

INDIGENOUS AND FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AT THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IN BOLIVIA

Locating the Representation of Indigenous Women

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Abstract: This article analyzes the recent constituent assembly in Bolivia as a political context in which the indigenous movement and the feminist movement presented different platforms to influence the content of the new constitution. The representation of indigenous women's gender-specific claims is examined through a study of their forms of organizing at the intersection of both social movements and content analysis of the movements' constitutional reform proposals. The success of both movements and the capacity of indigenous women to position themselves as a central actor in the process are explained through reference to the strength of the indigenous movement in national politics, the history of indigenous women's mobilization, and the collaboration between indigenous women and the feminist movement. Indigenous women's collective agency has benefited from this political context to develop new organizations and spaces to claim their rights and perspectives.

On January 25, 2009, Bolivians approved a new constitution by a majority vote of 61.43 percent after a constituent assembly process that lasted from August 2006 to December 2007, followed by a year of tough negotiations and confrontations in Congress and in the streets. Although there is a long way between the adoption of a new constitution and its implementation in state laws and policies, in Bolivia the reform process involved diverse social movements and political parties, among which was the governing Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) party. Because of the high level of participation and expectations from many spheres of society, the constituent assembly is a major turning point in Bolivian history.¹

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1. Of registered voters, 90.26 percent exercised their right to vote at the national referendum on the new constitution, a massive participation rate that was unprecedented in Bolivia.

In this article, I look at this transformative process from the point of view of the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity. How did Bolivian women and indigenous peoples organize to influence the content of the new constitution? How were women's interests represented, and how did ethnically based organizations play a role in influencing the pattern of organizing and claim making by women? In this endeavor, I seek to understand the ways indigenous women have participated and whether the process enhanced their political agency. The general question this article examines is, What was indigenous women's agenda, in relation to the mestiza-dominated feminist movement and in the male-dominated indigenous movement? As a social group experiencing racial, ethnic, class, and gender domination, indigenous women indeed had a high stake in transforming the constitution and in seeing their voice heard in the re-founding of the Bolivian state. Were they able to do so, and how? What allies could they count on?

In answering these questions, I draw on the literature that discusses the meaning of autonomy for indigenous women and men, which is connected to a reflection on the social construction of feminism(s). My argument is that Bolivian indigenous women's strong presence and activism enabled them to strengthen their voice throughout the constituent assembly process. Because of the central role of the indigenous movement in the Bolivian political process, the feminist movement had to include indigenous perspectives in the platform that it developed. In general terms, both the indigenous and the feminist movements were successful in influencing the content of the new constitution. Many gender-specific claims have been put forward not only by the feminist movement in representation of "all" Bolivian women but also by the indigenous movement representing specifically indigenous women.

The contribution of the indigenous and feminist movements at the constituent assembly produced a very progressive constitution from the point of view of gender and ethnicity and from the point of view of specific indigenous women's claims.² Moreover, the process led to an unforeseen consequence: indigenous women's agency has strengthened through the formation of new organizations, which they lead, in the wake of the adoption of the new constitution. This is significant in comparison with the case of Mexico, where indigenous women's participation in the negotiations before the 1996 San Andrés Accords did not lead to the inclusion of

2. A content analysis of the 2009 constitution is beyond the scope of this article. I focus on the process of constitutional reform rather than on the actual result. The new constitution is available in English and Spanish: "República de Bolivia: Constitución de 2009," Political Database of the Americas, last modified May 9, 2009, <http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Bolivia/bolivia09.html>.

many important gender-based claims in the accords or in the 2001 Law on Indigenous Rights and Culture (Stephen 2001, 63–64).

After presenting a theoretical framework on social movements and intersectionality and reviewing the literature on indigenous women's movements in Latin America, I briefly explain the constituent assembly process held in Bolivia and then proceed to analyze the role of indigenous women's organizations, the indigenous movement in general, and the feminist movement. I characterize the views of organizations and movements on gender claims in relation to three principles (equality, equity, and complementarity) through an analysis of the public platforms they have defended and with the help of interviews I carried out in Bolivia in May 2007.³ Finally, I conclude by discussing how this political process has created more space for indigenous women's collective action.

AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

The paradigm of intersectionality emerged out of several strands of feminist work within standpoint theory and black feminist thought, post-structuralism, and postcolonialism (for good overviews, see McCall 2005; Denis 2008). Briefly put, "intersectional analysis involves the concurrent analyses of multiple, intersecting sources of subordination/oppression, and is based on the premise that the impact of a particular source of subordination may vary, depending on its combination with other potential sources of subordination (or of relative privilege)" (Denis 2008, 677).

Intersectionality is grounded in the critique of essentialist forms of understanding social categories that marginalizes the experience of many groups within and across such categories like "women," "workers," "Afro-Brazilians," and so on. It also refuses the additive model of social complexity whereby one could analyze gender, ethnicity, class, or sexuality separately and then add them one on top of the other—with expressions like "triple oppression." Instead, it considers that the particular intersections of these social categories, in specific historical contexts, produce social positions and identities that are idiosyncratic (Yuval-Davis 2006).

An interesting question from this perspective deals with how the connection between multiple social positionings and the formation of group identities functions. Social categories are based on a set of constructed

3. I carried out field research in La Paz, Sucre, and Cochabamba in May 2007. I interviewed women from popular organizations, feminist activists, academics, international cooperation workers, and women's NGO workers. I also spent one week at the constituent assembly, where I carried out a dozen semistructured interviews with women and men elected as constituents, who came from a diversity of party affiliations and political backgrounds.

attributes that define who is entitled to what resources—tangible and intangible—and how authority over those resources is distributed, thus creating social hierarchies. Group identities, in contrast, are produced historically by political, social, and cultural processes that rely on how social actors interpret social categories and use them to generate identification between individuals, networks, and a variety of symbols (Brubaker 2004).

