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Coloniality, belonging, and indigeneity in Peruvian migration narratives

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ABSTRACT

Transnational lives include not only the mobility of individuals, but of racialized discourses that reinforce and sustain inequalities and exclusion. Building on the seminal work of migration scholars Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou, this article brings together Quijano's coloniality of power with cultural critic Aviles's insights on contemporary forms of discrimination and anthropologist Briones's conceptualization of 'internal Others' to center racialization in approaching contemporary middle-class Peruvian identities across borders. I suggest that similarly to how racialization is key to the processes of creating internal Others in Peru, middle-class Peruvians seek to assert higher status in relation to other migrants in the U.S. and Canada by employing discourses of indigeneity and internal Others. These forms of status-marking through racialization and differentiation are central to contemporary peruanidad within and beyond Peru's physical borders, and to understanding the role of race, racism, and coloniality of thought among Peruvians outside Peru.

KEYWORDS

Coloniality; middle class; migration; Peru

As a way to make their high status recognizable in new settings, transnational middle-class Peruvians regularly bring in racialized discourses of identity and migration that are grounded in Peru to their everyday lives abroad. 'What part of Lima are you from?' and 'What school did you go to?' are among the first questions with which *limeños* abroad may greet each other as a way to establish shared identities. Far from Lima, these questions invite racialized social hierarchies that inform everyday life in Peru into new settings. Similarly to European- or indigenous-sounding last names, the names of particular districts or schools become shorthand for simplistically locating where, within Peru's increasingly complex social hierarchies, an individual belongs.

Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou (2015) center coloniality in understanding and theorizing migration experiences as they suggest that racism and racialization have been woefully under-studied in our approaches to migrant incorporation. In foregrounding the pre-existence of racialized power structures and relations informed by colonial structures in migrants' places of settlement, the authors make visible the colonial legacies beyond the places of origin typically associated with coloniality. Here, I am interested in centering coloniality of thought in migration discourses specifically among middle-class

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Peruvians. I employ an intersectional approach that examines the role of class and racialization as these migration discourses travel from Peru to the United States and Canada through middle-class Peruvians' experiences of incorporation. Rather than examine how Peruvians as a group are on the receiving end of racism as they settle in the U.S. and Canada, I am interested in internal forms of differentiation and hierarchies as a way to examine how some Peruvians embody and exert racism vis-à-vis other Peruvians both in Peru and as they settle in these new spaces. I caution against underestimating the role of internal forms of differentiation and hierarchies among national or regional migrant groups (e.g., 'Peruvian,' 'Caribbean,' or 'Latin American') in studies of incorporation in new settlements. In new homes, Peruvians grapple with both the pre-existing power relations of the new space and the Peruvian social hierarchies they have brought with them as they attempt to differentiate themselves from marginalized domestic minorities, other Peruvians, and other Latin American migrants. While the experience of racism among working-class and indigenous Peruvian migrants in the U.S. has been well-documented (Berg 2015; Paerregaard 2014, 2008), Peruvian migration studies, as other migration studies, have focused less on the experiences of migrants with more social and economic capital.

Building on the seminal work of Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou (2015), I examine the significance of forms of differentiation and internal hierarchies in approaching middle-class migration discourses among Peruvians transnationally. I connect and expand coloniality of power (Quijano 2000, 2008, 2015) with Aviles's (2016, 2017) insights on contemporary forms of exclusion and discrimination in Peru and the United States as well as Briones's (2005, 2007) conceptualization of 'internal Others' to center racialization in approaching contemporary Peruvian identities across borders. I suggest that, much as racialization is key to creating internal Others in Peru, middle-class Peruvians seek to assert their higher status in relation to other migrants in the U.S. and Canada through discourses of indigeneity and internal Others that reinforce long-standing Peruvian class and racialized hierarchies transnationally. These forms of status marking through racialization are central to contemporary *peruanidad* (Peruvianness) within and beyond Peru's physical borders, and offer us a chance to understand the role of race, racism, and coloniality of thought among Peruvians outside Peru.

Building upon my long-term research in and about Peru, this article draws on data collected on experiences of belonging among middle- and upper-class transnational Peruvians in Peru, the United States, and Canada (Alcalde 2018), which includes close to fifty interviews with Peruvians between 2013 and 2015 both in Peru and in new settlement spaces.¹ I discuss middle-class discourses on internal migration in Peru before turning to Peruvian transnational practices as I examine how racialization in these transnational spaces in some ways parallels the racialization of internal migrants in Lima. Transnationally, the rejection of indigeneity becomes central to the inequalities that continue to benefit Peruvians whose identities have been associated with the highest concentrations of social power in Peru and, also, across national borders.

Approaching coloniality, belonging, and indigeneity

Knowledge in the form of theory has been traditionally associated with the North, pushing the majority of the world's population, who inhabit postcolonial spaces, to the

role of consumers and objects of study rather than generators of new knowledge (Banerjee and Connell 2018; Escobar 2010a, 2007; Grosfoguel 2007; Mignolo 2000). In this context, as a way to push against what Bannerjee and Connell call the 'structural imbalance in the global economy of knowledge' (Banerjee and Connell 2018, 3), or coloniality of knowledge, employing theoretical frameworks from the South can itself be a form of decolonization. Just as revolutionary leaders and movement in the Global South informed European social movements in the 1960s and 1970s (Teivainen 2019), analytical frameworks from the Global South, and specifically Latin America, can inform theories and understandings of Latin American migration beyond the region. Drawing on and being guided by theorizing and knowledge-making from those in the Global South not only has the potential to change the questions being asked, but also to transform our understanding of the phenomena we examine (Escobar 2010a). This article contributes to the decolonization of knowledge by engaging with knowledge and theory-making from the South, and from those originally from the Global South, to center racialized discourses as a way to transform our understanding of the processes at work in migration.

Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano conceptualizes coloniality of power as a set of discourses, practices, beliefs, and forms of organization within a hierarchical matrix of power that foregrounds racialization as central to colonization (Quijano 2000, 2008). In Limeño middle-class migration narratives, not all migrants are considered equal: those from middle and upper-class families who travel overseas are generally viewed more positively than poorer internal migrants who are indigenous and from the Andes or Amazon. The forms of discrimination and oppression internal migrants of indigenous and other non-European descent experience in Peruvian society today cannot be dismissed as simply vestiges of the colonial past, yet these forms of discrimination and racism result from a clear manifestation of coloniality: the conceptualization of non-Europeans as belonging to the past (Quijano 2000).²

In postcolonial societies, social power continues to be organized and exerted as a result of the structures and practices developed through centuries of colonialism. The living conditions in postcolonial societies are thus informed by persistent unequal colonialist structures within which some identities and experiences are valued over others. The lens of coloniality of power allows us to trace how racialization founded on Peruvian hierarchies becomes central to status-making/marking in middle-class transnational migration: as migrants seek to assert their high status across borders, they further entrench inequalities from Peru within a capitalist system that values some identities over others. It is this extension of the reach of local hierarchies from the country they have physically left, and the normalization of these inequalities across borders, that I am interested in. Even as I recognize that middle-class Peruvian migrants are far from homogenous, coloniality of power makes visible the fact that racialization is often – if not always – at the center of migratory experiences.

In their decolonial approach to migration Grosfoguel (2003, 2004, 2007, 2011) and Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou (2015) center coloniality in conceptualizing migration experiences in metropolitan spaces to examine racism and racialization. Against a simplistic skin color-based definition of race and racism, they propose a more intersectional approach to racism as 'a global hierarchy of human superiority and inferiority' produced through political, cultural, linguistic, religious and economic markers (Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015, 636–637). The racialization of bodies as inferior or

superior based on pre-existing embedded power relations in new places of settlement leads migrants to be categorized as belonging to specific racialized 'zones of being' and 'zones of non-being.' Those with racial privilege (i.e., recognized as white in Anglo-European terms) have access to rights, and those identified with domestic minorities are subjected to racial oppression (Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015). More specifically, 'colonial/racial subjects of empire' in zones of non-being are typically domestic minorities in new settlement spaces; 'colonial immigrants' are migrants racialized in ways similar to the 'colonial/racial subjects of empire' and are therefore likely to be placed in zones of non-being; and 'immigrants' are those who pass as white and assimilate into dominant forms of being, in zones of being. With the understanding that other Peruvians may be placed in the categories of 'colonial/racial subjects of empire' and 'colonial immigrants,' middle and upper-class Peruvians engage in several strategies to ensure they are recognized as white, differentiated from both of these and instead welcomed as 'immigrants.'

Writing on his own experiences of migration to Lima from Abancay, in the Andes, and to the U.S. from Peru, journalist and cultural critic Marco Aviles's insights reflect and clarify how coloniality of power and racialized hierarchies tied to different zones of being are experienced. In *No soy tu cholo* (Aviles 2017), he explains the coloniality inherent in the use of the term 'immigrant' to a classroom of teenagers in Maine. He surprises the students by telling them that the term 'immigrant' is reserved for Peruvians and others from the Global South, while those from the Global North enjoy the privilege of not being labeled immigrants. He further explains that since U.S. Americans and white Europeans are never called immigrants, they tend to be welcomed into new societies—so much so that U.S. Americans make up the largest immigrant group in Peru (to the surprise of the students). In the situation he describes, Aviles provides a concrete example of how coloniality of power results in the unequal power relations by which those moving from the Global South to the North are systematically placed in zones of non-being, while those moving from the North to the South are welcomed into zones of being as a result of longstanding, yet often taken for granted, unequal power relations.

As Aviles underscores, however, Peruvians' welcoming of immigrants to zones of being within Peru is limited to those from the Global North, as, 'with the ones from the provinces the story is more fucked [*jodida*]' (Aviles 2017, 82). Internal migrants from the provinces are rejected from zones of being, and excluded from access to many rights associated with realms of being and provided to those from the Global North. In his earlier book, *De dónde venimos los cholos* (Aviles 2016), Aviles recounts that in moving to Lima from Abancay as a child with his family in the 1980s, his family's previous social status mattered little as the family joined thousands of other internal migrants who built homes and settled on the mountainsides in the outskirts of the city. In school, children from those families were bullied and stigmatized through insults that included '*cholos, alpacas, cochinos*' (Aviles 2016, 15).

Reflecting on his experience in the Maine classroom, and considering how to explain the meaning of '*cholo*' to the students, Aviles shares that 'A *cholo* in Peru – I told them – is like a Latino in the United States: someone with dark skin who moves from far away, from the south, from the mountains' and who experiences discrimination (Aviles 2017, 82). This provocative statement elucidates the central association of indigeneity to oppression through the racialization of 'internal Others' in places of origin (Briones 2005), which also puts individuals into zones of non-being in new spaces of settlement. In these zones of

non-being, the systemic racial oppression intensifies intersecting gendered, class, and sexual identity oppressions (Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015). In this sense, it becomes important to embrace an intersectional approach to consider the multi-layered nature of oppression of different migrants in zones of belonging and how interacting social identities result in multiple forms of oppression (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015).

What Aviles describes in moving to Lima from Abancay exemplifies the process of becoming 'internal Others' that thousands of Peruvians who move to Lima, and millions who live there, experience. For Briones, writing about Argentina, the dominant view of the nation as homogenous and white legitimizes the view that Argentines descended from white Europeans who arrived in ships in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; simultaneously, this view categorizes indigenous Argentines, as well as Afro-Argentines, as 'internal Others' to be relegated to the bottom of the racial and social hierarchy (Briones 2007). These 'internal Others' are part of the nation but only in the exclusionary sense that they are denied rights afforded to the rest of the population both through national policies and everyday practices. The racialized Othering of these groups does not prevent elite groups from benefitting from them by objectifying internal 'Otherness' as sources of tourist attraction and cheap labor (Briones 2005). The resulting 'culturalist' racism in Latin American societies works to legitimize longstanding colonialist inequalities that sustain oppressive practices, particularly against indigenous populations (Scarritt 2012).

