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The Santa Cruz *Autonomía* Movement in Bolivia: A Case of Non-indigenous Ethnic Popular Mobilization?

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ABSTRACT   This paper discusses the recent autonomy movement in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, within a theoretical framework typically reserved for 'ethnic' political or social movements. The paper begins with a brief chronology of the Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement as it developed into a powerful political oppositional movement during the rise of Evo Morales. In doing so, the movement's leaders consciously adopted the organizational tactics and forms of discourse typically identified with traditional, indigenous-popular Bolivian social movements. As such, the Santa Cruz case both highlights the fluidity of multiculturalism and challenges our notions of how ethnic identity is publicly constructed.

Introduction

The countries of Latin America are today universally recognized as multicultural societies, and states across the region have adopted significant institutional reforms reflecting that reality. Bolivia reflects this trend: during the 1980s, a vibrant and diverse indigenous rights movement challenged the Bolivian state, leading to significant gains in constitutional recognition, protections, and special jurisdictional rights by the 1990s. Most visibly, the election of Evo Morales as the country's first indigenous president in December 2005 marked a significant socio-political shift and has deepened that process. This paper does not address that particular transformation (which has received extensive attention), other than as it relates to a parallel development: the emergence of a regional, pro-autonomy oppositional movement in the country's eastern department of Santa Cruz that similarly employs tactics and discursive tools of 'ethnic' social movements. I argue that such developments are not *merely* opportunistic tactics by political actors—though the choice of discourse (ethnic or otherwise) is *always*, strictly speaking, a tactical one—but rather a sign the conceptual category 'ethnic' is too often underused beyond a limited range of phenomena. This paper is a preliminary exploration of a much larger research agenda, which I hope to develop in the coming years.

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While recent scholarship gives considerable attention to the emergence, development, and breakthrough of indigenous political movements in Bolivia, relatively little attention has been given (outside Bolivia) to the Santa Cruz autonomy movement. The few exceptions reduce the *autonomía* movement to a 'backlash' to indigenous-popular mobilization (Easton, 2007; Fabricant, 2009; Fabricant & Postero, 2013; Gustafson, 2006). This stands in contrast to Bolivian scholars, who often take more nuanced views. One key example is Peña Claros (2010), who argues that recent scholarship on the 'new' social movements in Bolivia suffers from conceptual confusion, which limits its ability to adequately grapple with the Santa Cruz autonomy movement. In this paper, I take her critical evaluation of the recent social movement literature, as applied to Bolivia, as a starting point. But this paper then goes further afield, challenging the misuse of the literature on ethnic movements—particularly when applied to Santa Cruz. Whereas Peña Claros suggests that the *autonomía* movement should be understood as a 'populist' movement, I suggest that it may be more fruitful to approach it conceptually as an 'ethnic' social movement.

This paper does not deny the anti-indigenous and/or anti-popular impulses within the broader Santa Cruz autonomy movement. But a careful look at the timing of and historical–institutional context within which the regional autonomy movement developed cannot sustain reductionist interpretations. The recent *autonomía* movement predates the recent success of Evo Morales and his Movimiento al Socialismo (movement towards socialism—MAS) party and in many ways parallels the latter's development. Rather than simply emerging as a reaction to the rise of Morales and MAS, the *autonomía* movement developed simultaneously and in the same institutional context—though perhaps both were dialectically strengthened in the process. As I argue elsewhere (Centellas, 2009, 2010a, 2010b), the regional autonomy movement in Santa Cruz (like those in other parts of Bolivia) reflects broader institutional changes taking place in Bolivia that trace back to the country's transition to democracy, but especially the multicultural and decentralization reforms of the 1990s.

This paper uses the Santa Cruz autonomy movement to illustrate a theoretical blind spot in how much of the scholarship approaches multiculturalism. Despite broad scholarly consensus that ethnic identities are socially constructed and malleable, too often studies that employ the conceptual category 'ethnic movement' in practice revert to primordialist understandings of ethnicity that rely on a priori—and static—understandings of group identity. While this paper cannot definitively define the Santa Cruz autonomy movement as such, it argues that the movement meets the operational criteria for an 'ethnic movement'. At the same time, I am mindful of the danger of 'conceptual stretching' (Collier & Mahon, 1993; Sartori, 1970). If the concept 'ethnic movement' describes any kind of social or political movement, then the category is not analytically useful. Instead, this paper places the category 'ethnic movement' as a subspecies of the broader category 'social movement' and seeks to delimit them. That is, it recognizes that all ethnic movements are 'social movements', but not all social movements are ethnic ones.

