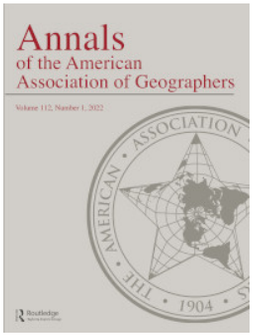

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"I Don't Want You in My Country": Migrants Navigating Borderland Violences between Colombia and Chile

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Through the lens of "navigating borderlands," this article brings together the anthropology-derived concept of social navigation (Vigh 2006) with a feminist geography approach to borderlands, enriching both. It is based on ethnographic research with Colombian and Venezuelan migrants along the 4,500-km migration route from the Valle del Cauca, Colombia, to Antofagasta, Chile, and additionally informed by further multisited ethnography in Antofagasta and the Valle del Cauca. The borderlands perspective bridges gaps between migration, border, and mobility studies by combining feminist scholarship on transnational social spaces and borders and violence with a reflexive migration trajectories methodology. It considers how the shifting space of the often violent borderland is constructed through interactions between diverse actors. Paying greater attention to the construction of space enhances the analytical potential of social navigation. In turn, analyzing actors' negotiations of the borderland in terms of navigation illuminates *how* they move in and through unpredictable spaces. Specifically, this article considers how actors including border officers, transport providers, scammers, and nongovernmental organization workers "police," "move," and "reroute" in the borderland. It also reveals how migrants navigate interactions with these varied actors to *aguantar* (endure/cope/hold on); although not resistance per se, aguantar may sometimes be a form of defiance. *Key Words: borderlands, migration, navigation, South America, violence.*

Just after 7 a.m., we arrived in Antofagasta, Chile, the city's sandy hills emerging out of the dawn light. We lugged our bags off the bus one last time and took seats at a table in the bus terminal food court. Damelys,[1] a Colombian woman in her forties, held Sofía, her four-year-old niece—who nonetheless referred to Damelys as *mamá*—on her lap. Leticia, a Colombian woman of thirty traveling alone, whom Damelys had met on the journey, checked her phone. The four of us waited together, not saying much but relieved to have made it.

A young woman walked toward us. She wore jeans, a black quilted jacket, and sunglasses, her long hair tied in a ponytail. She moved faster as she got closer. Damelys and Sofía looked up at her. Rushing the last few steps, she took off her sunglasses and gathered Sofía in her arms saying, "Mi niña, mi niña, tan chiquita" (*My girl, my girl, so tiny*). She held her for a long time. Tears rolled down Damelys's cheeks as she looked on. She wiped them away with the back of her hand, saying, "They haven't seen each other in three years." Sofía's mother put her daughter down and took a photo of her on her phone before lifting her up into an embrace again.

Leticia and I had tears in our eyes, too. At the table adjacent to ours, another Colombian woman looked on. She turned to me and said, her eyes shining also, "This makes me want to cry so much. I haven't seen my children in eight years." She told me that she was at the terminal sorting out paperwork so that she could see them at last. Leticia's cousin soon arrived to collect her, and they ran toward each other and hugged. We all exchanged warm goodbyes and parted ways.

This was the conclusion, at once everyday and extraordinary, to the 4,500-km journey that I undertook in July 2019 down the Pan American Highway from Cali in the Valle del Cauca, Colombia, to Antofagasta in Chile's northern Atacama Desert. It formed part of a broader research project that addresses Colombian migrant women's navigation of multiple violences in Antofagasta and in their places of origin in the Valle del Cauca as well as on their migration journeys. From November 2018 to January

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2020, I carried out five months of multisited ethnographic fieldwork over three visits (one extended and two short) in Antofagasta and in Cali, and Buenaventura in the Valle del Cauca and Popayán in Cauca. Although the empirical focus of this article is the journey down the Pan American Highway, it is informed by the wider research, particularly that conducted in Chile.

Intraregional migration in South America, and especially to Chile, has increased exponentially over the past decades and is a pertinent topic in often heated public debate. In the early 1990s, there were just under 115,000 international migrants in Chile (CASEN 2015). Today, there are more than 1.25 million migrants in the country, which has a total population of 17.5 million (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas and Departamento de Extranjería y Migración [INE and DEM] 2019). Venezuelans are now the largest migrant group by nationality (23.0 percent), followed by Peruvians (17.9 percent), Haitians (14.3 percent), and Colombians (11.7 percent), although until 2017, Colombians were the second largest group by nationality (INE 2018; INE and DEM 2019). There are approximately 4.5 million Colombians living outside Colombia (Organización Internacional de Migraciones 2012), which has a population of 48 million (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística 2018). Although their reasons for migrating are mixed, many have been compelled to leave due to the armed conflict and its complex repercussions (Bermudez 2016). In Chile, although most migrants settle in Santiago, Antofagasta is the second most popular city for settlement, particularly among Colombians. Nearly 80 percent of migrants to Antofagasta have arrived in the last decade (INE 2018), which reflects overall trends in Chile. Colombian migration flows to Antofagasta are feminized (INE 2018), and a high proportion of this population is Afro-Colombian.[2] Most Colombians in Antofagasta come from the Pacific Coast region of Colombia, and particularly the Valle del Cauca department, which has experienced high levels of violence in the past decade, despite the signing of the Colombian peace agreement in 2016 (Echeverri 2016).

From the Valle del Cauca to Antofagasta there exists, I contend, a constructed borderland space connected by the Pan American Highway. This is traversed not only by Colombian migrants but by many others as well. I traveled through this space during the Venezuelan crisis, which has led to an exodus of around 4.5 million people (International Organization for Migration 2019) of a total of 32 million (United Nations Population Fund 2019). Therefore, in this article I consider not only the experiences of Colombian migrants but also those of Venezuelans undertaking parts of the same Cali–Antofagasta odyssey. I mapped my route according to prior conversations with Colombian research participants in Antofagasta. I also referred to the "Ruta Principal" (*Main Route*) delineated in the map produced by the Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados Colombia (2018) for Venezuelans leaving the country.

In what follows, I explore how those on the move along this route use techniques of navigation to negotiate a borderland space that is permeated by intersecting violences. These violences are exemplified in the title of this article. "I don't want you in my country" was the shrugged reply given to Damelys's adult niece, Evelin, by a Chilean border officer at Chacalluta, the Peruvian–Chilean border complex, when Evelin asked why she was being denied entry to Chile. She remained stuck for several days while Damelys and the rest of us had to continue our journey to Antofagasta.

