who depend on them (Fuller, 2003). The Peruvian economy has been experiencing steady growth over the past years, however, fragile labor conditions, and increasing female participation in the labor market have been diluting the man's role as traditional breadwinner, which is being replaced by the couple who work and contribute together to maintaining the household. In a pioneering study with Filipino househusbands, Tadeo Pingol (2001) observes that through their overseas employment, many women have access to relatively well-paying jobs; they and not men, are the ones associated with modernity and success. In other words, whoever gains access to the symbols of modernity acquires the dominant position in the couple's dynamic. However, in concert with Fuller (2003), men, continue referring to themselves as the ones who are the economic providers and women only "collaborate" with the household. Not being able to successfully fulfill the breadwinner role creates real anxieties for migrant men. Being successful breadwinner means having a job that allows these men to be transnational providers. These men's economic success compensates for their families' sacrifices and investments.

Pribilsky (2007) describes how the "most eligible bachelors" in Ecuadorian rural communities are the ones most likely to leave for the USA. These potential migrant men represent ideas of progress and modernity that are possessed by the ones who are willing to stay at home. Marcos, a twenty-five year old heterosexual man who resides in New

1 In Andean folklore, the figure of *ekeko* represents a man wearing traditional attire and completely loaded with presents and goods such as money, food, groceries and anything that can represent gifts and abundance.

Jersey recounts the story of his uncle, whom he describes as *huaco* (pre-Columbian pottery) in direct reference to his uncle's indigenous features, becoming a "desirable bachelor" in Peru due to his economic improvement in the USA. Marcos's cousin invests all his economic resources in being the "cool" man among his friends in Peru:

> I make fun of him [cousin], why is he so keen to travel every year to Peru, if he can twice a year... he feels like a king there, women pay attention to him, he is not the *huaco* anymore... he is a desirable bachelor! [laughs] ... nobody knows that the poor man spends all his money on these trips... he wastes in a month in Lima a year's work here... just to be the *cool* man who invites and helps everybody. [Marcos]

Some of these migrants become model figures for their families and social networks in Lima. They gain "respect" as hard working and entrepreneurial men as well as providers for their families and other members of the community. A small present for neighbours in Peru is well appreciated and contributes to building the prestige of the migrant's family within the community: "You get respected, the small things you can bring for them, they appreciate that ... I feel like I am a better man helping these people, and they treat me with more respect now".

The American dream and becoming a modern and successful transnational man clashes with racial hierarchies in Peruvian society. For some white upper and middle class Limeños, the economic success of an indigenous migrant can be dismissed by these rigid racial inequalities still present in Peruvian society. For these wealthy Peruvians, successful migrants will return to the same subordinate social position they had before they left Peru: devalued *cholos* (indigenous). As Vanesa, a wealthy white Limeña states, *pitucos* Limeños (snotty white middle class) will always see *cholos* as subordinated individuals: "when they come back to Peru, money doesn't matter. If you are *cholo* you will be *cholo* the rest of your life". A representation closely related to the image of the modern successful migrant man is the *agringado* category. In the Peruvian and Latin American context, gringo denotes both a white blonde person, and also a USA citizen. In this sense, an *agringado* person designates someone who becomes "Americanized" by adopting the life style of a *gringo*. This can denote positive as well as negative connotations. In its positive state, an *agringado* man is someone well acculturated and integrated into American society, someone with a good job, American residency, fluency in English, who can comfortably navigate American society:

> When people call you *agringado* there is certain jealousy in recognizing your achievements... it's not an insult at all, they would love to be in your position, it's just a way to call your success. [Jerry]

On the other hand, an *agringado* man can represent someone who "pretends" to be American but fails in his attempts. He becomes a "fake copy" of the American style. Social class and race play an important role in defining who is a "real Peruvian *gringo*" and who is a "fake Peruvian *gringo*":

> People laugh at these ridiculous men who act like *gringos* [...] clothes, trying to imitate the American accent without speaking English well [...] you know, they forgot where they come from and pretend to behave like *gringos*. [Ronny]

