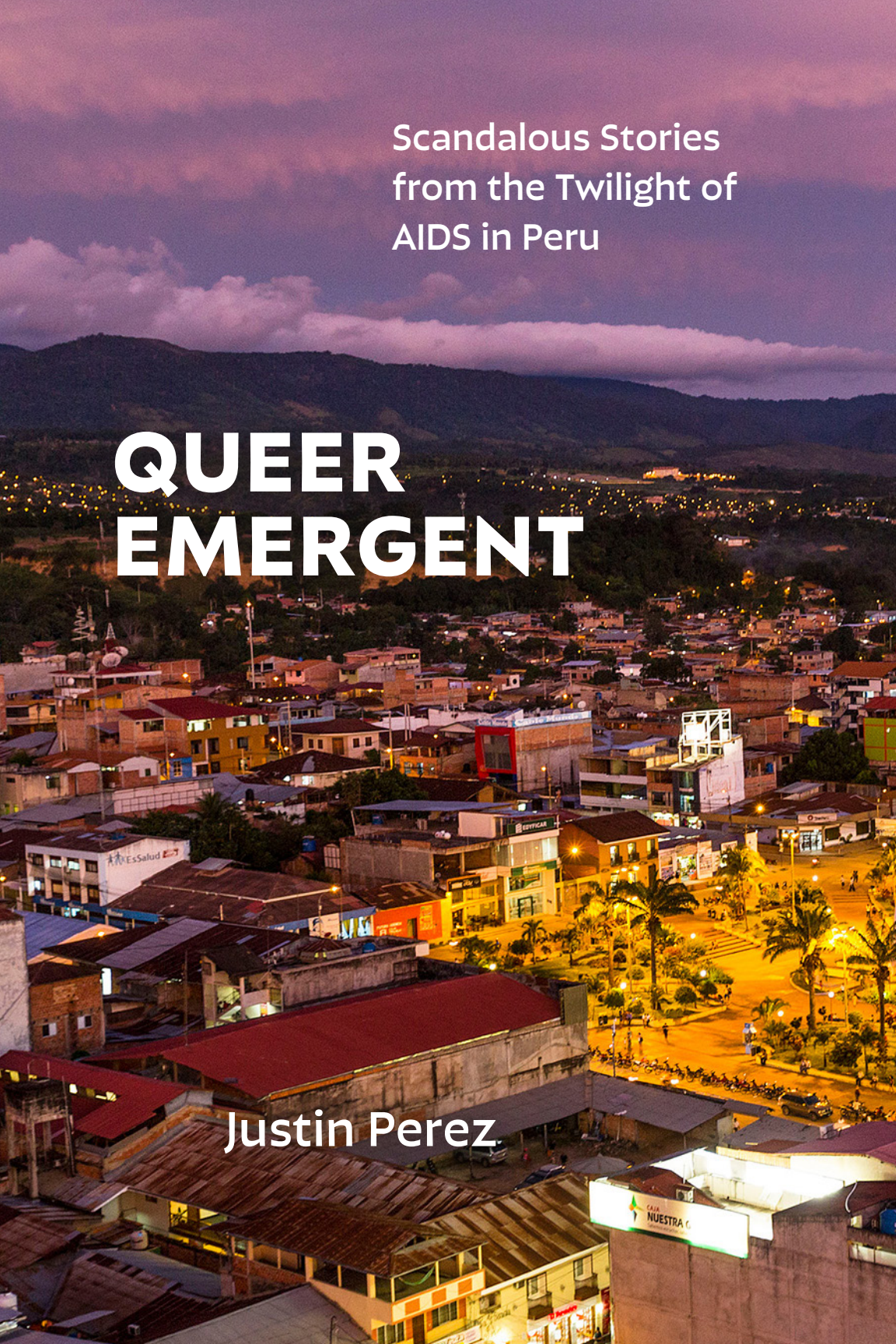
Scandalous Stories from the Twilight of AIDS in Peru

QUEER EMERGENT



Justin Perez

Queer Emergent

Critical Global Health: Evidence, Efficacy, Ethnography

A series edited by Vincanne Adams and João Biehl

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DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Durham and London
2025

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Project Editor: Bird Williams
Designed by A. Mattson Gallagher
Typeset in Minion Pro and Source Sans 3
by Westchester Publishing Services.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Perez, Justin, [date] author.
Title: Queer emergent : scandalous stories at the twilight of AIDS / Justin Perez.
Other titles: Scandalous stories at the twilight of AIDS | Critical global health.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2025. | Series: Critical global health: evidence, efficacy, ethnography | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2024047901 (print)
LCCN 2024047902 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478031802 (paperback)
ISBN 9781478028574 (hardcover)
ISBN 9781478060789 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: AIDS (Disease)—Social aspects—Peru. | AIDS (Disease)—Peru—Case studies. | HIV infections—Peru—Case studies. | AIDS (Disease)—Peru—Prevention. | HIV infections—Peru—Prevention. | Transgender people—Peru—Social life and customs. | Gay people—Peru—Social life and customs.
Classification: LCC RA643.86.P4 P467 2025 (print)
LCC RA643.86.P4 (ebook)
DDC 306.4/61—dc23/eng/20250218
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024047901
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024047902

Cover art: The main plaza of Tarapoto. Photograph by Marlon del Aguila Guerrero.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The seeds of this research project were planted while I was an undergraduate anthropology major at the University of Notre Dame. I thank Maurizio Albahari for advising my senior thesis. I am grateful to the Kellogg Institute for International Studies for sponsoring my early research in Peru, with special thanks to Holly Rivers and Sharon Schierling. In graduate school at UC Irvine, I was privileged to have the support of Tom Boellstorff, Susan Bibler Coutin, and Victoria Bernal. Many thanks to Tom Boellstorff, who deftly guided me through coursework, fieldwork, and beyond as an advisor and mentor. Courses and seminars led by Julia Elyachar, Lilith Mahmud, Bill Maurer, Keith Murphy, Valerie Olson, Rachel O'Toole, Kris Peterson, Steve Topik, and Mei Zhan taken alongside Nate Coben, Sean Larabee, Kyrstin Mallon Andrews, Kim McKinson, Simone Popperl, Daina Sanchez, and Natali Valdez made UCI a vibrant intellectual community and helped my scholarship grow in ways I could have never imagined. The opportunity to learn from Kris Peterson as a teaching assistant for the course "HIV/AIDS in a Global Context" was truly transformative. Fieldwork was supported by the Social Science Research Council International Dissertation Research Fellowship, the Inter-American Foundation Grassroots Development Fellowship, and the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program. I am also grateful for the James Harvey Scholar award from the UCI Graduate Division.

This project blossomed during my time at Princeton. It was an honor to hold the Fund for Reunion–Cotsen Fellowship in LGBT Studies at the Princeton University Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts. I am in awe of João Biehl and truly grateful for the generous support, critical perspective, and mentorship that he has offered me and this project. I extend my gratitude to Elizabeth Armstrong, Wallace Best, Nijah Cunningham, Rhea Dexter, Stefan Eich, Julia Elyachar, Alessandro Giammei, Michael Gordin, Javier Guerrero, Monica Huerta, Regina Kunzel, Maria Papadakis, Bernadette Perez, Carolyn Rouse, Ava Shirazi, Beate Witzler, and Mo Lin Yee. With the additional support of the Princeton Anthropology Department, the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies, and the Queer Princeton Alumni (formerly BTGALA), I convoked a workshop for an early version of this manuscript. The commentary, feedback, questions, and provocations of Paul Amar, Ulla Berg, João Biehl, Carina Heckert, Amy Krauss, and Natalie Prizel proved invaluable and productively reoriented the trajectory of this book. Follow-up fieldwork and a period of intensive collaboration with the photographer Marlon del Aguila Guerrero was supported by the Princeton University Committee on Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences William Hallam Tuck '12 Memorial Fund Research Grant.

At UC Santa Cruz, I have been lucky to have the support of the wonderful Latin American and Latino Studies Department. I am forever indebted to the inimitable Sylvanna Falcón, who has worn many hats in her endless support of my scholarship, including postdoctoral mentor, retreat organizer extraordinaire, summer writing accountability partner, fierce advocate, and dynamic colleague. I appreciate conversations, encouragement, and advocacy from Gabriela Arredondo, Lily Pearl Balloffet, Saskias Casanova, Nancy Chen, Kent Eaton, Jeff Erbig, Filippo Gianferrari, Phillip Hammack, Fernando Leiva, Carlos Martinez, Mark Massoud, Jaimie Morse, Christina Navarro, Sara Niedzwiecki, Ursula Oberg, Marcia Ochoa, Juan Manuel Pedroza, Patricia Pinho, Catherine Ramirez, Alicia Riley, Cecilia Rivas, Matt Sparke, and Jessica Taft. The Institute for Social Transformation funded undergraduate student support through the Building Belonging program, and I thank the undergraduate students Melanie Renteria, Jesus Najera, and Angelo Claure for their support at different stages of the project. The Dolores Huerta Research Center for the Americas provided grant funding for publication support. The Campus Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Writing Fellows Program supported my writing with course relief and funding to work with the professional editors Jacqueline Tasch and Mark Woodworth.

I have been able to share drafts, think out loud, workshop ideas, and learn from numerous intellectual communities. The Critical Approaches to Human Rights group, convened and led by Amy Ross and Chandra Sriram through the Social Science Research Council Dissertation Proposal Development Program, was a tremendous resource in the early stages of this project. I am grateful for conversations in Chaska and Cambridge with Samar Al-Bulushi, Jian-Ming Chris Chang, Evelyn Galindo, Alexa Hagerty, Christoph Hanssmann, Grégoire Hervouet-Zeiber, Austin Kocher, Laura Matson, Jaimie Morse, A. Marie Ranjbar, and J Sebastian. Under the guidance of Susan Coutin, members of the UCI Law and Ethnography Lab met on Skype while we were in our respective "fields" around the world to problem-solve and collectively think through the new challenges that we encountered in the process of doing ethnographic fieldwork. I am grateful for the encouragement and feedback of lab-mates Alyse Bertenthal, Josh Clark, Véronique Fortin, and Daina Sanchez. I had the opportunity to participate in the Residential Research Group "Queer Hemisphere/América Queer" at the University of California Humanities Research Institute. Thank you to the group coordinators Kirstie Dorr, Marcia Ochoa, and Deb Vargas for including me, as well as fellow participants Christina León, Ivan Ramos, Jennifer Tyburczy, and Shelley Streeby for convivial cross-disciplinary discussion on hemispheric queer studies and some fabulous karaoke.

Arguments developed throughout the book were expanded, refined, and worked out through the generous and productive engagement I received through talks at seminars, in classrooms, at conferences, and in informal conversations over coffee. I extend my appreciation to Rachel O'Toole, for the invitation to present at the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies Seminar at the University of California, Irvine; Javier Fernández Galeano, for the invitation to present at the "Nuevas Perspectivas de Género en Historia de la Medicina en Latinoamérica" seminar at the University of Valencia; Casey James Miller, for the invitation to present at the "40 Years of HIV/AIDS Activism: Perspectives from Around the World" speaker series at Muhlenberg College; Amy Krauss, for the invitation to present at the "Reproductive Justice Beyond Rights" speaker series at the University of Chicago; and Regina Kunzel, for the invitation to present at the Gender and Sexuality Studies Works-in-Progress Series at Princeton University. I am grateful for the insight, recommendations, and feedback of the many colleagues who have engaged my ideas in conference panels, provided feedback on chapter drafts, and helped me think out loud through

conversations in Peru and elsewhere: M. Cristina Alcalde, Florence Babb, Sophie Bjork-James, Michael Bosia, Tito Bracamonte, Julio Callo, Giancarlo Cornejo, Amy Cox Hall, Alexandra Cussianovich, Maria del Pilar Ego Aguirre, Joe Feldman, Carl Fischer, Larry La Fountain-Stokes, Carlos Leal Reyes, Silvana Matassini, Javier Muñoz Diaz, Eduardo Romero, Sydney Silverstein, and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz.

The most enduring source of support in my life has been my family and friends. During a very long car ride Natali Valdez convinced me to push send and reminded me that everything will be okay. My comadre Daina Sanchez has been present in just about every day of my life for over a decade, and I am so grateful for our journey. Virtual RPDR watch parties with Monica Huerta and Ava Shirazi lifted my spirits through the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic and have sustained me since. I treasure every memory from volleyball tournaments with Eric Astacaan, Michael Butler, and Ray Mapeso and look forward to more adventures around the globe. Mike and Tina Amerio kept me on track by checking in on my progress. I cherish the love of Mary Perez, Glenny Perez, Charlie Perez, Julia Reimann, Anna Thomas, and Margot Tilly.