This article views migration journeys such as those of Evelin, Damelys, Sofía, and Leticia through the lens of "navigating borderlands," which is developed in the first section. This approach advances Vigh's (2006, 2009) concept of social navigation by using it in conjunction with geographical scholarship on social spaces. Specifically, it combines critical, and particularly feminist, perspectives from migration, border, and mobility studies (e.g., Wright 2004, 2005, 2011; Faria 2017; Mountz 2017; Wilkins 2017; McIlwaine and Evans 2020; Schapendonk et al. 2020)—between which fields there sometimes has been a "puzzling separation" (Schapendonk et al. 2020, 212)—to analyze the dynamic and multiscalar construction of often violent borderland spaces. It uses navigation to consider how both migrant and nonmigrant actors move within these spaces.

The second section of the article illustrates empirically how the South American borderland space that was the focus of this research is produced and navigated. The analysis contributes to scholarship on intraregional South American migration and border crossing (recent examples include Guizardi 2015; Domenech 2017; Tapia Ladino and Liberona Concha 2018; Bastia 2019; Álvarez Velasco 2020;

Ramírez, Chan, and Stefoni 2021; Ugarte 2021), particularly that which addresses Afro-Colombian migration to and via the north of Chile (Liberona Concha 2015; Echeverri 2016; Stang and Stefoni 2016; Echagüe Alfaro 2018; Iturra Valenzuela 2018). The countries connected by this constructed borderland are heterogeneous, each with a long migration history and complex colonial past that informs the present. This article cannot do justice to each of these. Rather, it aims to capture how, spanning these territories in a particular moment in time, an imagined borderland with material effects is forged through repeated patterns of (im)mobility along the Pan American Highway.

In doing so, it hones in on how the borderland is made and remade through multiscalar interrelations between actors, and how these same actors, including the researcher, are navigators of the space. It addresses interactions between migrants and three categories of nonmigrant actors. First, it considers border officers and others involved in *policing* the borderland. Then it examines two categories of less obvious nonmigrant actors: transport providers *moving* in the borderland and a range of actors, including scammers, coyotes, and nongovernmental organization (NGO) workers, who play varied roles in *rerouting* migrants' paths through the borderland. Throughout, it considers how the lens of navigation reveals migrants' maneuvers with respect to these diverse actors as centered on the need to *aguantar* (endure/cope/hold on). Although this cannot be considered resistance in terms of conscious subversion of the power structures of the borderlands, aguantar signals resilience, and sometimes is a form of defiance.

Navigating Borderlands

Vigh's (2006, 2009) social navigation has assumed increasing currency in anthropology and beyond, including regarding migration and displacement (Schapendonk 2018; Triandafyllidou 2019) and violence in Colombia (Grajales 2016; Berents and ten Have 2017). Summarizing, Vigh (2009) explains social navigation as "an analytical optic which allows us to focus on how people move and manage within situations of social flux and change" (420). It draws attention to how, "no matter what the level of power, we are never completely free to move as we want … we move in relation to the push and pulls, influence and imperatives, of social forces" (Vigh 2009, 432). Thus, Vigh argues that social navigation responds to a "need within the social sciences to rethink the interplay between agency, social forces and change" Vigh (2009, 433). He contends that it offers a corrective to how "'the spatial turn' (Sheller and Urry 2006) in anthropology has been guided by a geographical fallacy, namely the idea of social space as similar to terrestrial landscapes, as solidified surfaces of enactment" (Vigh 2009, 433).

This seems, however, to be a misinterpretation of a human geography theorization of social space. Vigh's idea of what he terms "social environment" (the shifting milieu through which actors move) is, in fact, very similar to social space as it is commonly understood from a Masseyian perspective. Understood thus, space is a fluid, changing, and three-dimensional "product of interrelations" (Massey 2005, 9). The interrelations that produce a given space have a "power geometry" (Massey 1994) that shapes each individual's social location within the space and the subsequent extent to which he or she can maneuver. Vigh's social navigation can, in fact, therefore be usefully brought together with the significant geographical work on social spaces, as I now demonstrate with respect to critical, and particularly feminist, geography perspectives on migration, borderlands, and mobility.

Transnationalism has become a dominant paradigm in migration studies and, rather than looking solely at individual transnational practices and ties, increasingly there has been a shift toward considering how migrants (and nonmigrants) collectively construct transnational social spaces (Faist 1998; Jackson, Crang, and Dwyer 2004). Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) define transnational social spaces as "arenas'" that "are multi-layered and multi-sited. … Both migrants and nonmigrants occupy them because the flow of people, money, and 'social remittances' (ideas, norms, practices, and identities) within these spaces is so dense, thick, and widespread that nonmigrants' lives are also transformed, even though they do not move" (131–32). Feminist geographers have brought attention to how social identities (gender, race, class, etc.) condition how migrants are able to move within, and manipulate, transnational social spaces (Mahler and Pessar 2001; McIlwaine 2010; Anthias 2012; Purkayastha 2012; Ryburn 2018). This work has also focused on the multiscalarity of transnational social spaces. Formed

and re-formed through interactions between (groups of) migrants, states and their actors, nonstate actors such as NGOs, and international organizations, transnational social spaces incorporate, and complicate, scales from the body to the home to the nation-state.

Implicit within such an approach, but not always made salient, is recognition of the structural (or indirect; see Galtung 1969) violence that creates identity-contingent barriers to movement and manipulation of transnational spaces. As is well established (Davies and True 2015), those most negatively affected by structural violence are also those more likely to be subject to direct violence. Within feminist transnational migration research, drawing on concepts such as "intimate geopolitics" (Staeheli and Pain 2014) and a continuum of sexual violence against women (Kelly 1988), there is growing work that makes more explicit the links between these violences—structural and direct—across transnational spaces and multiple scales (Faria 2017; McIlwaine and Evans 2020). I suggest that this innovative scholarship can be brought closer together with feminist geographers' contributions to borderland studies, where violence tends to have been more overtly theorized. In turn, the attention paid in feminist migration studies to the multiscalar construction of transnational space can be incorporated further into borderland studies.