Peruvian scholars de la Cadena (1991, 2000), Paulo Drinot (2014a), Cecilia Méndez (1996), Gonzalo Portocarrero (1993), and Nelson Manrique (1999), among others, have pointed to the rejection of indigeneity and to exclusionary practices against indigenous Peruvians as central, persistent forms of coloniality. Far from being a static or fixed identity, indigeneity is 'a process; a series of encounters; a structure of power; a set of relationships; a matter of becoming' (de la Cadena and Starn 2007, 11) across spaces. In spite of the multiple forms of indigeneity within and outside of Peru, understandings of indigeneity in the region continue to suffer from essentialist tendencies. Outside Peru, among the Mapuche, for example, the positionalities of Mapuche youth as self-described *mapunkies* and *mapuheavies* challenge both dominant associations between indigeneity and rurality and dominant identity discourses internal to the Mapuche (Briones 2007). In contrast to the complex, heterogeneous, and fluid forms of identification that are encompassed by 'indigeneity,' the term is popularly imagined as a fixed, static, and backward state of being to justify discrimination and violence against indigenous populations. Indigeneity in this sense has been associated with the exclusion that accompanied 'modernity' in Andean societies (Rojas 2013).

Indigeneity, as popularly imagined, is a critical component of local hierarchies in which *cholos* and *serranos* represent the racialized identities of Peru's internal Others. In Peru, *cholo/a* refers to someone who is 'mixed, not white' (Aviles 2016, 58). *Cholo/a* is commonly understood to refer to someone transitioning from being indigenous to becoming mestizo (Quijano 1980) as a result of migration to an urban area, improved socio-economic status, and language use (typically, using Spanish instead of an indigenous language such as Quechua). It is routinely employed as an insult to refer to a person's inferiority due to indigenous roots.³ While *cholo/a* is often defined in contrast to whiteness, rural-to-urban migration disrupts traditional associations between indigeneity and

rurality, making *cholo/a* a transgressive identity since colonial times, when authorities complained of the possibility that indigenous Peruvians might pass as mestizo or even white if they assumed new forms of dress and customs in urban areas (Berg 2015). The term *serrano* popularly denotes both place of family origin (*sierra*, highlands) and race (*indio*). Negative characteristics such as backwardness, brutality, and ignorance are typically attributed to indigenous people of the largely rural highlands.⁴ As forms of internal Othering through racialization, these terms exemplify and solidify power relations that naturalize long-standing racialized hierarchies and forms of exclusion.

Middle-class Peruvians, internal Others, and internal migration discourses

One of the biggest contradictions in self-identification among middle- and upper-class Peruvians today is that those who argue that they most legitimately represent Peru commonly go to the greatest lengths to reject the identities most closely tied to the land they claim to represent. In Peru, class is experienced as a fundamentally relational process informed by multiple, intersecting identities (Webber 2017), and by the rejection of some identities (Huber and Lamas 2017). Middle- and upper-class identities in particular privilege Spanish or other Western European descent while distancing themselves from racialized identities that are incorporated into the nation in zones of non-being as internal Others (Berg 2015; García 2013; Larson 2004; Méndez 1996). Defining middle-class in Peru is thus a complex process tied to more than socioeconomic standing or background, in which self-identification and racialization become especially significant (Cruz 2020; Huber and Lamas 2017; Pereyra 2015). While a recent government report by the Lima Chamber of Commerce stated that 45% of the population is middle-class, in practice the increasingly complex ways in which one differentiates oneself from others who are not recognized as middle-class may be even more significant for understanding middle-class identities (Cruz 2020).

Middle- and upper-class Limeños may deny that racism exists today in spite of widespread racist practices that persist in the present (Portocarrero 2007). The denial of the existence of racism naturalizes and helps perpetuate forms of internal Othering, which are often justified in terms of a lack of 'culture' or 'education' to avoid recognizing and admitting racism. As Gaudio and Biolostok (2005) remind us in their analysis of racism within the middle class, whether in the United States or elsewhere, references to 'culture' are commonly used as a way to dismiss real histories of oppression and exploitation based on race and class, to diminish the very racism on which dominant colonial structures were built and have been sustained.

Similarly, in interviews with members of the Peruvian elite, Zavala and Zariquiey were told that racism was not a problem in Peru. One person who claimed not to be racist went on to report, in reference to indigenous migrants, that 'their lack of education offends' (Olwig 2007, 18). Others similarly contended that they were not racist but could not help but feel offended by the transgressions perpetrated by those with 'less education' and 'culture' who enter predominantly elite spaces and thereby contaminate those spaces. The elite spaces in question included beaches, shopping centers, clubs, and neighborhoods.

For many white and mestizo middle-class Peruvians, the internal Others who are rejected, excluded, and discriminated against are those identified as *cholos*, *serranos*,

indios, negros, and chinos by those in the middle and upper classes. Against this background, conflicts persist regarding who belongs and who does not belong to the middle class; these lines are becoming increasingly complex as the middle classes continue to expand and diversify. In the San Felipe apartment complex community in Lima, middle class includes both 'old' middle-class families (long established in Lima) and first-generation upwardly mobile families of *cholos* and *serranos* who have more recently migrated to the capital from other parts of the country or from *pueblos jóvenes* in the city. The racialized differences within the middle class are evident in everyday interactions within the complex, as members of the traditional middle class treat more recent members of the community as inferior and less deserving of respect (Pereyra 2015), in line with persistent forms of coloniality.