I dedicate this book to my parents, Glen and Antoinette Perez. Their infinite love and support make everything possible. Thank you for inspiring me to be an educator and for all the sacrifices you made so that I could dedicate my life to learning.

Introduction

Scandalous Stories of HIV Prevention

"*Ay sí, amiga, discriminada total*," Paula began to explain to me as she vigorously shook her head. I wondered what had happened for her to insist that she had such a clear and total experience of discrimination. Hoping to solicit an effusive and uninhibited recounting of the episode, I replied to her: "What happened, Paula?"

By the time I was ready to listen to and record Paula's story, I knew what had happened. But in that moment I was asking Paula to tell me again. She was a popular and well-known hair stylist in the city of Tarapoto, Peru; her popularity likely came from a combination of being an engaging storyteller and being an excellent stylist. She had recently opened her own salon after years of renting workstations elsewhere. Though small, the salon was always a

lively and welcoming space. Throughout the process of conducting ethnographic fieldwork among gay and transgender communities in Tarapoto and other cities of Peru's *selva*, or Amazonian jungle region, I often hung out in Paula's salon to hear her stories about queer social life in the region—stories like the one that she was about to tell.

Paula continued, "It was Christmas night." She and two of her friends had gone out to the popular disco called La Anaconda. Of the handful of large outdoor nightclubs set amid the palm trees and tobacco fields that border the Fernando Belaúnde Terry Highway into the city limits, La Anaconda was perhaps the best-known and certainly the trendiest. Tourists and locals alike flocked there. It was also Paula's favorite. However, on that Christmas night, Paula and her friends arrived to find an uncharacteristically empty disco. Nevertheless, the three of them went straight to the area of the bar where Paula typically hung out.[1] Standing nearby were a security guard and the security boss, and as soon as she and her friends settled into their usual corner of the disco, the security guard approached them. He told Paula that they were impeding the sale of beer at the bar and that they had to go to another area of the disco. "That was a lie," Paula explained to me, "because that was simply where we were standing. The security guard was discriminating against me, no?"

Paula was a clever and engaging storyteller. If you wanted to hear one of her stories, you had to be willing to engage with and reply to her questions. At this point, because she had used this story already to enthrall and entertain her clients, who might be sitting around for hours waiting for their hair color to set or their hair to dry, she needed to *really* convince the hearer that she had experienced discrimination. She knew, with all the evidence that she laid out in the introduction of her story, that a listener might not fully agree that what had occurred to her was *truly* discriminatory. "What if the bartender and security guards really did need you to move?" I said to her, knowing that I was meant to play this role if I wanted the full experience of her story. "But there had been two other groups at the bar as well," she replied, "and the security guard did not say anything to them. So, what does that tell you? It was discrimination for sexual orientation."[2] Now, with the detail that there had been others at the bar, presumably with normative, cisgendered embodiments, Paula was able to win the support of even the most incredulous of listeners. What had happened that night was truly a moment of discrimination.

Of course, Paula was not going to accept the discriminatory treatment: "I got upset, I yelled. I told him, 'Who do you think you are that you are

going to tell me to leave the bar? This is discrimination!'" If anyone knew how to argue, it was Paula. For nearly twenty years Paula had been playing volleyball in parks and streets not just in Tarapoto but also throughout the entire San Martín department (a department is the Peruvian equivalent of a state). Volleyball was an important social activity for gay and trans communities there. Every day, from around 3:00 p.m. until dark, Paula could be found at one of the several popular parks and plazas where gay men and transgender women play the game in front of crowds of residents from the neighborhoods where these parks are located. Betting on volleyball was popular, and so because the game carried either the hope of doubling her day's salary with a winning bet if her team came out on top or the risk that her day of playing might be for naught if her team lost, volleyball was an essential and highly significant element of her daily life and income. Paula had perfected the art of arguing on the volleyball court: demanding a replay of a point, persuading the other team that the ball had landed in or out, or insisting on another match with double-or-nothing stakes. I would be nervous if I were the security guard gearing up for an argument with Paula.

"It was the scandal, *amiga*, *el es-can-da-lo*," she told me, slowly pronouncing each syllable of the last word to emphasize that she had staged not just *a* scandal but *the* scandal. Right as she had been swearing to the security guard that he would pay for discriminating against her, mimicking the gestures of the wronged protagonist of a telenovela seeking revenge, she noticed the owner of La Anaconda standing in front of her. The owner told Paula there was nothing that could be done about the situation, or at least nothing that would satisfy Paula. Her friends tried to convince her that they should just leave. But Paula vowed she would not let this go, declaring that the logical next step was to march directly to the nightclub's *libro de reclamaciones*, or complaint book.

The complaint book, she explained to me, was there so that the citizens of Peru, whatever issue they might have with a business, can record their complaints right then and there. However, she continued, when she had asked the manager where the book was, he did not want to give it to her: "They were caught between a rock and a hard place." Paula explained that she had demanded the book because she had it in her mind that she was going to write her complaint and that was the only possible solution to the present issue. They reluctantly gave the book to her, but virtually threw it in her face. Nevertheless, she filled out the form, writing what happened; she kept her copy of the form, and the other copy stayed in the book with the disco. At this point in the story, a listener might breathe a sigh of relief.

The sense of catharsis that Paula had felt precisely at that moment, when it was happening, was embedded directly into the experience of hearing her recount the story. That catharsis, however, was fleeting.

Paula continued with the story. With her copy of the form, she explained, she had to go to INDECOPI (National Institute of the Defense of Competition and of the Protection of Intellectual Property), Peru's administrative agency responsible for market regulation, intellectual property, and consumer protection: "INDECOPI, *amiga*, it is a state institution that exists so that no consumer should experience poor treatment or discrimination in a public place like a disco. So that is where I went to file my complaint." A week later, Paula and the owner of the disco were called to a meeting at the regional office. The owner, however, did not show up for the meeting, instead sending a representative in his place. But, she continued telling me triumphantly, she ended up "half victorious." INDECOPI determined that she could file the grievance formally (after paying an administrative fee of 30 soles), and then the office would commit to following the process and fining the disco for the infraction.

"It was a fraud, though," Paula continued, because it took eight months for the grievance to be processed by INDECOPI. Eight months was a very long time, and maybe, Paula hypothesized, the grievance got "lost" in the bureaucratic jumble. But perhaps, she suggested, there was something going on under the table between the disco and INDECOPI. Was it normal, she wondered, "that the bureaucrats of INDECOPI tell you that they forgot about the grievance when you inquire about the status of it?" She even had a friend who worked at INDECOPI. In an exaggerated voice, she reenacted what her friend said to her: "'It is because I forgot about it, Paula. There were other things, things over here, things over there, blah blah blah.'"

"But you said that you ended up 'half victorious,' Paula. Where was the victory?" I asked her, knowing, again, that this was a part I was meant to play if I hoped to get the whole story. It was at this concluding moment of her tale that Paula explicitly announced the lesson of the story and the true consequences of the entire episode:

> Now you see, *amiga*, the staff at La Anaconda now knows that they cannot treat clients this way. They have to give better attention to their clients, whether they are *travesti*, gay, lesbian, Afro-Peruvian, poor.[3] The treatment has to be equal. There are many homosexuals whose rights are run over and they do not even realize it. They do not know how to defend themselves and they do not know what to do when

they suffer discrimination. I suffered this discrimination and made a scandal because no one else would, and now things are better.

Stories like this one were perhaps among the reasons she was so popular. As I hung out with Paula and her friends in her salon, I found that it was not uncommon to hear the same story twice or even more times, fine-tuned with each new iteration. As she was cutting and coloring hair, she knew exactly when to pull away with the clippers and scissors for emphasis as she was approaching the punch lines of the stories. Her choreography was precise and elaborate. Creative license, of course, was part of her process. She embellished aspects, exaggerated encounters, and intensified the emotional stakes of the scandal that she caused in the moment of her experiencing discrimination. For instance, that the *libro de reclamaciones* was "thrown in her face" added a dramatic element to the story, which she recounted with gestures that contributed to making the whole episode such a compelling performance. Over time, as I continued with my research, I came to realize that the kinds of flourishes she added were common in many of the stories I heard circulated across urban Amazonian Peru among communities of gay men and transgender women as they commented on their social world in everyday life.

With its ups and downs, triumphs and failures, Paula's story was entertaining. But the story was not meant just to entertain. It was also pedagogical. While Paula's story was not, on the surface, about HIV prevention, in fact it drew on lessons that she had learned from participating in projects intended to reduce discrimination as a means of improving the social conditions of communities vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. During the 2010s, one of the key communities of these efforts were gay men and transgender women in the cities of Peru's Amazonian region. Over this period, HIV prevention project specialists, community health promoters, and LGBT activists developed and disseminated messages about the importance of contesting and denouncing discrimination. They delivered these lessons to gay and transgender communities through capacity-building workshops, sensitivity trainings, and on-the-ground advocacy and support. As I participated in these activities while also hanging out in the everyday lives of people like Paula, a subject of these interventions in the city of Tarapoto, I came to realize that she was embedding in her story many of the points that she had likely learned along the way: among them, that anyone has the right to demand the complaint book when they experience mistreatment or discrimination at a business, that anyone has the right to go to the offices of INDECOPI and receive help,

and, most importantly, that one should never "give up" or leave a situation in the face of discrimination. But she did more than simply reproduce the lessons she had absorbed as a subject of HIV prevention. She dramatized them into a story about her triumphs, persistence, and disappointments as she sought to make widely and publicly known the injustice that she experienced that night at the disco.

Queer Emergent takes the stories shared by Paula and other subjects of HIV prevention in Peru as a point of departure to analyze broader social transformations brought about between the late 2000s and the 2010s through the global response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. On the heels of tremendous global investment in scaling up access to lifesaving antiretroviral therapy (ART) around the world, as well as the emergence of the paradigm that viewed the provision of treatment itself as a form of prevention, a new promise emerged about the possibilities of ending AIDS as a global threat to public health. As a response, transforming the social conditions of populations categorized as key or vulnerable became a newly significant priority. In Peru and elsewhere, the 2010s were a transitional period in the trajectory of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic: after the massive investment in the provision of antiretroviral therapy but also before the notion of the "end of AIDS" materialized. By the 2010s, Peru was no longer eligible for the international funding that had been made available to the country over the prior decade, linked to the scale-up of the provision of antiretroviral therapy. However, the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Peru persisted as a concentrated epidemic, principally affecting gay men, transgender women, and men who have sex with men but do not identify as gay (MSM). The stories collected in *Queer Emergent*—like the one Paula told about her scandalous response to her experience of discrimination at the nightclub—come precisely from this period.

Amid a renewed effort to approximate a post-AIDS future, the sexual practices and social conditions of gay and transgender Peruvians became a newly significant site of social, medical, and scientific scrutiny. In order to contribute to the global effort to end AIDS, those cast as most vulnerable to acquiring HIV—in this case, gay and transgender Peruvians—reoriented how they talked about themselves and their sexual and romantic lives, how they spoke about their experiences of discrimination and marginalization, and how they formed social relations with one another. Through capacity-building workshops, antidiscrimination and sensitivity trainings, and health promotion, individuals were asked to story new aspects of their commitment to living socially responsible and morally correct lives in the name of

ending AIDS. Their scandalous stories make uniquely visible not just how they processed these moralizing obligations but also how they collectively challenged and reimagined what it meant to make do in a changing social world and inhabit emergent subjectivities as the ending of AIDS unfolded. In bringing together some of the stories that gay and transgender Peruvians told as they encountered the new impasses, predicaments, and contradictions of HIV prevention, *Queer Emergent* asserts that the "end of AIDS" was not simply a technical project oriented toward ending AIDS but also a project of sexual subjectification and profound social transformation.

As an ethnography of emergent social worlds in urban Amazonian Peru, the research contained herein draws on the long-term ethnographic fieldwork I conducted alongside gay and transgender communities in urban Amazonian Peru from 2012 to 2018 as they encountered efforts to end AIDS. I center the stories and experiences of interlocutors from the city of Tarapoto with whom I conducted a sustained period of fifteen months of fieldwork in 2014–15.[4] Their stories are compared with and complemented by stories I collected from periodic fieldwork conducted in the cities of Iquitos and Pucallpa, two important and large port cities in the Amazonian region, as well as the coastal cities of Lima, Callao, and Chiclayo. These stories are enhanced by the reflections and observations of interlocutors collected through interviews as well as by my own observations.