The display of signs of modernity and acculturation to the USA life can have a negative impact on the lives of some of these migrants who seem to be losing their masculinity and becoming "delicate men" due to their new life style in the USA:

> [...] In Peru you buy a liter of beer and it circulates among your buddies... I can't drink so fast now, so I bought my own small beer... my friends said that I became a *gringo* [...] it's a little bit like you are "delicate" you know, not that you are a faggot, they don't think that, just "delicate" [laughs]. [Jaime]

The so-called *metrosexual* phenomenon is also part of the Peruvian scene. The term *metrosexual* has been used to describe heterosexual men with a strong concern for their appearance. Peruvian *metrosexual* icons can be seen in diverse areas such as sports and TV and film. These men are married or in publicized heterosexual relationships. These men live between Peru, Europe and the USA, and they bring home not only fashion but also "new" images and ideologies about being a "new" masculine man. These iconic local heterosexual men in the media represent a global trend, by which even though these men display attributes stereotypically seen among gay men such as an interest in fashion, their heterosexuality is not in question. Most heterosexual migrant men are very aware of the need to look after their bodies and physical appearance to attract women. However, these new trends in fashion are not valued similarly in all social contexts back in Peru. Rafael, a gay man with indigenous features, recounts that while on vacation in Lima, his way of dressing was not "masculine" among his social network in his working class neighborhood in Lima:

> There are *metrosexuals* in Lima, but it's more for *pitucos* (snotty white middle class), you know, but in other places people still give you a weird look if you wear *flip-flops* for instance... or certain clothes that are not "masculine" there. I guess one forgets how things are in Lima after so long being here. [Rafael]

Some upper and middle class migrants consider themselves to be the ones who "by default" embody modern forms of masculinity. For these men, embracing modern ideas and behaviors is what differentiates them from their "macho" and "traditional" working class and indigenous male compatriots. These men assure their masculinity by rejecting the less modern version of marginalized men. While certain expressions of "masculine" behavior can be a source of prestige, modernity and success in one context, the same behavior can represent limitations or even the possibility of failure in another context. In this sense, displaying a particular masculine capital in the Peruvian context, which can be seen as "successful masculinity" might be perceived by privileged Peruvians or more acculturated and long term migrants as an inadequate form of masculinity in the USA context. Ronny, a white middle class man, pokes fun at indigenous and working class Peruvian "newcomers" for representing "traditional" masculinity, understood as "macho attitudes" and "issues with their emotions", limitations that he, as a man with modern ideas of gender and masculinity does not have:

> It's funny the *recien llegados* (newcomers) act like *machitos*, you can recognize them even by the way they walk [...] Peruvians in Paterson don't change, they are living like they are in their *conos* [working class areas of Lima], when they come to Manhattan you can recognize them immediately ... they continue acting like machos [...] you know, "men don't cry", or "men don't wash the dishes" ... they have issues with their emotions. [Ronny]

Aldo, a white man who lived his entire adult life in the USA, and Michael a second generation Peruvian, consider that "macho" men and "*cholos* in Peru" embody violent and dominant forms of masculinity. These well acculturated to the American life considered themselves to be "sensitive" men with no issues concerning their masculinity, as in contrast with their less modern and less wealthy compatriots:

> *Cholos* in Peru think that being a man is to beat your woman, give orders in your place, never cry ... [Aldo]

> I have no issues with showing my emotions, I am not like these macho Peruvians [...] you know, they fight about nothing, control their women... don't cry! All these issues... [Michael]

However, not all "acculturated" and sensitive men display freely their emotions, such as crying in public. For many of these men, certain emotions associated with "weakness" should be avoided. A personal or national tragedy such as the death of a soccer team is entirely justified; crying because you were cheated on by women is understandable, but there is a limit for displaying this emotion. As one informant says: "[male and female] friends expect that men do the mourning quickly and then move on, fuck other girls, forget the bitch... be stronger again".