In doing so, this paper adopts an explicitly constructivist approach to ethnic identity. Although constructivism has been the dominant paradigm in the study of ethnic identity for some time, primordialist assumptions tend to shape much of the writing on ethnic movements, such as comparative studies that select preexisting (rather than evolving or contested) 'ethnic' (or even 'national') regional movements, such as those of Quebec, Scotland, Catalonia, or Kurdistan. There are as yet few studies of 'ethnic' communities that are in the process of being constructed. And, yet, if constructivism is to have any

meaning, it should allow for the *contemporary* construction of *new* ethnic identities (even if on the base of long-standing cultural, regional, or other 'differences'—which always exist in any geographic space). This paper, in large part, is an argument about the 'conceptual confusion' that exists in the study of ethnic movements of the kind identified by Tilley (1997). In particular, this paper borrows from Madrid's (2010) discussion of *mestizaje* ('race-mixing') and its role in complicating ethnic identity in Latin America. Madrid argues that the history of *mestizaje* makes the kind of ethnic parties common in other parts of the world less likely to exist (or succeed), because ethnic identities are more fluid. This reality has significant implications for how we theorize and conceptualize 'ethnic' political identities and movements. Because of its long multicultural history, Latin America offers much to our understanding of ethnic identity construction. This is especially true if one remembers that today's accepted 'national' identities in the region emerged among an otherwise homogeneous *criollo* elite and were sustained and expanded by conscious 'nation-building' projects. If we take seriously Benedict Anderson's analysis of how 'creole pioneers' constructed (or 'imagined') national identities in nineteenth-century Latin America (see Anderson, 1991, pp. 47–66), then we must be willing to extend that analytical perspective to contemporary similar phenomena.

To do this, the paper begins with a brief chronologically organized overview of the Santa Cruz autonomy movement, focusing on key events of the most recent period (2003–2010). The next section briefly discusses four distinct ways the movement could be conceptually defined: (1) as a tactic of elites seeking to retain the status quo in the face of challenges to their own hegemony, (2) as a social movement (i.e. mass mobilization from below), (3) as a populist movement (i.e. mass mobilization from above), or (4) as an ethnic movement. Most scholars outside Bolivia (and many within country) adopt the first approach. Next, this paper develops the argument that the latter approaches are more useful, given the scope and nature of sustained mass mobilization. Using the literature on ethnic movements would contribute to a richer analysis of the Santa Cruz autonomy movement in particular, as well as to the possibility of other similar, non-indigenous 'ethnic' movements. This would help escape the implicit, problematic collapsing of the categories 'ethnic' and 'indigenous'.[1] Next, the paper provides a brief overview of the way discourses of 'internal colonialism' are used in Bolivia by both indigenous and regional movements. Finally, the paper concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of the argument.

The Santa Cruz *Autonomía* Movement, 2003–2010: A Chronological Account

The start of the contemporary Santa Cruz autonomy movement can be dated to 22 June 2004. On that day, the Comité pro Santa Cruz (Committee for Santa Cruz—CPSC) held a public rally for 'autonomy and work' at the foot of the Cristo Redentor statue at the foot of Monseñor Rivero Avenue, one of the city's major commercial thoroughfares. Press accounts estimated 50,000 people attended the rally, which began with a series of local musical acts and concluded with a speech by CPSC president, Rubén Costas. Soon after, national and local media pundits and commentators began discussing a 'June agenda', a clear reference to the 'October agenda' that emerged after the resignation of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada on 17 October 2003. This dual discourse of rival 'agendas' is the source for much analytic confusion. Without discounting that those who promoted a 'June agenda' in favor of Santa Cruz autonomy were in significant ways reacting to the

popular movements and demands tied to the 'October agenda', this paper argues that a more careful look at both processes reveals a number of similarities and points of convergence.

The 'October agenda' was the product of a lengthy, tumultuous social uprising with deep roots in social dissatisfaction with neoliberal socioeconomic policies in place since 1985. It later merged with a growing indigenous-popular movement that challenged not only state policy, but also the very foundations of what was described as a 'neo-colonial' state. As such, that movement worked its way back through history, constructing a coherent narrative that placed the events of the September and October 2003 'Gas War' into a linear story of indigenous-popular resistance (see e.g. Hylton & Thomson, 2007).[2] By the time Morales was elected in December 2005, this narrative placed Bolivia's indigenous majority at the center, defining all Bolivian history as the struggle (with indigenous people as chief protagonist) to achieve social justice. A similar process occurred within the Santa Cruz autonomy movement. As the movement developed, it also worked back through history, constructing its own historicist narrative, one that described a lengthy struggle for recognition and autonomy from a distant, centralist state. The historical claims made by adherents of the Santa Cruz autonomy movement are both varied and extensive, and will be discussed later in the paper.