An intersectional analysis of social movements should distinguish between social positionings and group identities. The former does not automatically produce the latter, and group identities can include, explicitly or not, different categories of social positionings (Rousseau 2009). Thus, for example, the group identity of the Aymara includes various class- and gender-based combinations of positioning, but the way the group expresses its identity may more or less refer to that diversity. The next question is, Who or what produces and/or expresses the group identity? There are, of course, different ways to answer this question, but one of them is located in the field of social movement studies and pertains to how collective action is structured around a set of shared meanings and mutual recognition, at least minimal organizations, and sustained contentious interaction with public authorities where claims for political inclusion are laid out (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).

Social movements tend to essentialize collective identities and the social groups to which they relate for the sake of strategic legitimacy building, sometimes with contradictory effects (Stephen 2001). The feminist literature in particular has exposed the marginalization of some groups within feminist or women's movements or the African American civil rights movement, for example (Breines 2002). But we still miss intersectional studies of social movement politics that would consider how intersecting categories such as gender, race, and ethnicity are represented in a social movement field.⁴

I propose to start filling this caveat by exploring through this article how social positionings created by the intersection of a set of categories—here, gender and race/ethnicity⁵—are articulated in the representation of group identities that social movement organizations carry. Social move-

4. Crossley (2003, 62) defines a social movement field along Bourdieusian lines as "a field in which different agents, networks and groups variously align, compete and conflict in pursuit of their goals; a field which generates its own exigencies, dynamics and rules, becoming a relatively autonomous 'game,' but which is always only ever relatively autonomous."

5. I follow Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992, 12, 9) in their understanding racism as "a discourse and practice of inferiorizing ethnic groups" based on racialization as a historical process and ethnicity as "partaking of the social conditions of a group, which is positioned in a particular way in terms of the social allocation of resources, within a context of difference to other groups, as well as commonalities and differences within [the group]."

ments emerge out of specific political opportunities but also more fundamentally out of cultural processes of meaning construction derived from social relations and material conditions (Rubin 2004). Thus, group identities as built-in social movements should be taken as reflecting power relations within society as much as between society and the state. Some social positionings are not represented strongly in a social movement field, whereas some group identities are essentialized, thus obscuring more complex power relations and different experiences of oppression (Rousseau 2009).

From that perspective, it is interesting to examine the politics of women's movements under the impact of indigenous movements in Latin America. In the past decade, following the rise of indigenous movements in many countries of the region, a new literature has started to document and analyze indigenous women's organizing (e.g., Hernández Castillo and Elizondo 1996; Sierra 2001; Kampwirth 2002, 2004; Hernández Castillo 2003; Richards 2004; Speed, Hernández Castillo, and Stephen 2006; Oliart 2008). On the basis of a shared assumption that indigenous women are among the most exploited and least recognized as citizens in Latin American states—with high rates of illiteracy, maternal mortality, and suffering from racism, transnationals' attacks on their livelihood, domestic and state violence, and exploitative labor—most of the literature emphasizes that neoliberal reforms and globalization have transformed gender relations in indigenous communities or urban neighborhoods to which members of those communities migrate. Moreover, decades of organizing promoted by the church or development of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and by more autonomous peasant or indigenous organizations have opened new opportunities for indigenous women to mobilize for change.

Because of the ethnic, community-driven logic of indigenous movements, mobilized indigenous women support the collective projects of decolonization and political and/or cultural autonomy carried by their organizations while also criticizing patriarchal practices and norms in their communities. As several authors have already explained, indigenous women are as likely as other women belonging to other ethnic groups or nationalist movements to be considered the key agents for preserving and reproducing the community and what leaders identify as its culture (Cadena 1991; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Radcliffe 2008). This is both a source of empowerment and identity for women and a potential—and real—argument used against women's full participation in all social spheres. One of the most immediate tensions revolves around the revaluing of customary law that is part of the project of indigenous cultural recognition and political autonomy. Customary practices do not always embody indigenous women's rights or aspirations, thus their interest in participating in the (re)definition of what are to be considered indigenous norms (Sierra 2001, 2007).

In Mexico, Hernández Castillo (2003), Sierra (2001, 2007), Kampwirth (2002, 2004), and Speed and colleagues (2006), among others, have shown how the Zapatista struggle has been a turning point for the consolidation of women's spaces in male-dominated indigenous organizations and for the emergence of indigenous women's own networks in several states of Mexico and at the national level with the Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas de México (CNMIM). Indeed, one of their key demands is their inclusion in all political spaces and institutions at par with men. Sierra's (2007) work on indigenous justice mechanisms in the Sierra Norte de Puebla and in the state of Guerrero in Mexico has shown how indigenous women seek to combine some aspects of indigenous customary norms with notions of women's rights drawn from national and international law.

These processes are highly conflictual and reveal at least two intersecting levels at which indigenous women are building their collective agency. First, at the level of the indigenous movement, where indigenous women play a key role, the quest for indigenous autonomy implies at a general level the capacity for indigenous peoples to exercise self-determination: territorial rights, the right to govern themselves within those territories, and the right to participate in all the decisions made at a broader governance level that affect their lives and rights. This includes the right to their self-defined institutions and norms. This broad struggle for autonomy contextualizes the way indigenous women define their social positioning and their gender identity. Their perspective is in line with indigenous cosmovisions that present a strong alternative to modernization theory and individualism.

As a transnational movement in the making, indigenous women have put forward a "notion of equality [that] identifies complementarity between genders as well as between human beings and nature" (Hernández Castillo 2010, 540). In the proceedings of the First Summit of Indigenous Women in the Americas in 2003, this movement claims as one of its core principles the following: "Duality or dualism: in which the feminine and the masculine in a same deity are two energy forces found in one. . . . By considering the Supreme as dual, father and mother, one can act with gender equity. This attitude is basic for the eradication of machismo" (quoted in and translated by Hernández Castillo 2010, 540). As alluded to previously, indigenous women face a long process of negotiating in indigenous movement organizations for the recognition of the changes needed for this gendered ideal to materialize in daily life, drawing as much on the interpretation of customary practices and norms as on national and international women's and indigenous rights (Richards 2005; Sierra 2007; Oliart 2008; Radcliffe 2008).

