“Ni paisana, ni Jacinta”: Language and the Scaling of Indigenous Femininity in Peru

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ABSTRACT

In Peru, Andean indigeneity is often discursively gendered as female. Such a connection between indigeneity and femaleness is invoked in a range of discourses that marginalize the status of Indigenous individuals, and different forms of Indigenous heritage in the country. Yet does this imply that all variations of Indigenous femininity are evaluated and ideologized the same way? This article complicates the semiotic logics and frameworks by which Indigenous female figures have been evaluated and analyzed across different historical moments and ethnographic contexts in Peru. I use the concept of “scale” (Blommaert 2007; Gal and Irvine 2019) to highlight the conflicting and competing ideologized stances and modes of evaluation that compare Indigenous identities, female bodies, and linguistic practices in relation to each other. Through this analysis, I will show that the evaluation of Indigenous female identities is enmeshed in a matrix of competing ideologized scalar regimes, highlighting the need to think about the construction and evaluation of racial and gendered types as shifting across multiple semiotic fields and different ideologized paradigms of evaluation.

Every August, Indigenous *puneñas* (women from Puno) who are members of different artisanal handicraft cooperatives in the Department of Puno leave the high altitudes of the *altiplano* to sell their goods at the national fairs in Lima. Organized as part of a larger set of independence day celebrations (*fiestas patrias*), such fairs were created promote the cultural and artistic diversity

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that exists in Peru, reflecting the increasing dominance of the discourses of *interculturalidad* (interculturality), framed around celebrating cultural diversity and plurality with the nation (García 2005). But for these women from Puno, whose first languages are primarily Quechua and Aymara, such fairs are moments of vulnerability that expose them to forms of anti-Indigenous discrimination from non-Indigenous *limeños* (individuals from Lima).

One of my closest interlocutors, an older Aymara-speaking bilingual *puneña* named Señora Estela, recounted to me one interaction that involved obtaining a permit from a local municipal official to set up a series of stalls for her artisanal cooperative in the center of Lima. In addition to being hesitant to grant her the permit, the official repeated the various rules and regulations that she and her fellow Indigenous *puneñas* had to abide by if they did not want to incur any additional fines and fees. In particular, the official stressed to her the penalties that would be imposed if she and her associates did not "mantengan la limpieza de la ciudad" (maintain the cleanliness of the city).

Though not explicitly stated, such warnings indirectly draw on common racist assumptions of the dirtiness of Indigenous populations, particularly those from the Andean highlands. Such racially charged comments, which place indigeneity within the same semiotic field as qualities like "dirtiness" and "uncleanliness," circulate widely across Peru and especially within urban centers like the capital. Yet it is also important to note the degree to which such racialized statements are simultaneously gendered, aligning the negative qualities associated with Indigenous identities with female bodies.

This reality was not only implied in Señora Estela's interactional exchange with this municipal official but can also be found in discourses and commentaries by non-Indigenous individuals, activists, and journalists. Consider for example, the following comment from the Peruvian journalist Joseph Zárate featured in a 2020 interview on BBC Mundo (Valencia 2020):

> A more common example is that in my country, for at least the past 10 years, you did discriminate against another person. You would stop and tell them, *chola de mierda*, *serrana de mierda* [Indigenous Andean woman of shit], go and return to your village, you never will be anyone because you do not have education and you will always be a lowlife. You would say this, and people will not be scandalized, or they would not notice. Or say if you see the TV series where the comedians act, they reproduce an image of the Andean women with grotesque, caricatured features, and the people find this to be natural and they laugh at it.

Although Zárate was commenting on the general state of discrimination and prejudice in Peru, his examples were both gendered and racialized, focusing specifically on the verbal violence and mockery that Indigenous women experience. Like the racialized statements directed at Señora Estela by the municipal official, the racialized and gendered meanings from Zárate's comments emerge through the use and interchangeability of two terms: *serrana* and *chola*. *Serrana* (woman from the mountains), when used by non-Indigenous Spanish monolinguals, invokes the figure of the traditional, rural Indigenous woman who makes her living by subsistence farming and herding. *Chola*, when uttered by a non-Indigenous Spanish monolingual, invokes the figure of the sexualized Indigenous woman from the Andean highlands, whose physicality is distorted through her mixed, Indigenous heritage and her openness (and vulnerability) to sexual exploitation (see Weismantel 2001). Such terms expand the semiotic field of Indigenous femininity by evaluating Indigenous women in relation to a specific region of origin within the country, place of residence, sexual behaviors, occupation, and ideas about physical appearances, which together reinforce their racialized and marginalized status from the perspective of non-Indigenous individuals like Zárate.