Anzaldúa's (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera*, where she writes the border as an open wound, is a touchstone for feminist articulations of borderlands (Naples 2010). Such articulations vividly capture the structural violence of mobility regimes and how those against whom these regimes discriminate the most also face the highest levels of direct violence. Within this work, feminist geography has made key contributions to considering how borders and borderlands "refract geohistorically specific social cleavages and power relations" (Silvey 2006, 72). Wright's (e.g., 2004, 2005, 2011) research in the context of high levels of violence against women and girls and femicide in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, is emblematic. This and other recent feminist borderland research takes a multiscalar approach to analyzing borderland spaces. Mountz (2017), for example, traces how trauma moves across multiple spatiotemporal scales and cannot be contained by the borders of island detention sites. Through the analytic of intimate geopolitics, Wilkins (2017) also works across multiple scales in her exploration of the shifting sense of home among women migrants and border-dwellers on the Myanmar–Thailand border.

These borderland studies dialogue well with the aforementioned feminist conceptualizations of multiscalar transnational social spaces. These two related strands of feminist geography coalesce in their centering of the body as a site that is inextricably connected with—and of equal importance to—home, land, nation-state, and beyond. Drawing these strands closer together invites fuller consideration of how the private and public spheres, body, home, and nation-state are blurred at and by the border and of how violence is inscribed, resisted, and transformed on and through the body. This approach thus speaks to recent broader discussions in feminist geography around epistemologies and ontologies of embodiment, and the body as a site of racialized, gendered violence and political struggle (Fluri and Piedalue 2017; Gokariksel et al. 2021; Zaragocin and Caretta 2021). It can also offer responses to the agenda for critical border studies set out by Parker and Vaughan-Williams (2009), which calls for topologies that "disassociate the study of borders from the idea of territory" (584–85), for theorizing borders as experiences, and for rethinking the space-time of borders.

Further adding to this approach, especially with respect to methodology, contributions from mobility studies can be useful for thinking of the borderland as an often-violent transnational space produced across multiple scales. Mobility studies' intention has been to promote research that tries to "move with, and be moved by, the fleeting, distributed, multiple, non-causal, sensory, emotional, and kinaesthetic" (Büscher, Urry, and Witchger 2010, 1). Increasingly, mobility studies has addressed how "some bodies can more easily move through space than others, due to restrictions on mobility relating to gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and physical abilities" (Sheller 2018, 24). Within migration-focused research, this has translated into an interest in not only studying migration from the vantage points of places of settlement and origin but also a "call for greater attention to the spatiality of the journey itself" (Collyer 2007, 668). In response, there is a growing scholarship that focuses on migrant experiences in transit countries, including in Latin America (e.g., Vogt [2016] on Mexico; Álvarez Velasco [2020] on Ecuador; Huerta Varela 2016; Díaz de Leon 2020). Related to this, and of

particular relevance to this research, is Schapendonk et al.'s (2020) migration trajectories approach.

Studying migration trajectories ethnographically enables consideration of the convolutions, blockages, and uncertainties on migrant journeys as they play out over space-time. It challenges more static methods of studying migration, as well as notions of migrant journeys as linear. It can be physically and emotionally taxing for the researcher, however, and raises fundamental ethical considerations (Schapendonk et al. 2020). As the circumstances of the journey are constantly changing, consent needs to be (re)negotiated repeatedly to ensure that the migrants being accompanied agree with the researcher's presence. It can also throw into sharp relief the researcher's positionality—among other things, the ease with which the researcher may cross the border can stand in stark contrast to difficulties faced by participants. A feminist perspective that encourages reflexivity during the research process (McDowell 1992; Rose 1997) therefore seems essential for the ethical undertaking of migration trajectories research.[3]

In sum, combining critical, and particularly feminist, theoretical and methodological perspectives from migration, border, and mobility studies enables the study of the borderland space as constructed from fluid multiscalar interrelations between many actors. This approach does not consider social spaces as "solidified surfaces of enactment" (Vigh 2009, 433); rather, mining several rich seams of geographical scholarship, it offers a nuanced understanding of the spatiotemporal construction of borderlands. Engaging with social spaces understood in this way can, I suggest, enhance the analytical potential of social navigation. It focuses attention on the power relations that govern the interactions that construct a shifting, three-dimensional space. Moreover, it encourages us to think reflexively about how the researcher becomes a part of this space.

What social navigation offers in return, I contend, is greater precision in terms of considering *how* actors negotiate movement through rapidly morphing space-time. With an ethnographer's eye, Vigh captures the agility and alertness with which those in situations of chronic instability must respond to the changing social dynamics that surround them. Navigation sharpens focus on how, in such situations, rapid decisions must be taken based both on current circumstances and on future aspirations (Schapendonk 2018). Radicati (2020, 544) illustrates how this allows us to recognize the "agency and skill" of those who are marginalized, avoiding sweeping categorization of their attempts to negotiate unpredictable presents and futures under the umbrella of "resistance." Triandafyllidou (2019) made a similar argument for how navigation allows us to recognize types of migrant agency other than resistance in situations of irregular border crossing. Following Katz (2004), she specifically focused on migrants' *recuperation* and *resilience*, arguing that through a social navigation lens, "Instead of actual resistance … what we find are acts of defiance" (Triandafyllidou 2019, 15).

To this I would add that navigation can be used to consider the negotiations not only of those who are marginalized within a social space but also those of other actors within the space. To date, it seems research that uses the concept of navigation in migration and border studies has addressed (marginalized) migrant actors as the principal navigators (Schapendonk 2018; Triandafyllidou 2019). Finally, navigation can also be employed reflexively to consider how the researcher moves within and manipulates the social space of their research.

I now turn to illustrate empirically how navigation can be fruitfully combined with the feminist borderlands perspective outlined. The distended borderland I examine is not typically considered a contiguous space in policy, politics, or migration research to date. The nation-states it spans have different, although related, approaches to migration legislation (see, e.g., Domenech 2017) and distinctive (post)colonial histories. Yet for the migrant and nonmigrant actors who navigate through it, it is experienced as a multiscalar, interconnected, and often violent space. The analysis that follows aims to reflect this experience, thereby using a feminist migration trajectories approach to overcome the "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002) that continues to pervade migration studies (Lube Guizardi and Garcés Hernández 2012; Schwarz 2020), and to answer Parker and Vaughan-Williams's (2009) aforementioned call to disassociate borders from territory, to theorize borders as experience, and to rethink the space-time of borders. The risk of this perspective, however, is losing the contextual depth of more sedentarist approaches to studying migration. Therefore, the discussion is weighted south toward Chile where wider research for this project is being carried out. As Schapendonk

and Steel (2014, 268) explains, a migration trajectories approach is a complement to, rather than a replacement for, more "place-based" migration research.