The long-standing processes of racialization and internal Othering at work in Peru are also evident in other Latin American contexts that share the experience of European colonization. In neighboring Ecuador, middle-class families in Quito opt to send their children to private religious or military schools because it is in these spaces that existing racial, ethnic, and class differences are reinforced and the whiteness of the dominant group is privileged (Novo, Carmen, and de la Torre 2010). In Buenos Aires, racialized, class borders have become a central aspect of urban life, and those from the upper and middle classes rarely go into lower class neighborhoods (Grimson and Segura 2016). The spatialization processes in Lima and Buenos Aires reflect a broader Latin American class and racialization process stemming from colonial times. More broadly, the racialization processes at work result in high levels of discrimination against and exclusion of indigenous and Afro-Latin populations throughout the region (Hooker 2005; Rowell, Jones, and Carrillo 2011). As Hoffman and Centeno have proposed, given the persistent unequal distribution of resources, it is not difficult to recognize that 'inequity is the essential, constant, and defining characteristic of the region' (Hoffman and Centeno 2003, 381), particularly as we consider that a much higher proportion of the region's population is concentrated in one or two cities in each country as compared to Asian and African countries (Hardoy and Pandiella 2009).

In Peru, about one third of the country's population of 31 million is concentrated in the capital. Internal migration in Peru, as elsewhere, tends to be a first step in trajectories that may include emigration to another country (Altamirano 2010; Berg 2015; King and Skeldon 2010; Paerregaard 2008, 2014), for those who can afford it. For those who arrive in Lima, prospects are grim: the capital has the highest rate of extreme poverty as well as the most overcrowded housing in the country (Allen, Zilbert Soto, and Wesely 2017). By 1991, internal migrants made up almost half the city's population (Kokotovic 2007), and the percentage has continued to rise. In the absence of housing options, many Peruvians moved to Lima to settle in and develop new communities known as *barriadas* or *pueblos jóvenes*. Older such settlements dating to the 1940s and 1950s have since consolidated and now have city services, property titles, and brick houses. During the 1980s and 1990s, when Shining Path and state violence led many Peruvians to leave the country, displacement due to political violence also led to internal migration to Lima. More recent *pueblos jóvenes* continue to appear in marginal locations with houses made of more precarious building materials. These settlements, often in mountain slopes, are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters and weather-related risks (Hardoy and Pandiella 2009)

Internal migrants may find work in the informal sector, including as domestic servants in the homes of middle- and upper-class Peruvians. The discrimination faced by indigenous Peruvians, however, is not limited to the informal sector. Colonialist practices permeate all facets of Peruvian life, from the discrimination at schools that Aviles (2016, 2017) records against the children of internal migrants from the provinces, to workplaces, to media representations and politics; this legacy can challenge the inclusion of indigenous identities in zones of being. In 2006, after the passage of an anti-discrimination law (Law 28,867) that same year, congresswomen Maria Sumire and Hilaria Supa were bumped off a domestic flight. When they complained to an airline representative, 'the worker responded that they might be congresswomen, but that they cannot even speak Spanish properly and thus needed to take their complaints elsewhere' (Golash-Boza 2010, 318). The congresswomen's diplomatic status and rights as passengers were dismissed because of their primary identities as indigenous Peruvians in the eyes of the worker, as the embedded histories of gender oppression within colonialist histories further exacerbated those vulnerabilities.

This double bind of race and gender, founded in long histories of violence and colonialism (Lugones 2010), has worked to make some internal Others particularly vulnerable to oppression and violence. During the political violence that wreaked havoc on life in Peru between 1980 and 2000, the violence was felt especially intensely by Peruvians in the largely indigenous highlands. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission documented close to 70,000 deaths, and the majority were indigenous from rural areas and spoke Quechua or another indigenous language. Existing gender hierarchies intersected with racism in a particularly gendered form of violence: poor rural women deemed to be *indias* or *cholas* were considered rape-able *en masse* by low-level soldiers while women who were mestiza were 'reserved' for men further up the military hierarchy (Bueno-Hansen 2015).

Marking and re-inscribing social divisions transnationally

Lima has the highest rates of international emigration compared to other cities and regions within Peru (OIM (Organización Internacional para las Migraciones)/INEI (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas e Informática) 2010). Regionally, Peru's rate of out-migration is among the highest in Latin America, with between 7% and 10% of Peruvians living abroad (Takenaka, Paerregaard, and Berg 2010, 5; UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) 2012, 19). These rates of emigration mean that 10% of Peruvian households have at least one member abroad (OIM (Organización Internacional para las Migraciones)/INEI (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas e Informática) 2010). Between 2000 and 2003, approximately one-third of those emigrants were professionals and technicians from the middle-classes (Powell and Chavarro 2008).

North America contains approximately 34% of all Peruvians living abroad, with the United States having the greatest concentration of Peruvians outside Peru (Altamirano 2000, 2010; OIM (Organización Internacional para las Migraciones) 2012). In the United States, Latinxs are expected to make up one-fourth of the population by 2050, but prejudice and antipathy specifically toward Latinxs play a significant role in support for restrictive immigration policies (Hartman, Newman, and Scott Bell 2014). Over the last two decades, media depictions of immigrants have turned increasingly negative, persistently

associating immigrants with the spread of disease and portraying them as particularly dangerous and polluting (Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013). Latinx immigrants – Mexicans specifically – are almost exclusively associated with the terms ‘undocumented’ and ‘illegal,’ and depicted as a national threat both by politicians and in popular media (Chavez 2008; Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013; Santa Ana 2013). Under the Trump administration, Latinx immigrants have been explicitly demonized and routinely targeted for deportation. In Canada, Latin Americans make up only a small percentage of immigrants and come from over twenty countries to settle in three main areas: Montreal, Vancouver, and Toronto (Veronis 2007).⁵

Among Peruvian migrants, those who arrive in the United States and Canada tend to occupy higher social status positions within Peru compared to those to settle in destinations closer to Peru, like Chile or Argentina. Peruvians in North America are also more likely to have a middle- and upper-class background than Mexican and Central American immigrants there; South American migrants (predominantly Colombians, Ecuadorians, and Peruvians) have historically had the lowest rates of poverty and unemployment and the highest levels of education among Latin American immigrants in the United States (Cervantes-Rodríguez and Lutz 2002, 540; Logan 2002).