This way of defining gender and its politics has led some feminist and nonfeminist mestizo actors to attack indigenous (women's) movements

as essentialist and conservative, whereas indigenous women articulate strong critiques of feminist movements for their ethnocentrism and racist reproduction of unequal social relations on the terrain of social movements (Hernández Castillo 2003). However, several authors also have shown that some mestiza women's organizations have been key allies in the development of the indigenous women's movement, even if their collaboration is at times tense and unequal (Speed et al. 2006). The second level at which indigenous women develop their collective agency is therefore in relation to women's movements and feminist movements in particular. In this case, though, indigenous women are in general building relations from outside the feminist movement.

The Mexican leader Martha Sánchez Néstor (2005) says that, although some indigenous women like herself define themselves as feminists, most indigenous women still largely associate feminism with mestiza, middle-class movements. Some deep disagreements over the sources of inequality and oppression, as well as over the definition of gender, are at stake, but this is also a result of the power exercised by some feminist organizations and individuals to control or delegitimize indigenous women's struggles (Richards 2004). The Mexican anthropologist and women's rights activist Hernández Castillo (2010) claims that, although it may be too early to talk about indigenous feminism, the challenge indigenous women bring forward is that of a critique of capitalist individualism, neocolonialism, and neoliberalism, together with a critique of sexism and racism. Indigenous women's movements thus contribute to debates within and across feminist and other women's movements by proposing a new form of radicalism.

All the literature reports the difficult path involved in building the representation of indigenous women's gender interests. The Bolivian constituent assembly process created a terrain for social movement interaction in which the strength of the indigenous movement in national politics, relying on Bolivia's indigenous majority and its central role in the governing MAS, had a strong potential to influence the outcome. In Bolivia, the feminist movement is relatively small in comparison with that in some of its neighboring countries. How did this affect indigenous women's mobilizing and voices?

THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY PROCESS IN BOLIVIA

The Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB), representing thirty-four of thirty-six indigenous peoples, marched through the country in 1990 to demand territorial rights and was the first to formulate the proposal of holding a constituent assembly. This proposal became a central piece of the national agenda in the early 2000s, when the political regime had become highly illegitimate in the eyes of many organized sectors. The flight of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in 2003 and the

rise of Evo Morales as new political leader precipitated the demand for a complete institutional renewal.

Evo Morales was elected president with more than 54 percent of the vote at the end of 2005, and upon assuming power in early 2006, he announced plans for the election of a constituent assembly during that year. Even though Evo Morales has wanted to project an image of himself as a women-friendly leader and supporter of indigenous autonomy, the government's decision to retain the central role of political parties in the process marked the setup of the constituent assembly. Instead of an assembly in which women would hold 50 percent of seats and indigenous peoples would have direct representation, as several civil society actors had proposed, the MAS government decided that constituents would be elected through party lists with gender alternation (*alternancia*) in the lists.⁶ Because in fact women were rarely positioned on top of the lists, this led to women occupying 88 seats of 255 (33 percent), far from the goal of gender parity that women's and indigenous organizations defended. The MAS nonetheless ended up being the party that included the most women elected: sixty-four women, or 46.72 percent of MAS's seats. In comparison, the second-most-voted party, right-wing PODEMOS, fared poorly, with sixteen women elected, accounting for 26.67 percent of its seats.⁷

The MAS obtained the majority of seats at the assembly but not the absolute majority, which meant it had to negotiate. Political parties dominated the assembly but with a strong check from civil society, notably through the formation of a unity pact, the Pacto de Unidad, among all indigenous organizations that sought to lobby as a unitary voice and through the initiative *Mujeres Presentes en la Historia* (MPH), led by a coalition of feminist and women's organizations.

The election of constituents through party lists was not the last obstacle put in the way of women's participation. In January 2007, the first *Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres Constituyentes y Parlamentarias* was held under the presidency of Silvia Lazarte, a prominent peasant leader whom President Morales had chosen as president of the constituent assembly. Elected women who gathered together at this meeting agreed on the creation of the *Coordinadora de Unidad de Mujeres Constituyentes de Bolivia*, including all female political party representatives elected at

6. During the *Primer Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres para la Asamblea Constituyente*, held October 28–29, 2004, in La Paz, at which civil society women's organizations met, the Gender Parity Law Project was prepared and submitted to public debate. Reported in Arnold and Spedding (2005, 129), the project sought to ensure that women would hold 50 percent of seats at the assembly. "Gender alternation" means that the electoral lists must be made in a sequence of one male and then one female candidate, following each other (or one female and then one male).

7. Data reported in *Mujeres constituyentes*, published by the Viceministerio de Género y Asuntos Generacionales and Cooperación Técnica Alemana (2007).

the assembly, for the purpose of producing a joint platform on women's rights.⁸ When I interviewed constituents in May 2007, all reported that the MAS had impeded the functioning of the *coordinadora* because the party leadership wanted to retain control over it. But an informal coalition of about twenty women constituents coordinated the lobby work in the assembly's commissions.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND FEMINISM

Different types of actors have represented women's gender interests in civil society and inside the constituent assembly. Ethnic and class factors have historically divided the women's movement in Bolivia, with indigenous and popular-sector women having a several-decades-long history of organizing street protests, hunger strikes, and barricades to defend their living conditions and their labor and land rights. Indigenous women from peasant and mining communities have led important political mobilizations, such as the hunger strike against dictator Hugo Bánzer in 1978 and the Water and Gas Wars, which led to President Sánchez de Lozada's flight in 2003. For that reason, they have gained recognition from their male comrades and a reputation for being very combative. President Evo Morales recognized this when he appointed Silvia Lazarte as president of the constituent assembly.

Some middle-class mestiza women have formed self-defined feminist collectives or NGOs, mostly since the 1980s, to promote women's liberation, women's human rights, gender-sensitive policy making, and the integration of women in politics and development. Feminists developed some relationships with popular, indigenous women but mainly through NGO-provided services or as objects of study for the production of data on women for public-policy making (Monasterios 2007). During most of the 1980s and 1990s, ethnic differences among women were generally not acknowledged as a political challenge. Feminist NGOs in particular resorted to strategies based on spreading an institutionalized culture of women's rights. They made important inroads in the 1990s with the creation of a women's state machinery responsible for gender policy mainstreaming as well as for gender-based electoral quotas.