Señora Estela's experiences illustrates one of many instances of bias and discrimination that is experienced by other Indigenous *puneña* women when they leave Puno for Lima. Yet, during my fieldwork, I also became aware of how these same women faced similar kinds of biases and prejudice within their home region of Puno. However, instead of being placed in a semiotic field that aligned indigeneity with "dirtiness" or being "from the mountains," *puneña* women seemed to be evaluated against two contrasting fields that compared them to the ideologized and idealized figures associated with the ethnolinguistic labels of "Quechua" and "Aymara." During my time in Puno, I was often told by Indigenous men—especially those who held positions of power and authority in the capital, Puno—that the Indigenous women with whom I had become acquainted were not good examples of Indigenous Quechua or Aymara identity in the region. Thus, while Indigenous *puneña* women were perceived negatively, their negative evaluation was based on a different set of evaluative categories and their corresponding semiotic fields.

This article considers how Indigenous femininity and femaleness is a shifting category that is interpreted, evaluated, and compared against varying idealized types of Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizenship in Peru. I propose that evaluations and ideologized perceptions of Indigenous femininity or femaleness are not shaped by a single set of ideologized discourses and semiotic logics. Instead, I argue that Indigenous femininity is shaped by competing sets of ideologized discourses and semiotic fields that are particular to specific ethnographic places and moments of time, contributing to the partial and sometimes conflicting sets of ideologized evaluations of Indigenous femininity from varying perspectives from different parts of the country.

To unpack this phenomenon, my analysis rests on the analytic framework of scale and "scale-making" (Blommaert 2007; Carr and Lempert 2016; Gal and Irvine 2019) to show how particular enfigurements of Indigenous women and femininity emerge out of specific semiotic fields of comparison and projection. In other words, Indigenous femininity is a category that is evaluated, compared, or ideologically scaled against other kinds of idealized types of social difference in Peru. Each idealized type, therefore, becomes an ideological, evaluative "scale" that invokes a specific kind of Indigenous female figure as the most typical (or atypical) version of that evaluative regime. However, because such logics of social difference are grounded in a particular ideologized perspective, each instance of scale-making is influenced by other ideologies that maintain the marginalization of Indigenous women and Indigenous femininities across different ethnographic and historical contexts in Peru.

Following a brief discussion of the analytic concept of ideological scaling and its relevance to complicating our understanding of Indigenous femininities in Peru and the Andes, I present three different kinds of scalar logics and show how each selects and typifies a specific kind of Indigenous woman as the most (or least) exemplary version of that evaluative regime: the *paisana* (traditional, rural Indigenous woman) as the epitome of Indigenous identity; the unfeminine Indigenous women as the antithesis of an ideal femininity: and the multilingual Indigenous *puneña* woman as the antithesis of Indigenous identity in the Department of Puno in the *altiplano*. Each ideologized practice of scaling invokes a particular kind of Indigenous female figure, thereby situating Indigenous women within a particular semiotic field (Babel 2018) that indexically links linguistic practices with other signs of social difference. In each ideologized semiotic field, therefore, a specific figure of Indigenous femininity becomes the most contrastive type of social difference when compared with others in that evaluative scheme. Yet these schemas also intersect and influence each other, enmeshing Indigenous femininity within these competing and contradictory ideologized modes of evaluation.

Scalar Projects, Indigenous Identities, and Female Bodies across Peru and the Andes

The term *scale* has been used as an analytic metaphor and theoretical framework within linguistic anthropology in several ways. Blommaert, for instance, introduces scale as a "site" or level of ethnographic and linguistic analysis such that practices that can be found in one analytic unit or site might connect with practices at other comparable sites or "scales." Scale, in short, allows the researcher to look at the kinds of connections that are made between diverse sets of sociolinguistic practices by social actors beyond the confines of a single ethnographic site that transcends a basic micro-macro divide, which Choksi describes as the "process by which participants order a range of semiotic material through shifting participant alignments along interactionally produced sociotemporal clines" (2015, 1). In the same vein, Carr and Lempert shift the focus away from the term *scale* in favor of *scale-making*, which emphasizes the "efforts to sort, group, and categorize many things, people, and qualities in order of relative degrees of elevation or centrality" (2016, 3). Scale and scale-making, therefore, are ultimately ideological projects of comparison, projection, and encompassment that order, group, and categorize linguistic practices with other social types and kinds along and ideologized set of metrics.

Yet crucial in this mode of analysis is the role of perspective and positionality in shaping which practices or discourses get "scaled" and how that scaling is achieved. As Gal and Irvine note, "scaling is a relational practice that relies on situated juxtapositions and comparisons among events, persons, things, and activities; that is, among sites of attention" (2019, 218). Thus, scale and scale-making are not only about the ways that discourses from different or competing ideological projects travel and circulate across space and time. Instead, per Gal and Irvine, the ways things get "scaled"—evaluated, compared, and projected—is contingent on a particular set of perspectives that not only influence how linguistic practices and other semiotic resources get bundled together to produce enregistered types (Agha 2005) but also shape the degree to which these situated comparisons may travel, intersect, or influence other ideological regimes or discourses in other sites.