Constructing and Navigating Borderland Space between Colombia and Chile

We pulled up at Chacalluta, the Peru–Chile border complex. Milton, the bus assistant, produced a list that he had already handed over in Tacna, Peru, to the Chilean PDI (Policía de Investigaciones—border control) containing our names and identification numbers. He called us one by one according to where we appeared on the list, lining us up. When the queue inched too close to the PDI booth while a passenger was being processed, he said "El trámite es personal" (*Processing is individual*). When a family with two preteens was about to step up, Milton gently tugged down the hood that one of the boys was wearing so his face was more visible to the PDI officer.

A small group of Colombian passengers who had passed border control gathered near the bus, now parked on the Chilean side of the border. There were quiet exclamations of relief and brief hugs. "¿Pasó Baby?" (*Did Baby cross?*) one asked another, referring to a passenger from Cali. None of us knew. We were joined by Leticia, who told us that Sandra, a friend she had made on the journey, had not been allowed in. The group enumerated the other fellow passengers who had been denied entry— "el rolo" (*the guy from Bogota*), "la parejita" (*the cute couple*). There were at least eight of twenty-five who had been traveling together from Colombia who hadn't made it, including Evelin. Leticia was relieved that she was allowed in, and said she was barely asked any questions. She presented the US$1,500 that the PDI ask of Colombians, which she had borrowed from her cousin. She had been meticulous in having the exact amount—someone she knows was rejected because he was US$50 short. But all the passengers had this, she told me. Everyone had been so careful to have their documents in order and the correct amount of dollars.

This border-crossing experience exemplifies the entangled interrelations that produce borders and indicates some of the techniques used by migrant and nonmigrant actors, such as transport providers, to navigate them. It occurred at a clearly demarcated border place; however, it is not only in these places that actors interrelate to construct borders. Although the border is not everywhere, or at least not for everyone (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012), it is pervasive. In what follows, I tease out further examples from places and infrastructures stretching from Cali to Antofagasta, examining interactions between migrants and three categories of nonmigrant actors, who variously police, move, and reroute in the borderland. Using the optic of navigation to illuminate migrants' interactions reveals how their exercise of agency and skill was focused on managing to aguantar in the borderland. This polyvalent verb was salient in many conversations on and about the journey. Sometimes it referred to simply managing to get by, but at others, although it did not signal resistance in the sense of conscious subversion of structures of power, to have managed to aguantar was indicative of the type of defiance also demonstrated in Trianfyllidou's (2019) research with irregular migrants. It indicated a quiet resilience and determination; a refusal to desist and disappear.

Policing in the Borderland: Legislation and Officials

I am more interested here in the on-the-ground construction of the borderland, but there is no denying that top-down legislative changes shift the parameters of the borderland space. This was apparent in the far-reaching alterations to migration law made in June 2019 concerning Venezuelan migrants to Peru and Chile, a further extension of what Domenech (2017, 21) characterized as the "punitive turn" in the region's approach to migration. After Colombia, Peru has received the highest number of Venezuelan migrants—around 800,000 since the crisis began (Fowks 2019). A drastic change to the law governing the entrance of Venezuelans to the country was announced by Peruvian President Martín Vizcarra on 6 June 2019, deliberately coinciding with the deportation from Peru of fifty Venezuelans with criminal records (EFE 2019). From midnight on 15 June 2019, Venezuelans would be required to enter Peru with a previously acquired humanitarian visa, which they had to apply for at the Peruvian consulate either in Venezuela or in a third country. They had previously been able to enter on a tourist visa, subsequently applying for a temporary residence

permit. On 11 July 2019, América Digital reported that there was a queue of at least 1,200 people outside the Peruvian consulate in Caracas trying to acquire the new humanitarian visa. The consulate was admitting around thirty people per day to present their documents. Chile under President Sebastián Piñera implemented a similar, rapid change on 24 June 2019, requiring Venezuelans to apply for a consular visa in Venezuela or a third country, where previously they had been able to enter on a tourist visa and then apply for a temporary residency visa.

I began my bus journey on 30 June 2019 and therefore observed the enforcement by officials of these changes. The effects were evident at the Colombia–Ecuador border, nearly 1,000 km north of the Ecuador–Peru border, demonstrating the stretching of the borderland far beyond a nation-state's own mapped borders (cf. Álvarez Velasco [2020] on the outsourcing of U.S. border work to Ecuador). Aid workers estimated that in the brief window between the announcement of changes to the Peruvian legislation and the enforcement of the change—a period of less than two weeks—10,000 Venezuelans tried to cross the Colombia–Ecuador border aiming for Peru. When I arrived at the Colombia–Ecuador border, which was after the change, the number of migrants hoping to cross had dropped to the low thousands. Knowledge of legislative changes spreads rapidly through migrant social networks, particularly via WhatsApp, providing an essential navigational instrument for making decisions in a fast-paced environment.

On both the Colombian and Ecuadorian sides of the border, officials separated Venezuelans into a separate queue from other nationalities. On the Ecuadorian side, lines of tired faces and crying children looked at me from behind two-meter metal fences. Similar practices of control and exclusion were in force at the Ecuador–Peru border. I saw no instances of confrontation by migrants with officials, despite how they were treated. In general, a compliant and deferent affect was adopted in the hope that this would secure passage across the border. At the Peru–Chile border, exclusion and control of Venezuelan migrants by officials was more evident from what I could *not* see than what I could see. The hundreds of Venezuelans, including infants, who became stuck on the Peruvian side of the border unable to enter Chile due to the change to the law on 24 June 2019 (El Mostrador 2019) remained stuck as I approached on 7 July 2019. Yet there was no visible trace of them along the highway, at the Tacna, Peru, bus terminal, or at the Chacalluta border complex. As I explain later, their removal to the point that they could not even approach the border crossing was being managed not only by officials but also by those controlling means of transport.

