Writing on the Walls:
Discourses on Bolivian Immigrants in Chilean Meme Humor

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Internet memes have become a popular form through which northern Chileans express frustrations with their marginalization on global, national, and local levels. At the same time, many of these memes criticize Bolivian immigrants for using resources and taking jobs from "true Chileans." The humorous nature of these texts mitigates the extremity of embedded racial and nationalist ideologies, which are more explicitly expressed in political speech, news media, and quotidian language. This article uses critical discourse analysis to trace ideological formations across multiple online and offline instantiations, making visible a continuum of extreme speech. Through these connections, we see how anti-immigrant discourses position northern residents in a formation of nested marginality. Memes are thus a central way that disenfranchised Chilean citizens reinforce a worldview in which they consider themselves deserving of greater access to resources than Bolivians, precisely because of their marginalized position in relation to the nation.

Keywords: Bolivia, Chile, extreme speech, social media, memes, immigration

In his influential essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin argued that the ability to mass-produce and mass-circulate images would have a profoundly democratic impact. The Internet meme has become iconic of mass-circulation, traveling through social media unbound by platform, language, or Internet-enabled device. Yet memes, in some instances, contravene movement toward greater democracy and social equality. In this article, I explore how racializing anti-immigrant discourses become embedded in humorous memes in Chile's northern region of Tarapacá. As Bolivians migrate to this region in high numbers, some northern Chileans (nortinos) feel threatened by the increasing presence of immigrants. As a result, they express distrust and dislike for immigrants through discourses that circulate verbally, in analog written forms, and through digital texts such as memes. In doing so, they reproduce

nationalistic understandings of race and modernity that contrast with perceptions of Bolivians as Indigenous and culturally backward. These discourses reinforce inequalities that immigrants experience, even as most nortinos are marginalized within the nation state as well.

Chile's Tarapacá region is geographically peripheral within the country, economically exploited, and politically disenfranchised. Despite Tarapacá's reputation as an inhospitable place, the area draws large numbers of migrants from nearby Bolivia and Peru. In this border region, locals have a long history of perpetuating animosity and structural injustices toward migrants. These practices are sustained by discourses that situate migrants as backward, unhygienic, uneducated, plunderers of limited resources, and contributors to cultural degradation. Sentiments toward Bolivian immigrants take on a racializing character, conflating Bolivianness with indigeneity, in order to differentiate between "Others," and "true Chileans," who are assumed to be non-Indigenous mestizos. These discourses have long circulated through official policy, news media, and everyday speech. More recently, social media platforms have become spaces for locals to reinstantiate anti-immigrant discourses, often through humorous genres, and specifically memes.

Considering anti-immigrant memes as "extreme speech" draws attention to discursive continuities between objectionable rhetoric and mundane genres that make anti-Bolivian sentiments more palatable to a general audience. This conceptual framework acknowledges acceptability and objectionability as a spectrum rather than binary (Hervik, 2019, this Special Section; Udupa & Pohjonen, 2017). In this article, I use critical discourse analysis to examine Facebook posts that draw humor from longstanding negative discourses on Bolivian immigrants. Nortinos view these posts as "weas chistosas, no más" [just funny stuff]. However, I argue that their relationships with more extreme language, in combination with their quotidian nature, work insidiously to reinforce racialized discrimination against Bolivian immigrants.

Throughout the world, memes have become an important mode of expression. They may support socially progressive causes, extreme fascist stances, the status quo, or even espouse ridiculous thoughts entirely divorced from reality. Messages are conveyed through a wide range of genres, including moralizing, inspirational, informative, and humorous texts. Here, I concentrate on funny memes to examine how humor mediates the division between acceptable and objectionable speech. These memes subtly support discrimination against immigrants by casting "real Chileans" as more deserving of social and economic resources. Yet understanding wider national and global systems that economically and politically marginalize almost all residents of the region forces us to consider the individuals who create and share these memes, not as simple bigots, but part of a broader struggle for resources and recognition. Through the examples in this article, I demonstrate not only how mundane humor and extreme speech are intimately connected, but also how nested forms of marginalization provide conditions conducive to discriminatory discourses.

Methods: Contextual and Comparative

This research draws from a lineage of "digital ethnography methods" dating back to Coleman's (2010) "Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media," and Horst and Miller's (2012) volume, *Digital Anthropology*. Many scholars have subsequently developed methods using digital resources as a basis for conducting ethnography. This has allowed researchers to study digital phenomena during short stays (Pink et al., 2016) or from remote locations (Postill, 2016). In contrast, my work more closely reflects the approach of "Internet-related

ethnography" (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 126) that follows discourses across multiple online and offline instantiations to understand how the digital and analog are mutually constitutive (Juris, 2012). My work relies on the established anthropological practice of long term in situ fieldwork (Madison, 2012; Spradley, 1979, 1980) as a means of contextualizing digital practices. This article is based on 15 months of integrated online and offline fieldwork in northern Chile spaced between September 2013 and June 2015, engaging with about 200 interlocutors. My research included in-person interviews, surveying, and map-making, as well as participant-observation at events including lunches with neighbors, funerals of community members, and even sleeping on a mattress in a kind local family's kitchen after an 8.2 magnitude earthquake made my apartment uninhabitable. My work also employs digital methods, connecting with nortinos on social media, including Facebook (110 friends), Instagram (following 75 users), Tumblr (following 40 users), Twitter (following 30 accounts), and WhatsApp (47 individual contacts and 15 groups). As with in-person ethnographic methods, social media sites allowed me to interact with nortinos, see how they interact with others, and gain valuable insights about their lives.