Marking themselves as different from and superior to others who are not as wealthy, as white, as formally educated, or as urban is a common pattern among Latin American immigrants whose social status might not seem evident at first glance to others in their new settings. Middle-class Caribbean migrants seek to distinguish themselves from lower-class Caribbean migrants with whom they are commonly categorized in the United States (Olwig 2007). Middle-class Brazilian immigrants in London emphasize their class status from their communities of origin as a way to reject the lower status traditionally associated with the jobs they work in their new communities (Torresan 2007).

The marking of middle-class and upper-class status while abroad may be done in multiple ways, to separate from others who are not recognized as belonging to the same class – particularly domestic minorities and racialized immigrants in zones of non-being in new settlement spaces (Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015). These strategies include asking where one attended school or what neighborhood one is from, or emphasizing how much one misses or relied on nannies and domestic workers in Lima. While naming particular districts and neighborhoods (for example, Miraflores, San Isidro, Surco, La Planicie) makes class background visible, references to particular elite social clubs during visits also emphasizes status. References to El Club Regatas, which restricted membership to men until recently, were not uncommon in the interviews I conducted. At the club, the sight of uniformed nannies taking care of children on the playground while adults play sports, share a meal, visit a salon, or go shopping is common.

Naming, and separating from, cholos

In their North American communities, as in Peru, middle- and upper-class Peruvians seek to differentiate themselves from other Latin American and more specifically from Peruvian migrants whom they perceive as internal Others in countries of origin, as well as from domestic minorities and other colonial immigrants relegated to zones of non-being. The coloniality of thought present in approaches to *cholo* and *serrano* identities in Peru is present among middle- and upper-class Peruvian migrants as well, as they define their forms of belonging against these categories in attempts to reinforce status and assert

their belonging to what Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou (2015) refer to as zones of being reserved for immigrants who pass as white.

While international migration has become increasingly accessible to a greater range of Peruvians, racist and classist stereotypes associated with Peruvians of indigenous descent and from rural areas have also persisted. Peruvians from the highlands who embrace and approach international migration more as a cultural and class aspirational project about national and global belonging, rather than primarily an economic aspiration (Berg 2015), are repeatedly confronted with rejection from those positioned more highly in Peru's social-class hierarchies. When Peruvians from the provinces who have migrated internationally return to Peru, whether for short visits or long term, it is not uncommon for them to be mocked by middle- and upper-class Peruvians; they are ridiculed as 'Americanized *cholos*' (Berg 2015) who put on airs and pretend to be something they can never be by behaving in ways that fall outside of the hierarchical, racialized, gendered divisions that were established during colonial times but persist in more recent expressions of coloniality.

Sandra, who had recently returned to live in Lima after living in the United States with her husband and children, expressed a commonly held view about indigenous Peruvians from the provinces who emigrate internationally. I quote her here at length to make visible some of the common points in middle-class discourses about migration and Peruvian internal Others, and the rejection of these as legitimate immigrants belonging to zones of being abroad or in Peru. For Sandra,

[Indigenous, poorer Peruvians] go to the United States and they feel so great living there. And I can tell you, because of my job, they are no longer called Ramos but Reimos [Ramos with an American English pronunciation/accnt]. They no longer have the last name Huamán but Huimen [Huamán with an American English pronunciation/accnt]. They are not López but Loupez [López with an American English pronunciation/accnt]. And for sure the one that migrates to Lima, it's quite an accomplishment because they had never seen the city, the ocean. I feel that mostly people from the highlands are very submissive, innocent. But the Limeñito and his relatives, they're set, he bought his truck and his television the size of my apartment because they live in a room but they have a television and a truck and they feel they are the best thing. And they don't say *camioneta* [small truck], they say 'truck,' they say 'TV.' Definitely they imagine themselves as more, they even change the way they dress. They dress like rappers.

As an airline worker, Sandra regularly sees and speaks with migrants, and her words make clear that she views the changes experienced by poorer indigenous Peruvian migrants as negative and illegitimate. She selects popular last names (Ramos, López) and a traditionally indigenous last name (Huamán) to critique Peruvians who, according to her, take on airs and pretend to be something they are not (modern, American). She then goes further, making clear that it is these Peruvians who buy a television 'the size of my apartment' who 'feel they are the best thing' yet 'live in a room' [i.e., are poor]. Sandra's sentiments are founded on a long history of coloniality, and represent the dominant forms of bias and discrimination Aviles (2016, 2017) identifies against those identified as *cholos* in Peruvian media, public transportation, workplaces, and schools. Aviles, a self-identified *cholo*, underscores the prevalence, depth, and continuation of these discourses as he explains that he is 'fed up of *cholear* [naming/making one a *cholo*], that they *cholean* me, of the ones who *cholean*, of those who allow others to

cholar us, and of those who, having the power to do something, do nothing to stop this tragicomedy' (Aviles 2017, 15).

At the time of the interview, Sandra and I sat in her new, spacious, modern apartment. She contrasts the supposedly exaggerated size of the consumer item to the undesirable basic living conditions – 'in a room' – of some Peruvians as a way to underscore the incongruity and absurdity of claiming upward mobility in these cases. Her claims also situate those Peruvians as very different and far from her own life and identity, as a light-skinned, middle-class woman with an established non-indigenous middle-class family name living in a large modern apartment in which large-screen television sets do not (supposedly) seem out of place. While, as a group, Peruvians migrate, not all Peruvians who migrate are welcomed as immigrants into zones of being in their new societies. Middle- and upper-class Peruvians may play a significant role in ensuring that some Peruvians continue to live in zones of non-being even outside Peru.

