

**Forging Women's Substantive Representation:  
Intersectional Interests, Political Parity and Pensions in Bolivia\***

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**Abstract**

Lacking tools to measure substantive representation, empirical research to date has determined women's substantive representation by identifying "women's interests" a priori, with little attention to differences among women across race, class or other inequalities. To address this problem, I develop the concept of intersectional interests and a method for identifying these. Intersectional interests represent multiple perspectives and are forged through a process of political intersectionality that purposefully includes historically marginalized perspectives. These interests can be parsed into three types: *expansionist*, *integrationist* and *reconceived*. Identification of intersectional interests requires, first, an inductive mapping of the differing women's perspectives that exist in a specific context and then an examination of the political processes that lead to these new, redefined interests. I demonstrate the concept of intersectional interests and how to identify these in Bolivia, where I focus on the political process of forging reconceived intersectional interests in Bolivia's political parity and pension reforms.

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Scholarship on the relationship between women's descriptive and substantive representation in politics has focused principally on whether the presence of more women in political office (descriptive representation) has resulted in these politicians formulating more policies that favor women's interests (substantive representation). Surprisingly, despite the fact that gender and politics scholars broadly accept the importance of intersectionality, in empirical research, the fundamental question of how intersectionality might complicate women's substantive representation is usually evaded. Lacking tools to derive an intersectional measure of women's interests, empirical research to date has determined women's substantive representation by identifying "women's interests" a priori. Yet, identifying *which* women's interests might constitute the substantive representation of women becomes thorny once we recognize women are diverse and hold distinct priorities that may derive from their class, race, sexual orientation or another aspect of their lived experience. Indeed, once we introduce intersectionality, the underlying assumption behind the study of women's political representation –that women might better represent women– becomes suspect. Is this reason to abandon the study of women's substantive representation? My answer is no. Whether or not the growing numbers of women – and their increasing diversity– in elected office succeed or fail in changing traditional political dynamics is of inherent interest to their constituents and to scholars. But our methods of research must incorporate the reality of intersectionality in order to truly know whether women in political office make a difference.

In an effort to provide better tools, I develop the concept of intersectional interests and demonstrate a method for identifying these. Intersectional interests represent multiple perspectives and are constructed through processes of political intersectionality, in which political actors use strategies of inclusive solidarity to reach across structural inequalities to

identify shared goals and incorporate marginalized perspectives (Crenshaw 1991; Ewig and Ferree 2013, 416). Intersectional interests can be parsed into three subtypes that I define in detail below: *expansionist*, *integrationist* and *reconceived*. Identification of intersectional interests begins with an inductive mapping of the differing women's perspectives in a specific context, followed by identifying whether political intersectionality lead to the constitution of shared, intersectional interests. This concept and approach provides a method for the inclusive identification of women's interests, and an alternative to a priori approaches.

Contemporary Bolivia is a compelling place to re-think what constitutes women's substantive representation in intersectional terms because of its high numbers, and class and ethnic heterogeneity, of women in political office. In 2012, I carried out interviews with activist women in the major Bolivian feminist, indigenous and peasant organizations as well as women politicians and bureaucrats. Combining these interviews with social movement materials and historical and anthropological accounts of cleavages of inequality, I first map how the intersecting structures of class, race, rural/urban geography, and sexuality result in divergent women's perspectives on what constitutes important political issues. 2012 was a good moment to conduct these interviews. The election of Bolivia's first indigenous President, Evo Morales, meant that indigenous women felt empowered to speak to me (a white US researcher) frankly, in ways that may not have occurred at a different time. The Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) governments' embrace of women's participation in government in its second term (2010-13) also made women's representation a salient issue.<sup>1</sup> I then use this mapping to identify the ways Bolivian women forged intersectional interests, with emphasis on the reconceived intersectional interests developed in Bolivia's political parity and pension debates.

### **Intersectionality and Women's Substantive Representation**

Hanna Pitkin distinguishes among four views of political representation, including descriptive representation (“the making present of something absent by resemblance or reflection”) and substantive representation (“acting for others”) (1967, 11–12). While Pitkin did not consider descriptive representation to imply substantive representation, other theorists have made the case for a logical connection (Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995). As a result, there is significant research on the relationship between women’s descriptive and substantive representation.<sup>2</sup> Yet, despite the ways that intersectionality would seem fundamental, there has been surprisingly little integration of intersectional analysis into this scholarship. The lack of attention may be due to a philosophical impasse: some theorists assert common experiences unite women, while others insist the very idea of shared interests is flawed.

Implicitly or explicitly, most empirical scholars appear to accept the position that shared experiences with the gender division of labor or childbirth result in women’s shared interests and, thus, women will likely substantively represent women (Diamond and Hartsock 1981; Jónasdóttir 1988, 53; Sapiro 1981). Even among theorists who acknowledge women’s diversity, some ultimately assert underlying continuities based on gendered experiences (Phillips 1995, 67). It is on this philosophical basis that empirical scholars argue one can a priori determine “women’s interests”, and measure substantive representation as actions taken to represent these.

Theorists of intersectionality critique the idea of shared interests based solely on gender for portraying the experiences of dominant (white, upper class, Global North) women as universal. African American feminist scholars have pointed to the powerful ways black women’s experiences are impacted by race and gender combined (Crenshaw 1988; Hill Collins 1991; Spelman 1988) while scholars of the Global South have noted the effects of international power inequalities on women’s experiences (Mohanty 1991; Narayan 1997). These theorists argue that

the myriad experiences of differently-situated women make it impossible to determine women's interests a priori. Nor can interests derived from different forms of subjugation be simply added – as in expressions like “double jeopardy” and “triple oppression.” Instead, the interlocking of two or more structures of inequality simultaneously shapes individual experiences.

