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Influence of Sociocultural Context in the Perception of Risk and Negotiation of Protection in Poor Homosexual Men on the Peruvian Coast

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Salazar X, Cáceres C, Maiorana A, Rosasco A, Kegeles S, Coates T. Influencia del contexto sociocultural en la percepción del riesgo y la negociación de protección en hombres homosexuales pobres de la costa peruana [Influence of Sociocultural Context in the Perception of Risk and Negotiation of Protection in Poor Homosexual Men on the Peruvian Coast] *Cadernos de Saúde Pública* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) 2006 October; 22(10): 2097-2104.

Objectives: The article analyzes the different ways in which the sociocultural context shapes the perception of risk in relationship to internalized homophobia and hegemonic gender norms.

Methodology: Qualitative, in-depth interviews and focus groups in the homosexual population aged 18 to 30, residents of two poor communities in Lima and Trujillo, Peru. Data were analyzed using the Atlas-Ti program.

Results: The authors found that the potential for risk-free sexual relations in men who have sex with men is minimal and is not effectively realized. Internalized social guilt plays an important role, as does the sociocultural structure of gender relationships. The homosexual population studied here invariably occupies an inferior status, as their behavior meets social disapproval. The article emphasizes that in their relationships with a partner, lower class Peruvian homosexuals with a feminine identity seek men identified as “active heterosexuals” as a sexual partner, completely rejecting relations with someone who shares their characteristics. The authors close by stating that the group that has assumed the hegemonic feminine identity puts fear of contracting disease in the background and focuses on feelings, even though they may be short-lived. This shows that these types of couples play an important role in risky behavior.

Conclusions: To the authors, men with a feminine gender identity make decisions and run risks influenced by the sociocultural context of their surroundings on the Peruvian coast. It is clear that they themselves acquiesce to the hegemonic mandate that judges any non-heterosexual relationship to be non-normal.