In emphasizing the unruly, imaginative, and "scandalous" stories they told, I argue that gay and transgender Peruvians challenged the assumptions embedded in the technical project of ending AIDS while also finding ways, from the margins, to make emergent categories of sexual selfhood habitable on their own terms. I develop and sustain this argument throughout *Queer Emergent* by prioritizing three thematic interventions. First, I propose that stories and storytelling are crucial sites of knowledge for building more robust frameworks in HIV prevention and in critical global health that are attentive to social hierarchies and differences. Second, I develop scandal as a genre of storytelling that emphasizes exaggeration, embellishment, and collective authorship. As a cornerstone of the production of the collaborative relationality that characterized gay and transgender communities in urban Amazonian Peru, scandal is thus further rendered as a theory of queer social world-making. And third, I strive to model intersubjectivity as a mode of ethnographic presence and research. Through an intersubjective ethnographic approach, alongside analysis informed by intersectional theories of ethno-racial, gender, and sexual difference, *Queer Emergent* makes uniquely

Map I.1. Map of Peru. (Cartography by Bill Nelson)

visible the profound social change that occurred as the effort to end AIDS played out in urban Amazonian Peru.

Queer Social Life within and beyond Categories

The search for the "right" category of sexual subjectivity is ubiquitous and often a site of generative debate in a wide range of scholarly fields, including queer studies and global health sciences, as well as in the regional subfields within these broader scholarly fields. In global queer studies, the tensions between Western terms of sexual and gender dissidence and diversity—*queer*, *lesbian*, *gay*, *transgender*—and non-Western categories can render broader social phenomena like globalization, neoliberalism, and coloniality particularly visible. On the other hand, "traditional" categories of sexual subjectivity can sometimes have a paradoxical effect, either calcifying non-Western sexualities as unchanging or reproducing tropes of non-Western people as exotic Others.[5] In Latin America, the complex space that the categories of "queer" and "LGBT" produce throughout the region has pushed scholars to develop a field of *cuir* theory (Domínguez Ruvalcaba 2016; Falconí Trávez, Castellanos, and Viteri 2013; Reyes 2016; Russo Garrido 2020; Viteri 2014). As a transliterated version of *queer*, the word *cuir* attends to both the historical conditions of colonization shared throughout much of the region as well as the forms of translation, appropriation, negotiation, and subversion that emerge out of the globalization of the categories of LGBTQ.

The health sciences have also been concerned with identifying the "right" categories, especially in relation to HIV/AIDS. Long sensitive to how some categories can reproduce stigma or disincentivize participation in prevention or outreach programs, health science research tends to construct seemingly technical, apolitical categories like "men who have sex with men" as improvements on situated, contextual, and narrower ones. This too, however, can lead to paradoxes. In the case of MSM, the term itself can become an identity; when research data is collected, the category "MSM" can sometimes stand in for self-identified gay men or lead to "ghost populations" in which the subject population at which an intervention is aimed might not exist at all (Boellstorff 2011; Gill 2018; Parker 2019; Wright 2000). The global scale of the epidemic has made the globalization of "gay," "transgender," "men who have sex with men," and other categories of selfhood that originated in the West a fait accompli. It is thus not a particularly novel observation that HIV/AIDS transformed how people came to understand and identify with categories of sexual and gender selfhood.

Figure I.1. The author (right) and an interlocutor interact at a capacity-building workshop in Tarapoto, Peru. (Photograph by Marlon del Aguila Guerrero)

Categories, though, are always in flux. Throughout *Queer Emergent*, I primarily use the terms *gay* and *transgender* to draw attention to the shared processes of sexual subjectification encountered by the primary interlocutors of the study while also still holding analytical attention on the aspects of their distinct but interconnected social worlds.[6] This is because these were the groups and individuals whose sexual lives and social worlds were targeted by HIV prevention programs. Following anthropological approaches to subjectivity that take health and medicine as sites for the close examination of "hidden processes" of subjectification, I understand sexual subjectification as a system of power through which individuals come to recognize, understand, and speak of themselves as subjects of desire (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007). However, this does not mean these were the only terms that individuals who participated in these programs or whose social worlds were impacted by them used in their lives, or used to make sense of themselves. Some, for example, who were categorized as a "transgender woman" (*una mujer transgénero*) on the part of HIV prevention project specialists or who participated in transgender civic associations, also could have considered

themselves *travesti*, *transexual*, or simply *trans* in other contexts or even in different moments of their life trajectories. Thus, while I use the categories "gay" and "transgender" in the book to reflect the terms of HIV prevention, I also discuss the tensions and differences that arose between how interlocutors inhabited, contested, and exceeded these categories in their everyday lives. To that end, I consider subjectivities to be ongoing and "unfinished." This means that the ethnography attends to the "life-forms, collectives, and new kinds of politics . . . on the horizon, brewing within the leaking excesses of existing force fields and imaginaries" (Biehl and Locke 2017, 9–10). Even though the categories "gay" and "transgender" reached global saturation, particularly via globalization and four decades of AIDS, the project of ending AIDS ushered in a new stage for the ongoing process of inhabiting and contesting the categories of sexual and gender subjectivity. I use the concept "queer emergent" to direct ethnographic attention to the moments in everyday life when interlocutors themselves contended with the limits and potentials of the extant and conventional categories of sexual and gender selfhood. In doing so, I show how they found ways to live with them, without them, and beyond them. Throughout the book, moments of queer emergence occurred, for example, over discussions about whether a soccer team composed of lesbian mothers should compete in the tournament division of gay and transgender players or in the division for cisgender women, or whether beauty contests featuring gay, transgender, and *travesti* contestants should be called "Miss Gay" or "Miss Trans." I employ *queer* not because I observed that all interlocutors were coming to name or see themselves as queer, but rather because the term productively directs analytical attention to the ongoing nature of interlocutors' own debates and discussions around nomenclature and categories.

Moments of queer emergence begat new stories to tell. In constructing this ethnography around scandalous stories—that is, a narrative practice and form collected through long-term ethnographic participant observation—I develop a theoretical agenda that centers the metacommentary that gay and transgender interlocutors themselves engaged in as they experienced ongoing transformations in categories of sexual selfhood. I draw from Boellstorff (2005), who defines subject positions as "extant social categories of selfhood" and subjectivities as "the various senses of self—erotics, assumptions about one's life course, and so forth—that obtain when occupying a subject position, whether partially or completely, temporarily or permanently" (10). This approach poses an alternative theoretical horizon to the descriptive enterprise of enumeration—that is, of adjudicating

which categories of sex and gender selfhood "work" and which ones do not (Boellstorff 2007). Instead, it directs social analysis to how people can both make categories work and also exceed, transgress, or transform them. For example, in Figure I.2, a photograph taken at the annual Pride march in Tarapoto, Peru, a contingent of marchers held the international transgender flag. While some interlocutors lived their everyday social life inhabiting a *travesti* subjectivity, in this event they made the globalizing symbol and category of "transgender" both socially meaningful and significant in the context of Tarapoto. There can be many ways to occupy a subject position, and these ways can be mutable and changing.

The scandalous stories explored in this book reveal how the people telling them worked both within and outside new demands and expectations, living with, adjacent to, and beyond the categorical schema imposed on their social and sexual lives. However, the paradoxes and opportunities they encountered were not only the result of the new challenges brought about by HIV prevention; they were, as well, shaped by deeper and more entrenched hierarchies of difference. Formed through the construction of a nation-state founded out of colonial relations, these hierarchies were made particularly visible by the ambition of ending AIDS in Peru. This colonial legacy has persisted in various forms, but most crucially it takes expression through what Quijano (2007) termed the coloniality of power. This was the imposition of racial divisions that emerged from the colonial enterprise and expanded over time to structure postcolonial relations. The myth of *mestizaje*—the myth that racial mixture constituted the newly independent nations of Latin America of the early nineteenth century and onward—persisted to define belonging and citizenship. In Peru, as García (2021) observes, "the logic of mestizaje has been about state-sanctioned exclusions" (7). Drawing on Anderson's (1983) notion of the "imagined" national community, scholars of Peru further point to how the nationalist projects of the state consistently excluded indigenous Andeans as equal members of the "imagined" nation (de la Cadena 2000; Larson 2004; Portocarrero 2007a; Thurner 1995). As Méndez (1996) contends, this legacy further produced an enduring rhetoric that paradoxically exalted the indigenous past while maintaining contempt and disregard for the contemporary indigenous Other. And this process of othering can extend to and shape categories and experiences of sexual and gender diversity in different ways. For example, as theorists of *travesti* social life and history in Latin America demonstrate, *travesti* can signify class and racialized otherness not typically signaled by the English

Figure I.2. A contingent of trans and *travesti* marchers holds the transgender Pride flag as they participate in the LGBT Pride parade in Tarapoto, Peru. (Photograph by Marlon del Aguila Guerrero)

term "transgender" (Cornejo 2019; Machuca Rose 2019; Rizki 2019; Santana 2022; Silva Santana 2019).

The *selva*, or the Amazonian jungle region of eastern Peru, perhaps even more so than the Andean *sierra*, has figured precariously in the Peruvian national imagination, often only in the short-term boom periods of resource exploitation. The most well known of these booms was Peru's rubber boom of the 1890s–1920s. Since the nineteenth century, different efforts at incorporating the region—such as "whitening" the race by drawing European migrants and selling tracts of land to corporations to pay for debts incurred by wars—have consistently been based on short-term solutions to address the economic and political problems facing the country's coastal and Andean regions (Ludescher 2001; Walker 1987). As a result, interlocutors in the *selva* typically experienced a more indeterminate ethno-racial position within the broader national imaginary compared with those from the Andean or coastal regions of the country. For the most part, interlocutors

were non-indigenous and spoke Spanish as a first language, though a few in Tarapoto were from the nearby town of Lamas and either spoke or had some familiarity with the lowland variety of Quechua spoken there. Most interlocutors grew up in and around Tarapoto, though a few had migrated from more distant rural communities. Within Peru, nearly all interlocutors would be considered *charapa*. This is a term that refers to people who come from the eastern region of the country. In a cultural system in which ethno-racial superiority and differentiation tend to be "individualized," meaning established in the context of specific interactions and in reference to specific people, interlocutors' status as *charapa* generally positioned them as "lower" in relation to people from Lima or the coast.[7] However, interlocutors' position as Spanish-speaking city dwellers might also position them as "higher" in relation to people from more remote parts of the region or from indigenous communities. Nevertheless, despite the flexibility of individual encounters of social distinction, interlocutors often contended with entrenched systems of sexual, gender, and ethno-racial differentiation that frequently positioned them outside of privileged hierarchical status.

Scandal and Scandalous Storytelling

As I spent more time among gay and transgender communities in urban Amazonian Peru, I found they shared distinct narrative practices.[8] Telling compelling, humorous, and engaging stories—like Paula's scandal at the disco—was a cornerstone of their collective sociality and contributed to the complexity of their social lives.[9] Like Paula, several key interlocutors owned, worked at, or managed popular beauty salons at some point in their lives, including while I was conducting fieldwork, and many of the stories I heard likely derived from the social expectations linked to the traditional professional spaces—primarily for hairstyling and event organization—that had been available to elder gay and transgender individuals in the region. Having a repertoire of stories helped clients pass the time as well as entertained those who came to hang out in the salon as a social space. Though I surmise that many of the stories I heard over the course of fieldwork originated in the spaces of the beauty salons, they extended far beyond them, across the diverse sites of gay and transgender social life.

The stories I heard shared a set of characteristics. A typical story tended to follow a similar structure as it dramatized dynamics of social and sexual life that could be considered "scandalous." Scandalousness was a capacious vernacular concept associated with some elements of gay and transgender

sociality. In its most conventional sense, scandalousness could be wielded to discriminate against, stereotype, or marginalize people of diverse sexual orientations or gender identities. Broadly speaking, a scandal is often thought to transpire through a patterned epistemic-temporal configuration. In many instances, a scandal results when something previously "unknown," or something not usually publicly vocalized, is revealed about a person. This revelation then transforms perceptions about that person's actions or moral character. Someone assumed to be virtuous or upstanding can be corrupted and rendered disreputable over the course of the scandal. Thus, a scandal often requires a presumption of respect or repute in the first place. A scandal provides a road map, in a sense, for how to know about someone or something and how to feel (e.g., shock, disgust, horror, etc.). If an individual was too loud, caused too much of a commotion in public, or dressed in a way that subverted expected mores, they might be called scandalous.