The responses of scholars of substantive representation to intersectional theorists have varied. Lisa Baldez argues that because the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women has been vetted worldwide, it can serve as an intersectional template (2011). Others argue that women do in fact have shared interests; but differ on the *issues* within those interests (Beckwith 2014). Still others offer additional theoretical frameworks, but none of actually applies their framework, making the tools for implementation elusive (Dahlerup 2014; Hancock 2014).

In empirical work on women's substantive representation, common practice has been to acknowledge intersectionality but not sufficiently attend to its consequences. For example, among scholars of Latin America, Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) acknowledge the dangers of essentialism; but then focus on the “feminist” issues of violence against women, sexual harassment, reproduction and political representation. Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi (2013) side-step intersectionality by claiming to focus not on women's interests, but on “gender equality,” and then ignore how gender intersects with other forms of inequality. In the US scholarship, the most common measures are issues identified by feminist organizations, which are not necessarily intersectional (e.g. Carroll 2001; Cowell-Meyers and Langbein 2009; Swers 2002).

### **Intersectional Interests Rooted in Political Intersectionality**

I reconcile the reality of intersectionality with the empirical study of substantive representation by developing the concept of intersectional interests. While Pitkin recognizes

interests as value-laden and disputed (1967, 213), she does not explore their constructed nature. My concept of intersectional interests begins with the recognition that individual and group interests are shifting and temporally located, generated through political dialogue and action. This constructed nature is especially true for intersectional interests –which bridge different forms of inequality. Intersectional interests cannot be identified a priori, but rather are forged if and when political intersectionality takes place. In the words of Bolivian activist María Lourdes Zabala, “that which marks oppression and privilege and which constitutes a significant difference among women is not a fixed attribute, established and predefined, but is a contingent and situated relation mobilized in the collective practice of women” (2010).<sup>3</sup> Our attention, therefore, must focus on identifying the range of oppressions that impact women in a given context, at a given time (and which ultimately inform their diverse perspectives), *and* on the ways intersectional political practices can generate shared interests in spite of deep divides.

The concept of intersectional interests draws on Kimberlé Crenshaw’s three forms of intersectionality: 1) *structural* intersectionality, when two or more distinct structures of inequality conjoin to shape an individual’s lived experience; 2) *political* intersectionality, when political activism recognizes multiple axes; and 3) *representational* intersectionality, when two or more inequalities combine to create specific cultural representations (1991). All three play a role in women’s substantive political representation. The differing experiences of individual women as they are crosscut by race, class, sexuality, disability or other structures of inequality is why identifying common “women’s interests” is so fraught. But political intersectionality demands we also heed the dynamics of the political process itself; evaluate whether the political pursuit of “women’s substantive representation” utilizes inclusive political tactics, or conversely strategies and priorities that serve to perpetuate the dominance of one group over others. Finally,

representational intersectionality shapes the context of these politics, including stereotypes that inform experiences of structural intersectionality and the dynamics of political intersectionality.

While Crenshaw's subtypes of intersectionality are illuminating, she provides few examples of inclusive political intersectionality (Crenshaw 1988, 1991). Separately, intersectionality as a concept has been critiqued for its tendency to further fix identities (Puar 2007). Iris Young's approach to identity and politics helps to address both of these shortcomings. Like Zabala, Young argues that group perspectives are not rooted in essential qualities but are actively generated through interactions within social movements and between formal representatives and their constituents (Young 2000, 127–28). Young's focus on political interaction across lines of difference also offers a model for conceiving of political intersectionality beyond static identity categories. I argue that it is in political interaction across lines of difference that intersectional interests are generated.

Building on Crenshaw and Young, my approach to identifying intersectional interests begins with a contextually-specific mapping of the structural inequalities and cultural representations that influence individual women's perspectives. The inductive mapping begins with an historical understanding of the major societal cleavages, followed by analysis of written social movement materials and interview or observational data to capture the perspectives of marginalized groups that may not leave written records. This contextual mapping is critical because the salience of particular structures of inequality such as class, or race, varies across contexts (Ferree 2003) and even the ways in which these structures operate –such as the particularities of race in Latin America– may also vary (Ewig 2010).

Mapping in hand, the next step is to identify instances where intersectional interests are forged through political intersectionality. Intersectional interests are the result of deliberative

processes that include the most marginalized and which implement strategies that seek to bridge structural inequalities. Intersectional interests come in three common forms. The first is *expansionist*: when activists or politicians expand the spectrum of women's interests to include issues voiced by the most marginalized. The second, *integrationist*, occurs when a gender dimension is integrated into issue areas that address other inequalities. The reality for some women may be that class inequality, racial discrimination or another structural inequality are their most pressing concerns; but theories of intersectionality tell us that gender often works in tandem with these other inequalities. Thus, policies that address gender in conjunction with other forms of inequality are more substantively representative of women's interests than those that address gender inequalities alone. Third, are interests that are re-conceptualized through political intersectionality; or *reconceived* intersectional interests. This third form is most significant because reconceived interests address divergent perspectives in new, holistic ways.

Women's substantive representation, in this approach, is measured not by the achievement of specific policies that are identified as in women's interest a priori, but rather those policies that enact one of these three forms of intersectional interests. Below, I employ this approach in Bolivia.