For men like Ramiro, a successful white middle class lawyer who followed his wife to pursue her doctoral studies in New York, the experience of migration provided him the opportunity to question some gender roles he took for granted. Ramiro always identified himself as a progressive man with egalitarian gender roles; however, the economic dependency on his wife's student scholarship created a crisis about his manhood that he did not anticipate. As he recounts, he wasn't as progressive or modern as he imagined himself. He discovered how pivotal was work for his gender identity. This experience opened new possibilities for Ramiro to explore "domestic" activities that he avoided while working full time in Peru. Now Ramiro considers himself a "more modern" man, someone who is not only in touch with his emotions and "feminine" side, but also more committed to gender equality.

New sexual commands for modern men?

Compulsory heterosexuality is a fundamental part of men's socialization. This social imperative associates masculinity with active and penetrative sexuality (Ramirez, 1999). For many heterosexual men, "generating" their partners' orgasm is an imperative of their performance as modern men. Heterosexual men feel the pressure not only to demonstrate sexual activity and conquest of women, but also the "responsibility" of being good lovers, capable of "satisfying" their women. These men mark a generational change as compared to earlier generations, for whom women's pleasure was not a criterion of male sexual performance. However, this social pressure to exhibit an ideal sexual performance is contextualized by the "type" of relationship and only applies to women they care for. In the case of occasional sex, most men focus on their own pleasure, and the failure to generate women's orgasms does not erode their masculinity.

Women's active participation during sex is problematic for most heterosexual men. As Rubin recounts, men want a "sexually-experienced virgin" (Rubin cited by Duncombe and Marsden, 1996: 225). Most Peruvian men complain about the lack of participation and "effort" that their women invest in sex, but at the same time "excessive" knowledge about sex or signs of "excessive" experience in bed are considered "turn offs". These male narratives show contradictions and tensions in what kind of female behavior arouses them and what kind of female expertise is considered appealing. Men's strategies to "discover" *tramposa* women who fake sexual inexperience or orgasms show male anxieties, as well as the limits of women's initiation and active participation in sexual courtship and intercourse.

In terms of men with homosexual experiences, the term "*moderno*", literally translated as "modern", defines "versatile" men who perform both the *activo* (insertive or top) and *pasivo* (receptive or bottom) roles in sex. *Moderno* can also be associated with "open minded" individuals, those self-identified heterosexuals who are "open" to homosexual experiences. Carrier (1995) and Cantu (2009) find among Mexicans the term *internacionales* (internationals) used to define "versatile" men. In concert with these authors, Parker (1999) in Brazil and Carrillo (2002) among Mexican migrants have found that traditional rigid sexual dichotomies between *activo* and *pasivo* conflict with global notions of modernity and "versatility" and men who have sex with men have to negotiate their sexual practices and identities. They find more fluid identities shaped by factors such as race, social class and the experience of migration. Interestingly, in both Peru and Mexico, the terms *moderno* and *internacionales* are associated with modernity and openness to "foreign" sexual ideas and practices. The experience of migration and the exposure with other gay men can challenge fixed sexual roles and open new possibilities for some of these gay men, while reinforcing others. However, even though this top-bottom dichotomy has been challenged for many of these gay men, who identify themselves as *modernos* (versatile), some of them still refer to their role in the sexual act as the basis for the constitution of their sexual and gender identity. Hence, being *activo* continues to be a desirable identity that some men who have sex with men embrace in order to keep their masculinity and sexual identity as heterosexuals intact. Ricardo, who identifies himself as "straight" with an "occasional desire for men" asserts his identity as a top man. He is not comfortable with the "American versatility obsession".

For some migrants, heterosexual and gay, as well as single and married, the experience of migration expands their possibilities of new intimate and sexual relations, and many of these migrants increase the

number of their sexual partners, and engage in extramarital sex. However, for many others, migration also multiplies dislocations and displacements that place migrant men in situations of vulnerability, loneliness and isolation.