This research was enhanced through comparative work with the Global Social Media Impact Study (GSMIS). By using the same set of methods and thematic foci in nine cities across the world, the GSMIS was able to provide in-depth analyses of social media practices in particular locations, while working toward broader comprehension of the use and consequences of social media. Comparisons, along with quantitative work on surveys and Facebook post counting, allowed me to distinguish among near universal practices across distant geographic spaces, locally inflected particularities, and idiosyncratic individual examples.

Digital research methods range from computer analysis of Twitter data to the ethnographic practice of actually watching over people's shoulders as they post on Instagram. The ethnographic approach that I take here is important for understanding the ways digital media are embedded people's lives holistically (Pertierra, 2018), but also in contemplating confluences of digital practices with issues of social inequalities and social justice. I argue that the ways that race, gender, sexuality, social class, and citizenship status inflect and are performatively created through online media must be understood, not only in local historical context, but also with attention to how they are sustained, shifted, or contested in quotidian practices.

Scholars have paid attention to expressions, organizing, and political engagement through Internet media since the 1990s (Castells, 1996). More recently, many have concentrated on politics and social media with attention to digital divides (Nayaran, 2007; Norris, 2001), building democratic spaces (Papacharissi, 2010), and the activism–revolution spectrum (Coleman, 2012; Fu & Chan, 2015; Fuchs, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2012; Lim, 2012; Morozev, 2009; Postill, 2012, 2018; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). In contrast to these studies that concentrate on the ways people participate in online groups with explicit political aims, most nortinos do not engage in what they would define as political action, seeing "politics" as that which metropolitan elites enact. Instead, they distance themselves from such pursuits and from elites they perceive as "political." Nortinos see social media as a place to build community around issues that affect their daily experiences. Even as these issues are sometimes related to national political debates and policy, nortinos frame them in ways that extract them from their overtly political context and reestablish them as mundane complaints.

Many northern Chileans reframe political issues through the use of humor and formulism associated with memes. Humor in memes is widely recognized as central to audience engagement (Milner, 2013; Miltner, 2014; Shifman, 2013). Indeed, most nortinos I interviewed noted humor as the most important consideration in sharing social media posts. They were particularly fond of the "image macro," the most recognized type of Internet meme, which is essentially a stylistic formula for combining text and image. In these memes, both text and image direct the viewer to interpret the other in a certain manner. Much of the meaning is connected to the memes' intertextuality—the ways in which images are reused in different contexts. This format is used to express a variety of sentiments, from greetings and celebratory messages to "indirects" and warnings. But most often we associate image macro memes with humor—cats desiring cheeseburgers or Willy Wonka's ironic request "Go on. . ." This humor, as Miltner (2018) notes, is an effective means for commenting on the mistakes and hypocrisy of the powerful, making memes a "weapon of the weak" (Weiping, 2009, para. 24). Yet nortinos leverage memes against the weakest members of society, thereby carving out a space where they may symbolically gain power by denouncing those with less.

The popularity of particular memes often hinges on their "emotional resonance" with audiences (Miltner, 2014). With this in mind, I analyze memes that appeared most often in the feeds of the nortinos I interacted with personally. They are not representative of the memes being shared daily, but rather are exceptional in that they were the most popular memes commenting on immigration, likely considered to be the most humorous, and corresponded to the kinds of formulism most prevalent in memes shared in northern Chile. This approach recognizes that individuals are not mechanistically induced to create or share memes, but do so because they are compelled by the meme's engaging qualities and the significance of its message.

Like other forms of social media, the content of a meme is made meaningful through relationships to cultural discourses that exist within and beyond social media (Faulkner, Farida, & D'Orazio, 2018). The ideological positioning on racial categories and citizenship evident in the memes I analyzed was similar to that found in local and national politicians' speeches, news stories, conversations among friends and family, and, as I explore here, graffiti. Thus, I use critical discourse analysis to uncover the intertextual relationships of discourse in disparate genres. My interest lies, as with Milner (2013), in the "interdiscursive, intertwining multiple texts and commentaries" that are embedded in these "complex collages" (p. 67). These examples demonstrate the ways language acts as a mode of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991), thus illuminating social and cultural processes (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008) associated with immigration, citizenship, racial categories, and marginalization in northern Chile.