As such, scaling is an ideological project that involves some form of ordering, comparison, and ideological projection. Yet an aspect of scale that has not been fully addressed is the multiplicity of scalar practices. While multiplicity and the ensuing diversity and contradiction in language ideologies have been discussed within the linguistic anthropological literature (Gal 1993), a similar approach to the multiplicity of scalar regimes of evaluation has not received the same kind of scholarly attention. As I will argue in the examples below, closer attention to the multiplicity of scalar practices of evaluation, and the semiotic and ideological processes that inform this multiplicity, can help unpack the diverse ways that Indigenous femininity and Indigenous women have been interpreted and evaluated across the Andes. In addition to showing the diversity of ways Indigenous femaleness is evaluated, understanding how different scale-making processes intersect and diverge can also explain how the ideologized evaluation of a single enregistered figure or type, such as the marginalization of Indigenous women or Indigenous femininity, is reproduced across diverse and contradictory scalar logics and evaluative processes.

Since the colonial encounter, Indigenous femininity has been defined in relation to histories of contact, sexual violence, and exploitation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations (Paz 1959; Canessa 2012). However, recent feminist explorations have sought to complicate these narratives and disentangle the binaries that separate Indigenous from non-Indigenous individuals, as well as men from women. Mary Weismantel (2001) and Joanne Rappaport (2014), for instance, have both articulated how Indigenous femininity is shaped by larger networks of signs and social relationships such that Indigenous femaleness is defined not only through parentage but also through other signs, such as dress, residence, and sexuality. The inclusion of language and linguistic praxis also brings in another dimension, highlighting the varied semiotic terrain that undergirds the evaluation of Indigenous women. Karl Swinehart (2018), for instance, has highlighted how the figure of *la bilingüe* situates bilingual fluencies between Spanish and an Indigenous language within a larger indexical field, such that bilingualism can be emblematic of gender, Indigenous identity, region, or socioeconomic class. Similarly, Anna Babel (2018) details how contrasting semiotic fields—constellations of signs that align linguistic proficiencies with other signs of identity, such as styles of dress or political alignments—shape the ways that residents of Saipina, Bolivia, articulate and navigate the contradictions between racialized, gendered, and linguistic identities.

All these studies highlight the variation in evaluative practices around Indigenous gendered bodies and reveal the contradictions in the evaluative logics surrounding the interpretability, legibility, and value of Indigenous women. Approaching this problem through the lens of multiple scalar, evaluative regimes can redirect our focus to the processes of comparison and projection that produce the same ideologized product across diverse times and spaces. As I will show in the following sections, Indigenous femininity becomes a focal point for different evaluative frameworks that set the standards for the place of Indigenous individuals, their linguistic practices, and gendered associations and performances within the nation-state.

La Paisana and the Enfigurement of Indigeneity as Female

Social engagement and evaluation of the Indigenous heritage and histories within Peru first began during the late colonial period the of the eighteenth century (Mannheim 1984) and reemerged during the early Republican period of the early nineteenth century, after the formation of the independent Peruvian nation-state (Mendez 1996). Both historical moments were marked by a nationalistic (or early nationalistic) pride in the distinctiveness of a Peruvian national identity that was shaped by, and descended from, pre-Hispanic Indigenous civilizations of the area. And, both moments sought to connect *criollo*, or Spanish-descended Peruvian born intellectuals, landholders, and wealthy established families, with the Inkaic rulers of the past, laying claim to their own legitimacy and political authority by positioning themselves as the heirs of the Inka empire. Through the revalorization of cultural and artistic customs associated with the Inka, as well as the temporary revalorization of Quechua language and literature, the image of an Inkaic Indigenous past was idealized and elevated to represent the distinct national identity of Peru and of its elite *criollo* families.

The gendering of this idealized Indigenous past however would only occur in the early twentieth century as a product of the *indigenista* intellectual movement that originated out of Cusco, the former capital of the Inka empire. As Marisol de la Cadena (2000) has shown, *indigenista* intellectuals of the time initiated a political and intellectual project that sought to celebrate and reanimate interest in the Indigenous cultural and linguistic traditions of the Andes. In addition to celebrating the achievements of the Inka empire, *indigenistas* also tried to elevate the cultural and political importance of the Andes within Peru. Yet *indigenistas* were also careful to ensure that an ideologically purified image of indigeneity would be celebrated and promoted through their efforts. This image of Andean indigeneity was grounded in the idealized existence of the "untouched" Indigenous individual, whose lifeways and traditions were unchanged and unaffected by European contact. This authentically "pure" individual was restricted to living in the rural countryside, maintained their traditional Indigenous beliefs and practices, and was a monolingual Indigenous language speaker. Furthermore, this ideologized framing of the ideal Indigenous subject was also gendered, aligning these features of ideal indigeneity with the traditional Indigenous Andean woman, the *paisana* (de la Cadena 2002).