### **Mapping Women's Perspectives in Bolivia**

Intersectionality does not operate the same way everywhere; in different societies, distinct structural inequalities gain salience from divergent histories. My mapping of Bolivian women's perspectives begins with historical and anthropological scholarship that points to the salience of class, race, geography and gender as long-standing structural divides that generate inequalities. Historians and anthropologists agree that class in Bolivia is the most salient structural inequality and is intertwined with race/ethnicity and rural/urban divisions.<sup>4</sup> Bolivia's

mining economy helped to create strong class divisions and fostered class-consciousness among mine workers in particular. Leaders of Bolivia's 1952 revolution exploited these class divisions, heightening class identification (Dunkerley 1984). But the nationalist ideology of the 1950s also masked long-standing racial divisions between indigenous Bolivians and those of Spanish and mixed Spanish and indigenous (or *mestizo*) descent. Revolutionaries renamed indigenous rural residents peasants (*campesinos*) for instance, in an effort to overcome the racism inscribed in the distinction between *indios* and whites (Albó 2008; Toranzo Roca 2008).<sup>5</sup> Despite class rhetoric, anthropologists have documented the colloquial ways racism has been continually practiced against indigenous Andeans (Weismantel 2001).

More so than in other parts of the world, in Latin America, race is a fluid construction. "Modernity" and "civilization" are associated with whites and mestizos in urban areas – making education, economic advancement and migration modes of "whitening"; processes that also reinforce the co-construction of race with class and geography (de la Cadena 2000; Stepan 1991). It is hard, therefore, to disentangle indigenous and class divisions from rural/urban divides. While not all rural Bolivians are poor and indigenous, the poor and indigenous live predominantly in rural areas. Beginning in the 1980s, indigenous identities re-emerged as politically salient, due in part to the break-down of class-based corporatist alignments and the dawn of a global "multicultural" discourse (Yashar 2005; Albó 2002, 2008). The emergence of a broad indigenous movement propelled the election of Bolivia's first indigenous president, Evo Morales and his MAS party, in 2005. Morales was reelected twice more in 2009 and 2014.

Gender is also a significant structural inequality; the lack of women (until recently) in political office; their concentration in lower economic echelons; the prevalence of violence against women; and norms that discourage girls from seeking education are just some indicators

(Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2010). But gender operates and is understood in different ways in rural indigenous and campesino, compared to urban mestizo/white, communities. In urban, white/mestizo areas, dominant gender relations stem from Victorian ideals of female domesticity and patriarchal control and the Catholic ideal of self-sacrificing mothers; though these have evolved.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, the two largest indigenous cultures in Bolivia, Aymara and Quechua, adhere to an ideal of gender relations called *chachawarmi* (*qhari-warmi* in Quechua). Chachawarmi centers on the conjugal pair, with a clear division of labor between husband and wife, yet the labors of each are equally valued (Choque Quispe 2009; Harris 1978). For contemporary indigenous women, chachawarmi is an ideal, but one that they recognize is rarely entirely realized (Burman 2011, 78).

Gender and race interact substantially in the Andes, with indigenous women associated with indigeneity more than men due to a their greater likelihood to remain monolingual indigenous speakers, maintain indigenous dress and customs, and not travel far from their communities (de la Cadena 1996).<sup>7</sup> Rural male migration for work has accentuated this gender/race connection as men become “whiter” due to their growing urban ties and cultural experiences (Canessa 2005). Moreover, rural indigenous communities hold more conservative views of sex and sexuality than urban mestizo communities (Canessa 2005).

Each of these axes of structural inequality intersects, and informs the experiences of women political activists, while representational intersectionality informs their perceptions of one another. My interviews with activist Bolivian women and review of their social movement documents confirm these divisions, and show how they manifest among politically active women.<sup>8</sup> These materials also reveal sexual orientation serves as another crosscutting inequality.

To obtain a sample of the full range of women political activists across these cleavages, I used news reports, websites and the “snowball” method of asking initial contacts to identify others in order to locate women leaders of independent women’s organizations, of women’s branches of male organizations, and within mixed-sex activist organizations. I also identified women currently or formerly in the legislature and bureaucracy. I began the interviews by asking about their personal political trajectory, and then their organization’s priorities. I probed key issue areas to identify similarities and differences in perspectives among women. I also asked about the relationship between their organization and others that engaged women of different class or ethnic compositions. I also asked about their political strategies. I supplemented interviews with written materials from these organizations.

The interviews made evident differing understandings of gender and how it operates in Bolivia. Drawing on *chachawarmi*, most rural indigenous women saw their place for activism alongside men, not separate from them.<sup>9</sup> This was clear in all of my interviews with women who were part of either peasant or indigenous organizations or who identified with these.<sup>10</sup> Many of these women emphasized the importance of women’s contributions to family and community alongside their individual empowerment.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, several urban activist women, organized in feminist organizations, rejected *chachawarmi* in favor of more individualist ideals. Bolivian feminists Victoria Aldunate and Julieta Paredes, from the collective *Asamblea Feminista* (Feminist Assembly), write that the idea of indigenous complementarity “denies women the possibility of being political representatives autonomous from men –normally their husbands– and denies lesbians the power to be legitimate members of the community” (Aldunate and Paredes 2010, 11). Paredes self-identifies as Aymara, but her urban lifestyle and radical politics

make her “feminist” rather than indigenous in the perceptions of women engaged with indigenous and peasant movements.