Marginalized Identities in Northern Chile

In my first few months in Tarapacá, I noticed a number of walls inscribed with graffiti about Bolivians. One read, "Cholos fuera! Bolis, pata raja! Monos culiao"[2] [Cholos (urban Indigenous Andeans) get out! Dirty-footed Bolivians! Fucking monkeys]. Another, more to the point, simply said, "Muerte a los

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[2] Though graffiti and Facebook posts are disparate forms of public expression, they often share lackadaisical attention to grammar. In this case, "monos culiaos" is grammatically correct, but as with many of the social media examples in this article, the text's author seems unconcerned with grammatical accuracy.

bolivianos" [Death to Bolivians]. The most perplexing read "Cuidado con los brujos bolivianos" [Be careful with Bolivian witches]. And though the particular vulgar language of these graffiti scribbles caught me off guard, the sentiments did not surprise me. Anti-Bolivian attitudes are common throughout Chile, particularly in the border region.

While a recent survey found that 68% of Chileans want to restrict immigration (Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos [INDH], 2018; see also Meseguer & Kemmerling, 2016; Noy & Voorend, 2015) and that anti-immigrant sentiments take on a racializing and moralistic character, it notes that these characteristics are accentuated in the northern region. Nortinos often think of Bolivians as prototypical immigrants in the region who are criminals, stealing jobs, and exploiting resources that rightfully belong to "real Chileans." The focus on Bolivians stems from their high numbers. About half of all Bolivian immigrants in Chile live in the north, where they make up roughly 5% of the population, a far higher number than any other immigrant group.[3]

My research was primarily based in Alto Hospicio, a city of about 100,000 situated in the Atacama Desert. The city is about 5 hours from the border with Peru to the north, and 2 hours from the Bolivian border to the east. In contrast, it is more than 30 hours by bus from the national capital, Santiago. Many residents characterized the area as marginalized and disenfranchised, citing this distance, national politicians' disregard for the area, and economic conditions of the region. Nortinos often employ marginalization as a form of identification in which they reject a victimized status and instead highlight the ways in which they toil through hardships and struggle to improve living conditions (Haynes, 2016). I use the term *marginalization*, as opposed to *marginality*, to distance it from notions of a static state and instead concentrate on processes that change with time as an effect of socioeconomic and geopolitical contexts (Tsing, 1993).

Nortinos often voice complaints of being forgotten by national politicians. During the presidential election of 2013, many scoffed at candidates who came to Tarapacá and waved from their cars, but never engaged in conversations with local people. These feelings were reinforced in the aftermath of the 8.2 magnitude earthquake of April 2014, when many nortinos were left without water, electricity, and gas for several weeks. Many of the 1,000 families whose homes were beyond repair lived in tents for more than a year while waiting for temporary trailers. Most nortinos perceived this government assistance as insufficient and slow to arrive—a clear indication of nortinos' political insignificance.

Nortinos equally note the region is exploited for economic benefit of Santiago elites and foreign companies. The region is home to vast mineral resources and, as a result, an extraction-based economy. Nitrate was first discovered in the area in the late 1800s, when the land was governed by Peru. This discovery shifted perceptions about this piece of the Atacama Desert from a useless tract of *terra nullius* to valuable property. Chile dispossessed the territory from Peru, and the area to the south from Bolivia,

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[3] Bolivian immigrants make up about 9% of all immigrants in Chile, about half of whom (18,000) live in Tarapacá, making up 5.5% of the region's population. The number of visas solicited by Bolivian nationals in Tarapacá between 2011 and 2015 (21,488), for example, was almost 150% of the number solicited by Argentine (293), Colombian (3,435), Ecuadorian (1,094), and Peruvian (11,147) nationals combined (Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, 2015)

launching the War of the Pacific (1879–1884). By the war's end, Chile had taken Bolivia's entire coastline and Peru's southernmost province of Tarapacá, thus moving Chile's northern border more than 700 km north. The nitrate of Tarapacá benefited a wealthy class of mining barons based in Santiago. These barons further profited from the exploitative conditions under which workers in the north labored, including low pay, shoddy facilities, and coercive employment strategies.

Though the nitrate boom was short lived, extraction of other Atacama resources has perpetuated regional and global inequalities. In the 1980s, copper became the major mining resource in Tarapacá. As of 2011, northern Chile supplied one third of the world's copper, making up 60% of the country's exports and 20% of its GDP. The Chilean government has averaged about $11.5 billion per year in mining profits (Economist, 2013). But more importantly, large multinational companies such as Phelps Dodge and Sumitomo have partnered with the state-owned copper company, CODELCO, sending profits abroad to Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom. These multinational mining companies have not reinvested profits in the region, nor do they pay workers wages comparable with the national average.[4] It is not unusual for nortinos, even those with skilled labor jobs in mining, to live in houses with cement floors, no hot water, and unfinished ceilings. During my fieldwork, Chile was the most unequal highly developed country in the world (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015), with the National Index of Quality of Urban Life ranking Alto Hospicio very last among cities in Chile. This designation took into consideration working conditions, business climate, sociocultural conditions, transportation connectivity, health, environment, and housing (Núcleo de Estudios Metropolitanos, 2015).