As demonstrated in both the introduction of this article and the introduction of this section, in addition to the almost blanket exclusion and control of Venezuelan migrants based on nationality, a more selective type of racialized and class-based exclusion is also enforced by Chilean border officials. Powerful legacies of racism and classism in Chile combine to produce a claim to racial mixture that is "effectively white and therefore distinct from (and better than) all other racial types in Latin America" (Walsh 2019, 106; see also Subercaseaux 2007). As Liberona Concha (2015) illustrates, migration legislation stems from this history of deeply engrained racism. Moreover, the principal legal instrument on which Chilean migration law was based during the period in which I conducted this ethnography was a 1975 Decree Law made under the Pinochet dictatorship.[4] Although important modifications had been made, the law was based on a premise of exclusion of "subversive elements" from the Chilean nation-state (Ryburn 2018; see also Iturra Valenzuela 2018). The historic premises underpinning this migration law combined with arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement by border officials to generate particularly severe discrimination toward Latin American migrants who are identified as being of African or indigenous descent and/or working class (see, among others, Liberona Concha 2015; Stang and Stefoni 2016; Tijoux 2016; Echagüe Alfaro 2018; Ryburn 2018; Ugarte 2021).

In the period in which this research was conducted, Colombian migrants to Chile could enter the country on a tourist visa, which they applied for at the border. During the period of validity of their tourist visa, they could then apply for a temporary resident visa to reside and work in Chile.[5] The tourist visa for initial entry was a nebulous instrument, and PDI border officers had a high level of discretionary power over to whom it was granted. There was significant ambiguity in how it was described on the official Departamento de Extranjería y Migración Web page (DEM 2020). The first paragraph

indicated that this visa was not designed for the "purpose of immigration," but the following paragraph suggested that people of certain Latin American nationalities, including Colombian, might want to apply from Chile for a temporary resident visa after entering on a tourist visa; that is, that the tourist visa *was* the first step to immigration. Additionally, the Web page stated that "all tourists should demonstrate, *when the police authority considers this appropriate*, that they have sufficient economic means to subsist upon during their stay in the country" (author translation and italics added). No definition of "sufficient economic means" was given on this Web page or elsewhere. The US$1,500 that Leticia and other Colombian migrants told me was the amount PDI officers demanded to see at the Chacalluta border as proof of "sufficient economic means" was not officially recorded anywhere but rather was a figure that circulated among Colombian migrants and those in Colombia planning to migrate (see also Liberona Concha 2015).

Substantial power was thus devolved to border officers to decide who could enter Chile on a tourist visa. In 2018, 13,742 foreigners were denied entry at Chile's borders, predominantly at the Chacalluta border complex (Aravena 2019). In 67 percent of cases, the official reason given for their exclusion was that they did not meet the criteria to be considered as "tourists," either because they were intending to migrate or because they did not present sufficient funds. Yet, as academic and migrant rights advocate Miguel Yaksic stated in an interview with Chilean national daily *El Mercurio* (Aravena [2019], author translation), this was a "complicated" reason to give because, as explained, a person who entered as a tourist could then apply for temporary residency once in the country, and "sufficient economic means" was nowhere clearly defined. Furthermore, rejection at the border was often delivered with overtly discriminatory language. Evelin, who is mestiza, was one of two women in my research to be told by a PDI officer that entry was being denied because the officer did not want them in the country. Others had faced explicit sexism, such as the insinuation to one Afro-Colombian woman that she was entering with the intention of engaging in sex work.

Following our crossing at the Chacalluta border, Damelys tried to return to speak to Evelin, but the PDI officer shouted at her, "And you? Do you want to be sent back, too?" Damelys and all the passengers permitted entry had to continue on Milton's bus to the Arica bus terminal, leaving those who had been rejected behind. On arrival at the terminal, the first priority before finding a night bus to Antofagasta was to purchase a Chilean SIM card so that Damelys could contact Evelin. She made a series of frantic calls to family already in Antofagasta. To an upset and agitated Evelin, she repeated down the phone, "No llores, no llores. Hay que aguantar un poco más, no más" (*Don't cry, don't cry. You have to hold on a bit more, is all*).

In such cases of rejection at the Chacalluta border crossing, the women I was traveling with and others in the wider research drew on the tenuous social networks formed on the journey (see also Díaz de Leon 2020) and the stronger ones with family and friends already in place to seek and give advice on how to navigate and thus *aguantar*. Those who had been rejected usually returned to Tacna and waited for the PDI officers to change shifts before attempting to cross again. This was possible because the rejection was not recorded in their documents, a reflection, I suggest, of the legal gray area it fell into and that it was above all an exercise of power that reinforces racist, gendered structures of violence. Migrants often reattempted the crossing several times, and if rejection continued, traveled to a different border crossing, typically one between Bolivia and Chile. If they had a friend or family member in Antofagasta or elsewhere in Chile with permanent residency, this person might travel to the border, cross to the Peruvian or Bolivian side, and then cross back accompanying the new arrival, effectively acting as a guarantor of their stay in Chile.

Sandra, the friend Leticia made on the journey, managed to enter the country alone on her second attempt. Evelin also managed to enter, but only after a family member, who had permanent residency, had traveled up to the border to cross with her. It is important to emphasize that none of these techniques were in any way "illegal"; however, as Liberona Concha (2015) demonstrated with respect to the Bolivian–Chilean Colchane border crossing, if authorized entry cannot be achieved, these practices of control serve to produce illegality rather than deter migrant entry. The effect of this, and of the border as "endurance test" more generally, is, ultimately, as has been shown in other contexts, "the beginning of the process of creating and cultivating a lifelong condition of migrant illegality,

deportability, precarity, and disposability" (De Genova and Roy 2020, 355).