And yet, within the rich and complex social worlds of gay and transgender interlocutors, the conventional conceptualizations of the term could be played with, re-signified, and transformed. For them, the presumption of repute was typically not applied. In other words, a scandal did not reveal something "new" about an individual or their general behavior and disposition. Rather, a scandal or scandalousness reaffirmed existing notions about their character or person. But more importantly, interlocutors did not always see scandal or scandalousness negatively, even as the term could also sometimes be used that way.[10] To scandalize was, at once, to transgress social norms and expectations and to render the mundane spectacular or make something larger than life.[11] It is in this sense that I use *scandal* in *Queer Emergent*—that is, as an adjective not to describe a person or set of people in a discriminatory way, but rather to describe a habit interlocutors cultivated of telling stories about the world they encountered through the arts of embellishment, exaggeration, and hyperbole.[12]

Scandal, being scandalous, or throwing a scandal was thus an important element of the stories people told. Typically, the protagonist of a scandalous story, who may or may not be the person telling it, finds themself in a desperate or distressed circumstance, often precipitated by their own search for a sexual encounter. As the situation unfolds, the protagonist finds it increasingly hard to escape the situation, until, by a stroke of luck, good fortune, or divine grace, they encounter a resolution to the predicament. Other times the resolution comes thanks to the "collaboration" of others. *La colaboración*, or collaboration, was an idealized social order that emphasized the creation of redistributive relationships and is described in more depth

in chapter 2. Ultimately, in a scandalous story, while the protagonist may have learned a lesson, the conclusion comes with a "wink," suggesting that the protagonist may not have changed and may continue to do whatever brought on the distress in the first place. Because of the obvious use of exaggeration and hyperbole, the story is typically entertaining, engaging, and humorous, even when the protagonist is at the lowest of low points or is facing a sensitive or intense personal trauma.

A story can circulate and be retold by any capable narrator. In each retelling, the narrator has the license to exaggerate details and add personalized flourishes. The narrator and the protagonist do not always have to be the same. A story could be retold about someone else, and the narrator can adopt the role of the protagonist while still maintaining the plot and basic details of the preexisting story. New stories can be crafted out of new experiences and thus enter the collective repertoire. Effective narrators can turn a mundane anecdote into a newly embellished, engaging, and exaggerated episode.

One of the most salient and unique characteristics that I observed about the practice of scandalous storytelling in Peru was that any capable gay or transgender narrator could assume the role of the protagonist (the "I"). Although scandalous stories might involve traumatic experiences—such as the experiences of gay and transgender people during the country's internal armed conflict or the pervasive, everyday encounters with stigma and discrimination—the modularity of the "I" enabled a collective expression of shared experiences of discrimination or violence without having to put forward the sensitive details of personal traumas. The same story set in the context of the internal armed conflict (1980–2000), for example, could be recounted from a first-person perspective by many different people, even if during the conflict the narrator had not yet been born. The shared recognition suggested that there was a sense of communal authorship and that stories were intersubjective phenomena for interlocutors. The version of a story that one heard at any moment was likely the result of co-authorship, as new details could always be added along the way. These stories were inherently social, animating collective worlds as they circulated from the beauty salon to the volleyball court to the capacity-building workshop for HIV prevention, or to other sites of social life. Each occasion offers someone the opportunity to embellish and to entertain whoever might be listening while at the same time extending a sense of social connectedness and relationality.

Throughout *Queer Emergent*, I analyze stories that dramatized incidents ranging from sexual encounters with armed insurgents during Peru's

internal armed conflict to a story about submitting a proposal on behalf of a community-based organization to administer an HIV prevention program. In deriving source material from the everyday stories that emerged from experiences with new forms of HIV prevention introduced over the decade and transforming that material into new stories, gay and transgender communities in urban Amazonian Peru painted a fuller picture of the lived experiences of efforts to prevent HIV that could not be captured by quantitative measurements and standardized metrics alone.[13] Any retelling of a story opened the possibility for reinvention. As Ochs and Capps (1996) observed, "Everyday narrative practices confront interlocutors with unanticipated emotions and ideas and ultimately with unanticipated selves" (37). Through their scandalous stories, interlocutors responded to the contradictions, challenges, and transformations that transpired as the "end of AIDS" unfolded and, in the process, conceived of new ways to inhabit and to imagine queer social life.

They countered an unequal, discriminatory, and stigmatizing world and rendered these seemingly rigid modes of social differentiation flexible through imagining outcomes that could be conceived only through tales of transgression, excess, and exaggeration.[14] Amid entrenched systems of ethno-racial hierarchy and social differentiation, as well as the obligation to embrace new narrative forms, gay and transgender interlocutors found ways to experience and describe fulfilling moments of pleasure and romance through their scandalous stories, sometimes set in the most unexpected of places and situations. Their stories—about nights out at the disco, beauty contests, soccer tournaments and volleyball games, romantic and sexual encounters amid political violence, the formation of community-based organizations, informal fundraisers organized to prevent the dissolution of community-based organizations, and the ebbs and flows of the unpredictable landscape of international HIV/AIDS funding—came to reveal a rich and robust world of social relations undergoing profound transformation (and even social fragmentation) resulting from their encounter with the global aspiration to end AIDS. To hear these stories as such, however, required work on the part of the listener. The stories exaggerated situations, interchanged protagonists and characters, jumped between time frames and geographic contexts, and obligated listeners to suspend, if only momentarily, any sense of disbelief as to the factuality of the episode and become immersed in the scandalous world of queer social life in urban Amazonian Peru.[15]

Storying HIV/AIDS in Peru

Accounts of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic conventionally employ a periodization to signal how new technologies and priorities transformed the governance of HIV/AIDS and how communities themselves experienced these shifts. These periods generally correspond to decades or, more aptly, to what Parker (2024) considers "waves." The stories in *Queer Emergent* were collected during a particular period of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic and thus connect to the rich ethnographic study of HIV/AIDS. I offer a brief overview of these periods as a means to briefly situate the Peruvian response to HIV/AIDS within a macro-level chronology and to contextualize the research within the deep tradition of the critical anthropology of HIV/AIDS.

The first decade, which often is characterized as beginning in 1981, conventionally starts when the US Centers for Disease Control first reported clusters of rare lung infections and cancers among young, sexually active, and previously healthy white gay men in urban New York and California in the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.[16] In the middle of the second decade—the 1990s—combination antiretroviral therapy was introduced. This inaugurated a new period in the story of HIV/AIDS. Characterized by the global effort to "scale up" access to antiretroviral therapy, this new period is generally associated with the third decade, or the 2000s. Following the unprecedented investment in the global HIV/AIDS response over the 2000s, the fourth decade, the 2010s, is characterized by the aspiration to "end AIDS." Despite the triumphalism and optimism of the idea of ending AIDS, the period is generally associated with a "scale-down" of and disinvestment in the HIV/AIDS response in many countries around the world. *Queer Emergent* chronicles the impasses and contradictions of this period through the stories of gay and transgender communities in Peru.

While the first case of AIDS in Peru was registered in Lima in 1983, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was a low priority for the health sector throughout the 1980s and even into the 1990s. Most of the first registered cases were among gay men who acquired HIV while living outside of the country (Cueto 2001, 47).[17] Over the decade of the 1980s, the epidemic in Peru was mostly confined to the cities on the country's Pacific coast, specifically the capital city, Lima, and was primarily transmitted sexually among those categorized as homosexual. Beyond a comparatively low number of cases, part of the reason the epidemic attracted little notice in Peru at the time was that attention was directed to national crises that were then unfolding.

An internal armed conflict between the state and two armed insurgency groups, the Maoist-inspired Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), began in 1980 and grew as the decade progressed. The conflict lasted until 2000, when Alberto Fujimori resigned from the presidency and fled the country for Japan. Atrocities ranging from torture, kidnappings, and killings by extrajudicial death squads committed by the state and by the armed groups ultimately brought about the death or disappearance of an estimated seventy thousand people (CVR 2003).

As the 1980s came to a close and the new decade began, the country was increasingly consumed by the growing internal armed conflict. And though the violence unequally and disproportionately affected rural, peasant, and indigenous communities of the Andean highlands, violence extended to the capital city, Lima, by the 1990s. Hyperinflation from newly elected President Alberto Fujimori's implementation of a "shock" economic plan at the beginning of his first presidential term was then compounded by a disastrous cholera outbreak in 1991 that appeared nearly out of nowhere. All this, of course, occurred amid an intensifying and ongoing internal armed conflict between the state's armed forces and armed rebels. Chapter 1 more closely explores how stories about sexuality and the intimate relations of gay and transgender Peruvians have been transformed by the overlapping temporal entanglements of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic and the ongoing resonances of the internal armed conflict.

The Era of Scale-Up

With the introduction and approval of highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) in 1996, HIV/AIDS was no longer a "death sentence"; for those with access to healthcare, it could be a treatable and manageable chronic condition. However, by the turn of the century, this lifesaving combination therapy remained out of reach for most of those around the world who needed it. In fact, precisely in the regions of the world where the epidemic was growing most rapidly, access to antiretroviral therapy was the lowest. While combination antiretroviral therapy was saving lives in some parts of the world, its effects were less palpable elsewhere. As a result, the primary ambition of the global response to HIV/AIDS by the 2000s shifted to ensuring access to and equitable distribution of lifesaving antivirals. The Millennium Development Goals, proclaimed by the United Nations in the year 2000, concretized this ambition through targets: (1) achieving universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment for all who needed it by the year 2010 and (2) halting and then reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. The challenge was

to scale up—that is, to transfer and expand therapies and interventions to communities across the globe. The scale-up of the provision of antiretroviral therapy was a numerical phenomenon, and over the decade it was measured by objectives related to the total number of people receiving therapy.[18] To halt and reverse the spread of HIV, scaling up antiretroviral therapy beyond well-resourced contexts became a key step.

The global transition to the era of scale-up that occurred over the 1990s and 2000s in the global HIV/AIDS response coincided with tremendous political and cultural transition in Peru. By the year 2000, the country was confronting a dire economic outlook—more than half of all Peruvians lived in poverty, and external debt had doubled over the course of the preceding decade. The country also faced a growing HIV/AIDS epidemic. Although then-president Alberto Fujimori had established a national program for control of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and increased funding over the latter half of the 1990s in response to the expanding epidemic in the country, it was not nearly enough to guarantee universal access to antiretroviral therapy (Cueto 2001, 112).[19] In 2002, only two years into its postwar transition, Peru established a country coordinating mechanism (La Coordinadora Nacional Multisectorial en Salud, CONAMUSA) and began to work toward submitting its first proposal to the newly established Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (the Global Fund).[20] The CONAMUSA was tasked with the coordination of proposal submission and the integration of "vertical," disease-specific interventions funded by the Global Fund into the national health system. When its initial proposal was unsuccessful, the CONAMUSA turned to technical and academic consultants, people living with HIV/AIDS, representatives from affected populations, religious leaders, and relevant government ministries and found more success (Amaya et al. 2014; Sprungli 2007). Over the 2000s, Peru's successful proposals for funding (in the Second, Fifth, Sixth, and Tenth Rounds) ultimately generated over $80 million of HIV/AIDS funding in the country (Cáceres et al. 2013).

As in many low- and middle-income countries around the world, scaling up access to antiretroviral therapy was a primary objective for Peru's initial collaboration with the Global Fund. In fact, a new national HIV treatment program was created. Through Second Round funding, the Global Fund committed to supporting the universal provision of antiretroviral therapy for two years, with the understanding that the state would then assume, by 2007, the costs of treatment for all those living with HIV/AIDS. Once the state covered treatment, subsequent rounds—the Fifth Round (2006–10) and Sixth Round (2007–11)—were increasingly oriented toward preven-

tion activities. This included sex education and syndromic management in the general population, peer health promotion and regular screening and checkups among vulnerable populations, and the promotion of a favorable sociopolitical environment that supported human rights and reduced discrimination and stigma through support of community-based organizations (Cáceres et al. 2013). While funding was intended to build off the precedent of ensuring universal access with robust prevention efforts, published evaluations suggest that the various Global Fund rounds did not always directly build off or even connect with one another.[21] Ultimately, like many low- and middle-income countries around the world, Peru experienced growth in access to funding for HIV/AIDS over the 2000s. However, as the decade came to a close, the funding streams that had made HIV/AIDS "the single most dominant global health issue" in the 2000s began to slow, and they contracted over the 2010s (Parker 2024, 5). It is against the backdrop of this transition period of contraction and defunding that the social transformations explored in *Queer Emergent* transpired.