As Monasterios (2007) highlights, the rise to power of indigenous movements with the election of Evo Morales is signaling a new era that affects the dynamics of the women's movement. The hour of indigenous women seems to have arrived, and the time in which the feminist movement sought to represent all Bolivian women will have to end, accord-

8. "Las mujeres constituyentes y parlamentarias acuerdan crear coordinadora nacional," CENDA-CEJIS-CEDIB Web site, http://www.constituyentesoberana.org/3/noticias/ac/enero2007/210107_1.html.

ing to the author. Open conflicts between different sectors of organized women were to be expected from this new power balance. The constituent assembly was installed in that context. About 45 percent of the female constituents could be described as indigenous, a fact that is in itself a historical precedent in the political history of Bolivia.⁹ The assembly was the first institutional space to include indigenous women on a formally equal footing with nonindigenous women and men.

When I interviewed them, some indigenous female constituents criticized feminist NGOs openly. They accused them of receiving wealth of money flowing from foreign sources, of defending an ideology that pitted women against men rather than recognizing each gender's contribution to society, and they reported feeling used by feminist NGOs as clientele.¹⁰ Beyond the ideological discrepancies, the inequality indigenous women activists describe is based on the fact that they voluntarily carry out their political work, whereas NGO workers generally receive a salary and the resources needed to work at professional standards. Yet on my questioning how they felt about the platform MPH elaborated, all the indigenous women interviewees replied that they generally agreed with it. When I asked them how it could be so, in light of their tense relationship with feminist NGOs, they replied that the latter had held a long consultative process throughout the country and, as a result, had involved women from all sectors of society in building the platform. Thus, they deemed the platform representative and inclusive.

On the other side of the spectrum, in interviews I carried out during the same period, some professional women identifying with the feminist movement expressed feelings of unjust criticism and fears that the work done in the 1990s and early 2000s to engender the state and public policies might be lost with the rise of indigenous power.¹¹

9. This is my approximation based on interviews with eighty-four of the eighty-eight women constituents reproduced in the publication *Mujeres constituyentes*. Although the interviewees did not always explicitly state their ethnic identification, several characteristics, such as membership in social organizations, occupation, social background, and political ideas concerning indigenous claims, can be used to infer ethnic identification, bearing in mind that in the 2001 national census, 62 percent of Bolivian citizens self-identified as belonging to an indigenous people. If anything, this approximation underestimates the percentage of female constituents who considered themselves indigenous.

10. It should be clarified that the critique of NGOs' instrumental relationship with projects' target populations is a common feature of critiques from popular sectors throughout Latin America and of nonfeminist NGOs as well.

11. This fear was at least in part based on President Morales's decision to abolish the Vice Ministry on Gender in 2006, a decision that was reversed only after lobbying by the women's movement. The new Vice Ministry on Gender was housed in the Ministry of Justice rather than the Ministry of Social Development, as it had been before Morales assumed power. All feminist interviewees widely perceived this as a severe downgrade.

The interaction between indigenous women and feminist activists was thus set in a historical context filled with some frustration, mistrust, and changing power dynamics. In the following sections, I analyze in greater detail the main actors involved in the indigenous and feminist movements, focusing on how the platforms they launched during the constitutional reform process represented women's gender interests.¹² One of the key questions guiding my analysis of the platforms is whether indigenous norms of gender complementarity had a central place in indigenous women's claims. I was also interested in analyzing if and/or how gender equality appeared in indigenous women's and feminist movements' agendas, as well as gender equity.¹³

Complementarity, as much as equality, is an ideal that can shape gender relations in very different ways. It can mean the representation of gender duality in all social spheres or the gendered separation of social spheres. Both options can lead to a gender hierarchy or not (Arnold and Spedding 2005, 157–161; Canessa 2005). In a publication presenting interviews with eighty-four of eighty-eight female constituents who were asked the question, "What does 'gender' mean to you?" 24 percent answered by referring to equality, equity, and/or nondiscrimination, whereas 20 percent referred to their own experience as women, 18 percent talked about political participation, and 10 percent referred to the indigenous principle of complementarity (Viceministerio de Género y Asuntos Generacionales and Cooperación Técnica Alemana 2007, 5). In reading the content of individual interviews, it appears that there is a wide variety of opinions.

For example, Esperanza Rosario Huanca Mendoza, who was a traditional Aymara authority of the ancestral territory of Suyu Charcas Qhara-Qhara, refers to the Aymara notion of gender duality and claims that gender equity means that men and women participate equally in all social spheres. She declared, "Las mujeres fallamos desde nuestra casa. A veces siempre estamos delegando las tareas a las mujercitas, que ellas tienen que cocinar y hacer las labores del hogar y no comparte ese rol con su hermano. La equidad de género tiene que partir desde el hogar" (Viceministerio de Género y Asuntos Generacionales and Cooperación Técnica Alemana 2007, 15). Antonieta Meneses Rodríguez, who defines herself as a Quechua nurse and who was active in the Water War in Cochabamba, said: "desde la colonia las mujeres hemos sido excluidas

12. My method is formal: I use written, official platforms produced before and during the constituent assembly to compare and trace the process followed by the various actors. My goal is to assess whether there were central differences and/or shared ways of representing women's gender interests.