Clearly, officials play a key part in constructing a borderland structured by racism, classism, and sexism, which marginalizes and constrains migrant actors' navigation of the space. Officials themselves, however, are also navigating the space as they police it. They, too, must rapidly adapt to legislative changes and shifting migration currents. As I traveled the route from Cali to Antofagasta, my interactions with officials were limited and I had to rely on observation. I was concerned that by stating I was carrying out research, I could put the migrants with whom I was traveling at risk of greater difficulty crossing the border. I did, however, meet with former DEM employees[6] as part of my wider fieldwork—although the PDI control initial entry to the country, the DEM oversees all visa applications inside Chile and so they are also a fundamental part of the borderland. They discussed the complexities of working within the hierarchies of the DEM, which restricted them in terms of the decisions they could make about individual cases. Likewise, the significant growth in migration had made their jobs increasingly stressful and demanded more rapid decision making. There were also glaring differences in the treatment of migrant service users by employees with the same job, and they had witnessed sexist and racist behavior by fellow employees, such as audible comments on the appearance of female service users.

Sexist behavior from DEM employees is something I have also experienced when interacting with them as a service user. One employee "joked" that as part of a visa application, I needed to send a "full body photo," and another made sexual remarks about my relationship with my Chilean partner. When traveling alone in the borderland space, how my race, class, and gender are read by officials affects how I navigate. Although being white, middle-class, and from the Global North offers a substantial cocoon of privilege, as a woman I still feel vulnerable and I endure rather than confront sexual harassment in an attempt to navigate the borderland more safely.

Moving in the Borderland: Transport Providers

The racialized, classed, and gendered hierarchies that structure the borderland space are not only constructed by legislation and officials. After disembarking in Tacna from our twenty-four-hour bus ride from Lima, my fellow passengers and I had to negotiate at the Tacna bus terminal to either take a taxi or a smaller bus to Chacalluta and then onward to the Arica, Chile, bus terminal. Damelys, Evelin, Sofía, and I hauled our bags to the taxi stand. The first driver in line immediately asked whether we already had temporary or permanent visas for Chile. Clutching a plastic folder with her documents, Damelys explained that they didn't but they did have everything in order to enter on tourist visas. The driver appraised the two women and the little girl, focusing on their battered luggage, which I read as an assessment of class markers. "They won't let you in. I won't take you," he stated baldly.

We approached the small buses instead, of which there were several in the terminal carpark. There were many drivers and assistants milling around, most of whom were Chilean. We found the driver who seemed to be next in line and requested tickets. Again, he asked about our visa status. He would take me but not the others. In shrugged reply to my question as to why, he said, "It's what the PDI have told us. They won't let them in." After some vacillation, he pointed to a man nearby whom he said would take us all. By now, quite a few other passengers from our bus, including Leticia, had gathered, all having had the same experience with the taxis. Some had been told by a taxi driver that he would take them, but for CL$20,000 each instead of the advertised CL$4,000.

Initially, Milton, the bus assistant who had been indicated to us, was also reluctant. Increasingly desperate, the passengers became more vocal, clarifying that they were Colombian and not Venezuelan, thus navigating by reinforcing the production of a hierarchy of more and less desirable migrants. Finally, Milton agreed. We all had to pay CL$4,000, which was double what the Chileans were paying for buses. Still, Milton was friendly, and he joked that the advantage of his bus was that if there was too much of a wait at border control, then he would do a "baile erótico" (*sexy dance*) for us. Sensing a potentially important ally, the passengers laughed along with him.

We sat outside the terminal in a thin strip of shade, waiting for enough passengers to fill the bus. I told Milton about my research, and he explained that it is much slower at border control if one takes passengers who do not have temporary or permanent visas because the bus driver must wait until all his passengers have been processed before he can leave

the control point, although he has no responsibility for passengers who are rejected, who must find their own way back to Tacna. Therefore, a lot of the drivers only take Chileans and passengers with visas. Milton said that the driver he works for "is a good person, he likes to help people." That was why he was prepared to take passengers without visas, waiting until he had a whole busload who would be slower to be processed through border control. Even so, he would not take Venezuelans unless they had a consular visa because the PDI were simply not letting them in, and he charged his passengers more than the standard fare. In this way, transport providers construct the hierarchies of the borderland but also must navigate it, responding to changing conditions to find means of making an income. This involves working with officials, whom they try to placate, but also migrants, whose crossing they may attempt to facilitate, as Milton and the driver of his bus did.

It is not only as gatekeepers to transport access but also as authority figures within the buses that transport providers construct and navigate the borderland. On the long-haul buses down the Pan American Highway, bodily functions are tightly regulated, contributing to the sense of biometric control throughout the borderland space. For example, as well as handing out tightly rationed food and drink, the assistant declares regularly over the loudspeaker with respect to the single, cramped toilet, "Los servicios higiénicos son de uso urinario unicamente" (*The facilities are only for urinating*). Responding to these restrictions, and to present as desirable subjects at control points, passengers also police their own bodies by limiting food and water intake, trying not to vomit, massaging ankles and necks, and standing to stretch in the aisle.

This experience of bodily regulation was something over which passengers bonded and formed alliances. Journeying through Ecuador, one woman stood and walked down the aisle to speak to a new acquaintance. "Even my hair hurts!" she exclaimed. Further on in southern Peru, when we disembarked for a customs check of our bags and to use the bathrooms at the side of the road, a woman called out from the back of the bus, "¡Son los baños para hacer caquita!" (*It's the bathrooms we can poop in!*) and everyone laughed. Humor is a navigational resource used to form bonds, as in this instance or between Milton and his passengers, and a vital component of the ability to aguantar the physical deprivation of a ninety-hour bus journey.

Rerouting in the Borderland: Scammers, NGOs and Other Actors

My conversation with Milton outside the Tacna bus terminal was interrupted by another driver calling out to two men in the distance, "¡Huevones cesantes! ¡Hay trabajo aquí!" (*Unemployed bastards! There's work over here!*), to the laughter of the others. I looked quizzically at Milton. He explained that the two men were Venezuelans who had been taking advantage of other Venezuelan migrants. His dislike and disapproval were apparent. The two men had developed a scam where they convinced new migrants to buy taxi and bus passages to Santiago for an elevated price, promising this would guarantee their crossing. It did no such thing. For Milton and the other drivers, in their upholding of what they perceived as the order of the borderland, it was morally acceptable to charge a higher price to transport migrants without visas, but it was not acceptable to promise them that they would consequently be able to cross or to sell them onward passages before they had crossed the border.