In the Aldunate and Paredes quote, sexuality is enmeshed with these differing ideals of gender. For these feminists, *chachawarmi*, intimately tied to the male-female couple, denies the possibility of alternative sexual preferences. These differing perspectives are reinforced by stereotypes. For example, Julia Ramos, the national leader of the peasant women’s organization, Bartolina Sisa, described the differences between peasant, indigenous women and urban feminists this way:

The majority of us, we are married...we respect that there is [among feminists] a different way of life. They are single, divorced, others are widows, so they have a different way of perceiving things, and well, we also are not very interested in being on the extreme – neither one side or the other. We women, the majority married with children...we don't believe women should submit to men, nor men to women.

For Ramos, key differences include sexuality as well as differing ideas of male-female relations. Bolivia is predominantly Catholic, with a growing evangelical Protestant presence especially in rural communities. Both religions promote male domination over women and reject deviations from heterosexuality and the gender binary. Despite the growth of a LGBTQ movement in recent decades, negative cultural representations of LGBTQ individuals have been slow to change, as Ramos’ comment makes clear.

The structural inequalities of gender and sexuality are informed by class and race. Cecilia Enríquez, director of the feminist non-governmental organization (NGO) Gregoria Apaza, was most graphic on this point:

In a society like ours, in which there is a process of whitening as one advances in the power hierarchy [before the government of Evo Morales] calmly, as a *mestiza* women, I could beat an indigenous man. Because within the hierarchies of power, I am more. So, if an indigenous man said something to me, insulted me...I would turn around and slap him because, again, in the power hierarchies,

I have more power than an indigenous man. So that demonstrates the relativity of the power hierarchy dependent on your ethnicity, class, gender and the possibilities of who you can be in life.

The result of this racial (and its related class) subjugation is that for peasant and indigenous women, racial equality is as important, and often more important than, gender equality.

Class also creates significant divisions among women. The differential effects of economic structural adjustment in the 1980s, in which poor women suffered disproportionately, further divided an already highly class-stratified society and its effects remain stark within the women's movement. Feminist NGOs – such as the Centro de Información y Desarrollo de la Mujer (Center for Women's Information and Development, CIDEM), Gregoria Apaza, and the umbrella organization, Coordinadora de la Mujer (Women's Coordinator) – are mainly run by urban, college-educated mestizas. In the 1990s, feminist NGOs collaborated with the World Bank and the government to implement development projects serving peasant and indigenous women in rural areas, but rarely considered rural women peers.<sup>12</sup> Peasant women's distrust of NGO feminists increased in the Morales era, when the MAS government broke with neoliberalism and anti-imperialism became rhetorically central.<sup>13</sup>

There are also divisions between liberal and radical urban feminist organizations that compete for resources and recognition.<sup>14</sup> Here too, divides of class (in the form of representational stereotypes) and sexuality play a role. In contrast to the liberal NGOs, the radical autonomous collectives such as Mujeres Creando (Women Creating) and Asamblea Feminista, take decidedly anti-statist positions. While the professionalized NGOs work on development projects, direct services to women, and legislative proposals, the collectives advocate unconventional forms of protest aimed at changing culture. The collectives are also led by out-lesbians who make sexual orientation central to their discourse. And, similar to peasant

and indigenous women, the collectives are suspicious of NGO feminists' past collaboration with neoliberal governments and organizations – even though there are no real class differences between them. As María Galindo of Mujeres Creando recounted:

When in 85 they implemented structural adjustment, the World Bank understood well that the economic support for this process was going to be women. So, they directed a lot of policies towards women and the agent of these policies was the women's NGOS –with “a gender perspective” with “gender equity.” And, what emerged, from my point of view, was not feminism but gender technocracy.

Galindo viewed the feminist NGOs as opportunists who simply “changed their skirt” (*cambiar la pollera*) and shifted from working with neoliberal governments to working with the MAS.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, as anti-state radicals, the feminist collectives also rejected coordination with the peasant and indigenous women activists. Galindo extolled her belief that the Bartolina Sisa peasant organization had been coopted by the MAS:

At one time, we had an alliance with the Bartolina Sisas. But today we don't because it is now a completely coopted movement...I believe that even the Bartolinas themselves don't have real contact with their base. So, there is no value in allying with them...It could sound very correct, “Oh, we have alliances with peasant women...” Yes, it could sound very correct, but politically, we are in disagreement.

Given her misgivings, it is perhaps not surprising that María Galindo believes: “that the only feminist expression in Bolivia is Mujeres Creando.”<sup>16</sup>

These differing experiences within interlocking forms of inequality among Bolivian women lead to radically different perspectives on similar issue areas. For example, when I asked indigenous leader, Viviana Lima, Director (with her husband) of the Department of La Paz section of the indigenous organization CONAMAQ, whether violence against women was a concern for women in her organization, she emphasized women-against-women violence – not just male violence. Referring to mestiza women committing violence against indigenous women employed as domestic servants in their homes, she explained: “they whistle at you, shout at you

– I don't know what all else – that that woman has to cook, that she has to watch her baby, that that house is her house.”<sup>17</sup> Lima’s observation underlines the dominance of race and class inequalities in the Bolivian context.