Referencing these disparities, nortinos use Santiago as a foil for what they see as authentically Chilean. This is poignantly illustrated by a series of memes popular among nortinos in 2015 proclaiming "Santiago no es Chile" [Santiago is not Chile]. Beneath the text, these memes used images of regional industries such as mining in the north and logging in the south. Through these memes, Chileans outside Santiago illustrated the ways they perceive their own marginalized experiences to be more representative of true "Chileanness" than privileged experiences of the elite. Through such logic, nortinos express fierce nationalism, while distinguishing themselves from politically and economically powerful Chileans represented by "Santiago." As the meme series makes clear, nortinos consider natural resources and the jobs that depend on them as central to what it means to be Chilean, suggesting that only certain people have rights connected to these resources. This formulation differentiates nortinos from metropolitan elites, but also distinguishes them from immigrants.

Bolivian immigrants are particularly vulnerable to claims that they are unfairly using Chilean resources because of economic disparities between the two countries, and resulting conceptualizations of Bolivians as poverty stricken. Bolivians residing in northern Chile are usually employed in the worst paying jobs and live in the most impoverished neighborhoods. Rather than working directly in mining, they earn closer to the national minimum salary in the retail or service sectors as part of a secondary economy that relies on the strength of the copper industry. This compounds Chileans' views of Bolivia as an economically

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[4] While those working in the mining industry make roughly twice the national minimum monthly wage (CLP 402,000 or US$670 a month vs. CLP 250,000 or US$371 a month), national averages are closer to CLP 1,020,000 or US$1700.

lagging nation. Though the Bolivian government has succeeded in cutting poverty drastically since 2000 (World Bank, 2017), Bolivia is still considered one of the poorest and least developed countries in the hemisphere. The economic differential between the two nations leads many Chileans to conceptualize Bolivians as "atrasados" (behind or backward) and lacking in markers of cultural modernity. These views depoliticize Chile's historical role in Bolivia's lagging economy. After losing its coastline to Chile in 1879, Bolivia is now begrudgingly landlocked, which affects industries' ability to export, subjects imports to international taxes and regulations, and requires Bolivia to pay other countries for access to fiber optic cables, driving Internet prices up and connection speeds down. As a result, Bolivians are less connected to world systems through which individuals might easily gain access to the kinds of consumer goods and even media that index cultural modernity.

These notions of Bolivians as atrasados also takes on a racializing character, because many nortinos connect both poverty and judgments of cultural stagnation to indigeneity. This has historic antecedents extending back to the War of the Pacific. At the conclusion of the war, the Chilean government was satisfied with its new resource-rich territory, but less pleased with the residents of the area—primarily small groups of Indigenous peoples living rural lifestyles who spoke Aymara or Quechua. Chilean military troops were stationed in the area as deterrents to Peruvian and Bolivian forces, but also to remind the populace of their new nationality. The Chilean government launched projects aimed at incorporating the northern population into the nation-state through religion and education for both children and adults (Frazier, 2007). These nationalization projects effectively silenced Indigenous languages, valorized racial homogeneity under ideals of mestizaje, and incorporated discourses of "modernity" into nationalistic exceptionalism, thereby ideologically linking indigeneity to foreignness.

Today, whereas more than 60% of Bolivia's population identifies as part of an Indigenous group, less than 10% of the Chilean population describes itself as Indigenous.[5] Chileans often point to Bolivians' language and phenotypic features as evidence of racial difference between the two countries' populations. So although Bolivians' skin color does not differ significantly from that of darker Chileans, Bolivians often have a shorter, broader stature, and what many refer to as "Indigenous facial features," including close-set eyes and a large nose. At times, Chileans suggest that Bolivians' typically slower speech is indicative of their indigeneity and signals inferior intellect. Chileans also question Bolivians' hygiene, evidenced by the common joke that Bolivians have a particular unpleasant odor. This itself is a racializing stereotype, in which indigeneity is associated with certain bodily characteristics. It turns attention to the body as the origin and location of racial difference (see Weismantel, 2001). As Patricia Richards (2013) notes, "It may seem strange to use words like 'race' and 'racism' in describing Indigenous peoples who more often are conceptualized in terms of ethnicity" (p. 15), but the ways in which social meanings become attached to phenotype require attention to processes of racialization (Omi & Winant, 1994; Wade, 1997). Indeed, "the cultural and the phenotypic are often mutually implicated in popular understandings of where purportedly racial and ethnic attributes come from" (Richards, 2013, p. 15), and most racism stems from a combination of physical and cultural attributes (Hooker, 2009). The social value, or lack thereof, attributed to phenotype and culture

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[5] While the Calendela Project finds that Chilean genetics are approximately 44% Indigenous American, 52% European, and 4% African, the 2011 Latinobarómetro survey found that 66% of Chileans identify as White, 25% categorize themselves as mestizo, and 8% consider themselves Indigenous (Latinobarómetro, 2011).

then become embedded in social institutions, ideologies, and discourses, institutionalizing racism's effects. Over time, social markers such as dress and language eventually supersede phenotype or biology in popular understandings of racial categories (Postero, 2007).