The Aspiration to End AIDS

As studies began to show that antiretrovirals could be effective in both treating and preventing HIV, the division between efforts to scale up the treatment of HIV/AIDS with prevention efforts began to collapse and the "treatment as prevention" (TasP) paradigm emerged. TasP was a conceptualization of the prevention of the transmission of HIV as a "secondary effect" of HIV treatment for people living with HIV (Montaner 2011). In other words, since treatment could effectively lower the viral loads of people living with HIV to the point of undetectability, this greatly reduced the risk of transmitting the virus through sex.[22] And as the initial Millennium Development Goals timeline neared its conclusion, in 2011 the United Nations announced a new target for the provision of antiretroviral therapy. Called the "15 by 15" target, the ambitious plan was to provide antiretroviral therapy to fifteen million people by the year 2015, the benchmark year for the Millennium Development Goals. Not only was the 15 by 15 target achieved, but it was achieved ahead of time. The enthusiasm that resulted from distributing ART to fifteen million people by 2015, coupled with the emergent paradigm of TasP, spilled over into the elaboration of one of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals: ending AIDS as a global public health threat by 2030.[23]

By 2010, Peru's economic situation had improved according to metrics used to classify country income levels, which meant Peru had reduced eligibility for Global Fund support. This roughly coincided with a wider overall

decline in funding streams for HIV/AIDS and a scale-down of the international response. Continued investment was, however, possible because of a particular characteristic of the country's HIV/AIDS epidemic: in Peru, HIV was *concentrated* among vulnerable populations.[24] Specifically, it was concentrated among gay men, transgender women, and MSM in the urban areas along the coast and in the Amazonian region. In the 2010s, it appeared as though the long-term sustainability of Peru's HIV response—which had relied tremendously on investment from the Global Fund over the 2000s—became dependent on the fact that gay, transgender, and MSM communities bore an unequal burden of the country's HIV epidemic in relation to the general population. Continued international support was thus dependent on the inequality of the epidemic in the country. In order to continue receiving international funding, the country's response coalesced around addressing the vulnerability of gay men, transgender women, and MSM in the country. Just as rumblings of an "end of AIDS" era were beginning to take hold at the global level, in Peru the sexual practices and social conditions of gay, transgender, and MSM Peruvians became a newly significant site of research and scrutiny among the health scientists, medical professionals, technical experts, state bureaucrats, and community advocates who played a role in the country's response to AIDS.[25]

The Tenth Round of the Global Fund in Peru

As Peru began to prepare its application for the Tenth Round of the Global Fund, epidemiological data pointed to an expanding breach between the communities in which HIV/AIDS was most concentrated and the general population. A handful of studies and statistics appear in the documents relating to the country's proposal to the Global Fund that help paint a picture of the epidemiological situation at the time (Global Fund 2017). The National Center for Epidemiology, Prevention, and Disease Control, part of Peru's Ministry of Health, published a monthly epidemiological bulletin regarding the national tally of cases of HIV/AIDS.[26] Its January 2010 bulletin indicated that since 1983, there had been a cumulative total of 40,181 reported cases of HIV and 25,748 cases of AIDS in Peru. A total of 97 percent of the cases were transmitted sexually.[27] At the time, data on HIV prevalence, or the proportion of a specified population affected by HIV at a given time, was derived from two important studies. One was a cross-sectional study conducted in the city of Lima (Tabet et al. 2002). This study determined prevalence among MSM to be 18.5 percent and, crucially, among trans women to be 33.3 percent.[28] Another study, based on HIV sentinel surveillance surveys,

determined prevalence among MSM in Lima to be 22.3 percent and an estimated HIV incidence, or the rate of new cases in a given year, among MSM to be 8.3 percent in 2002 (Sanchez et al. 2007).

In light of data that pointed to the high vulnerabilities of gay, transgender, and MSM communities, Peru's proposal for the Global Fund's Tenth Round emphasized efforts to address the social conditions that contributed to this pattern of concentration. The primary sources of vulnerability were discrimination and stigma toward these communities. By mitigating the effects of discrimination and stigma on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, it was reasoned, the conditions that produced this vulnerability among gay and transgender populations could be mitigated, and, consequently, new cases of HIV could be prevented. Addressing discrimination and stigma toward gay men and transgender women, in particular, became the primary focus of HIV prevention projects in the ensuing years. The TasP paradigm was circulating at the time of the implementation of the Tenth Round, but because Peru had incrementally inched out of the low-income category, the Global Fund was no longer willing to invest robustly in the provision of treatment as a means of prevention in the country (as the state was by then committed to funding the provision of treatment). Investment for social interventions aimed at mitigating discrimination, it appeared, would have to suffice.

Set to operate from July 2011 until June 2016, the measures proposed in the successful application for Tenth Round funding targeted discrimination and stigma at two levels. At the community level, the intervention aimed to bolster the infrastructure and technical capacities of gay and transgender community-based organizations (CBOs) in places where HIV prevalence was highest. At the individual level, the proposal emphasized teaching gay and transgender individuals how to identify discrimination in their lives and how they might employ formal, legal mechanisms to seek redress. Enculturating the members of community-based organizations into the technical practices of tracking indicators, evaluating projects, and evidencing objectives, the proposal asserted, would ultimately result in a more robust and better-functioning gay and transgender NGO and CBO infrastructure throughout the country and would ultimately lead to a decreased incidence of HIV among the populations in which it was presently most concentrated.

In Peru, and elsewhere, the emergence of "post-AIDS" or "end of AIDS" strategies during the 2010s engendered a significant shift in the global response to HIV/AIDS. For one, the notion of the "end of AIDS" transformed preexisting ideas about HIV exceptionalism—the idea that the experience of living with HIV/AIDS is exceptional (whether due to sociocultural, biological, or political aspects, or a combination of these) and consequently obligates an exceptional public health response (Benton and Sangaramoorthy 2021; Moyer and Hardon 2014).[29] If one reason the HIV crisis was considered exceptional was that it appeared to be never-ending, then the idea of the "end of AIDS" altered this exceptionalism by projecting an expiration date for the epidemic. However, the idea also coincided with a broader defunding of robust, structural HIV prevention and treatment models around the world in favor of narrow, or "vertical," approaches that focused almost exclusively on biomedical treatment for those living with HIV and those vulnerable to acquiring it. This would come at the expense of programming that supported human rights, antidiscrimination efforts, and capacity building. Some scholars have called this shift the re-medicalization of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Kippax and Stephenson 2016; Nguyen et al. 2011; Parker 2020). Investment in health systems, human rights, and antidiscrimination measures that had been key ingredients for supporting the scale-up of the provision of antiretroviral therapy in the prior decade came to be seen as increasingly costly and unnecessary in the face of new biomedical HIV prevention technologies. And even though experts acknowledged the fundamental need for human rights efforts and antidiscrimination and stigma education, as Kenworthy, Thomann, and Parker (2018) note, the "end of AIDS" discourse came to be endorsed by the entities that stood to gain from privatized, technology-driven HIV interventions.

While in some contexts the reorientation toward the AIDS endgame brought about a re-medicalization of the AIDS epidemic and the dissemination of messages and slogans like "Undetectable = Untransmittable," for those in Peru this was still on the horizon.[30] For some communities, particularly in the Global North, the pharmaceuticalization of HIV prevention was a significant effect during the 2010s. For instance, the development of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) led to a shift in HIV prevention, transforming the long-dominant paradigm of "safer sex" to one focusing on a pharmaceutical form of prevention. However, in Peru, the re-medicalization of the

AIDS epidemic, as represented, for example, by access to PrEP as a form of prevention, was accessible only to the small number of people who participated in clinical trials.[31] The project to end AIDS in Peru did not emphasize biomedical intervention nor did it meaningfully invest in the continuance of prior efforts to secure universal access to antiretroviral therapy. Rather, the "end of AIDS" was palpably lived and experienced through interventions targeting the social and cultural challenges of discrimination and stigma. Those involved in the everyday and on-the-ground advocacy of HIV prevention shifted their orientation toward the social conditions and individual dispositions that would mitigate discrimination—and, perhaps, clear the way for a future re-medicalization of the AIDS epidemic.

Gay and transgender communities in Peru experienced a rebalancing of emphasis from the provision of antiviral therapy for people living with HIV/AIDS toward increased attention to prevention among vulnerable populations through social interventions. Even as the numbers of those who had access to antiviral therapy slowly rose over the 2000s, access to these resources in contexts around the world remained variegated and unequal.[32] In response, anthropologists studying the experiences, politics, and governance of HIV/AIDS observed how the distribution of treatment, support, and resources often became a function of an individual's capacity to learn and employ certain narrative genres, such as testimony about one's HIV status or the performance of "positive living" (Benton 2015; Benton, Sangaramoorthy, and Kalofonos 2017; Boellstorff 2009; Nguyen 2010). The capacity to speak about one's self came to have direct implications for who lived and who died, and transformed understandings of life, including morality, sexuality, reproduction, and citizenship.[33] Drawing on this insight, but contextualizing it within a new period in the story of HIV/AIDS, *Queer Emergent* tracks how the "end of AIDS" compelled even those who were seronegative to speak about themselves and their social worlds in new ways. As international funding focused on HIV prevention among vulnerable populations in Peru, even seronegative gay and transgender people became subject to new expectations about how to live moral, healthy, and fulfilling lives. Newly cast as key populations in the effort to end AIDS, gay and transgender Peruvians responded to the obligation to reframe how they understood and talked about their sexual relationships and social worlds. Sometimes their stories fit within the new funding requirements disseminated through capacity-building workshops, antidiscrimination and sensitivity trainings, and community health promotion. Their scandalous stories, however,

pointed to the new obstacles that came along with the project to end AIDS, and in turn enabled them to draw attention to these predicaments and to collectively make do in a transforming social world.

Toward an Intersubjective Ethnography

This book draws from the ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in the San Martín department of Peru, principally in the city of Tarapoto, for fifteen months in 2014–15.[34] My primary method of data collection was long-term participation in gay and transgender communities in Tarapoto and surrounding towns, divided between two principal social settings. In the mornings and afternoons, I focused on spaces involving the implementation of HIV prevention programming. This meant hanging out in the community-based and nongovernmental organizations most active in the coordination of HIV prevention projects. Participant observation in these spaces included brainstorming grant proposals, conducting research and translations, and participating in capacity-building workshops and sensitivity trainings. My primary interlocutors in these spaces were project specialists, the gay and trans individuals who worked short-term contracts dealing with various aspects of the implementation of HIV prevention strategies and LGBT human rights issues. This ranged from doing community health outreach to organizing workshops and sensitivity trainings. I attended workshops led by the community-based organizations Diversidad San Martinense (DISAM) and Las Amazonas and the nongovernmental organization Center for Amazonian Development (CEDISA), coordinated in partnership with a range of state entities, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor, and the National Ombudsperson (Defensoría del Pueblo), as they implemented activities funded by international donors, including the Global Fund and Hivos.

In the afternoons and evenings, I focused participant observation on the everyday activities of gay and transgender collective social life. The primary space was daily afternoon volleyball games, which took place in parks, on streets, and in empty lots throughout Tarapoto and in surrounding towns. Played by gay men and transgender women, the games were watched by youth and adults from the neighborhood passing by after school or work. Enterprising neighbors sold snacks and drinks to the players and the spectators. While I was sometimes invited to play volleyball in low-stakes games or if there were not enough people to field two teams, I was usually a spectator. I also conducted weekday participant observation at gay- and transgender-

Map I.2. Map of San Martín department. (Cartography by Bill Nelson)

owned beauty salons. Weekday activities were loosely organized, whereas activities that occurred on the weekends involved greater degrees of planning and organization. These activities included sports tournaments, transgender beauty contests, and other forms of spectacle-based entertainment like nightclub performances or dance shows. Those with whom I interacted in the afternoons and evenings typically were not directly involved in the coordination of HIV prevention projects, but they were invited to be participants in the workshops and trainings coordinated by project specialists. Because such workshops were intended to bolster human rights and to mitigate the impact of discrimination and stigma in the social lives of gay men and trans women, the HIV status of interlocutors varied, if it was disclosed to me. My presence in activities and informal social spaces offered opportunities to gain insight into everyday dynamics and helped me establish rapport for interviews. I conducted thirty interviews with gay men and transgender women in Tarapoto. In these interviews, I asked interlocutors to renarrate stories that I had heard them tell previously so that I could have the chance to record details I might have missed.

To complement fieldwork in Tarapoto, I conducted shorter periods of ethnographic participant observation and interviews in the Amazonian cities of Pucallpa and Iquitos. I also made brief visits to Callao, Lima, and Chiclayo, cities on the Pacific coast of Peru, for interviews and observation. Global Fund projects for HIV prevention among gay and transgender communities occurred in all of these cities. While I did not carry out long-term participant observation among the gay and transgender communities in these coastal cities, I attended workshops and meetings as well as conducted interviews. In Lima and Callao, I conducted five interviews with LGBT rights activists and/or workers at various nongovernmental organizations who were familiar with the Global Fund's interventions and other LGBT rights projects in Peru in order to provide a perspective from Lima, Peru's capital city. My interviews in Chiclayo, Iquitos, and Pucallpa were conducted with gay and transgender individuals who had been involved with the Global Fund's projects, contributing a greater breadth to my understanding of HIV prevention throughout the country.