I had already encountered other, similar actors on my journey. On the Ecuadorian side of the Ecuador–Peru border complex, when I was sitting talking with Roberto, a Venezuelan in his late thirties who was migrating with his young family, we were approached by a smartly dressed man carrying a small wheeled suitcase. He was cagey about where he was from. Roberto and I shifted awkwardly, made uncomfortable by his continuing presence. Then, by way of an explanation of why he was still standing there, he said he was waiting for a woman from Peru— "una amiga" (*a friend*)—whom he would help to cross into Ecuador because she had found work there. He obliquely explained he was going to pay someone to help her with the *trámites* (paperwork). He looked at us expectantly, but when we were unresponsive, he walked away. Roberto and I said nothing but exchanged an uneasy look. Although we could not be sure, it seemed most likely that he was a coyote facilitating unauthorized crossing between Peru and Ecuador, touting Roberto for potential business.

Figures such as he navigate the borderland space by shadowing migrants to exploit their vulnerabilities.

Although the intended outcomes of this exploitation vary, in all cases it would reroute migrants' paths. These figures may be coyotes facilitating unauthorized crossings. Like the Venezuelans in Tacna, they might be scammers seeking to make a one-off profit from migrant misfortune. They could be traffickers, aiding either the authorized or unauthorized crossing of migrants with the purpose of labor or sexual exploitation (Ryburn 2016). They may be corrupt officials. The young Afro-Colombian woman sitting next to me on the bus from Lima to Tacna had done the journey several times and told me that about an hour before Tacna there was sometimes a police checkpoint where officers asked for bribes of US$20. She had paid a bribe before and witnessed other young women do the same. Although I cannot verify this, I have also heard reports of migrants rejected by PDI officers at the Peru–Chile border who, following rejection, are directed by officials to specific taxi drivers back on the Peruvian side of the border. These drivers then charge a large fee to facilitate the migrant's attempt to cross again, on which occasion they are accepted by the PDI.

Some of these diverse figures were mentioned in a workshop with eleven migrant women that I ran in Antofagasta in January 2020. In groups, they drew maps of journeys from Cali to Antofagasta, incorporating typical characters encountered along the way. "Uff. Es mucho aguantar" (*It is a lot to endure*), one commented, to nods of recognition, after finishing the maps. Although none had entered the country unauthorized, several had been approached at border crossings by such actors. While in some cases these actors may facilitate navigation, the workshop participants related them as contributing to a sense of "peligro" (*danger*) in the borderland. One woman described how she thinks she nearly fell victim to trafficking for sexual exploitation. It was only because of a "mal presentimiento" (*bad feeling*) that she did not accept the offer of the man proffering assistance to cross the border. Indeed, a reliance on intuition was often key to how migrants described their navigation of interactions with potentially dangerous actors.

Hyperalertness—sleeping little, maintaining vigilance with personal belongings—was likewise a navigation strategy developed to preempt danger. Alys, a nineteen-year-old Venezuelan woman to whom I spoke in Quito, barely slept on her journey for fear of what would happen to her. She walked most of the 1,600 km from Cucuta, Colombia, at the border with Venezuela, snatching rest when she could at the side of the road. Once when she was napping, her bag was stolen. She viewed this as relatively minor, however, because above all, she had been afraid she would be raped. This makes stark the gendered dimension of the threats of direct violence that permeate the borderland.

The road itself can also be a threatening actor. There are frequent traffic accidents along the Pan American Highway. Fatal bus accidents are reported with regularity. In 2017, 772 people were killed on highways in southern Peru alone, the majority on the Pan American Highway (Medrano 2018). Information circulates among migrants about which bus companies are considered the best and safest, although finances dictate whether passages on these buses can be purchased. In a more existential attempt to navigate this threat, passengers offer muttered prayers and cross themselves before the start of a journey. The bus I boarded in Cali had an image of the Virgin painted on its wing mirrors, and rosaries swing from many drivers' rearview mirrors.

Threatening actors may also be the catalysts for migration journeys. I do not have the scope to do this important topic justice here, but, in brief, multiple forms of violence have often been the cause of participants' migration. This includes the economic violence of being unable to make ends meet, as for many Venezuelans. Other violences include intimate partner violence, which was a recurring theme among Colombian women in Antofagasta, and the violence caused by the ongoing repercussions of the armed conflict in Colombia. The latter was the case for Ignacia, her husband, and their four-year-old daughter, who are *campesinos* (from the countryside, usually mestizo). They arrived in Antofagasta in June 2019 from a rural area in the Valle del Cauca having fled after armed men threatened to kill Ignacia's husband and then pursued the family across the Ecuadorian border. The navigation of violence from threatening actors who would rereroute migrants' journeys—or worse—thus forms part of many migrants' trajectories from their places of origin in Colombia or Venezuela to their destinations.

Throughout, and constructing, this borderland space, there are also, however, actors who try to facilitate migrants' navigation, rerouting them toward safe passage. Exemplifying this, Ignacia's family's journey down the Pan American Highway to Antofagasta was enabled by the assistance provided by a loose network of church-based organizations. I

collaborate with one of the social workers in Antofagasta who forms part of this network. They work tirelessly on a shoestring budget to try and secure refugee status for those who arrive in such circumstances. At the borderland's other extreme, in Buenaventura in the Valle del Cauca, I interviewed another worker for one of these organizations. It took time to gain their trust so that they would speak to me because they feared for their life given the killing with impunity of so many human rights defenders in Colombia. They have facilitated the transnational escape of victims of violence from the city and surrounds and spoke of the necessity of this work in a context where there are "an infinity of impacts" from the "reconfigured" armed conflict.

NGO actors are present in places of transit as well as origin and settlement. At the Ecuador–Colombia border complex, I negotiated to spend a day with aid workers. They were mainly assisting Venezuelan families, most of whom had walked from Venezuela, but there were also displaced Colombian families. I spent time in the child care tent with children who had been on the road for five to six weeks. One of the aid workers told me, "They often have blisters all over their little feet." I interacted particularly with three little Venezuelan boys; brothers aged seven, five, and three. The eldest kept a watchful eye on the other two. He drew a picture with a palm tree, sunshine, clouds, and three small figures above a line representing the ground. At first glance, it could have been the drawing of any primary school child. I asked him about it:

"What a lovely picture! Who are they?"

"Me and my brothers."

"Are you playing?"

"No, we're walking," he replied solemnly.