Indigeneity is not just a racial classification, but is tied to a lack of modernity, poverty, and cultural deficiency. Indigenous peoples living in rural communities or otherwise excluded from industrialized urban publics are often not considered to be "Chilean" regardless of their citizenship or ancestry (Richards, 2013). Assessments of Bolivians' backwardness contrast with discourses of Chilean progress, development, modernity, and mestizaje, all of which are connected to resource extraction in the north. This process of conflating national citizenship with racial and ethnic subjectivity (Vergara & Gundermann, 2012) then leads to both anti-immigrant discourses and material instances of discrimination.

I conceptualize these discourses and discrimination not as a product of some inherent bigotry on the part of Chilean nationals, but as a product of nested marginalization that triangulates privilege and inequality among nortino citizens, Santiago elites, and immigrants to the region. I use the concept of nested marginalization to understand the ways in which power relations exist not only on the level of hegemon and subaltern, but also among different subaltern groups. The concept relies on approaches to intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2003) in order to understand how race, socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, and other social categories combine to impact the privileges and forms of marginalization individuals and groups experience. This is not an argument for ranking inequalities, but instead draws attention to the multiple motivations a group may feel within a situation of marginalization, compelling them to further marginalize others as a by-product of their own self-positioning; at times, this might involve strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1988). The concept draws from Levi's "grey zone" (1989), which understands the marginalization of one group by another subaltern group as a strategy employed by hegemonic forces. It is also related to the notion of "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2004), in which people reinforce their own subordination through ideas of deservedness. This concept of nested marginalization thus concentrates on popular formations in which scapegoating and exclusion of another group benefit a marginalized group or are perceived by members of that marginalized group as beneficial to them.

I take the concept of nesting from the term *nested inequalities* (Hochschild, 2003), which describes the ways students are impacted by disparities at the national, regional, local, and intra–school district levels. I look at the ways processes of marginalization work at the global, national, regional, local, and intergroup levels. Thus, the marginalization experienced by Bolivian immigrants is impacted by the ways that all nortinos are marginalized within the nation-state (in contrast to Chilean elites), and even the ways all Chilean residents are impacted by global capitalism through resource extraction industries, thus creating a nesting effect through which marginalization is enacted at multiple levels.

Walls: Physical and Virtual

The words scrawled on the walls of Tarapacá are clear examples of extreme speech. They use inflammatory naming practices, such as "brujos bolivianos" or "monos culiao," and even invoke death, as in "Muerte a los Bolivianos." But less extreme manifestations of these same anti-immigrant discourses

appear on Facebook walls as well. Many nortinos create different genres of posts commenting on immigrants, framed as everyday complaints.

Using Facebook as a public forum for communications, including complaints, is a quotidian practice for nortinos. Chile has long been at the forefront of telecommunications technology in South America, and Internet connections were first available in the north in the late 1990s. During my fieldwork, Chile ranked as the third most highly penetrated market for Facebook in the world, and one of the most engaged social media markets worldwide, averaging 9.5 hours per day per visitor. Smartphones are the most common way nortinos connect to social media, often paying less than $15 a month for 1 GB of data. This makes social media accessible to most nortinos, though recent migrants and rural people tend to be less well connected, or place less importance on their ability to access social media. As a result, social media is a space where nortinos expect that their interlocutors will primarily be working class, but not impoverished, mestizo Chileans. Their posts do little to hide or downplay anti-Indigenous or xenophobic feelings.

Fabian, in his early 30s, wrote in 2014, "These Bolivians, they come, and they take our resources. Indigenous people, they get help with school, a place to live, health care. And what do we get? Where are our bonuses? We the real Chileans who deserve them?" Fabian was born in Santiago but lived most of his life in the north, working in construction. Most of his colleagues were Chileans from various parts of the country, with the addition of a few Bolivians who had lived in northern Chile for several years. When I asked Fabian about his Bolivian coworkers, he spoke of them fondly, but described them as soft-spoken, keeping to themselves, and having "strange habits." Both his Facebook post and these statements reflect common discourses that conflate Bolivian nationality with being Indigenous. The Facebook post also draws on widely circulating (mis)conceptions that by virtue of being Indigenous, immigrants can take advantage of resources allocated to officially recognized "vulnerable populations" in Chile. Indigenous peoples with Chilean citizenship are eligible for housing on originary lands, funding for irrigation projects, seed money and subsidies for entrepreneurial projects, subsidized technical training, special credit funding, and educational benefits (Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena, 2014). The Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena (CONADI) also coordinates with other government offices to ensure access to housing, education, and healthcare for Indigenous peoples. These resources are aimed at Indigenous peoples who are Chilean citizens, but many non-Indigenous Chileans misconstrue the existence of CONADI as an indication that noncitizen Indigenous people are "stealing" resources.

Other Facebook posts speak of immigrants more generally, such as a post by Jorge, a man in his mid-40s. He wrote,

> Que infantil y poco conciente, aún existe gente que desea regalarle weas a otro país, por qué no vuelvan a ese país y no deja este largo de país a ellos que de verdad hemos pagado con nuestro trabajo un montón de weas.