The creation and idealization of the *paisana* that emerged from these early twentieth-century projects therefore gendered the semiotic field and constituted indigeneity such that women and femaleness became aligned with other typified signs of an Indigenous background such as traditionalism, residence in the rural highlands, and Indigenous monolingual fluencies. The creation of the *paisana* and enregistering women with indigeneity also helped contribute to the dominant gendered discourses that positions Indigenous women as being more "Indigenous" than men (de la Cadena 1995). Making Indigenous women paradigmatic of all of indigeneity therefore is one instance of ideological scaling that emerges from the creation of the *paisana* by *indigenista* intellectuals of the early twentieth century. Statements, attitudes, and discourses that evaluate women as being more Indigenous than men are evaluative statements that distinguishes degrees and kinds of indigeneity along gendered lines. Yet such scalar comments are also grounded in longer histories of anti-Indigenous prejudice and violence, where being "Indigenous" is devalued when compared with being non-Indigenous and racially unmarked. In other words, it is not only the case that women get scaled as more Indigenous than men but also that the traditional, rural Indigenous woman is the figure most often invoked by non-Indigenous, monolingual speakers and social actors when talking about indigeneity and Indigenous populations in the Andes.

It is through this fractal recursion (Irvine and Gal 2000) that Indigenous women get marked as targets of anti-Indigenous sentiments and violence. This targeting is reproduced through microaggressions and forms of discrimination that emerge between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous professionals working for governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions (Huayhua 2018), and it has also figured in more violent histories against Indigenous women, such as the forced sterilization of Indigenous Andean women in the highlands during the Fujimori regime (Carranza Ko 2021). This scaling and evaluation of women as more Indigenous is also reflected statements made by non-Indigenous Peruvians about Indigenous individuals. Zarate's comments in the introduction, for instance, explicitly describe anti-Indigenous sentiment through specifically targeting Indigenous women by using words like *serrana* and *chola*, which directly evokes the image of the Indigenous Andean woman. Automatically defaulting to women when talking about Indigenous experiences within Peru highlights the pervasiveness of discourses that circulate the semiotic field enregistered by twentieth-century *indigenista* intellectuals with the creation of the idealized *paisana*. Yet this process has also positioned Indigenous women to be the target of anti-Indigenous sentiment, making them the Indigenous individuals most likely to be on the receiving end of discriminatory practices in real life and the most typical subjects in discursive accounts of anti-Indigenous marginalization.

The Mockable Unfemininity of Urban Indigenous Women

Through the elevation of the imagined, idealized *paisana* in the early twentieth century, Indigenous women became more Indigenous than men, and femaleness became equated with Indigenous identity. Thus, in the semiotic field of indigeneity, women and femaleness exists in relationship to being monolingual in an Indigenous language, maintaining traditional dress and customs, and living in a rural Andean community. However, how is the femininity and femaleness of Indigenous women scaled when compared with other kinds of women within Peru? This section considers a different mode of scaling for Indigenous women, where Indigenous femininity is scaled in relation to other kinds of women within the semiotic field of femininity in Peru.

Generally, Indigenous women are scaled as "less feminine" than other women, particularly non-Indigenous, monolingual Spanish-speaking women. Not only does their indigeneity place them on the fringes of the semiotic field of femininity and femaleness, but they are further marginalized by being from rural communities in the Andes and by not having a fluent command of Spanish like a monolingual speaker of the language. While such qualities have placed Indigenous women outside of the semiotic field of evaluation of womanhood in Peru to varying degrees, the least "feminine" Indigenous woman is the figure of the urbanized Indigenous woman. Urbanized Indigenous women have most often been approached in the literature through the lens of their racialized integrity as to how Indigenous they are and have been discursively and analytically labeled as *mestiza* (woman of mixed Indigenous heritage) or, more pejoratively, *chola* (Weismantel 2001). These terms are not fixed racialized categories; instead, they speak more to the presence of Indigenous women working and living in urban spaces. Nevertheless, both terms evoke an image of an unfeminine urbanized Indigenous woman whose lack of femininity is traced to both her Indigenous origins and the fact that she lives in cities and urban spaces. Furthermore, her lack of femininity is exacerbated by habits and behaviors that are also considered unfeminine, in relation to the ideals associated with both the traditional *paisana* and with femaleness more generally. Such behaviors not only include loud and lewd talk but also an aggressive demeanor and sexual promiscuity (Weismantel 2001; Canessa 2012).

The lack of femininity exhibited by urbanized Indigenous women also makes them the subject of jokes and mockery, targeting the qualities that make them marginalized female figures while also serving as metapragmatic commentary on the ways that femaleness is ideologically scaled and valued in Peru. The most infamous example of this mockery is the popular television show *La paisana Jacinta*, which captures and reproduces ideologized perceptions of the lack of femininity among urbanized Indigenous women (de los Heros 2016). Part of these scalar evaluations can be found in the main character Jacinta's physical appearance, which includes disheveled hair, mismatched clothes, and missing teeth. Her unfeminine status is additionally reinforced by the fact that the actor portraying Jacinta is a non-Indigenous man who walks in a clumsy, ungraceful, almost childlike manner.