On abortion, there is an even stronger divide. For both liberal NGO and radical feminists, abortion liberalization is a central political demand.<sup>18</sup> By contrast, indigenous women generally support abortion only in cases of rape or medical need – already legal in Bolivia.<sup>19</sup> These different perspectives stem from urban and rural women’s divergent experiences with eugenic policies and high rates of infant mortality in rural areas (Zulawski 2007). Some argue indigenous women have their own methods of inducing abortion, making legal change a low priority.<sup>20</sup> Still other influences include conservative evangelicalism in indigenous communities.<sup>21</sup>

In other instances, differing perspectives lead to the prioritization of issues not traditionally conceived of as “women’s” issues. For example, peasant activist Berta Blanco demanded: “that education ... extend outside of urban areas, and also outside of universities. Because some have opportunities, and some do not” (Coordinadora de la Mujer 2006, 156). Aymara leader Rosario Arias made clear: “Our principal objective is to defend property rights” – referring to gender inequalities in land titling and the centrality of titling to indigenous membership (Coordinadora de la Mujer 2012a, 136). The strategic plan of the La Paz Federation of Bartolina Sisa focuses on the economic consequences for women of desertification due to climate change (Federación Departamental de Mujeres Campesinas 2010). Still other issues emerge if one speaks to poor, urban women (indigenous or not) –from domestic workers rights to the safety of women migrants.

Like other societies, in Bolivia the category “women” is less one of solidarity based on shared experiences, and more often one cut-through with other hierarchies. As Cecilia Enríquez

notes, Bolivian “women are as different from one another as women are different from men.”<sup>22</sup> And their interests are too. This makes defining “women’s interests” as a measure of women’s substantive representation complicated, and is why a focus on political intersectionality helps to move this enterprise forward.

### **Intersectional Substantive Representation**

If it is impossible to identify common interests when one maps women’s diverse perspectives, are intersectional interests identifiable? I argue they are, and that there are three complementary forms, each products of political intersectionality. To recap, these are: 1) *expansionist*: expanding the spectrum of individual issues considered to be women’s substantive representation; 2) *integrationist*: incorporating a gendered dimension into policies that address other inequalities and 3) *reconceived*: issues that are re-conceptualized. Below, I provide examples of how each of these forms was forged in Bolivia. Given the first two are easier to identify, I provide brief examples. Given the complexity of achieving reconceived intersectional interests, I describe in greater detail in relation to political parity and pension reform.

The above mapping signals that political intersectionality is not easy in Bolivia. Yet, the period under Evo Morales was also one of significant power shifting, empowering indigenous women, and forcing mestiza and upper-class feminist women to begin to see peasant and indigenous women as peers. Morales’ election in 2006 and the subsequent rewriting of the Constitution led to “an incremental process of inclusion of marginalized social sectors with little [previous] presence in the institutional political space, in particular indigenous peasants and women” (Mayorga 2011, 20). The Morales government’s anti-neoliberal discourse and its related discourse of “decolonization” –or reversal of internal colonization by whites and mestizos created an opening for political intersectionality.

Expansionist intersectional interests are evident in the overall strategy of the Coordinadora de la Mujer in the period following Morales' election. The Coordinadora is a network of 26 organizations with either an explicit or strong interest in gender issues. Led by urban, mestiza feminists, in both the pre- and post-Constitutional Assembly period, the Coordinadora reached out to women in the main indigenous organizations (CONAMAQ and CIDOB), as well as the peasant women of Bartolina Sisa, Women Miners, and others, in addition to feminist affiliates, in efforts to impact the new constitution and subsequent legislation. The processes themselves served to orient Bolivian activist women, across their deep divides, to a wider variety of issue areas. While traditional "feminist" interests such as reproductive rights and violence remained part of the agenda, the agenda expanded to include questions such as land tenure and migration that reflect the concerns of rural, poor and indigenous women. These issues are now present in places that set the activist agenda, like the Gender Observatory, and were achieved through a process of political intersectionality.<sup>23</sup> Executive Director, Katia Uriona explained that the process "presuppose[d] generating alliances, generating consensuses."<sup>24</sup> Former parliament member Elizabeth Salguero described it as: "[an] organic, strong and impactful coordination that changed [how indigenous women] have been present in spaces of power; they have become valid interlocutors."<sup>25</sup> While the publications that document this process do not reveal conflicts, my interview with the Uriona indicated that generating consensuses required significant trust building. Yet, while expanded agendas are an advance, the true test will be dedication of resources to all of the identified issue areas.

Forging integrationist intersectional interests can be observed in the formulation of Bolivia's 2010 Law Against Racism and all Forms of Discrimination, which outlaws discrimination by government and in the media. The clauses in the proposed law that sought to

restrict racist stereotypes in the media dominated the national debate over this law. Less-known is the fact that a small coalition of feminist and human rights NGOs worked with women parliamentarians to insert “all forms of discrimination” into the law. Specifically, the feminist organization Gregoria Apaza worked with human rights NGOs focused on racism, such as the Capítulo Boliviano de Derechos Humanos (Bolivian Chapter of Human Rights) to integrate other forms of discrimination into the law.<sup>26</sup> Including gender discrimination into a law focused on racism resonated, in part because, as discussed above, racist stereotypes especially affect indigenous women. Moreover, in 2008, just preceding formulation of this law, indigenous women had borne the brunt of racist attacks in conflicts that took place in the city of Sucre during the writing of the new Constitution. Vice Minister of Decolonization, Félix Cárdenas made the tie explicit in his advocacy for the law: “in some places it is natural to beat a woman in a *pollera* (traditional indigenous skirt)” (*La Prensa* 2010). With the support of President Evo Morales and indigenous National Assembly member Marianela Paco –who herself was attacked in the Sucre protests– the bill was revised to cover “all forms of discrimination”– including, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity (Democracy Center 2008).<sup>27</sup>

While expansionist and integrationist intersectional interests are important, when an issue itself is reconceived, this is a more powerful form of intersectional interest. Below, I recount how reconceived intersectional interests emerged in debates over political parity and pensions.