In Toronto, Hernán also spoke of his own position vis-à-vis *cholos*. He explained that to him there is a difference between 'the *cholo*' and 'the *cholo de mierda*' [fucking *cholo*]. Explaining the latter, he proposed, 'if they see you are *blanquito* [white], they treat you badly, or if you're a bureaucrat.' He added that it was impossible to make those persons come to their senses ('*entrar en razón*'). In this case, it is not only that *cholos* or Americanized *cholos* are viewed as illegitimate, as in Sandra's discussion. Hernán marks some *cholos* as lacking reason and suggests that they are racist against more privileged whites, such as himself. By marking a specific group as lacking reason, Hernán further separates *cholos* from middle-class migrants like himself who pride themselves on their reason, intellect, family background, and education, and who belong in existing zones of being transnationally. Hernán's views directly draw on and seek to justify prevalent historical racism in Peru and reinforce and naturalize his own privileged position by presenting certain identities (*cholos*) as anathema to modernity, civilization, and desired forms of Peruvianness (e.g., whiteness) – all factors that, per his narrative, he and those like him more adequately embody. Through him we can see that the dehumanization of indigenous internal Others still permeates everyday life and coloniality of thought persists across borders.

Liliana, who lived in the United States at the time of our interview, lucidly identified the forms of exclusion and discrimination that internal migrants deemed as *cholos* or indigenous may be subjected to in Lima. She had migrated from Huancayo to Lima for her university studies before migrating to the United States. Whenever her migrant background came up in conversation with her classmates in Lima she felt excluded and discriminated against. She explained that when it came time to form groups for projects, students from the provinces typically found themselves together in a group because they were excluded from other groups. Exasperated by her classmates' rejection of her and other internal migrants, Liliana confronted them, telling them it was very likely that their parents or grandparents were also from the provinces or somewhere else because there is 'no one who is pure, pure Limeño.' In response to Liliana's claim, some classmates insisted that their last name came directly from Spain. In calling upon their Spanish heritage, they distanced themselves from indigeneity and internal Others, reinforcing their own superiority vis-à-vis those Peruvians.

The popular saying '*quien no tiene de inga tiene de mandinga*' [whoever doesn't have some *inga* in them has some *mandinga* in them] refers to the mix of Spanish, indigenous

(*'inga'*) and African (*'mandinga'*) ancestries in Peru that are foundational to Peruvians. The saying is commonly heard among Limeños. Sandra, Hernán, and Liliana's classmates' comments reflect the everyday reality of how this diversity is treated: non-Spanish identities continue to be viewed and treated as inferior and relegated to zones of non-being. Liliana was an internal migrant, but, unlike many of the internal migrants in her classmates' everyday lives, she was a middle-class internal migrant and therefore could move more easily between zones. She felt proud that she could confront her peers about what she viewed as blatant and unacceptable attitudes toward her and other non-Limeños. The racialization inherent in the comments made by Sandra, Hernán, and Liliana's classmates is founded on Peruvian hierarchies central to the coloniality of power.

While Peruvians of different class, racial, and cultural backgrounds regularly occupy the same spaces, they rarely occupy equal roles in those spaces. Another college-aged middle-class Peruvian migrant who had recently returned to Lima after living abroad explained that she realized that when she was younger she had become accustomed to accepting everyday inequalities in her social life with her peers in Lima. She cited as an example 'the *señoras* who sit in the bathrooms to hand you pieces of toilet paper, whom they pay 20 soles to for the entire night of putting up with a bunch of drunk girls or guys, and no one is conscious of that.' She then added that the inequalities persist and that 'in my building [in Lima] the poor boys, who are younger than we are, work twelve hours each day ... the *guachimanes* [private security guards], they are paid 800 soles per month, and that is difficult for me [to accept].' Her reflections further underscore the continued inequalities embedded in everyday middle-class life: underpaid women employed for parties and events, exploited young boys and men working long hours for a salary that will never allow them to become middle-class. While many Peruvians move to Lima in search of better opportunities for themselves and their families, internal Others from indigenous backgrounds frequently find themselves up against physical and social barriers that inhibit their possibilities for significant upward mobility and economic security. The middle-class return migrants I interviewed both recognized and oftentimes directly benefitted from these inequalities.

Some forms of discrimination may be particularly visible, like the treatment of women working as domestic servants in middle- and upper-class households. Iván lives in the United States and regularly visits Lima. When he visits during the summertime, friends and family tend to spend at least part of the time in Asia, an exclusive beach resort south of Lima. Until 2007, posted rules in Asia denied domestic servants and nannies access to the ocean during the day time, the prime time during which wealthy families enjoyed the beach. In 2014, Iván commented to me that he continued to witness discriminatory practices on the beaches in the resort area. These practices bother Iván, yet Iván also benefits from these practices and enjoys the same spaces from which many Peruvians are excluded, including the Asia beaches.

Iván's description of how *empleadas* are treated in Asia – and how his friends and family are complicit in this – is related to a broader and longer history and pattern of racialization and coloniality. As feminist scholars of Peru have demonstrated, critical histories of race relations that also include intersecting gender relations reveal persistent forms of vulnerability, exploitation, and internal Othering imposed on indigenous women, particularly those from rural areas (Babb 2018; de la Cadena 1991; Seligmann 1993). Domestic servants continue to be under-paid, undervalued, and exploited (sometimes

both economically and sexually) in no small part because of the ways in which middle- and upper-class discourses imagine *empleadas*' intersecting gender-race-class identities within a capitalist system of exploitation based largely on race, class, and gender hierarchies. As Drinot rightly notes, 'during the years of the internal armed conflict, many white middle-class Peruvians began to suspect, and certainly to fear, that their *empleadas* were *senderistas*' (Drinot 2014b, 179). This suspicion was not based on any behaviors or evidence they had found but on the simplistic conflation between indigeneity and violence/terrorism. The *empleadas* were from historically poor and indigenous areas of the country, including from the highlands – where Shining Path had developed.