Male's representation of females' sexuality

Peruvian migrants recreate in the USA racial and social class hierarchies presented in Peruvian society. These men re-activate in the USA their cultural background in which the male and female body is valued based on "whiteness". The experience of migration challenges some of these representations and expands the spectrum of what is considered a desirable body. These racial hierarchies intersect with representations about women's "sexual reputation" to qualify not only Peruvian migrant women but also other women in the USA. There are several representations of women, such as *ruca* women (working class women with indigenous features) who are considered an "easy target" for men; or *tramposa* women, regarded as slutty, tricky, crooked, swindler, manipulative or cheating women. For the purposes of this paper I will focus on just two categories: *Tranquila* and *Jugadora/Player* women. The word "*tranquilo/a*" can be translated as calm and tranquil, a person with a quiet life. The *tranquila* woman is a modern representation of "decent" and "virginal" women. These women encapsulate attitudes of modernity and gender equality, such as a public life through studies and work outside the house. However, *tranquila* women should also maintain a respectable life and be faithful and dedicated wives. In the migrants' narratives, these women are not necessarily "virgins" they are modern women ("they are not stupid); *tranquila* women know how to preserve their "good names" and maintain their sexual reputations intact, and have sex with the right men at the "right time", in the context of a formal relationship, and under the certainty that these men are going to marry them. *Tranquila* women are the *firmes* (stable) or "formal" partners.

Another fluid representation of women is the *jugadora/player* category. In the Peruvian social imaginary, *jugadoras/players* (both Spanish and English words are used interchangeably by Spanish speakers in Peru) represent a contested woman in terms of gender and sexual roles. *Player/jugadora* women challenge traditional gender and sexual female roles as "virginal", dedicated, faithful, over-trusting, and passive women. *Player* women have an active role in courtship, take the initiative in sexual relationships, and express desire for more than one man. They do not necessarily hide their sexual experiences with other men like *tramposa* women do; *players* do not cheat on men: they are usually "openly playing". *Player women* have fun with men like men usually do with women.

Player women are interested in their sexual pleasure and take an active role finding the right man or men to satisfy them:

> [Players] are like men, they want to have everything, they go to parties, they have their group of female *patas* (buddies), they don't want just one man, they want as many men as they can have [Victor]

Even though *tranquila* and *player* women represent different forms of female sexual reputation, both categories challenge traditional representations of women and create uncertainties for men's relations with women.

Conclusion

Being a "modern" man has different connotations for migrant men. While for some men being modern means to be "more" acculturated and integrated into the USA lifestyle, for others being modern represents the incorporation of more egalitarian gender roles. There is also an association between modernity and success. A modern man is someone who achieved the migrant's dream: has a decent job, becomes an entrepreneur, and navigates within the USA society. For men who have sex with men, the term "moderno" not only carries connotations of global notions of modernity, but also refers to men who are open to "versatility" and fluid sexual practices in contrast with the ones who adhere to the traditional dichotomy "top-bottom".

The modern migrant man achieves the "migrants' dream": personal achievements and fulfillment of family's expectations in the host country. This man is an economic provider not only for his own household, but also is seen as a potential resource for the rest of the social network in Peru and even within the migrant community in the host country. For those legal migrants who are able to travel to Peru and return to their lives in the USA, the experience in Peru can represent an opportunity to display masculinity as successful "winner migrants".

This paper has shown the tensions and fluidity in the representation of the modern man in a transnational context. Some middle class Peruvian men express their rejection of Peruvian "macho" behaviors such as violent, hypermasculinized, dominant, and disconnected from their emotions. For these white middle class Peruvians, these male performances are associated with lower social class men who come from the provinces, have no "manners and culture", and who tend to be *cholos* (indigenous men). Additionally, some migrants who are more acculturated into US American society display "modern" aspects of masculinity such as openness to women's independence or sharing responsibilities in

the house. I argue that Peruvian migrant men negotiate modernity and gender in both ways. On the one hand, these men embrace modernity through representations and experiences of egalitarian gender roles. In other words, by rejecting representations of "traditional" or "macho" men, they are more acculturated and part of the global modern world. On the other hand, these men negotiate gender incorporating signs of modernity such as the display of technology or a successful acculturation to the US American lifestyle. These signs of modernity place them as less "machistas". In this interplay between gender and modernity, "modern" men are in a better social position than the "traditional" ones.

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