#### *Political Parity: Allying Concepts of Gender*

Adoption of political parity by the Constituent Assembly and then by the legislature in 2009 Transitory Electoral Regime Law which required alternation of women and men on party lists –for both the main candidate and the alternate– for all elected political offices is perhaps the most robust example to date in Bolivia of political intersectionality leading to reconceived

intersectional interests.<sup>28</sup> In this process, not only were women of wide-ranging perspectives included, but the debate itself led to a re-conception of gender equality in political participation from the original feminist vision of gaining a foothold in politics, to demands for full partnership with men rooted in *chachawarmi*.

Multiple interviewees from feminist NGOs noted that in the meetings leading up to the Constituent Assembly, for the first time there was dialogue between urban feminists and rural women.<sup>29</sup> Katia Uriona, of the *Coordinadora de la Mujer*, described the shift in the feminist movement from “a very homogenized vision in terms of our urban roots and a movement that did not articulate alliances with other actors or organizations” to a “new articulation” as a result of the pre-Constituent process.<sup>30</sup> And it was not just urban-rural divides that were crossed. Over 25,000 women representing organizations of all kinds –afro-descendants, domestic workers, neighborhood leaders and more– took part in 400 workshops in nine departments and 150 municipalities across the country. In that process, they agreed upon a shared set of principles to promote in the Constituent Assembly (*Mujeres Presentes en la Historia* 2006; Novillo González 2011, 38–39).

In this inclusive process, the meaning of gender equality in political representation itself was reconceived. Historically, gender equality in political representation had been an exclusively feminist demand. In 1997, after years of lobbying, organized, urban and middle-class feminists– without the participation of rural women– won a 30% electoral quota for women representatives.<sup>31</sup> The quota was viewed as a means for individual women to gain a foothold in the political system. Feminists came to the Constituent Assembly hopeful that the 1997 law could be improved, as its implementation had been poor (Albaine 2009; Uriona Crespo 2009, 28). By contrast, most indigenous and rural women came to the Assembly prioritizing decolonization;

many believed gender subordination was a result of colonialism and with its repeal, the egalitarian ideals of chachawarmi would thrive (Burman 2011, 90; Rousseau 2011). In this context of conflicting priorities, feminists had to “rethink what they understood to be gender,” and for the first time debated the concept through the lived experience of indigenous and peasant women – rather than through their own experiences and theoretical scholarship. They sought to understand how rural women “lived gender in their daily lives, and why they resisted the concept”, and began the work of “mutual understanding.”<sup>32</sup>

For many rural women, the dialogues and experiences in the Assembly pushed them to consider gender inequalities in political representation more directly. But their concept of gender relations, rooted in chachawarmi, led them to view 50-50 gender parity as the only proposal that would reflect their vision of gender relations (Uriona 2010, 54). Their objective was not simply allowing individual women to gain a foothold, but rather about reshaping the political system to reflect the ideal of gender complementarity. As one peasant representative in the Constituent assembly remarked: “We want 50-50, and that we women be taken into account...in the Aymara world we always talk about equity and complementarity, which is chachawarmi” (Viceministerio de Asuntos de Género y Generacionales 2007, 18). CONAMAQ leader, Viviana Lima, described her thought process: “Women, we voted, we elected, but we had not been elected. So, organized women, we said: ‘We can’t elect and elect and nothing else, so that they keep marginalizing us more – we should be elected’.” She also expressed the hope that now that Bolivia has had an indigenous male president, the next should be an indigenous woman.<sup>33</sup>

The alignment did not come easy however, and faced opposition from within the MAS party. Constituent Assembly member María del Rosarios Ricaldi recounted:

I came in confident that the 146 MAS Constituents would have to say yes to women’s demands...but I suddenly realized that of the 88 women constituents, only three of us were

militants from the women's movement; so it was very difficult to debate the issue of women when there was so much prejudice about the social inclusion of our demands. They would say 'they must be wild women', and things like that – the opposition came at you from your own political party (Vicepresidente del Estado Plurinacional 2008, 1:19)

Moreover, there was not consensus even among feminists to pursue political parity. María Galindo of Mujeres Creando questioned participation in the formal political system: "What happens? That patriarchal, machista, hierarchical, corrupt power is disguised, is camouflaged with a woman's figure."<sup>34</sup>

The inclusion of gender parity in the constitution and the the law – alternating women and men in the candidate and alternate positions– was in keeping with the chachawarmi concept of couples sharing in decision-making. In addition to broad-coalition building between feminists in civil society and feminist parliamentarians, the law's successful passage rested on the intervention of indigenous woman Senator, Leonilda Zurita, who called on indigenous women to speak in favor of the legislation when it faced substantial resistance (Htun and Ossa 2013; Novillo Gonzáles 2011, 52–58). Despite the misgivings of some feminists, political parity constituted a reconceived intersectional interest because its debate deployed inclusive political strategies and led to a new conceptual understanding that incorporated diverse, previously marginalized perspectives.

#### *Pensions Law: Reconceiving What Counts as Work*

Following the passage of the new constitution, the Coordinadora de la Mujer built on its prior experience of political intersectionality and led a nationwide initiative that brought together women's organizations, indigenous organizations and women parliamentarians to develop a plan to integrate women's perspectives into the new legislature's agenda (Coordinadora de la Mujer 2012b).<sup>35</sup> One of its foci was the proposed reform of Bolivia's pensions law. Like political parity, the effort to influence pension reform displayed political intersectionality in its inclusive

solidarity that led to reconceptualization – this time of what constitutes the work for which pensions provide compensation and who is deserving of these.