13. *Gender equity* means fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. It often requires women-specific programs to end existing inequalities (World Health Organization 2001).

totalmente. En los años de Mama Ocllo y de Manco Kapac se trabajaba en forma coordinada. . . . El trabajo y el manejo económico eran mutuos y no había esa discriminación" (Viceministerio de Género y Asuntos Generacionales and Cooperación Técnica Alemana 2007, 15). This belief in precolonial gender justice is present in several interviews. Others, like Virginia Mamani Condorena, a union leader for coca-leaf producers, criticize abusive practices on the part of male comrades in social struggles: "Hay ese machismo en las federaciones. Cuando hacíamos esos bloqueos nos buscaban, pero cuando venían los ministros y viceministros a acordar con ellos, nosotras estábamos desaparecidas y no nos convocaban. Y eso no es justo" (Viceministerio de Género y Asuntos Generacionales and Cooperación Técnica Alemana 2007, 19). Marcela Choque, a craftswoman, claims that "la equidad de género es el igual tratamiento del hombre y de la mujer. Discrepo que sigamos como antes, donde las mujeres éramos vistas como inútiles e ignorantes" (Viceministerio de Género y Asuntos Generacionales and Cooperación Técnica Alemana 2007, 21). Such a diversity of views precludes any rapid assumption about how indigenous women may consider the meaning of complementarity in relation to the principles of equality and equity.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

Indigenous women are fully integrated into the indigenous movement, which comprises three main organizations: the Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB), founded in 1982, which represents thirty-four peoples of Bolivia (all but Aymaras and Quechuas) living in the eastern lowlands; the Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ), founded in 1997, which represents Aymaras and Quechuas living in the highlands; and the Confederación Sindical Unida de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB), which was formed as a peasant union in the early 1980s and has made increasingly visible ethnic claims in the past decade and a half. Before the election of the constituent assembly, all major indigenous organizations were mixed-gender organizations, and men dominated their leadership. The Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas de Bolivia Bartolina Sisa (FNMCB BS, popularly called Las Bartolinas) is an exception as a women-only organization created in the early 1980s as a branch of the CSUTCB.¹⁴ Some leaders of Las Bartolinas attempted to create a more independent organization in the 1990s, but it

14. At its eleventh congress in April 2006, the FNMCB BS decided to recognize Afro-Bolivian women as members of its organization, and it changed its name to Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas, Indígenas, Originarias y Afrodescendientes de Bolivia Bartolina Sisa.

was a short lived and controversial initiative, and the FNMCB BS remain connected to the CSUTCB in organizational, political, and financial terms (Salazar 1998; García Linera, Chávez León, and Costas Monje 2004).

The Bartolinas formed around the basis of a core principle of indigenous social structure and community organization, that of gender complementarity. As the Aymara anthropologist María Ángela Riveros Pinto (2003) has explained, in Aymara communities, the *chachawarmi* is a socio-economic and moral unit that accomplishes the basic social functions in a household and at the community level.¹⁵ The *chachawarmi* is made up of the union of man and woman. Before entering into such a union, man and woman are not considered fully adult or full members in their community (Riveros Pinto 2003, 17). The notion of individual equality is historically foreign to indigenous cultures, which are grounded in community-based principles of justice and harmony. However, there are various degrees of recognition of the notion of individual equality in indigenous communities, as manifested in the use of the concepts of citizenship and human rights, for example (Canessa 2005; Rivera Cusicanqui 2010).

If *chachawarmi* is based on the complementarity of man and woman, in today's indigenous communities, as everywhere else in Bolivia and elsewhere, there exists a high discrepancy between discourse on gender relations and daily practices. Gender relations have been profoundly transformed by colonialism; capitalist development; and, lately, neoliberal reform and globalization, an important topic that goes beyond the scope of this article (see Rivera Cusicanqui 1996; Stephenson 1999; Riveros Pinto 2003; Canessa 2005). The impact of increasing migration patterns among males and females, in the context of a rising rate of urbanization, is especially important in accounting for current disjuncture between indigenous gender ideals and practices (Canessa 2005; Rivera Cusicanqui 2010).

As some of the Bartolinas members have stated, the group was created to "accompany" men in their struggles for land, democracy, and autonomy, which echoes the much earlier struggle of leader Túpac Katari and his wife, Bartolina Sisa, in indigenous rebellions of the late eighteenth century (Salazar 1998, 16). The Bartolinas were created from above and then worked hard to establish the organization at the grass roots in a pyramidal structure going from the national level to departmental units and then regional and local unions. As of 2004, the Bartolinas still had not laid down solid roots in four of nine departments, according to some analysts (García Linera et al. 2004).

The Bartolinas' initial gender-specific demands revolved around condemning violence against women and claiming women's shared decision-making power in the union organization. Many peasant women are il-

15. In Quechua culture, the equivalent of *chachawarmi* is *qhari-warmi*.

literate and without land titles, two issues that are often used to exclude them from union politics (Salazar 1998, 37). Moreover, peasant women are in charge of household management and child care, which makes it quite a challenge for them to develop leadership positions at levels above the local (Salazar 1998, 46).

Early on, the Bartolinas positioned themselves explicitly as not feminist, viewing feminism as a conflict against men (Salazar 1998, 55). This position was reaffirmed in some of the interviews I carried out in 2007 with Aymara and Quechua women elected at the constituent assembly, some of whom belonged to the Bartolinas.¹⁶ That being said, even a cursory look at the politics and discourse of indigenous peasant women reveals that the ideal of gender complementarity is not to be confused with Western notions of the separation of public and private spheres with corresponding gender roles. For indigenous women, maternity and household work are not to be opposed to active citizenship, meaning that they can be reconciled—at least in principle—with political participation and leadership, equal access to education, and the carrying out of productive income-generating activities. Complementarity thus refers not to the construction of exclusive spheres corresponding to each gender but rather to the fact that the duality of gender should be represented in all spheres, sometimes with different tasks performed according to one's gender.¹⁷

This is manifest in the documents presenting the Bartolinas' constitutional proposal, in which many gender-specific claims are grounded in the notion of gender equity. The central claims were focused on political participation, land rights, education, and domestic violence: the Bartolinas demanded 50 percent female representation in Congress, in parties, and in policy-making bodies; women's equal right to land titling and redistribution; and women's right to participate in land regulatory bodies. They also claimed the right to free public education, sanctions for violent spouses, and the creation of women's shelters. It is worth mentioning that the Bartolinas took a clear stance against abortion.¹⁸

Other important gender-specific claims related to family care, livelihood, and health emphasized the right to water as a human right; the right to food sovereignty and security; the promotion of traditional medicine and midwives; and equal access to health-care services, including

16. Interviews were carried out in Sucre, Bolivia, in May 2007.

17. Canessa's (2005) ethnographic work emphasizes that the Aymaras' understanding of gender is performative rather than essentialist: gender is differentiated according to what men and women do rather than what they are.