Her lack of femininity, which makes her a mockable subject, can also be traced to the Spanish that Jacinta uses. Compared with the primarily monolingual Spanish viewing audience, Jacinta performs a disfluent, or incorrect, variety of Spanish that reflects her status as a bilingual speaker whose first language was an Indigenous Andean language. Transcript 1, from episode 115 of *La paisana Jacinta*, "Jacinta tamalera," highlights some of the most common features that mark Jacinta's Spanish, ensuring that Spanish monolinguals viewing the show interpret her speech as incorrect, disfluent, or funny sounding. Yet the creation and use of this mediatized mock register for a racialized or marginalized figure also reinforces ideological evaluations of that individual's marginalized status in relation to other social orders of evaluation. Similar to the racialization of Native Americans through "Hollywood Injun English" (Meek 2006) or the enregisterment of the *Colla* in Bolivian comedies (Swinehart 2012), the creation and use of these registers not only enhances the character's otherness but also scales them against other types and kinds of social personae. Therefore, the disfluent Spanish of Jacinta reinforces her indigeneity and makes her the racialized "other." At the same time, the use of this mediatized variety of a grammatically impoverished, incorrect Spanish scales her femininity in relation to the semiotic fields of ideal femaleness in Peru:[1]

Transcript 1

Tamalero:	Ya tamales haces tú? A ver, ¿qué tipo de tamale haces?	Yeah, you make tamales? Let's see, what kind of tamales do you make?
	¿De chancho, de carne . . . o asi de pollito?	[Tamales] of pork, of beef . . . or like this of chicken?
Jacinta:	Bueno d**i**pende d**i** m**i**nu s**i**ñur	Well, depends on the menu sir
	Hasta más grande [los hago]-s**i**ñ**u**r. Asit**u** hasta más grand**i** s**i**ñ**u**r	Up till much bigger [I can make them] sir. Like this but much bigger sir
Tamalero:	No . . . bueno bueno bueno . . . haces más grande entonces?	No . . . well good good ok . . . you make them much bigger then?'
Jacinta:	Si s**i**ñ**u**r	Yes sir

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[1] In this and the following transcripts, I employ the following conventions: **BOLD:** vowel change ([e] changes to [i]; [o] changes to [u], respectively); [ ]: verb in phrase final position; { }: incorrect agreement (either incorrect subject-verb agreement or agreement between modifiers and nouns); < >: incorrect word order; (): missing or unarticulated elements; =( )= : overlapping talk.

Transcript 1 (*continued*)

Tamalero:	¿Tú me haces tamales más grandes que aquicitos?	You can make me bigger tamales then these [small ones] here?
Jacinta:	Mas grande si . . . chiquitit**u**s s**i**ñ**u**r	Much bigger yes . . . [these] are really small sir
Tamalero:	¿Esta tamale es muy chiquitito?	This tamale is really small?
Jacinta:	Es doble [lo hago]. Para arriba más grand**i** s**i**ñ**u**r de isos	[I make] double [the size]. Much bigger than these sir
Tamalero:	=(inaudible)=	
Tamalero:	¿Tú lo haces en una olla muy grande entonces?	You must make them in a large pot then?
Jacinta:	Aw no no . . . yo no necesit**u** olla. Cualquier parte [lo hago]- s**i**ñ**u**r	Aw no no . . . I don't need a pot. I can make them anywhere sir

Jacinta's depiction as an unfeminine woman is also achieved through placing the character in situations that reinforce her position as a mockable subject. As a comedy show, *La paisana Jacinta* engages in a variety of antics that contrasts her against more knowing, non-Indigenous residents of Lima. Across the various scenarios, Jacinta's otherness emerges through emphasizing her ignorance and inability to conform to life in the city. Furthermore, many of these scenarios frame her ignorance in relation to other unfeminine behaviors, thereby equating Jacinta's naïveté with her tendency to behave in rude or vulgar ways that do not conform to idealized, urbanized standards of femininity. This kind of obliviousness and unfeminine behavior can be seen in transcript 2, also from episode 115 and a continuation of the same scene, in which Jacinta declares that she can make a tamale of spaghetti with red sauce. The punchline and resolution of the situation comes when she exclaims, "Haciendo mi tamal-pis siñur!" (I am making my tamal sir!), which she says as she lifts her skirt to relieve herself in the *tamalero's* basket:

Transcript 2

Jacinta:	Si . . . pues puedo ser una **u**rita si quieres entonces	Yes . . . well I make one right now if you want therefore
	<De tallarines rojos lo hago **u**rita un**u**> - s**i**ñ**u**r	<I can make one of spaghetti with red sauce right now>- sir
Tamalero:	¿Tamale de tallarín rojo?	Tamale of spaghetti with red sauce?
Jacinta:	Si	Yes
Tamalero:	¡Eso nunca he le visto! Nunca vi!	I have never seen this! Never!
Jacinta:	Si-*pis* <se lo>	Yes <I know (how to make it)>
Tamalero:	¿Cuéntame . . . no se lo va a dar a nadie?	Tell me . . . you are not going to give it to anyone else?
Jacinta:	¡No . . . acá [te hago]!	No . . . [I make it] here!
Tamalero:	=(inaudible)=	