The Social Security Working Group brought together civil society organizations and representatives of government institutions to discuss the Bolivian pension system and the draft reform bill that was eventually passed in 2010 as Pensions Law 65. The organizations included were broadly representative of working women– including domestic workers, union women, women miners and professional women.<sup>36</sup> The Bolivian Network of Women Transforming the Economy (REMTE, Red Boliviana de Mujeres Transformando la Economía) played a pivotal role in pulling the organizations together.

Through a process of political intersectionality, what transpired was a re-thinking of whom the pension system might include and the work it would recognize. Traditionally, pensions are designed so that employees, employers, the state or some combination of these, contributes to a fund that an individual can draw on in old age. Originally conceived to serve men employed in the formal labor force, over decades, pension systems evolved to include payments to wives, and as women entered the formal labor force, they too became eligible for pensions, and eventually were granted the ability to cover their spouse. In the 1990s, Bolivia converted its state-run pension system into a system of individual private accounts. While at the time this was viewed as a means to increase efficiencies through market competition and increase national investment, in practice its high administrative costs cut deeply into individual earnings (Mesa Lago 2014). The 2009 reform proposal opened a window for women’s organizations to integrate greater gender equity into the pension system, and address the fact that just 10.3% of economically active women were affiliated (López 2011, 100).

The political process by which this occurred was key: REMTE, first, sought an inclusive dialogue among women from all walks of Bolivian life. In addition to professional women – lawyers, sociologists – that studied the gendered implications of the existing pension system, REMTE invited leaders of domestic workers organizations, women miners and experts in gender and migration to participate (López 2011). While the full vision of gender equitable pensions imagined through the inclusive dialogue was not ultimately achieved, some progress was made.

Feminists have long recognized three principle ways that women end up with lower pension levels than men: first, because they are paid less than men and second because they often have interrupted working years due to child and elder care responsibilities. A third obstacle is life expectancy: because women on average live longer than men, pension providers (including in Bolivia prior to 2010) often provide smaller monthly sums to women than men on the assumption that they will be making these payments over a longer time period. All three of these issues were raised in the working group discussion, and their proposed reform attempted to address these through: a) a shorter total number of years of required pension payments in order to receive a pension b) credit for time taken out of the workforce to care for a family member and c) the use of a single age expectancy table when calculating pension payments.

However, the process of bringing in diverse perspectives from a variety of women led to a reconceptualization of the work for which pensions provide compensation. One influential factor was the gendered nature of the Bolivian economy – in 2009 only 41% of Bolivians worked in the formal workforce; and 66% of working women were employed in the informal sector (CEPALSTAT 2017). Thus, the pension system excluded most Bolivians, and women in particular. In the discussions, the group realized that the pension system, by using the last two years of earnings as the baseline for retirement payments, privileged a male norm of retiring at a

high wage, whereas women, because they tend to work in the informal sector with more flexible scheduling, often taper off their work as they near retirement. A key proposal to come out of the discussion of informality, was not only support for a system that would cover more informal sector workers, but also to award payments based on the two highest earning years.

The inclusion of women miners was also crucial in shaping the vision of the group. Women miners in Bolivia are often considered “informal” workers in that most do not work directly for the mine companies, but rather in self-organized cooperatives that harvest what value remains from the refuse left from the initial mining process. Out of the dialogue came the recognition that 74% of women miners were not covered by the pension system, and the need to create a formal relationship between the pension system and their cooperatives to achieve greater coverage (López 2011, 98.) The fact that domestic workers –an almost entirely female workforce– were not covered by the pension system, also became a central advocacy point.<sup>37</sup> Also unearthed was the practice of some men of divorcing after mid-life, marrying younger women, and denying social security pension payments to the first wife.

The political process of asserting these new concepts of work and workers into the proposed legislation faced large obstacles. The legislative process started with two competing reforms, one presented by the executive branch, and another by the Bolivian Central Workers Union (Central Obrera Boliviana, COB), neither of which addressed gender inequities (Marco Navarro 2010). It took a concerted effort by the women’s movement to demand a gender chapter be incorporated into the final law. To achieve this, key interlocutors were the Bartolina Sisa peasant women’s organization, and union women.<sup>38</sup> In the end, the reform of Bolivia’s pension law included the use of a uniform life-expectancy table and a credit of one year for each child a woman had, up to a maximum of three. The expansion of Bolivia’s solidarity pension for the

poor, was also an important gain for the poorest women (Arza 2012; Mesa Lago 2014). These amounted to just a small slice of the proposals that the intersectional process revealed; indigenous women, dependent on subsistence production, for example remain largely excluded. But the reform began to adopt new, broader concepts of work and workers.

## **Conclusion**

That strong divisions and suspicions still existed among Bolivian women, *after* these instances of developing intersectional interests, drives home the temporal nature of intersectional interests. Intersectional interests are not static indicators to be identified but, rather, are forged through political intersectionality. And while the Constitutional re-founding in Bolivia may have been an especially propitious context for forging intersectional interests, instances of forging intersectional interests abound. Scholars that wish to more accurately measure women's substantive representation by including intersectional perspectives, need to identify one or more of these three forms of intersectional interests and determine whether political representatives promote these. To do so, first requires an inductive understanding of societal cleavages and how these intersect to generate diverse perspectives among women in a specific context. Then, it requires the researcher to ask: Have instances of political intersectionality led to an expansion of the array of women's interests, so that those of marginalized women are included? Are there instances in which individuals or organizations have crossed divides of structural inequality to integrate a gender perspective into policy proposals that address other forms of inequality? Finally, are there ways in which interests themselves have been reconceived through inclusion of previously marginalized perspectives?