Inevitably, over the course of 2012–18, I sometimes became a figure in the very phenomena I was studying. For example, at a capacity-building workshop in Tarapoto in 2013, organizers gave an annual planner to all of the participants. As I opened it and paged through the images accompanying each month, I was surprised to see my picture taken the previous year at a workshop in Iquitos. I often saw photographs of me in social media,

frequently in the form of Facebook posts by organizations or interlocutors who were themselves documenting their coordination of or participation in a range of HIV prevention activities. More significant, and perhaps more pertinent to the analysis in this book, was that I unwittingly became a figure in the scandalous stories that circulated in Tarapoto.

Martín, an interlocutor in Tarapoto, dramatized and circulated a story about a special lunch I had with Axel. The background—which many who heard the story would know—was that Axel and I were friends. A fellow volleyball enthusiast, Axel often took me on the back of his motorbike to watch pickup volleyball throughout Tarapoto. The gay and transgender volleyball players, and the spectators, often associated us with arriving together. Martín's story proceeds as follows:

> Axel was leaving Tarapoto for a few months and the *gringa* [me] wanted to do something special. So he invited him to lunch at the Segundo Muelle ceviche restaurant, one of the nicest restaurants in Tarapoto. They ordered a pitcher of *chicha morada* [a sweet beverage brewed from purple corn]. As Justin was drinking a glass, he turned to Axel and asked, "Is it normal for corn kernels to be in the *chicha*?" "No," responded Axel, to which Justin replied, "then what is this?" Sticking out his tongue, he grabbed what he thought was a corn kernel but which turned out to be a fly. He let out a shriek and threw a scandal right there in the restaurant, in front of everyone. Now Axel can never go back to Segundo Muelle because of this fly in the *chicha*.

This story was told at workshops, meetings, informal gatherings, and beauty salons. Martín, in particular, perfected the delivery of this scene: gesticulating the way I might, sticking out his tongue and grabbing a fake fly, imitating my higher-pitched voice and my English-speaker's Spanish accent. Martín was not even at the restaurant—yet he and others told this story so often that, frankly, I remember the details more from how it has been told than from what actually happened. Referring to me as *gringa* or *la Justina*, as Martín and others often did when talking about me in the third person, was in part as a nod to my effeminate mannerisms, but it also signaled that the story was intentionally embellished, as I did not identify as transgender or personally use feminine pronouns. The humor in the story was in the disjuncture between the scandal that was thrown and the fine restaurant where it had occurred: the *gringa* understood that a scandal could be had in the situation, but it was done in an entirely wrong context. While the lunch was

intended as a heartfelt farewell, the *gringa* made it funny for almost everyone who heard the story.

The imperative to explicitly situate oneself in the research, known as reflexivity, has become an established practice in ethnographic writing. The reflexive gesture opens space for the ethnographer to author a transparent account of how they arrived in the "field," how they went about conducting research, and the multiple social identities and privileges that are often afforded to participant observers. This story—along with other stories that dramatized me as an ethnographer-in-action, as well as moments when interlocutors conscripted me as a subject of their own research agendas—provides an opportunity to probe the limits of ethnographic reflexivity by drawing attention to the intersubjective dimensions of ethnographic encounters—that is, moments in which the anthropologist and interlocutors co-constructed the anthropologist's position.[35] The openness to explore moments where interlocutors "reversed" the ethnographic gaze furthers both methodological and analytical ends. I bring to the fore the stories and experiences that emerged within ethnographic encounters to situate my own perspective as one that was constituted by the stories, agendas, and projections of interlocutors.[36] And in seeing the disjuncture between their projections of me and my own sense of self, I am able to better sharpen my interpretation of all the scandalous stories contained in *Queer Emergent*.

As I moved back and forth between urban Amazonian Peru and the North American universities that trained, hosted, and funded me as a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, and faculty member over the course of this project, the person that I understood myself to be did not always coincide with the person interlocutors projected or imagined. I learned this through the difficulties I often encountered in providing compelling or conceivable responses to participants' common questions. Regardless of my response, these questions were often resolved through the frames of reference that made most sense to participants. Many assumed that I was *adinerado*, or excessively and privately wealthy, with a family who simply bankrolled my education and travels to Peru. In reality, I received financial support from the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine, so I could conduct preliminary fieldwork and then secure grant funding to support fieldwork. The idea that a university would not only support postgraduate studies but further support international travel was simply not a compelling explanation for many interlocutors. A second question was whether I had family from Peru or if I myself was Peruvian. Many wondered why someone who looked like me and had my last name would keep return-

ing to this place. The reality is that I am not Peruvian. I am the grandchild of immigrants to the United States from Mexico and the Philippines. I grew up speaking English and learned Spanish mostly at school and sometimes at home. Generally, I was understood as being both "Latino" and "gringo," most everyone in Peru thought my spoken Spanish sounded funny, and sometimes *motocar* drivers and other people I encountered in the street called me *chino* because of my facial features. This productive tension between how I defined my own position and how interlocutors understood it is ultimately valuable for expanding reflexivity to include the intersubjective dimensions of ethnographic encounters and relationships. At the expense of some embarrassment, I am attentive throughout the book to the way I figured into the scandalous stories that gay and transgender interlocutors circulated, because this magnifies the tremendous capacity of interlocutors' narrative practices to reimagine and rearticulate the globalizing forces that intersected their lives over the decade.

Finally, the combination of a focus on how gay and transgender interlocutors themselves storied their experiences of HIV prevention and an emphasis on intersubjectivity allows ethnographic research to go beyond the limits of traditional techniques of interviewing and data collection in health science research. Anthropologists have long asserted that ethnographic data can "read between the lines" of numerical data as well as reimagine the very forms in which success is conceptualized and measured (Adams 2016; Biehl and Petryna 2013). In their effort to read between the lines of the numerical data of disease and epidemic, anthropologists have found that stories, and the mechanics of how stories are produced and circulate, can have effects on who lives and who dies as real as the effects of pathogens themselves (Briggs and Mantini-Briggs 2003). And while health science research typically implements a "social determinants of health" approach, the "social" is often treated as an unchanging or stable constant (Adams et al. 2019; Yates-Doerr 2020). This has particularly been the case with global HIV/AIDS research: while researchers increasingly recognized that addressing discrimination and stigma was central to ending AIDS, these complex social dynamics are often treated as reified social conditions (Parker and Aggleton 2003). Scandalous stories extend ethnographically informed critiques of the "social determinants of health" framework by putting into sharp focus some of the limits of the methods typically used in that framework. Interviews, for example, can offer tremendous insight into the perspective and experiences of the interviewee, and conducting several interviews can help the interviewer identify trends and patterns across a community. However, structured interviews alone

are limited: they exist outside of social context and do not typically lend themselves to improvisation. They are limited by the language and categories of the interviewer's questions, as the interviewee looks back and recalls the world as it was through these categories. Structured interviews do not get at what that world could have been or could be, and they do not allow room for the conditional and the imaginative, which are also an important part of what is "social." Scandalous stories, by contrast, emerged within the social milieu as lived and experienced by interlocutors as they interacted with each other and with me. They thus bring a richer sense of social life and social relations to understandings of the "social"—understandings that have become increasingly imperative to preventing and "ending" HIV/AIDS.

Outline of the Book

As noted earlier, a fundamental challenge in addressing the concentration of HIV/AIDS through HIV prevention in Peru was to reduce discrimination and stigma toward communities of gay men and transgender women. The ensuing efforts engendered new ways to talk about, document, and measure the sexual and social lives of gay and transgender Peruvians, taking on both imaginative and moralizing dimensions regarding the management of their sexualities and social worlds. In other words, antidiscrimination efforts posited both the social conditions and institutional configurations that would make ending AIDS feasible and the kinds of gay and transgender subjects who would be able to enact this future and be committed to doing so. But they also strove to create and inhabit a social world on their own terms. While the ambition to end AIDS brought about new forms for the management and governance of sexuality, sustained attention to the on-the-ground implementation of HIV prevention efforts illuminates the concomitant forms of contestation that emerged. Amid the failures and disappointments that ultimately transpired as HIV prevention efforts were implemented across urban Amazonian Peru, gay and transgender communities crafted stories that imagined possibilities of what could have been and what could be: what the official records did not capture about experiments in ending AIDS as they developed over the decade, and what could be as the effort to end AIDS continued to unfold.

Chapter 1 situates gay and transgender communities in urban Amazonian Peru at the intersection of two entangled chronologies: the ongoing HIV/AIDS epidemic and the legacies of Peru's internal armed conflict. In Tarapoto, gay and transgender interlocutors themselves brought these dis-

tinct historical trajectories together by circulating stories set against the backdrop of the conflict that dramatized their intimate and romantic relationships with men whom they consider to be heterosexual. Central to their stories was the concept of the *peche*, a regional colloquialism referring to the small gifts that interlocutors gave to their romantic and sexual partners. Exhibiting the hallmarks of scandalous storytelling, such as exaggeration and anexactness (being intentionally rather than accidentally inexact), interlocutors evoked the *peche* both as a narrative device to emphasize moral values of discretion and mutual obligation and as a way to participate in ongoing debates about the legacies of political violence. Taking seriously the *peche* as an interpretative device, I then use it as a framework to analyze health science research on "transactional sex," the globalized, technical analogue to the *peche* that has come to be associated with increased vulnerability to HIV. As HIV prevention in Peru shifted toward individualized behavioral interventions among vulnerable populations, reading transactional sex through the lens of the *peche* magnifies some of the moral assumptions undergirding the post-AIDS horizon.

Chapter 2 examines another set of social relations that constituted and sustained the social worlds of gay and transgender interlocutors in Tarapoto: the social relations they cultivated with each other and the strategic relations that some developed with local elected officials. Through the close analysis of a queer soccer tournament co-organized by two interlocutors, as well as the scandalous stories that circulated about the tournament over the month when it occurred, I propose the concept of *la colaboración*, or collaboration, as a theory of queer relationality in urban Amazonian Peru. A theory of collaboration poses two interventions. First, as contrasted with existing theories of redistributive politics in Latin America that emphasize the *mediation* of redistribution between unequal dyads (e.g., clientelism and patronage), collaboration is a triadic system that emphasizes the ongoing *creation* and *multiplication* of redistributive social relationships. Second, a theory of collaboration as a mode of social relatedness requires a reconsideration of the dominant frameworks in global HIV prevention. Instead of positing social and communal cohesion as an *outcome* of HIV prevention, collaboration names an existing condition of queer social life in Peru and, subsequently, can be used to help track the consequences and impacts of HIV prevention projects in the region.

Scandalous stories did not always yield desired social outcomes. Though the cultivation of exaggerated and embellished storytelling helped some interlocutors put forward personal traumas and experiences, the broader

association between gay and transgender people and "scandalousness" sometimes limited their ability to counter injustice. This was made evident through the implementation of antidiscrimination components of the Global Fund's Tenth Round project in Tarapoto. Chapter 3 explores a paradox that resulted from the effort to mitigate vulnerability to HIV through antidiscrimination: though intended to improve the social conditions of gay and transgender communities, the obligation to denounce discrimination through formal grievances sometimes intensified existing social hierarchies of race, gender, and class. To illustrate this paradox, I develop a conceptual distinction between *emblematic denouncements* and *scandalous denouncements*. The former were stories of successful discrimination grievances that were circulated through capacity-building workshops and other elements of HIV prevention programs, whereas the latter were stories of discrimination that were never formalized or were dismissed as too scandalous. In giving these scandalous stories what Sara Ahmed (2021) calls "a hearing," I show how the pervasiveness of deeply entrenched hierarchies of race, gender, and class impacted everyday responses to the imperatives of HIV prevention.

Chapter 4 tracks the consequences of the sudden and unexpected closure of the Global Fund's Tenth Round in Peru. It focuses specifically on the fate of project specialists across urban Amazonian Peru. These were the gay and transgender individuals who played pivotal roles in their local communities as organizers of popular social spectacles like sports tournaments and beauty contests and who thus earned reputations as "collaborators." After they were recruited to coordinate the on-the-ground implementation of HIV prevention strategies, however, project specialists experienced tremendous social loss in terms of their reputations when the Global Fund terminated the Tenth Round before it was scheduled to conclude. Even though the Tenth Round turned out to be a brief project in the longer-term effort of ending AIDS, the fragmentation of collaborative social relations that resulted from its early termination continued to resonate in gay and transgender communities long after the program concluded. And yet the crisis of the closure of the Tenth Round became source material for new scandalous stories. Stylized and embellished, these stories were anticipatory lessons in imaging queer social life in the face of the impasses and predicaments they were to encounter as the "end of AIDS" continued to unfold.