When his parents came to collect their sons to continue their journey, he was delighted to be "allowed" to take the picture with him, checking several times that it was permitted. This was a behavior repeated by other children. That a crayon drawing could hold such significance was indicative of the level of loss they had experienced as well as of the degree of control over their movements and possessions in the borderland space. Working with limited resources and confronted with levels of human distress they described as overwhelming, aid workers and other advocates and NGO workers were often fundamental in assisting migrants' safer navigation.

It is important to note that, in addition to their support of migrants navigating the borderland, at times some aid workers may also contribute to controlling the borderland. This is particularly with respect to governance of migrant bodies. At the Ecuador–Peru border complex, Roberto and his family were approached by an aid worker wearing a bright green t-shirt featuring instructions on how to wash one's hands. He informed them that they could come and queue for "wash kits" at 12:30 p.m. at the station where they gave personal hygiene talks. On the one hand, there had been measles outbreaks in the borderland space due to the breakdown of health care in Venezuela and the related lack of vaccines, and thus there was an urgent need for health care provision. On the other, the patronizing way in which this was approached by some aid workers arguably reproduced the stigmatization of certain migrants as disease-carrying and ignorant of hygiene.

I find it difficult to level such critiques at actors whom in large part I admire, and with whom, in some cases, I have a close working relationship. Indeed, in some instances they are key to my navigation of the borderland space, giving advice and facilitating my access. I also put migrants in contact with advocates and NGO staff who can assist them, therefore contributing myself to rerouting migrants' navigation. Thus, I am also one of a wide range of less obvious nonmigrant and nongovernmental actors who both contribute to the multiscalar construction of the borderland and navigate within it.

Conclusion

The lens of navigating borderlands proposed in this article advances the concept of social navigation (Vigh 2006, 2009) by bringing it into conversation with geographical literature on social spaces, and specifically critical, predominantly feminist, geographers' interventions in migration and border studies (e.g., Wright 2004, 2005, 2011; Faria 2017; Mountz 2017; Wilkins 2017; McIlwaine and Evans 2020). Although social navigation does consider and analyze the "social environment" within which those who are navigating move, I suggest that the borderlands perspective developed here enriches this through focusing more attention on the multiscalar interrelations that construct the moving space-time of the borderland. In turn, analyzing actors' negotiations of the

borderland in terms of navigation sheds light on *how* those moving in rapidly changing and unpredictable borderland spaces are doing so. A migration trajectories methodology (Schapendonk et al. 2020), which stems from the mobility turn, has allowed me to theorize the border as lived experience (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2009). It has enabled me to ethnographically explore entwined scales from the body, to buses and border complexes, to the legislation produced at the level of the nation-state, while reflexively considering my own positionality.

In its insistence on visceral, bodily experience as key to understanding how the borderland is constructed and navigated, this article also responds to a wider imperative in feminist geography to epistemologically, methodologically, and ontologically center embodiment to reveal "the relational production of geopolitical and geoeconomic violence through systematic and institutional forms of oppression" (Fluri and Piedalue 2017, 536). Building particularly on scholarship that addresses the racialization of migrants in Chile (Liberona Concha 2015; Stang and Stefoni 2016; Tijoux 2016; Echagüe Alfaro 2018; Iturra Valenzuela 2018; Ugarte 2021), it has considered how, through the minutiae of everyday policing, moving, and rerouting, migrant bodies are raced, classed, and gendered in a continual (re)construction of a violent transnational space. In their policing, border officers and other officials navigate rapidly increasing migration flows and a shifting legislative environment in such a way as to reinforce a hierarchy of classed, racialized migrant desirability. Transport providers, in their navigations aimed to generate income by moving in the borderland, cooperate with border officers to further reinforce this hierarchy. They additionally, however, may work with migrants to assist their passage. Within the borderland space there are also a range of other, less obvious actors who reroute migrants' journeys. These include those, such as scammers, coyotes, and thieves, who opportunistically navigate by exploiting migrants' vulnerabilities but also NGO and aid workers who use their knowledge of the borderland to support migrants' navigations, even as they might sometimes reinforce racism and classism.

Migrants must navigate the borderland through interactions with these actors. Using the transnational circulation of information regarding legislative changes, connections with more established migrants to facilitate difficult border crossings, humor to form alliances with others on the journey, and intuitive instinct, hyperalertness, and prayer as responses to danger and threat, they must flexibly adapt and maneuver at speed. Within this constantly moving space, where migrants are marginalized and their agency constrained, thinking in terms of navigation highlights the stamina and skill needed to aguantar. Although not resistance per se, at a certain scale or across a certain time period, aguantar can become a form of defiance in a space structured by multiple violences. To return to where my journey ended, and this article began, for Evelin to aguantar and return to cross the Peru–Chile border after being told her presence was not wanted in the country was to defy the exclusionary logic of the borderland. So, too, was all that was *aguantado* by Damelys and Sofía as they traveled 4,500 km to be reunited with Sofía's mother after three years of separation. Focusing on the embodied experience of migration journeys through the lens of navigating borderlands helps reveal these instances of quiet resilience that might sometimes be defiance.

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Notes

1. All names are pseudonyms.
2. It is not possible to give an exact figure because "Afro-descendent" is not currently an ethnic category option in the Chilean census or official household surveys.
3. Ethics approval for this research was sought through the London School of Economics Research Ethics

Committee, and an Ethics Advisory Board comprised of staff with relevant expertise was established for the duration of the project. I had valuable conversations with them at various points prior to and during fieldwork.

4. New migration legislation was passed in Chile on 11 April 2021 (see Gobierno de Chile 2021). It has been condemned by migration scholars and activists as likely to increase rather than reduce irregularity and precarity. A detailed analysis by academic Thayer (2021) concluded that it is focused "not on the integration of people who migrate, but rather on the supposed capacity of the state to control, select, and restrict the mobility of people who wish to make a life in Chile" (author's translation). Ureta and Figueroa (2021) of the Servicio Jesuita a Migrantes, one of the principal migrant organizations in Chile, concluded that since changes to the legislation began in 2018, migration to the country "has become more precarious, disorganized, and dangerous" (author's translation).
5. Under the new Chilean migration legislation, this is no longer the case. See Thayer (2021) and Gobierno de Chile (2021).
6. To protect their anonymity, further details cannot be given.

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