Transcript 2 (*continued*)

Jacinta:	Acá en tu canasta	Here in your basket
Tamalero:	Ahorita?	Right now?
Jacinta:	En tu canasta [te lo hago]	[I will make it] in your basket
Tamalero:	(claps) Rapidito, no va que se venga la competencia . . . se vayan a ganar pues . . .	Hurry, before the competition comes, so that they also don't take part (gain from) on this . . .
	(Jacinta lifts skirt to sit on basket. Tamalero pushes her off and starts shouting)	
	Oi! Oi! ¿Qué estás haciendo?	Hey! Hey! What are you doing?
Jacinta:	(estoy) Haciendo mi tamal- *pis* s**i**ñ**u**r!	I am making my tamale sir!
Tamalero:	¿Qué tamal?	What tamal?
Jacinta:	¡Tú me has empujado! ¡Me has cortado mi modo siñur!	You have pushed me! You have cut my flow sir!

At one level, the humor in this joke draws on racialized prejudices that monolingual Spanish speakers have of Indigenous populations. However, the performance and portrayal of Jacinta draws more on the ideologized semiotic fields of femininity in Peru, specifically pointing to longer histories of the defeminization of Indigenous women in urban spaces and the circulation of these (dis)figured and defeminized female types through pejorative terms like *chola*. *La paisana Jacinta* therefore, crystalizes the ways Indigenous women, and especially the urbanized Indigenous woman, are interpreted and positioned as unfeminine, to the point of being almost antifeminine. Furthermore, when compared with the semiotic fields of the *paisana*, not only are Indigenous women more Indigenous than men, but they are also less womanly than other women, thereby making them the object of mockery, prejudice, and discrimination.

How Indigenous Are Indigenous *Puneña* Women?

So far in this essay, Indigenous femininity is evaluated against two kinds of scalar regimes. One is the relative scaling of an Indigenous individual, where Indigenous women are "more Indigenous." However, when it comes to evaluating their femininity, Indigenous women are also less "female" or "less feminine" than other kinds of women. While both scalar frameworks and their associative semiotic fields result in the discursive marginalization of Indigenous women, it is also important to note that both frameworks emerge from the perspective of Spanish monolinguals and populations historically associated with Peru's intellectual and socioeconomic elite. Therefore, the question remains, how might Indigenous women, and Indigenous femaleness, be evaluated when the ideological evaluative frameworks are shifted to more Indigenous or non-Hispanic perspectives of understanding social difference and the associated semiotic fields?

These differences became apparent during my time conducting fieldwork in Puno, Peru, located in the *altiplano*. The region is the site of long-term inter-Indigenous contact and multilingualism between Quechua- and Aymara-speaking communities (Adelaar and Muysken 2004). Although Puno is in the Andean highlands, it differs from other areas, where indigeneity or Indigenous identity is privileged along a Quechua-Aymara axis. In other words, in Puno today, it is not enough to claim that one is Indigenous. Instead, one must demonstrate and perform one's Indigenous identity through being interpreted as either Indigenous Quechua or Indigenous Aymara, thus reproducing ideologies of ethnolinguistic difference that separate speakers, communities, and other cultural practices along an ethnolinguistic ideologized boundary (Irvine and Gal 2000). Furthermore, the semiotic field in Puno is split not along the lines of being Indigenous or non-Indigenous but instead along an axis that separates qualities, practices, and linguistic forms that constitute being Quechua from a similar semiotic field that constitutes being Aymara.

Today the social and linguistic landscape in Puno has been shaped by these ideologies of ethnolinguistic boundary maintenance and regimentation that monitor not only the differences between Quechua and Aymara linguistically but also the differences between Indigenous ethnic "Quechuas" and "Aymaras" socially, culturally, and politically. Furthermore, discourses and institutional projects throughout the *altiplano* reinforce the alignment and difference between both semiotic fields, widening the social distance measuring indigeneity between Quechuas and Aymaras. Such projects not only include the increased codification of styles of dress, projects of linguistic purification, and regional origin within the *altiplano* but were also extended to evaluations about political party affiliations, economic achievement, and degrees of participation in forms of Indigenous activism and mobilization. Thus, although the Department of Puno is regarded by many *puneños* as a multilingual Indigenous region, many of my Quechua- and Aymara-speaking interlocutors would also tell me that the best representation of Quechua or Aymara linguistic and cultural authenticity came from rural communities outside of the main regional capital of Puno that do not border a province or community of a different ethnolinguistic affiliation. Therefore, the semiotic fields that constituted an Indigenous Quechua or Aymara identity included linguistic varieties, cultural practices, and regions that were regarded as equally bounded and lacking in histories of contact and interaction with another ethnolinguistic group or community.