18. The constitutional reform claims come from different documents produced in 2006 by the FNM CB BS: commission reports from the eleventh congress of the FNM CB BS, April 8–10, 2006 and *Propuestas para la Asamblea Constituyente*, available at Mujeres Constituyentes, http://www.mujeresconstituyentes.ctic.bo/archivos/biblioteca/propuesta_en_construccion_federacion_nacional_de_mujeres_campesinas_bartolina_sisa.pdf.

guarantees against abuses committed by health-care professionals. Some documents proposed the end of compulsory military service.¹⁹

Other documents presenting indigenous women's proposals are also worth mentioning. Women (of the lowlands) from CIDOB produced a statement that presented a different set of gender-specific claims among which women's right to choose the number of children they have and their right to use contraceptives.²⁰ Another organization representing indigenous women but outside the frame of ethnic movements is the domestic workers movement, the Federación Nacional de Trabajadoras del Hogar de Bolivia (FENATRAHOB), founded in 1993. The federation includes domestic workers from all Bolivia's departments and has acted as a union to represent workers' rights. The adoption of the Ley de la Trabajadora del Hogar in 2003 is FENATRAHOB's major accomplishment. The federation produced a constitutional platform in July 2006 in which it pursued the agenda of domestic workers' rights; shared all the claims of the Bartolinas, except on the question of military service, for which it proposed women's inclusion in military service and insisted on what it called the democratization of domestic work (FENATRAHOB 2006).

INDIGENOUS MIXED-GENDER ORGANIZATIONS

I now move to discuss documents emerging out of mixed-gender indigenous organizations.²¹ This is important because indigenous women are very active in such organizations. Although in the abstract we can speak of a single indigenous movement in Bolivia, as mentioned previously, the movement comprises several organizations. In the context of the constituent assembly, all the major organizations, including the Bartolinas, have chosen to present a united front under the Pacto de Unidad. The platforms produced by the pact were the result of intense negotiations.

The Pacto de Unidad presented a first document outlining its constitutional reform platform in August 2006. It contained important gender components, including 50 percent of cabinet ministers being chosen by

19. According to Canessa (2005), military service is one of the key institutions that allows for rural, indigenous men to become citizens by learning Spanish and earning their first official ID, whereas indigenous women usually stay in the village. Military service is also associated with men's access to pornography and prostitution.

20. Pueblos Ayoreo, Chiquitano, Guarayo, and Yuracaré/Mojeño, *Propuesta de las mujeres indígenas de Santa Cruz sobre sus derechos y deberes para la nueva constitución política del estado*, Mujeres Constituyentes, http://www.mujeresconstituyentes.ctic.bo/archivos/biblioteca/propuesta_de_las_mujeres_indigenas_de_santa_cruz.pdf (accessed December 13, 2007).

21. There are many aspects of these platforms that I could emphasize here, but for the sake of precision, I mention only what I consider the most specific elements in terms of gender, bearing in mind that broader indigenous claims also have important consequences for transforming gender relations.

the president from a list presented by social organizations, of which half would be women; gender alternancia (not to be confused with gender parity) in electoral lists for legislators; gender equity in land distribution (thus not a very strong demand compared to equal land rights); gender equity in labor training and labor protection; breast-feeding leave insurance; prohibition of all forms of violence; prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex; and the right to integral health. The document states explicitly both that male and female Bolivians have the right to be elected and vote and that they have equal rights, including special measures to guarantee women's personal integrity; health and safe maternity; political, social, and economic participation; access to land; work justly remunerated with social insurance; and labor protection.²² Some of these elements are therefore stronger than what appeared in the Bartolinas' statements and others are weaker.

A little less than a year later, in May 2007, the Pacto de Unidad launched a more developed constitutional proposal that, interestingly, was written in nonsexist language as introduced by MPH earlier. It also included several articles close to the latter's proposal, such as the following: the state's adoption of positive discrimination measures in favor of women and other disadvantaged sectors; the extension of the prohibition of discrimination to gender, sexual choice, and pregnancy, among other motives; the prohibition of sexual violence and exploitation in couples and families; the establishment of sexual and reproductive rights, as well as the right to gender equity and equal gender rights to land titling and property; the new legislature's formation by men and women according to the principles of parity and alternancia; the establishment of the right to free education with gender equity guaranteed for all men and women in equal conditions and opportunities, and supported by public policies geared toward guaranteeing girls' schooling; the guarantee of equal conditions, opportunities, and protection in the labor market, with labor discrimination against women prohibited (including protections for pregnant women and the right to equal pay for equal work, not to be confused with pay equity); the establishment of universal health-care insurance; the promotion of paternal and maternal coresponsibility; and the recognition of equal rights to sons and daughters.²³

The Pacto de Unidad's 2006 and 2007 platforms mentioned complementarity as one of the fundamental principles that should guide the Boliv-

22. Asamblea Nacional de Organizaciones Indígenas, Originarias, Campesinas y de Colonizadores de Bolivia, *Propuesta para la nueva constitución política del estado*, Sucre, August 5, 2006, CENDA-CEJIS-CEDIB Web site, <http://www.constituyentesoberana.org/3/propuestas/indice-osio.html>.

23. Acta de Acuerdo de las Organizaciones del Pacto de Unidad, Constitución política del Estado Boliviano, Sucre, May 23, 2007.

ian state. But it was not associated explicitly with gender, contrary to the principle of equity that was frequently associated with gender. Overall, the Pacto de Unidad's final position not only was stronger in many ways than the Bartolinas' own documents but also shared many of the claims that MPH had voiced.

THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

The feminist movement in Bolivia comprises at least two currents, which I call radical-autonomous and institutional. The first, mainly formed by the collective *Mujeres Creando*, based in La Paz, acted as a strong critique of the constituent assembly process and as a critique of the MAS government in general, denouncing what it considered the instrumentalization of women by Evo Morales's government.²⁴ *Mujeres Creando* is known for its strong critiques of patriarchal, neocolonial, heteronormative, and racist structures, and it remains largely led by mestiza, urban, middle-class women. In Santa Cruz, *Colectivo Rebeldía* is another autonomous feminist collective that seemed remote from indigenous women's politics when it expressed some fears in 2006 about how Aymara organizations could be a potential threat to feminist proposals because of their insistence on the value of complementarity (Sanabria, Nostas, and Román 2006).

The institutional current comprises several NGOs and coalitions of NGOs. Although it might be a stretch to consider feminist all the organizations that formed the project *Mujeres y Asamblea Constituyente*, which later became MPH, I categorize them as such for the sake of contrasting them with indigenous, peasant, and popular women's organizations that have a very different historical relationship with the state and that, at the time of this research, did not generally define themselves as feminists.

The *Coordinadora de la Mujer*, a network of development and women's NGOs, launched and sustained the MPH project. The *Foro Político Nacional de Mujeres*, formed by some women from political parties; the *Articulación de Mujeres por la Equidad y la Igualdad (AMUPEI)*, a follow-up body to the Beijing Platform for Action; and the *Plataforma de la Mujer*, which represents women's and feminist organizations, were all members participating in the project (Lanza Monje 2008).

Mujeres Presentes en la Historia started at the end of 2004 and organized more than four hundred workshops and meetings throughout the country, in the nine departments, in the city of El Alto, and in more than 150 municipalities. According to MPH sources, about twenty thousand women representing one thousand women's and mixed organizations were consulted and participated in elaborating a comprehensive constitutional proposal (MPH 2006; Lanza Monje 2008). The group had the

24. See articles by *Mujeres Creando* at the Web site <http://www.mujerescreando.org>.

vantage point of orienting the consultation through a set of educational material on the constitution, launched in 2005.²⁵

The MPH's platform, produced at the end of the consultations in 2006 and on the basis of which its staff lobbied constituent assembly members, provided empirical data on gender inequalities and injustices. On that ground, it proposed several principles for the new constitution to embody: equity and affirmative action, equality and nondiscrimination, women's specific rights in relation to sexual and reproductive rights and gender-based violence, democratization of nonremunerated domestic work and recognition of its economic value, equal pay for work of equal value (pay equity), constitutional recognition of international human rights treaties signed by the Bolivian state, gender parity and alternancia in elections and political institutions, women's equal right to land ownership and inheritance, and the principle of nonsexist language in the writing of the new constitution (MPH 2006). It also argued for a secular state that recognizes religious freedom,²⁶ and for the recognition of indigenous collective rights over territory and to their traditional institutions.²⁷

Thus, both gender equality and gender equity informed MPH's platform. Gender-specific rights were based on an explicit claim about "sexual difference as a universal fact that creates distinct biological and cultural needs for men and women" (MPH 2006, 10). This definition of gender as anchored in biological differences is far from a radical feminist position, to say the least. However, nowhere in the platform is the notion of gender complementarity mentioned, which reflects the limits of the feminist movement's recognition of indigenous women's cultural frames.

Continuing on to how the MPH addressed indigenous norms and claims, the comparison of the educational material produced in 2005 with the proposal launched in 2006 after national consultations reveals important nuances. The 2005 material reads that "indigenous customary norms are contrary to women's legal equality," a rather blunt statement that evokes ethnocentric prejudice. In general terms, though, the material recognized the legitimacy of indigenous peoples' claims to territory and to their own institutions. In contrast, the 2006 platform asked for the "elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in customary norms dealing with access, property, inheritance, and the sale and redistribution of land." It also proposed that "the judiciary shall articulate positive

25. The Proyecto Mujeres y Asamblea Constituyente disseminated the *Guía pedagógica* and a series of thematic booklets (*The State and Rights; Human Rights; Social, Family, Cultural, and Economic Regimes; Land, Territory, and Natural Resources; Political Regime and Decentralization; History of the Constituent Assembly*) throughout the country.

26. In the former constitution of Bolivia, article 3 specified that "the State recognizes and supports the Catholic Church."

27. There are many other aspects of this platform that I could emphasize here, but for the sake of precision, I mention only the most relevant elements in terms of gender.

law with customary law in due respect of individual fundamental rights.” Led by mostly middle-class mestiza women, MPH has thus moved to show greater openness to the indigenous movement’s agenda, but it has remained cautious in terms of how it perceives the ways in which indigenous institutions can guarantee women’s rights.

Another sector of the Bolivian feminist movement united under *Campaña 28 de Septiembre*—a Latin American regional campaign to decriminalize abortion—and produced a platform centered on sexual and reproductive rights, the decriminalization of abortion, the right to protection from all forms of violence, and the recognition of different family forms.²⁸ Most of these issues were also included in MPH’s 2005 and 2006 documents, except for the sensitive issue of abortion. Katia Uriona, coordinator of MPH, argued instead for the inclusion of a general article on sexual and reproductive rights and one on the right to life, saying that abortion should be treated in an ordinary law rather than in the constitution (Claire 2007). This was probably motivated by the fact that abortion was one of the most divisive issues between feminists and indigenous women’s organizations, with some of the latter openly opposing abortion. In fact, the *Campaña 28 de Septiembre* decided to focus strategically on a minimalist agenda during the course of the constituent assembly process by dropping the issue of abortion when it confronted the need to ally with other sectors of the women’s movement against the progress conservative groups had made in the assembly’s Commission on Rights, Duties, and Guarantees. During the time of my fieldwork in Sucre, the city was the site of a debate around the article guaranteeing the right to life, as some constituents, including some from the MAS, wanted to include the right to “life beginning at conception.” In a document produced after the end of the assembly’s work, the *Campaña* recognized that this crisis had prompted it to seek compromise with broad sectors of the women’s movement. Facing the crisis, it decided to focus on three points of its platform: the right to life in general terms, the recognition of diverse family forms, and a secular state.²⁹

INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S MOBILIZATION AFTER THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY PROCESS

Indigenous women’s mobilization has shown increased strength during the last months of and following the constituent assembly. First, the

28. *Campaña 28 de Septiembre*, Bolivia, *Desde nuestros cuerpos: Hacia la Asamblea Constituyente*, available at the Web site of *Campaña por una Convención Interamericana de los Derechos Sexuales y los Derechos Reproductivos*, <http://www.convencion.org.uy/aborto097.htm> (accessed January 21, 2011).