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<sup>1</sup> In Bolivia's 2009 elections, women in Congress increased from 14.6 to 30.1% (Inter-Parliamentary Union n.d.) and Morales' first cabinet of his second term featured 50% women, all indigenous (Rousseau and Ewig 2017).

<sup>2</sup> In the US (Bratton 2005; Carroll 2001; Cowell-Meyers and Langbein 2009; Swers 2002) and beyond (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Grey 2006; Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi 2013; Schwindt-Bayer 2006) greater women's presence in legislatures has been linked to greater substantive representation.

<sup>3</sup> All translations from Spanish are my own.

<sup>4</sup> While indigeneity is often considered "ethnicity," when one group has historically subjugated another, indigenous/white (or mestizo) distinctions also constitute a racial divide (Wade 2010).

<sup>5</sup> African and Asian descent Bolivians are less salient in the societal imagination.

<sup>6</sup> Latin American gender relations are often described as "marianismo" and "machismo" (Stevens 1973) but see (Navarro 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Interview by author with María Eugenia Choque Quispe, historian and indigenous activist, February 11, 2012, La Paz.

<sup>8</sup> My interviews cover the major women's organizations in La Paz. Further research in other departments would strengthen the mapping, but the La Paz sample combined with social movement documents from across the country captures significant variation.

<sup>9</sup> Organized indigenous women tend to be active in Bartolina Sisa, (the women's wing of the peasant union, La Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia, FNMCB BS), or as members of the mixed-sex indigenous organizations, Consejo Nacional de Markas y Ayllus del Qollasuyo

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(CONAMAQ) representing highland indigenous groups and La Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB) representing lowland indigenous groups.

<sup>10</sup> Interviews by author with Julia Ramos, National Director, Bartolina Sisa, February 14, 2012, La Paz; Viviana Lima, Director, La Paz branch of CONAMAQ, February 16, 2012, La Paz, Bolivia; Choque 2012, *op. cit.*; Esperanza Huanca M., Vice-President Decolonization, Head of the Depatriarchalization, Ministry of Culture, February 13, 2012, La Paz; Felipa Huanca Llupanqui, President, La Paz Branch of Bartolina Sisa, February 14, 2012, La Paz.

<sup>11</sup> Interviews Choque, *op. cit.* and Ramos, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Interview Choque, *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> See also Monasterios 2007; Rousseau 2011, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Interview by author with Cecilia Enríquez Aliaga, Executive Director, Gregoria Apaza, February 13, 2012, El Alto.

<sup>15</sup> Interview by author with María Galindo, founder, Mujeres Creando, February 14, 2012, La Paz.

<sup>16</sup> Interview Galindo, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Interview Lima, *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> Interviews Enríquez 2012 *op. cit.*; Galindo 2012 *op. cit.*; interview by author with Mary Marca Paco, Executive Director, CIDEM, February 8, 2012, La Paz; interview by author with Cecilia Terraza Ruiz, Católicas por el Derecho de Decidir, February 10, 2012, La Paz.

<sup>19</sup> Interviews Choque *op. cit.*; F. Huanca, *op. cit.*; E. Huanca, *op. cit.*; Terraza, *op.cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Interview Choque *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> Interview Ramos, *op. cit.*; interview by author with Pilar Uriona Crespo, researcher and member of Collective “Samka Sawuri”, February 7, 2012, La Paz.

<sup>22</sup> Interview Enríquez, *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.coordinadoradelamujer.org.bo/observatorio/>

<sup>24</sup> Interview by author with Katia Uriona, Director, Coordinadora de la Mujer, February 8, 2012, La Paz.

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<sup>25</sup> Interview by author with Elizabeth Salguero Carrillo, former legislator and Minister of Culture, February 7, 2012, La Paz.

<sup>26</sup> Interview Enríquez, *op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> Interview Enríquez, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> The law was strengthened in 2010 and the 2017 Congress was 51.8% women (Inter-Parliamentary Union n.d.).

<sup>29</sup> Interview by author with Erika Brockman Quiroga, former legislator, February 7, 2012, La Paz; interview Enríquez, *op. cit.*; interview K. Uriona, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> Interview K. Uriona, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> Interviews Brockman *op. cit.* and P. Uriona, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Interview P. Uriona, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Interview Lima, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Interview Galindo, *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> Interview Salguero, *op. cit.*

<sup>36</sup> These included the 25 organizations of REMTE, the National Federation of Domestic Workers, Fundación Colectivo Cabildeo, Red de Mujeres Trabajadoras y Sindicalistas de Bolivia, Centro de Promoción de la Mujer Gregoria Apaza, Red Nacional de Mujeres Mineras, Articulación de Mujeres por la Equidad y la Igualdad, Defensoría del Pueblo, the gender rights section of the Ministry of Labor, and the Employment, Social Provision and Gender Unit of the Vice Ministry for Equal Opportunities (López 2011, 99).

<sup>37</sup> Interview by author with Graciela López, REMTE, February 17, 2012, La Paz.

<sup>38</sup> Interviews López *op. cit.* and P. Uriona, *op. cit.*