However, the dominance of such discourses and the reproduction of indigeneity as being constructed by two contrasting semiotic fields contradicts histories of inter-Indigenous interactions that have shaped Puno since before the Spanish conquest (Narayanan 2018). Long-term contact, for instance, has created a linguistic ecology in which *puneños* typically code-mix and engage in forms of lexical borrowing across Quechua, Aymara, and Spanish, blurring the ideologized linguistic boundaries between the languages that are discursively promoted regionally. Such practices also point to histories of inter-Indigenous interactions that would allow for some degree of cross-linguistic transference, such as histories of inter-Indigenous marriage or engagement with commerce and forms of labor that bring speakers of different backgrounds together. Therefore, being an Indigenous *puneño*, Quechua or Aymara, entails some level of linguistic and social hybridity that contradicts the ideologized parameters of what constitutes an Indigenous Quechua or Aymara.

The idea that indigeneity must be measured and scaled according to some sort of linguistic and semiotic concordance with the semiotic fields associated with "Quechua" and "Aymara" occurs in two directions. Regionally, *puneños* will often hedge their authenticity as ethnic Indigenous Quechuas or Aymaras, saying that they are less authentically Quechua or Aymara compared with other, more typical examples of "Quechua" or "Aymara" identity elsewhere in the Andes. Such comparative statements therefore scale up (Irvine 2016) Quechua or Aymara Indigenous identity to project those comparisons across regional and national boundaries in Peru and the Andes. However, such comparisons also scaled in the opposite direction (Gal 2016), since within Puno and the Peruvian *altiplano*, women and female speakers of Quechua and Aymara are more likely to have the authenticity of their Quechua or Aymara identity, and therefore an Indigenous identity, questioned by themselves and by others.

Part of this concern about the lack Indigenous authenticity for *puneña* women can be traced to the ways that Indigenous *puneñas* are seen as transgressing the boundaries between "Quechua" and "Aymara," engaging in practices that do not conform with the signs and linguistic practices that constitute the semiotic field for each ethnic Indigenous category. Marriage, for instance, is one site that generates perceptions of cross-boundary transgressions. In the Andes, marriage is gendered as female due to the movement of women across community lines into their husbands' homes and communities. Such movement marks women as outsiders, a status that is further heightened in cases of cross-linguistic marriage. The alignment of women with movement and with being marked as social "outsiders" or "others" positions women as symbolic carriers of difference that contrasts with, and can potentially threaten, the authenticity of local, community-based conceptions of self that contribute to

Indigenous identities and notions of personhood in the region (Narayanan 2022).

Another set of practices that aligns women with linguistic and social boundary transgressions is their engagement with specific forms of work and labor that cast these women to be interpreted as not conforming with the qualities associated with a distinct "Quechua" or Aymara" Indigenous semiotic field. Historically, across the Andean nations, market labor is gendered as female and has typically been the primary, if not the only, form of labor that is almost exclusively dominated by women (Harris 1995; Seligmann 2004; Mangan 2005). Yet despite this alignment between Indigenous women and market labor, across the Andes, market women have often been singled out for their lack of conformity to racialized standards of Indigenous practices and behaviors (Harris 1995; Weismantel 2001; Paulson 2002). Market women therefore already transgress the semiotic fields that constitute indigeneity by taking up work in urban spaces outside of their rural communities.

Yet what makes the market women of Puno additionally transgressive of their indigeneity is that their work in the local market economy requires them to interact and build networks with both Quechuas and Aymaras. The need to have multiethnic networks also requires market women to have varied multilingual proficiencies to make deals and negotiate with vendors and clients of different linguistic backgrounds. The acquisition of such multilingual fluencies can be seen in the linguistic biography of Señora Estela, the artisanal market vendor whose experiences of racial and gendered discrimination from municipal officials in Lima appeared in the introduction of this essay. Born in an Aymara-speaking community south of the regional capital Puno, Señora Estela grew up speaking Aymara. When she began to earn a living as a market vendor as a young adult and later began to sell her handicrafts through her artisanal cooperative, she learned Spanish. Today, she often mixes Spanish with Aymara in everyday conversations, especially with many of her long-time friends who are also Aymara-speaking market women. Furthermore, through her work as a market vendor and in working with Quechua speakers in her multilingual cooperative, she has learned some basic Quechua to understand her Quechua-speaking friends and associates.

Because femaleness is aligned with forms of boundary crossing, either through movement (such as the movement that occurs in marriage) or through the acquisition of additional linguistic repertoires, women are scaled as "less Indigenous" than men. Additionally, such scaling was discursively reproduced by both Indigenous men and women in Puno. Many of my female interlocutors would feel embarrassed when asked to be interviewed about their knowledge of Quechua or Aymara. These women included not only the market women who lived in Puno but also their older female relatives who resided primarily in the rural countryside. Although I was able to interview most of these women, these interviews often ended with the advice that I should also interview their fathers or husbands, who they considered to be more authentic speakers of Quechua or Aymara and, therefore, better authorities to talk with about the language and culture. Some of my Indigenous male interlocutors, especially those who were prominent professional leaders within the local municipality or local university, would also comment about the inappropriateness of focusing my study on the linguistic practices of *puneña* women. For instance, one of my Aymara-speaking acquaintances, a self-identified Indigenous Aymara man who worked for the local municipality and whose first language was Aymara, criticized my decision to spend time with the market women of Puno saying, "No, *señorita*, don't work with those women. They do not even know their mother tongue properly. No, if you want to study how Quechua and Aymara should be spoken, go to the rural communities. That is where the language is spoken perfectly. And the women there are also so beautiful because they also speak the language perfectly like our grandmothers did."