A set of numerical benchmarks, known as the 90-90-90 targets, became the key indicators in the latter half of the 2010s for tracking the progress toward ending AIDS by the year 2030. This was both to ensure that countries—especially those receiving international aid—were making prog-

ress toward the 2030 target and, more generally, to provide a metric for ongoing evaluation. Following the initiatives and strategies of the 90-90-90 targets would, the story went, fast-track the strategy for ending AIDS by 2030. In Peru, HIV/AIDS advocates confronted the challenge of what Vincanne Adams (2016) calls "data deprivation." As efforts to control HIV/AIDS increasingly turned toward the numerical and quantitative, chapter 5 describes the knowledge practices that emerged when crucial data is inaccessible, unreliable, or inconsistent. The chapter traces a process I term *conversion*; that is, the unanticipated route that stories of discrimination took as they were collected as narratives in the cities of the Amazonian region, sent to LGBT activist collectives and NGOs in the capital city, Lima, and then returned to the Amazonian region in the form of statistical and quantitative data. By drawing on an adjacent field of data centering the human rights of LGBT Peruvians to fill in the gaps when data on HIV/AIDS was unreliable or out of date, advocates in urban Amazonian Peru contributed to the creation of discrimination stories that could be transformed into quantifiable data. That is, stories that counted. In turn, this process transformed queer social relationships and created the space for novel queer subjectivities to emerge.

Queer Emergent approaches the unfolding of the technical project to end AIDS during the global AIDS epidemic's fourth decade not just as a straightforward technical effort but more deeply as a moralizing and imaginative project. To do so, the book takes seriously the everyday stories gay and transgender communities in urban Amazonian Peru circulated as they responded to, and even reconfigured, the imperatives and obligations of HIV prevention as it transformed their social worlds. The afterword synthesizes the book's primary interventions and offers insight into what lessons can be learned in anticipation of a new stage of HIV prevention efforts among vulnerable communities in Peru during the 2020s.

NOTES

Introduction

1 This element of Paula's story was no exaggeration. Whenever I saw her at the La Anaconda disco, she was always at the same corner of the bar right next to the main, elevated stage where the DJ was located. Part of the story is that the listener typically knew that Paula was a regular at La Anaconda and even had a signature spot.

2 That Paula played with gender presentations in her everyday life was clear to anyone who might see her. Her height (she was nearly six feet tall) and her broad shoulders, which were a constant source of playful banter among her friends, juxtaposed starkly with the jet-black eyeliner, applied with a thick wing tip extending to her temple, which she wore every day. Her long black hair was always put into a ponytail and always covered with a floral-printed bandana. I never heard her assume the identity terms *travesti*, *trans*, *transfeminine*, or *transgender*. These were the more common terms used in the region among those who assume a gender identity, style, or social role that differed from the sex they were assigned at birth (Pierce 2020). These were also the terms typically used in global HIV prevention initiatives, which had been increasingly present in cities throughout Peru's Amazonian region. Paula always referred to herself by feminine pronouns, though, and although she referred to sexual orientation in her story, in the formalized version her complaint became one of discrimination on the basis of gender identity. Paula also played with grammatical gender in her

story. She often interpellated a listener as *amiga*, using the grammatical feminine, regardless of how the listener might identify.

3 People choose to identify with the term *travesti* in contexts throughout Latin America and, through circuits of transnational migration, in countries around the world as well (Silva and Ornat 2015). Across these diverse contexts, *travesti* generally "refers most frequently to people assigned male sex at birth who feminize their bodies, dress, and behavior; prefer feminine pronouns and forms of address; and often make significant bodily transformations by injecting silicon or taking hormonal treatments but do not necessarily seek sex-reassignment surgery" (Pierce 2020, 306).

4 In total, my fieldwork in urban Amazonian Peru lasted from 2012 to 2018. I conducted brief periods (two to three months at a time) of fieldwork in 2012, 2013, 2017, and 2018 in addition to fifteen months of sustained fieldwork in 2014–15.

5 This is queer anthropology's legacy of what Weston (1993) termed ethnocartography—the impulse to salvage traditional, non-normative sexual categories in the non-West before they seemingly disappear.

6 The Global Fund's Tenth Round in Peru specifically sought to target three categories: "gay men," "transgender women," and "MSM." Though some parts of the study reference broader LGBT social movements, in order to direct critical attention to the effects of HIV prevention, and because the Global Fund specifically directed prevention efforts toward gay men, transgender women, and MSM, I do not include equal amounts of ethnographic data on how people in urban Amazonian Peru encountered and experienced other categories of the expansive LGBT+ acronym, including "lesbian," "bisexual," "nonbinary," "transmasculine," or "intersex." Readers of *Queer Emergent* may also note that I make little mention of "MSM." This is for several reasons. The first reason is purely a response to the ethnographic realities of field sites. In practice, throughout Tarapoto and other cities of urban Amazonian Peru, those who might have been considered "MSM" (and not "gay") simply did not actively participate in HIV prevention programming, nor did they become involved in LGBT community-based organizations. This does not mean there were not men who had sex with men but who did not identify as gay. They were typically called *maperos*, and in chapter 1 I analyze at length the stories that gay and transgender interlocutors told about *maperos*. The second reason is methodological and related to some of the limits of ethnographic methods. I was out playing volleyball, hanging out in beauty salons and discos, and being visibly connected to the public social milieu of gay and transgender collaborators. Even if there were individuals who considered themselves "MSM" (and not "gay"), they would have valued discretion. My presence was not discreet in a way that could have accommodated rapport with

them. This is a personal limitation of this particular researcher; perhaps a future study could shed more light on this and fill in gaps.

7 Drawing on the work of Portocarrero (2007a), further discussion of the "individualization" of ethno-racial hierarchy in Peru is in chapter 3.

8 As Garro and Mattingly (2001) observe, anthropological theorizations of "story" and "narrative" do not necessarily align with how the terms operate within literary theory. Literary scholars maintain key distinctions between narrative and story, the former referring to a specific "discursive rendering," and the latter to the "underlying events that the narrative recounts" (Garro and Mattingly 2001, 12). Following Garro and Mattingly—and the general conventions of anthropology—*Queer Emergent* does not maintain as rigid a distinction between these terms. First, scandalous storytelling emphasizes embellishment and exaggeration, to the extent that any underlying sequence of events, if such a thing exists, is not actually what is most socially significant. And, second, my fundamental interest is to understand emergent and unfinished social phenomena. I thus use the terms *narrative* (and *narrative practice*) and *story* (and *storytelling*) interchangeably.

9 Ochs and Capps (2001) term conversational narrative an approach to storytelling that both emphasizes the everydayness of stories in social interactions and shows that stories have social roles and animate social life.

10 Other social scientific scholars working in Peru have observed how the concept of "scandal" was used by gay men to differentiate themselves from others. For example, Alcalde (2018) documented an upper-middle-class gay interlocutor from Lima who expressed ambivalence toward public demands for LGBT rights through protests and marches because he saw them as scandalous. To be scandalous, Alcalde's interlocutor explained, was "to participate in public protests and to yell in public to make demands" (2018, 138). Studying gay Peruvian immigrants, Vasquez del Aguila (2012) observed that the popular saying "*Dios perdona el pecado pero no el escándalo*," meaning "God forgives the sin but not the scandal," suggested that being gay may be socially acceptable as long as it does not appear to be scandalous. In his study of gay Dominican immigrants, Decena (2011) also observed how some interlocutors coded their unease with effeminate behaviors through the concept of "scandal."

11 Queer scholarship on the concept of "scandal" and "the scandalous" has tracked how the negative connotations of the terms can be reconfigured and re-signified as an effective strategy to contest or subvert normative structures. Ethnographers have described how LGBTQ people throughout Latin America drew on the notion of "scandal" to make novel demands and claims on others as well as on the state itself (Babb 2003; Kulick 1996; Ochoa 2014; Sosa 2014). In her study of *travestis* in Buenos Aires, Cutuli (2012) theorized scandal as both a political strategy to achieve specific

objectives and the site of communal negotiations. Cutuli argued that *travestis* re-signified scandal as an idea that "is fruitful for them to think, to make themselves visible and for them to act politically" (2012, 88). De la Barreda Solórzano (2023) reverses the direction of the scandal, positing that homophobia (and not homosexuality) is the scandal. My conceptualization of scandal further resonates with scholarship that takes excess—or "too much"—as a site of abundance that challenges the austerities often imposed on racial and sexual others (Hernandez 2020). In highlighting the spectacular, the excessive, and the extravagances of social life, excess can also subvert the idea that "too much" is unnecessary, unproductive, or not useful.

12 It is important to emphasize that my use of *scandal* is not intended to describe individuals themselves as an *escandaloso/a*, or "scandalous person." It is an adjective to describe a situated narrative practice. This does not mean that interlocutors might not have considered themselves as such at some time. As Paula indicates in the opening story of the chapter, she explicitly "threw a scandal" at the disco and would not disagree if, for example, I had said she was an *escandalosa* in the situation. In the context of HIV prevention efforts, however, I rarely encountered anyone, trans or gay, explicitly assuming or taking ownership of a scandal or being perceived as scandalous. Thus, I see *scandal* as a term that can invoke multiple layers of meaning and can be particularly context dependent. A term that works analogously to *scandal* and that has received significant critical attention in the field of queer Latin American studies is the concept of *la locura*, or "craziness." *La loca*, "the crazy person," for example, "is pathologized at the clinical level, seen as scandalous at the popular one, and celebrated as a site of knowledge and resistance in psychoanalytically inspired cultural critique" (La Fountain-Stokes 2008, 196). Like *la loca*, scandal can be used in different ways in everyday life or in critical analysis. Sívori (2004) argues that the *loca*, as invoked in everyday life, typically functions as an interpellative category. One might not say, "I am *loca*," but in the act of calling another person *loca*, one assumes reciprocity with the term. So when someone calls someone else *loca*, they are identifying themselves as such and expecting to be interpellated by others as such. Scholars across diverse disciplines have sought to challenge the negative stereotypes sometimes associated with the term by reconfiguring it as what Ochoa (2008) calls an honorific. Other examples of scholarship on the *loca* figure include Decena (2011), La Fountain-Stokes (2014), Lima (2011), Peña (2013), Perez (2011), Vidal-Ortiz (2011), and Viteri (2014). I put forward *scandal* as a key term to be in conversation with the efforts to reinvigorate and re-signify terms like *loca* as part of an expansive queer Latin American vernacular that goes beyond the conventional and globalizing terms of sexual orientation and gender identity.

13 Garro and Mattingly (2001) ask anthropologists to more closely consider anthropological approaches to the story: "In ordinary speech and in much scholarly writing, there is a certain tendency to treat a story as a 'natural' object that needs no explaining, which one can somehow just point to" (9). I situate my analytical approach to narrative and story within longer anthropological traditions that see stories and storytelling as essential sites of data that help bring readers into diverse social worlds that may sometimes be very different from their own. Looking through what she termed the spy-glass of anthropology, Zora Neale Hurston (2008 [1935]) pioneered this approach in *Mules and Men*, reproducing the stories that she encountered as she traveled back to her hometown of Eatonville, Florida, to collect the folktales that animated Black social worlds in the US South. I draw on what Hernández (1995) terms Hurston's "harmonic" literary approach that blends subjective self-reflection with the objective reproduction of the stories she collected, thereby implicating the reader (or the listener) "in the creative act by calling on a reader's subjective interpretations of the text" (Hernández 1995, 156). Debates around the elision of Hurston in the anthropological canon and the subsequent projects to recuperate her contributions speak to her continued significance to anthropology and beyond. For further interpretation, analysis, and critique of *Mules and Men* and on Hurston's legacy in anthropology, see Baker (1989), Boxwell (1992), Mikell (1983), and Wall (1989). My analytical approach is informed by Renato Rosaldo's (1989) vision of narrative as part of the remaking of anthropological social analysis. As he writes, "Rather than being merely ornamental, a dab of local color, protagonists' narratives about their own conduct merit serious attention as forms of social analysis" (Rosaldo 1989, 143). The social analysis of the scandalous stories I undertake in *Queer Emergent* is directed toward understanding an abstract and technical ambition—the "end of AIDS"—that transformed the lives of gay and transgender Peruvians over the 2010s. It is through their everyday responses, circulated in the form of exaggerated and embellished stories, that I ground the abstract in lived experiences and explore how they made sense of changing and emergent social worlds.