Opportunities, differentiation, and new spaces: 'It depends on whether you present yourself as an educated person'

Middle-class Peruvians typically recognized that Peruvians identified as indigenous or *cholo* might face less discrimination outside of Peru than in Peru due to long-held social-racial hierarchies. Barbara, who had recently returned to Lima from the United States, offered that 'in the United States there are opportunities to move upward economically and socially, which is something that there may not be here in Lima' for poorer Peruvians. She explained that, for example, 'a young man that comes from a very low social class no matter how smart he is he will struggle more here in Lima, and let's say that it is because there is more flexibility in the United States.' Barbara's observation points to how racialized hierarchical divisions and boundary-marking, which are central to coloniality of power and evident in middle and upper-class behaviors and attitudes, create barriers to upward mobility. The barriers that internal migrants face as internal Others in Lima are different than the ones they confront outside of Peru, yet middle-class and upper-class Peruvians may actively work to reinforce these barriers and familiar zones of being and non-being as a way to claim belonging to privileged zones of being in new spaces.

In Canada, middle-class Peruvians worked to separate themselves both from other Peruvians and other immigrants whom they considered less desirable and as belonging to zones of non-being in their communities of origin. In speaking with Peruvian men in Toronto, one thing soon became clear: several of them were part of the same close-knit group of white middle-class friends whose camaraderie dated back to their time together in the Navy in Peru. When I expressed surprise about the presence of this group of former Navy officers in Toronto, all doing very well and all from the same middle- and upper-class backgrounds, David put it bluntly: 'Who becomes a soldier? I don't want to be racist but we all know that it is those of the mestizo race, the *cholitos*, the poor. Who joins the Navy? The *blanquitos* [whites]. Identification with the Navy therefore becomes as a status marker, as it brings in and sustains hierarchical, racialized social divisions originating in Peru's colonialist structures to new spaces also inhabited by different groups of Peruvians.

In bringing up the Navy as a space of belonging, David and other Peruvians I met could indirectly claim middle-class status and whiteness, both important characteristics for being recognized as 'immigrants' rather than 'colonial immigrants' or 'colonial/racial subjects of empire' (Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015). This identification, almost by default, implies distance from indigenous, *cholo*, and poor identities from Peru, even outside Peru. This distance is not simply the result of random choices about which branch of the Armed Forces to join. Specific requirements act as barriers to sustain such 'choices.'

The height requirements for the Air Force, for example, may also work to push some indigenous Peruvians away from this arm of the Armed Forces and into the military. In 2017, the minimum height for men was 1.65 meters for men (5 foot 4 inches) and 1.60 meters for women (5 foot 2 inches). Some Peruvians, particularly indigenous Peruvians, are less likely to be able to meet those height requirements.

Another man from the group of Navy-affiliated men I interviewed mentioned that he sometimes felt discriminated against. When I asked him if he considered the discrimination he experienced to be a result of racism, he quickly added that, 'I don't know if I would call it racism. In my case, I haven't felt much racism, more like prejudice against Latin Americans. Racism is something someone who has a different skin color feels.' Even as he acknowledged that he had been discriminated against he asserted his whiteness and proximity to mainstream identities and zones of being, to differentiate himself from Latin Americans who could not do the same. His understanding of racism echoes North American understandings of racism which emphasize skin color, in contrast to approaches that reflect the more complex hierarchies that inform race and racism in Peru – the political, cultural, linguistic, religious and economic markers that define racism as a hierarchical phenomenon of superiority and inferiority (Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015).

In differentiating themselves from other immigrants, middle-class Peruvians sometimes referred to Canada's official policy of multiculturalism. Gabriela, a long-time resident of Toronto, reported that she had never felt discriminated against in the city, explaining that, 'what is beautiful about this country is that because it is a country full of immigrants' so there is little discrimination. Within a few seconds, she added that, 'I have seen it [discrimination] but it depends on whether you present yourself as an educated person, with respect.' As a middle-class, professional woman she and her family could easily present themselves in the ways she viewed as important to avoid the discrimination faced by internal Others in Peru and Canada.

Gabriela's qualifier that you are okay as long as you present yourself as educated underscores her positioning of herself and those like her within a realm of belonging and respectability that is closed to others who do not possess certain identities. Later in the conversation she explained where different groups of Peruvians as well as other South Americans lived in Toronto, noting which ones were *bien ubicados* (well-situated, both economically and socially). She explained that while this was not the case for all Latin Americans, the majority of Peruvians in the area she identified were *bien ubicados*. After I mentioned that my understanding was that there was also a sizable Colombian community in the area, Gabriela explained that 'South Americans are viewed positively, Central Americans [are viewed] differently, but the South Americans who are here, at least in this area, are very well viewed.' Gabriela makes a distinction between Peruvians and other South Americans who are well-positioned and Central Americans whom she presents as not well-positioned, and therefore more likely to be perceived as 'colonial immigrants.' The latter immigrants, in her view, are unable to present themselves as 'an educated person, with respect' and are therefore more likely to experience discrimination. She does not condemn the discrimination to which they may be subjected.

Similar to Gabriela, Piero referred to multiculturalism as positive while simultaneously suggesting that some immigrants were more difficult to include in a multicultural society. He explained that 'I really appreciate multiculturalism, and it comes with lots of problems, and Canadians are very naïve about that.' He added that he and other (middle-class)

Peruvians he knew had no trouble in this society because ‘our customs are very similar’ to those of middle-class Canadians and contrasted this to Muslim immigrants, whom Piero viewed as having very different customs and therefore more difficulty integrating. Here we again see the inclusion of middle-class Peruvians in privileged realms of belonging and being at the same time as other immigrants are deemed as too different from this white, middle-class norm to be included in these realms of being.

In the United States, Peruvians spoke of how commonly a Latino identity was imposed on them, in spite of Latin American heterogeneity. While some eventually embraced a pan-Latino identity, most initially rejected it. Patricia would differentiate herself by identifying herself to others as, ‘no, not me, I am Peruvian,’ adding that she and her Peruvian friends ‘developed a sort of pride to not be Mexican, [but] not so much to the point of being racist.’ She explained that other South Americans, and some Mexicans, also shared this pride in not identifying with the majority of Mexicans in the country because ‘the vast majority of Mexicans are there because they have a very low economic status.’ Like the middle-class Peruvians in Canada, middle-class Peruvians in the United States seek to differentiate themselves from fellow Peruvians and others whom they see as embodying an inferior status. Peruvians in both settings are more likely to identify with middle-class, ‘educated’ immigrants from other countries and from the host society than with those from their own country or other Latin American countries (such as Mexico) who are positioned near the bottom of social-class-racial hierarchies informed by pre-existing histories of race, class, gender, and power.