29. *Campaña 28 de Septiembre*, “Desde el nuevo texto constitucional hacia nuestros cuerpos,” Comité de América Latina y El Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer, http://www.cladem.org/espanol/nacionales/bolivia/desde_el_nuevo_texto.pdf (accessed July 2, 2009).

creation of the Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas de Bolivia (CNAMIB), in November 2007, responded to lowland indigenous women's willingness to build a stronger voice in the CIDOB. Founded at the very end of the constituent assembly's work, CNAMIB can be considered a by-product of the constitutional reform's mobilization process. Moreover, a new national event in which popular, indigenous women's organizations jointly strategized was held twice, in 2008 and 2009. The Cumbre Social de Mujeres de Bolivia, led by the Bartolinas, was established to create women's synergies around the implementation of the new constitution. It brought together FENATRAHOB, CIDOB and CNAMIB, and women from CONAMAQ and several other women's organizations. Among the claims it put forward in its meeting resolutions in 2008 was demanding the creation of a Consejo Nacional de Mujeres Originarias Campesinas to resolve community and indigenous justice conflicts involving women's rights.³⁰

Finally, indigenous women from the lowlands and highlands held the joint Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas de Tierras Bajas y Tierras Altas de Bolivia on May 8–9, 2009, to prepare a joint platform to be brought to the First Continental Summit of Indigenous Women of Abya Yala, held in Puno, Peru, on May 27–28, 2009. The official meetings testify to a stronger protagonism on the part of indigenous women at a national scale in which they represent themselves directly and not only through mixed-gender organizations.

The collaborative stance between feminists and indigenous women has also continued in the wake of the constituent assembly. On March 29, 2008, the CNAMIB and the Domestic Workers Federation signed a joint statement together with numerous other women's organizations—including the Federación de Mujeres de la Ciudad de El Alto (El Alto is a city with an indigenous majority) and Campaña 28 de Septiembre—to defend the draft constitution and in particular women's sexual and reproductive rights and the right to live without violence.³¹ Once the new constitution was approved by referendum in early 2009, there was a joint feminist-indigenous women's work on the new transitional electoral law. The Federación Bartolina Sisa supported the proposal developed by CNAMIB, CIDOB, CONAMAQ, FENATRAHOB, and the Coordinadora de la Mujer, among others. The proposal sought to ensure that the actual electoral law

30. Resoluciones de la Primera Cumbre Social de Mujeres de Bolivia, August 15, 2008, Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia "Bartolina Sisa," <http://www.bartolinasisa.org/sitio.shtml?apc=I1----&x=1362310> (accessed July 3, 2009).

31. Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres en el Cuarto Encuentro Social Alternativo, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, March 29, 2008. Included as an annex to Campaña 28 de Septiembre, *Desde el nuevo texto constitucional hacia nuestros cuerpos*, Comité de América Latina y El Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer, http://www.cladem.org/espanol/nacionales/bolivia/desde_el_nuevo_texto.pdf (accessed July 2, 2009).

would reflect the gender parity and *alternancia* principles of the constitution. The organizations were only partly successful in that only the gender *alternancia* principle was included in the law.³²

CONCLUSION

Indigenous organizations that united under the Pacto de Unidad showed an increasing, strong commitment to representing indigenous women's gender specific rights. This was because indigenous women, whether involved through the Bartolinas or through mixed-gender organizations, had a strong influence on the Pacto de Unidad's negotiations. Moreover, a great part of the explanation for the success of women's gender-specific interest representation lies in the collaborative stance that mobilized indigenous women and feminist organizations adopted during the constituent assembly. Although there was no official women's coalition to bring them together, the MPH provided a space for the formulation of a platform that indigenous women recognized as legitimate, even if feminists had not initially showed much openness to indigenous agendas, and even if a climate of mistrust surrounded the negotiations.

This analysis of the indigenous and feminist movements' dynamics around the constituent assembly in Bolivia presents several findings for the study of indigenous women's mobilization in the Americas. The first one is obviously related to the strength of the indigenous movement in the national political process, as a key variable to consider in understanding both the important space occupied by indigenous women who are central to the indigenous movement and the feminist movement's willingness to include and negotiate with indigenous women. The broad context whereby the constituent assembly is a historical demand of the indigenous movement, and whereby the governing party, the MAS, is strongly connected to this movement, acted as a strong motive for the feminist movement to consider some of the indigenous women's agenda. Indigenous Bolivian women managed to position themselves as a central collective actor in representation of Bolivian women.

An interesting outcome of this political process is indigenous women's increasing protagonism outside of mixed-gender organizations, starting at the end of the constituent assembly. They seized the opportunity presented by their gains made in negotiations to develop more autonomous forms of mobilization but did not break ranks with their male comrades. This is in line with the findings of the literature on other cases of indigenous women's mobilization in other parts of Latin America, where their

32. "Ley transitoria electoral: La acción coordinada de las mujeres por la paridad y la *alternancia*," April 16, 2009, Coordinadora de la Mujer, http://www.coordinadoramujer.org/noticia.php?cod_noticia=NO20090416100142 (accessed July 3, 2009).

struggle inside the indigenous movement involves both unity and gender differentiation.

Finally, the findings reveal that equal rights and equity measures in the form of specific women's rights or positive discrimination were much more central than the indigenous principle of complementarity to all the indigenous and feminist organizations that lobbied constituent assembly members. The latter remained important in a general fashion in indigenous platforms and in the 2009 constitution rather than directly associated with gender. Now that Bolivia has one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, it is only to be hoped that its political class will have the means and the will to implement it.

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