> [How infantile, and unthinking, there still exist people that want to give things to another country, why don't they go back to that country and leave this large country to those of us who really have paid a ton of things with our work.]

Fabian and Jorge both make complaints about resources that "rightfully belong to real Chileans," whereas Bolivians are deemed unfit because of their status as Indigenous, backward, and not rightfully part of the Chilean labor force.

Whereas posts like Fabian's and Jorge's are original thoughts in response to their experiences, other Facebook posts express anti-immigrant stances through content that has been shared from user to user. Though Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013) define memes as a key part of participatory culture, nortinos' social media use relies more heavily on curation (Taylor, 2014) than participation. Rather than actively creating new memes, nortinos more often share, unchanged, those of others that show up on their feeds. Those that are most popular have the "emotional resonance" to which Miltner (2014) refers, often highlighting the ways in which locals are marginalized. Kermit the Frog memes lament "Sometimes I have the urge to complain to the government, later I remember that I'm nortino and I get over it" (Haynes, 2016, pp. 80–82). Other memes parody popular soda advertisements to suggest that Santiago politicians "live in another world" (Haynes, 2016, p. 156), in a similar sentiment to the "Santiago no es Chile" meme series.

While these memes frame being authentically Chilean as rooted in marginalized experience rather than citizenship, the memes I examine here define "real Chileanness" in contrast to racialized notions of foreignness. Certainly, Chileans share memes relating to Colombian, Peruvian, and Venezuelan immigrants, who are sometimes racialized in different ways than Bolivians. But in the northern region, the vast majority of anti-immigrant memes relate to Bolivians. I offer here three examples.

Figure 1. "Anti-Bolivian repellant" meme.

The first example (Figure 1) was shared by 40-year-old Catalina in early 2014. The photo depicts *The Big Bang Theory* character Sheldon, with his T-shirt pulled over his nose and mouth, spraying an aerosol can. The meme simply states, "Anti-Bolivian Repellent." This type of meme uses an image drawn from media with a popular following in the area, overlaid with language that is explicitly anti-Bolivian. The aerosol can could easily be interpreted as air freshener, a reference to joking discourse about the propensity of Bolivians to have a foul odor. But this meme also works on a double entendre; the text suggests something more extreme than simply mitigating unpleasant smells. "Anti-Bolivian repellant" is associated with bug repellant, which either drives them away, as may be suggested by the graffiti "Cholos get out," or worse, "Death to Bolivians."

A second meme (Figure 2) was shared by at least 10 different Facebook users from Alto Hospicio over several months in 2015. The underlying image depicts Giorgio A. Tsoukalos from the History Channel's program *Ancient Aliens*, another popular television show in the north. This "alien expert's" face is contorted in explanation, with text written above, "There is only one explanation for this." Below his face appears the answer: "Bolivians." This meme was posted almost exclusively as a "comment" on friends' Facebook posts. These posts usually concerned complaints, from the types that Fabian and Jorge wrote, to quotidian annoyances like neighbors playing music too loud, or too much traffic on the commute to work. Again, the image underlying the text plays an important role. Given the photo's origin, the expected finish to the sentence would be "Aliens," thus drawing a parallel between aliens and Bolivians. Indeed, though less directly used than in English, Chileans recognize a confluence of concepts between extraterrestrial beings and foreigners. So, this particular image is especially appropriate in referring to Bolivians and blaming them for social ills.

Figure 2. "There is only one explanation . . ." meme.

The final example (Figure 3) comes from Jorge. In July 2016, he shared a meme depicting an Altiplano Indigenous man at a social gathering. The man's brightly colored stocking cap (*lluchu* in Aymara, *chullu* in Quechua) is the visual focus of the image. It is overlaid with the text, "Meanwhile in Tarapolivia . . . More Chilean than ever, Jallalla." The humor here works on morphological and lexical levels as well as through incongruence between image and language.

Figure 3. "More Chilean than ever" meme.

Morphologically, our attention is drawn to Tarapolivia—an amalgamation of the words Tarapacá and Bolivia. This alludes to a sense that the two are becoming indistinguishable. As the latter encroaches on the former, it evokes the idea that Bolivia (or Bolivians) is intruding on the region of Tarapacá.

On the lexical level, the meme prominently uses "Jallalla," an Aymara and Quechua word that unites concepts of hope, festivity, and blessings. The word is commonly used by Bolivians in celebratory contexts. This contrasts sharply with a number of distinctly Chilean slang words such as *wea*—in Jorge's textual post (Figure 3), and *culiao*—as written on a physical wall in Alto Hospicio. Chilean Spanish is well known for distinct cadence, conjugational forms, and extensive slang lexicon. Slang in memes and other public texts acts as an indexical marker (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982) of the writer's or sharer's Chileanness. This meme uses *Jallalla* as a marker of Bolivianness, because Chileans would more likely use *conchatumadre* to capture a celebratory spirit. Although both locally inflected words evoke extreme emotion, the latter would be understood as distinctly Chilean, whereas the former is marked as Other.