Liliana had a similar reaction to being grouped together with other Latin Americans in the United States. And, like Patricia, her rejection of a Latino identity had more to do with its association with lower-status than with any inherent rejection of similarities among Latin Americans. Liliana explained that people she met regularly assumed that she was Mexican because she spoke Spanish. She added, ‘I don’t like it. I feel very uncomfortable, because they see that the Latino [here] doesn’t have culture, respect, education. So they always say, “Oh, you’re Mexican,” and I say, “No, I’m not from Mexico, I’m from Peru.”’ Sometimes, she adds, ‘I have to get out a map and say, “Look, Mexico is here, and we [Peruvians] are very far. South America is very far.”’ In bringing out a map, Liliana not only provides those she is speaking to with a geography lesson but, most significantly, explicitly distances herself from the identities and connotations that middle-class identification has historically defined itself against: poor, indigenous, uneducated. As in the dominant middle-class discourses on internal migrants in Lima, middle-class Peruvians in the United States and Canada see those they wish to separate themselves from as lacking culture, education, and respect.

Entrenching inequalities

In 2020, the covid-19 pandemic response in Peru has uncovered the depth of the foundational societal inequalities that characterize postcolonial Peru. Preventative measures such as stay-at-home orders and economic aid, which were put in place early on by President Martín Vizcarra, proved inefficient in the context of extreme societal inequalities. Current structural inequalities and social hierarchies, mired in histories of economic inequality, racism, and sexism, made it impossible for large numbers of the population to stay home given the precarity of housing, lack of access to running water, absence of

access to refrigerators to keep food from spoiling, and lack of savings.⁶ Those most affected by these inequalities were those whose families had migrated to Lima during earlier decades and internal migrants – many of whom sought to return, sometimes by foot, to their communities in the Andes from the increasingly harsh and lethal conditions in Lima. Confronted with these inequalities, the rates of covid-19 cases in Peru have come close to those in Brazil, where preventative measures were markedly absent. These inequalities define the resources available to different populations, with those who are perceived as internal Others and pushed to inhabit zones of non-being facing continued oppression and discrimination. In this context, social identities within and outside of Peru are founded on forms of racialization and status-marking that are central to forms of power and have very real consequences.

The status and power of middle-class Peruvians are intricately tied to the construction of an internal, racialized Other rooted in colonial structures. While in theory all Peruvians have the same citizenship rights, in practice inside and outside of Peru, Peruvians exert and experience varying levels of inequality and exclusion. Outside Peru, middle- and upper-class Peruvians work to differentiate themselves not only from domestic minorities in their new communities but from other Peruvians with whom they may otherwise be grouped. Examining these processes centers racialization in migration, and in transnational processes of belonging.

The conclusion of any such examination is that transnational lives are shaped not only by the mobility of individuals, but by racialized discourses that reinforce and sustain inequalities and exclusion. Negative attitudes and racist practices toward internal Others are central to Peruvian middle- and upper-class identities transnationally. There is no clear straight line from the colonial period to the present, yet embedded racialized hierarchies have continued to develop, making today's practices sometimes eerily similar to those of the past yet more expansive. These practices remind us that even as migration necessitates adaptation and the learning of new practices and customs, positions of privilege may also encourage the reinforcement of local (to the country of origin) hierarchies that reflect colonial legacies in new communities, and the coloniality of power so central to some migrants' high status in Peru.

Middle-class discrimination against some migrants constitutes a sustained effort to maintain, or increase, power while simultaneously rejecting and enforcing distance from indigeneity and lower-status. Inside Peru, the devaluation of and self-distancing from *cholo*, *indio*, and *serrano* identities becomes a common thread across stories of migration. Outside Peru, in North America, migrants reject these identities and distance themselves from domestic minorities, the 'colonial/racial subjects of empire,' and 'colonial immigrants' in new settings (Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015). Peruvians may work to differentiate themselves from existing Latinx identities as a way to separate themselves from lower-status internal Others. These strategies within and outside of Peru support middle-class aspirations of maintaining higher status in racial-class hierarchies largely by identifying and then rejecting internal Others of lower status, as a way to claim belonging in existing zones of being. Middle-class Peruvians are far from homogeneous, yet a transnational perspective on the persistence of coloniality of power in middle-class migration discourses and practices helps center racialization in migration and underscores the centrality of race and racialization in forms of *peruanidad* across borders.

Notes

1. All names used in this article are pseudonyms.
2. Scholars have engaged with coloniality of power to analyze postcolonial contexts and phenomena beyond Peru and Latin America. While developed in the context of European colonization of the Americas, coloniality of power has proven useful in analyzing the experience of coloniality within global matrices of power in other postcolonial contexts as well, including among Aboriginal peoples in Australia (Stead and Altman 2019), postcolonial Africa (Bertolt 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013) and even within the Caucasus and Central Asia (Tlostanova 2006).
3. Recently, the term '*cholo*' has acquired more positive connotations as more individuals proudly self-identify as *cholo* and more Peruvians claim that Peru is a predominantly *cholo* nation.
4. In my earlier research in Lima in 2001–2002, one woman described to me and a group of other women how she angrily defended herself from her abusive husband because 'I don't know, the *indio* in me comes out, the *cholo* in me comes out, all my generations come out!' In this case, *cholo* and *indio* are associated with wild uncontrollable forces of anger (and self-defense) from within.
5. Multiculturalism has been the official Canadian immigration policy since 1971, and civic duties and people's sense of belonging are formally prioritized over assimilation in Canada (Armony, Barriga, and Schugurensky 2004).
6. The contrast between the preventative measures and the increasing number of covid-19 cases has been covered in the media, including in the New York Times article, 'Virus Exposes Weak Links in Peru's Success Story,' published 12 June 2020, available online.

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