Openly commenting on how market women are not paragons of Quechua or Aymara linguistic fluency or Indigenous identity reflects the ways *puneña* women are evaluated as less Indigenous than their male counterparts. Yet these comments also echo the scalar metrics that evaluate indigeneity in the region. Unlike in the regional capital Puno, authentic Indigenous Quechua or Aymara identity, epitomized by an authentic Quechua or Aymara linguistic variety, can be found only in rural communities that are free from contact with the other Indigenous ethnolinguistic group. Furthermore, while women might be read as less Indigenous, rural women like those from older generations are elevated as being more emblematic of their Indigenous identities, as they are presumed to have not transgressed the boundaries separating Quechua and Aymara speakers linguistically, geographically, and socially.

Although some kinds of Indigenous *puneña* women were more exemplary of an Indigenous Quechua or Aymara identity than others, they were overall still perceived as less Indigenous by men and by themselves. Because of their alignment with with boundary crossing practices, such as movement between communities or acquiring additional linguistic proficiencies, Indigenous *puneñas* do not conform to the ideologized distinctiveness that separate Quechua and Aymara Indigenous practices and identities. Evaluated against a set of metrics that measure indigeneity as adhering to and reproducing an authentic and ideologically purified Quechua or Aymara Indigenous identity, Indigenous *puneñas*, who embody histories of inter-Indigenous contact, are instead read as “less Indigenous.”

Conclusion

I want to end by reflecting on the title “Ni paisana, ni Jacinta.” Both parts of this title reflect the kinds of evaluative contradictions that shape Indigenous femininity in Peru as a result of competing semiotic fields and scales of comparison that shift according to different perspectives of authority, privilege, and power in Peru. In this essay, I critically unpack the category of Indigenous femininity, highlighting the ways Indigenous women and femaleness do not constitute a single category but are instead a multivalent ideologized type that emerges from competing evaluative regimes. Specifically, this essay focused on the ways that a specific form of Indigenous femininity becomes an exemplary type across three different evaluative regimes: typical indigeneity, typical femininity, and a typical Indigenous Quechua or Indigenous Aymara identity. Each evaluative regime identifies a specific kind of Indigenous femininity that becomes iconized as the most recognizable figure for each ideologized mode of evaluation. In terms of indigeneity, she is scaled as the most Indigenous gender, harking back to the enfigurement of indigeneity as female through the figure of *la paisana*. In terms of femininity, she is scaled as unfeminine, and she is stereotypically invoked through the figure of the mocked, urbanized Indigenous woman, like the television character Jacinta. However, with respect to the politics of inter-Indigenous, Quechua-Aymara difference in Puno, Indigenous *puneña* women are not quintessential exemplars of Quechua or Aymara identity through their associations with linguistic and social boundary crossing. Because they are neither authentically Quechua nor Aymara, they are scaled as less Indigenous than their male counterparts (see table 1).

The implications of this analysis highlight the need for a continued engagement to complicate current analytic approaches and analyses of Indigenous women, Indigenous femininity, and the relationship between gender and indigeneity in the Andes and Latin America. Not only do the three cases I selected in this essay demonstrate how Indigenous femininity is differently evaluated, but they also illustrate how those differences emerge from distinct evaluative logics and semiotic fields, each one composed of a particular alignment of linguistic practices, qualities, and typified figures. Across these scales, Indigenous women or an Indigenous female figure can be scaled as either the most or the least

Table 1. Three Scalar Frameworks of Indigenous Women and Femininity

	Indigenous versus Nonindigenous	Feminine versus Unfeminine	Indigenous Quechua versus Indigenous Aymara
Evaluative interpretation	(+)	(−)	(−)
Scalar interpretation	More/most Indigenous	Unfeminine	Less Quechua/less Aymara than men
Typified figure/ interpretation	*La paisana*	Mockable urbanized Indigenous woman	Less authentically Indigenous than Indigenous *puneño* men

exemplary. These contradictions speak to the partial indexical and semiotic fields that enregister Indigenous identity, gender, and Indigenous language use. At times, indigeneity and femaleness are connected. At other moments, indigeneity is distanced from femininity. In still other situations, Indigenous women are not Indigenous enough. Such contradictions speak to the diverging nature of language ideologies, emphasizing the myriad ways that Indigenous and female subjectivities have diverged and converged at various historical moments and contexts across Latin America.

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