Finally, considering the way the image frames the text, we see a direct contradiction between "More Chilean than ever" and the man with his eye-catching hat, which is distinctly "not Chilean" by local standards. This style of dress is usually accompanied by leather or rubber sandals and associated with rural areas and agrarian lifestyles. Individuals wearing sandals frequently walk through mud and dust in agricultural fields, leaving their feet dirty. This image, then, is precisely what one would associate with a "dirty-footed Bolivian." Indeed, the man's facial features, missing teeth, and garments; the appearance of other individuals in the background of the photo; and even the word *Jallalla* work to racialize Bolivians as Indigenous and by contrast reinforce the notion of Chile as a country of mestizos. Overall, this framing establishes Bolivian immigrants as, in the words of Yilmaz (2012), an "incompatible ontological category predicated on culture" (p. 368). Bolivians are distinctly the opposite of "more Chilean than ever."

Intertextuality

In each of these memes, humor mitigates the extremity of ideas, but critical discourse analysis reveals the ways this humorous genre relies on discourses present in more "extreme speech." Although the undeniably extreme text of the graffiti remains anonymous, plenty of people feel no shame in having their name emblazoned above memes drawing on the same ideas. Considering these two genres as intimately connected reminds us that seemingly mundane statements are always part of larger and sometimes more dangerous discursive circulations. Indeed, as Udupa (2019, this Special Section) comments, extreme and mundane forms of nationalism "enter a co-constitutive relation on digital media."

Without leaving the space of social media, we can relate these humorous memes to more explicit posts, which give graphic form to grievances for which Chileans blame immigrants. One prominently shared meme lists types of innocuous resource exploitation associated with immigrants such as school scholarships, social support, housing vouchers, and the creation of precarity in the labor market. These phrases are interspersed with dangerous characterizations, including drug traffic[king], delinquency, and sexual aggression, as well as loss of "our" identity and imposition of cultural customs. Only with the framing words of *¿Inmigrantes?* above and *¡No Gracias!* below in typical meme layout do these contrasting phrases take on local meaning.

Looking beyond the Internet, these online texts reflect and comment on what people do in the material world. As Thurlough (2018) notes, boundaries between talk and technology are often blurred when considering the social meanings of communication. As a consequence, proper understanding of digital discourse requires that large-scale discourses related to systems of power and the linguistic specificities of quotidian communication be considered alongside each other. Herein lies the importance of Internet-related ethnography and in situ fieldwork. Anti-immigrant discourses do not originate with these memes, but draw on already established media representations and political rhetoric (Ekman, 2015). They are contextualized by politicians and news organizations that associate foreigners with crime, including Chile's President Sebastián Piñera, who has equated "bands of delinquents" in Chile with immigrants (Carreño, 2016). These intertextual linkages provide the means for interpreting new instances of discourse in light of familiar textual categories. Social media users' interpretations of these memes are conditioned by the other ways that they see immigrants treated in a variety of media. In a cyclical manner, the familiar attitudes embedded in memes contribute to their popularity, while the memes as mundane

texts naturalize the more extreme expressions of anti-Bolivian sentiments in graffiti, news reports, and political speeches.

The manifestation of these common sentiments on social media is central to their importance. As I have written elsewhere, the visibility associated with social media in northern Chile has made it a space in which normative notions of cultural acceptability are more often upheld and reproduced rather than challenged (Haynes, 2016). While one may paint graffiti on a wall under the cover of night, the name of someone sharing a meme appears alongside the post on Facebook. Whereas a wall in a particular neighborhood is only likely to be seen by people who frequent that area, a social media post may be visible to the sharer's full range of friends, and those of past and future sharers.

As van Dijk (1993) notes, "dominance may be enacted and reproduced by subtle, routine, everyday forms of text and talk that appear natural and quite acceptable" (p. 254). Although graffiti is more extreme, these memes exhibit language that naturalizes the social order and relations of inequality (Fairclough, 1985). As Launay (2006) instructs, for a joke to work, it must be construed by its audience as appropriate. Indeed, Hervik (2019, this Special Section) notes that humorous texts may foreclose discussion, allowing those who invoke them to contend that adversaries simply do not understand the comedy. Although counterdiscourses appear in other memes, these generally take on a factual approach, rather than invoking humor. Because humor is key to the popularity of sharing, and thus visibility, these pro-immigrant memes, then, have far less visible presence on social media. Precisely because anti-immigrant memes use humor, they have greater impact, entering everyday discourse and thus desensitizing the issue so that the sight of extreme speech on any sort of wall is less noteworthy.