14 Nyong'o (2019) proposes the concept of "fabulationality" as a black, feminist, and queer mode of relationality and world-making in his study of contemporary aesthetic practices. One of the characteristics of "fabulationality" is anextactness, which means being intentionally rather than accidentally inexact. I see resonance between his discussion of the art of anexactness and the practice of scandalous storytelling. As Nyong'o (2019) does, I trace the contours of scandalous storytelling with the help of theorists of queer sensibilities and social life like Allen (2022), Halberstam (2011), Manalansan (2014), and Muñoz (2009), whose texts orient toward the experiments that go on in the everyday as people attempt to make queer

lives livable as well as a mode of storytelling as critique that draws on the feminist traditions encapsulated by scholars like Huerta (2021), Berlant and Stewart (2019), Stewart (2007), Anzaldúa (1987), and Hartman (2019).

15 My approach to scandalous storytelling is, in part, an ethnographic response to Cornejo's (2019) call for serious engagement with what he terms "the queer art of lying" as a way to make sense of *travesti* and queer life in Peru. I further engage with and extend anthropological traditions in Peru and the Andes that have emphasized the cultural significance of stories, storytelling, and creative experimentation. I draw particular inspiration from the approaches of Babb (1989), Dean (2023), García (2021), Kernaghan (2009), Mayer (2009), Theidon (2013), and Weismantel (2001). The subtitle of this book, *Scandalous Stories at the Twilight of AIDS in Peru*, riffs on the title of Mayer's (2009) elegant, hybrid ethnography *Ugly Stories of the Peruvian Agrarian Reform*. Greene's (2016) experimentation with ethnographic genre to describe the subversive potential of the subculture of punk in Peru and Gandolfo's (2009) ethnography of urban transgression in Lima offer important points of departure for my conceptualization of scandalous storytelling as queer social critique.

16 Some scholars suggest that "starting" the story of AIDS in 1981 elides the colonial and imperial structures that fundamentally lay at the center of the origins of AIDS. Starting the story in the year 1921, sixty years before the year the first cases of the syndrome that would come to be called AIDS were identified, Pepin (2011) describes how the Belgian and French colonization and administration of Central Africa led to the construction of railroads and precipitated new forms of urbanization and large-scale, labor-related migration. Colonial medical campaigns for treating malaria and sleeping sickness among these newly mobile populations, though well-intentioned, used unsterilized syringes and likely led to the amplification of HIV in the region.

17 For a more thorough periodization of Peru's response to AIDS, Cueto (2001) is the definitive historical study of the AIDS response in Peru; however, it covers only as far as the 1990s. Cáceres and Mendoza (2009) offer a concise historical periodization through the 2000s.

18 The era of the scale-up of ART has been the subject of a rich and robust ethnographic record. Ethnographic accounts of scale-up show how the impacts of treatment went far beyond the biological; significantly, the scale-up of ART engendered diverse and unanticipated political and cultural changes, all amid the intensifying neoliberal entrenchment of healthcare (Pigg and Adams 2005; Benton 2015; Decoteau 2013; Kalofonos 2014; Kenworthy 2017; Nguyen 2010). In Latin America and the Caribbean, Abadía-Barrero and Castro (2006), Biehl (2007), Frasca (2005), Gutmann (2007), Padilla (2007), Parker (2009), and Smallman (2007), to name a

few, captured the radical transformations in subjectivities and social relations that emerged right before and over the course of a decade focused on the scale-up of antiretroviral therapies. Their ethnographies, alongside those from other regions, remind us of the fallacy of a so-called magic bullet—the idea that a technological innovation itself can be a panacea. Even though lifesaving treatments were available, access to therapies and resources remained variegated and unequal.

19 This differed from the response unfolding at the time in neighboring Brazil. No sooner was combination antiretroviral therapy introduced than activists in Brazil began to pursue right-to-health litigation, demanding access to the treatment and setting the stage for the Brazilian government to assume the role of what Biehl (2004) termed an "activist state"—that is, politicizing the managerial and economic practices of the global pharmaceutical industry to negotiate better rates for patented drugs and, in theory, commit to the effort to universalize access to treatment.

20 The Global Fund was launched in 2002 to help countries reduce the impact of the three diseases primarily through grant-making and program monitoring. A multilateral funding mechanism, the Global Fund receives financial support from multiple donor countries and then directs that funding to multiple recipient countries that oversee the implementation of programming. Potential recipient countries must establish a "country coordinating mechanism" in order to solicit funding, with funding opportunities presented in rounds. The country coordinating mechanism in each country is in charge of preparing the country's proposal for funding and selecting the nongovernmental organization that will be designated as the principal recipient to carry out the implementation and programming.

21 However, as Amaya et al. (2014) suggested, the sequence of rounds did not always play out as planned. For one, tensions arose between the Ministry of Health and NGOs, as NGOs were selected to be the principal recipients of Global Fund grants and sometimes made unilateral decisions without consulting the Ministry of Health. But also, as Amaya et al. (2014) evidenced, NGOs were found to have limited technical capacity and operated without accountability or adherence to established practices of independent evaluation or self-evaluation. Accountability concerns and growing tensions would come to have significant consequences in the following decade.

22 This has been accompanied by the circulation of the slogan "Undetectable = Untransmittable," or "U = U." During my fieldwork on HIV prevention in urban Amazonian Peru in the 2010s, I did not observe messaging around "U = U." For a critical analysis of the TasP paradigm—and the enduring global inequities that it elided—see Gagliolo (2012), Nguyen, O'Malley, and Pirkle (2011), and Sandset (2021). Bor et al. (2021) track the uneven circulation of the "U = U" campaign and shifting global attitudes toward TasP.

23 Launched in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals marked a reassessment and redirection of the Millennium Development Goals, which had been launched in 2000 and concluded in 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals codified at the level of the United Nations and World Health Organization a version of the "post-AIDS" discourse that had in fact been in circulation before the actual announcement of the goals. The appearance of "post-AIDS" language prominently appeared in the promotional material and reports produced by the World Health Organization, UNAIDS, and PEPFAR as early as at least 2010 (O'Connell 2020, 91).

24 A "concentrated epidemic" is one in which HIV prevalence is greater than 5 percent within a particular population and less than 1 percent among the general population. The general population measurement is typically assessed based on HIV prevalence among pregnant women in urban areas.

25 Crane's (2013) concept of "valuable inequalities" within the global health sciences helps describe the scenario in Peru with regard to the vulnerabilities of gay and transgender Peruvians to HIV/AIDS. In her analysis of the explosion of health research in Uganda on HIV/AIDS, Crane describes how suffering, death, and poverty paradoxically became the conditions in which a "resource-poor" setting like Uganda could come to be a valuable site of research for US research institutions. Though Peru did not experience the same level of investment in HIV/AIDS research as the contexts analyzed by Crane, the concept is still productive for considering the "value" of gay and transgender vulnerability. As Crane and other researchers show (Biruk 2018; McKay 2018; Nading 2014), the persistence of colonial relations continues to shape the politics of global health knowledge. In Latin America, the traditions of social medicine and collective health pose important critiques of global health's colonial geopolitics (Adams et al. 2019; Carter 2023; Laurens, Abadía-Barrero, and Hernández 2023; Vasquez, Perez-Brumer, and Parker 2020; Waitzkin, Pérez, and Anderson 2021)

26 See Peru Ministry of Health, National Center for Epidemiology, Prevention, and Disease Control, "Vigilancia epidemiológica del VIH/SIDA," https://www.dge.gob.pe/portalnuevo/vigilancia-epidemiologica/vigilancia-epidemiologica-del-vih-sida/.

27 Dirección General de Epidemiologia, "Situación del VIH/SIDA en el Perú: Boletín Epidemiológico Mensual," January 31, 2010, https://www.dge.gob.pe/vigilancia/vih/Boletin_2010/enero.pdf.

28 This study took an expansive view of the MSM category and included subjects who identified as heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual. It also used the term *cross-dressers* and considered "cross-dressers" to be MSM. Subsequent reports and proposals that invoked this particular study's data about prevalence replaced this term with *transgender women*. The technical terminology changed in the years between when the study was published

and when the data was used for the purposes of the Tenth Round proposal. A subsequent study (Silva-Santisteban et al. 2012) focused specifically on transgender women in Lima and determined HIV prevalence to be 30 percent.

29 The paradoxical consequences of HIV exceptionalism for low- and middle-income countries, as evidenced most tellingly in Adia Benton's (2015) ethnography of HIV/AIDS support organizations and government agencies in Sierra Leone, were that it results in the underfunding and defunding of robust, comprehensive health care systems and infrastructure. As a consequence, people living with HIV experience slightly better medical attention than their seronegative counterparts, which paradoxically can cause otherwise preventable suffering or harm.

30 See Moyer (2015) for a review of anthropological research in the "age of treatment." Rose (2007) suggests that labeling a phenomenon as problematic or suspect because it is the result of "medicalization" elides just how foundational and omnipresent medical expertise is for making us who we are. Medical expertise still sanctioned the emphasis on interventions in transactional sex and discrimination, but these were decidedly not biomedical forms of HIV prevention.

31 PrEP remained a "promise" for gay and transgender Peruvians throughout the decade, at least for those even aware of its existence. For example, Silva Torres et al. (2019) found that only 46 percent of gay male survey respondents in Peru indicated awareness of PrEP, and Tang et al. (2014) found that 57.5 percent of healthcare providers in Lima reported awareness of PrEP.

32 In pointing to how the "end of AIDS" imaginary assumes that new technologies can resolve long-standing inequalities, humanistic and social scientific inquiry has emphasized the persistence of racial disparities that have long characterized the AIDS epidemic. Advocates and scholars have revived classic declarations like "The AIDS crisis is not over" and the "Black AIDS epidemic" as a direct response to the circulation of the "end of AIDS" imaginary to underscore how even in well-resourced contexts like the United States, the "end of AIDS" universalizes the contexts and prospects of some groups (e.g., white, urban, and wealthy gay men, who may have access to medical care and PrEP) with less consideration for the realities of others (e.g., urban Black and Latinx gay men, Black women in the American South, transgender women). Insisting that the AIDS epidemic is ongoing, critical scholarship asserts that robust theories of race continue to be obligatory interventions in the dominant modes of biomedical intervention and global health measurement (Bailey and Bost 2019; Caruth et al. 1991; Cheng, Juhasz, and Shahani 2020; Gossett and Hayward 2020; Hobson and Royles 2021; Jolivette 2016; Mackenzie 2013;

Walker 2020). *Queer Emergent* engages in dialogue with this scholarship on racial disparity and HIV as it situates HIV prevention efforts in Peru within the deeply entrenched legacies of colonial ethno-racial hierarchies.

33 Further anthropological discussion of the temporalities of HIV/AIDS, and its moralizing effects, can be found in Murray (2022a, 2022b), Sangaramoorthy (2018), Thomann (2018), and Vernooij (2022).

34 Peru's administrative structure is divided into departments, provinces, and districts. Each of the twenty-four departments (and the province of Callao) has a regional government. The seat of the regional government of San Martín is in Moyobamba, its capital city. The department is divided into ten provinces. Tarapoto is the capital of the province of San Martín. San Martín province is divided into fourteen districts. The districts of Morales, La Banda de Shilcayo, and Tarapoto constitute an urban center, colloquially called Tarapoto, that had a population of approximately 143,000 inhabitants in the year 2015 (INEI 2017). I focused most research in Tarapoto (including Morales and La Banda), but also integrated fieldwork with smaller cities in the department within a day's travel from Tarapoto, including Juanjuí, Sauce, Juan Guerra, Lamas, and Chazuta.

35 I draw on the assertion of Boellstorff et al. (2012), who contend that "intersubjectivity, the dynamic flow of communication and engagement between people, is one of the foundations of the ethnographic encounter" (42).

36 Mary Weismantel's (2001) reflection on the intersubjectivity of her ethnographic claims in *Cholas and Pishtacos* is particularly apt: "My claim to the reader's trust rests not on my singular authority as eyewitness but on my ability to construct a credibly intersubjective narrative about a particular social world" (xxiv).

Chapter 1. Stories That Scandalize

An earlier version of chapter 1 appeared as "Peche Problems: Transactional Sex, Moral Imaginaries, and the 'end of AIDS' in Postconflict Peru" in *American Ethnologist* 49 (2): 234–48, 2022.

1 The term *peche* is part of a regional lexicon of transgender, *travesti*, and gay language varieties known as Lóxoro or Húngaro in Peru. See Rojas-Berscia (2016) for a sociolinguistic analysis of Lóxoro. In his analysis of Claudia Llosa's film *Loxoro*, Cornejo (2021) theorizes that "travesti worldmaking is intimately bound to the cultivation of the travesti language Lóxoro" (34). Fernández-Dávila et al. (2008) locate the term within homosexual social worlds and describe it as a verb: *pechar*. They write, "*Pechar* is the term used in the language of homosexual men to refer to the 'purchase' of company or sexual favors in exchange for some type of economic or mate-