Further, considering memes as formulaic language draws our attention to the ways they allow for expression of that which may not be voiced under other circumstances. Genre of text contributes to understandings of what is acceptable or unacceptable discourse (Fairclough, 2003). As Abu-Lughod (1986/2016) points out, poetry among Bedouin women "renders content impersonal or nonindividual, allowing people to dissociate themselves from the sentiments they express, if revealed to the wrong audience" (p. 239). A Bedouin woman may claim "it was just a song," and social media users may claim "it was just a meme" (see Hervik, 2019, this Special Section). In both cases, the formulaic aspects of the language protect those who invoke it, as they express messages that may contravene more widely accepted ideals (Abu-Lughod, 1986/2016; Davison, 2012), while reinforcing the notion of collectivity implicit in sharing.

What otherwise may be hidden to all but close social circles or subtly implied in face-to-face communication is teased out publicly on social media. More important, through social media, anti-immigrant discourses are socially reinstilled and taught to younger generations. The visibility of these ideological texts, rather than creating public space for discussion over their viability, reinforces their hegemony.

Meme language may appear as superficial, but certain instances of anti-immigrant violence remind us of the material consequences. For example, in July 2017, a group of fishermen in the northern port town of Tocopilla doused two Peruvian immigrants with gasoline and set them ablaze (Kozak, 2017).

The men survived, but this incident took place amid an "increasingly heated debate over the recent surge in migration to Chile . . . and growing racial tensions," as reported by *The Guardian* (Kozak, 2017). And this violent incident stood amid far more numerous smaller attacks. According to the Annual Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Chile (INDH, 2017), more than half of Chileans admit to having been present or knowledgeable of intimidation and verbal or physical attacks on immigrants. As verbal and physical attacks become more mundane, it is precisely the popular nature of social media as a form of entertainment that allows anti-immigrant discourse to be naturalized in insidious ways.

Conclusion: Humor, Extreme Speech, and Marginalization

The precise language of humorous memes I analyze is quite obviously less "extreme" than the graffiti on Tarapacá's literal walls, but expresses the same sentiments. These mundane types of humorous online speech are linked to speech associated with fear, hate, and extremist positions. The kinds of discourse represented by these memes painting Bolivians as racially distinct and suggesting they take up resources provide, or at least reinforce, foundational assumptions on which the more extreme texts on physical walls rely. This confluence of discourse between public walls with anonymous writers and social media accounts with named sharers provides an example of how the digital is always connected to the material world. More precisely, it demonstrates the ways discourses in virtual spaces are always linked to those circulating outside social media.

The formulaic nature of memes, and the fact that they are most often shared rather than directly authored by nortinos, demonstrates the importance of formulaic language to a study of extreme speech. Formulaic texts both diminish the apparent impact of the message through depoliticizing platitudes and mitigate the culpability of the sharer. Humor furthers both of these goals, making memes an important mode through which unpopular or potentially offensive notions may be publicly expressed with limited liability. Thus, this case study points to important ways that memes, as both formulaic and humorous, are potential vehicles for discourses that contravene societal expectations.

This social function of the meme is equally implicated in the ways it may provide members of the public a space to express extreme opinions insidiously, even if the sharer does not recognize it as such. When asking nortinos about anti-immigrant sentiments in both memes and graffiti, many explained them as a way of alleviating frustration about immigrants and related it to stress about their own marginalized or precarious position. This example then further points to nested marginalization in creating conditions that support or naturalize exclusionary discourses. In the case of nortinos, their positioning outside economic and political power leads them to define "Chileanness" against elite subjectivity, but equally creates an urge to protect the resources of the area (including copper, the jobs associated with mining, and social services provided by the government) from outsiders construed as less deserving. The nexus of memes such as "Santiago no es Chile" with the ironic "Más chileno que nunca" illustrates the connection between these two groups, who are framed by nortinos as outside true Chilean experience. For people who consider their marginalization to be closely connected to a lack of public forum to express their frustrations with both groups, social media becomes an important site for defining and further reinforcing their own definitions of who belongs as a "true Chilean."

Extreme speech may be embedded within complex notions of citizenship, belonging, authenticity, and marginality (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008) in which those marginalized through race, class, or other social categories enact exclusionary practices against others to gain some hold on social or political power. The maintenance of power structures in northern Chile—ideals of mestizaje and Chile as a country of modernity, among them—requires legitimation. Discourses are employed to naturalize, justify, and make it appear necessary that certain people have access to valuable social resources and others do not (van Dijk, 1993). In sharing these memes, nortinos reinforce a worldview in which they are considered to be deserving of greater access to resources than Bolivians, but still maintain their marginal position in relation to the nation. The extreme speech of the physical walls and the mundane humor of the virtual walls work doubly to paint "real Chileans" as more deserving, precisely because they are marginalized within the nation and global capitalism.

Looking beyond northern Chile, then, this example demonstrates how memes provide a public forum for grievances, yet temper them through humor, formulism, and the collectivity of sharing. These three aspects of memes further reinforce group identity through limiting full understanding of the text to those who are familiar with humorous genres relevant to the in-group, who recognize the kinds of formulism at play, and who participate in sharing and appreciation through likes and commenting. So although memes may often be a key way in which marginalized people are able to speak back to power, the same features that make this work possible may equally be employed for opposite effect. Memes give voice to those who consider themselves voiceless, but also may shield them from culpability for racist and xenophobic speech.

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