The June 2004 rally marked a new phase in a process that began in 2003 and was critical to the contemporary *autonomía* movement. As Sivak (2007) points out, the October 2003 crisis radicalized the CPSC. Founded in 1950—during yet another period of national crisis—the CPSC had rarely participated in politics directly. Rather, the CPSC had always sought to maintain a working relationship with each government administration. This took a new form after the transition to democracy, when CPSC members established ties with the 'systemic' parties. The crisis of 2003, however, made clear that this relationship with the state was in jeopardy. Already on 1 October 2003 more than two weeks before Sánchez de Lozada resigned his presidency, the CPSC issued a 'manifesto' (full text in Chávez Casazola, 2009, pp. 72–73). The brief document, while not explicitly contradicting any of the claims made by the leaders of the anti-government social movements, identified the source of the country's political, economic, and social problems in a badly designed, centralist state. The document agreed with the need to 'reconstruct' the country, but did so from the principle of regional autonomy (not just for Santa Cruz, but all the country's departments). The manifesto put forward a 'national proposal', but one that sought to reverse the model from the 1952 National Revolution of *bolivianzar el Oriente* in favor of one to *orientalizar Bolivia* (see Chávez Casazola, 2009, p. 74).

On 17 October 2003, Sánchez de Lozada resigned the presidency, handed power to his vice president, Carlos Mesa, and left for self-imposed exile in the USA. Soon after he became president, Mesa made clear that he intended to move slowly and conservatively (in the sense of preserving the country's basic republican structure), though he also publicly stated that he intended to address the 'October agenda' through a national referendum on the gas issue. Mesa was a political 'outsider', though one closely aligned with the La Paz intellectual and cultural elite (he was a respected historian and television pundit). This meant that, for the first time in several decades, the Bolivian government was led by a figure with limited ties or affinity to the CPSC, and one much more likely to gravitate to the demands of the El Alto 'street' (see Centellas, 2008, pp. 15–18).

It was in this context that the CPSC organized the June 2004 *cabildo* (the traditional Spanish word for a public, deliberative assembly). At that rally, Costas offered Mesa a

direct challenge: He announced that Santa Cruz would hold a referendum on regional autonomy—whether the central government convoked one or not. Costas also formally attacked the 'October agenda', which he identified with 'violence and road blockades, not with autonomy and work'; (cited in Sivak, 2007, p. 30). Only a few months before, constitutional reforms had introduced popular referendums and citizen initiatives. Though these had been introduced primarily with an eye to facilitating a referendum on the gas issue (which was held on 18 July 2004), they provided a legal structure within which the CPSC could make its call for a referendum on departmental autonomy. Using the June 2004 *cabildo* as a legitimating platform, the CPSC organized a Pre-Autonomic Council, which began deliberations in December 2004.

During the next several months, Santa Cruz was the scene of significant political activity as the CPSC began working on the autonomy issue with other organizations, including the public Universidad Autónoma Gabriel René Moreno (Gabriel René Moreno Autonomous University—UAGRM), the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista (Young Cruceño League—UJC), the Nación Camba (a radical 'ethno-nationalist' movement that has frequently advocated secession of lowland Bolivian territories that extend beyond the department of Santa Cruz to include Beni and Pando), the Cámara de Industria y Comercio (Chamber of Commerce and Industry—CAINCO), and the regional Central Obrera Departamental (Departmental Worker's Central—COD). By February 2005, movement leaders had submitted a petition demanding regional autonomy backed by 454,635 verified registered voters—nearly three-quarters of all registered voters in the department.[3] Due to various circumstances, including difficulty in crafting acceptable language in the National Congress and the precedence given to the more time-consuming task of organizing a Constituent Assembly (which would write a new national constitution), a referendum on regional autonomy was not held until 2 July 2006 (when voters also elected delegates to the Constituent Assembly).

In the interim, the CPSC organized a second *cabildo*, on 28 January 2005. This time, the rally drew a crowd estimated at 350,000. During the rally, Costas asked for—and received—public approval to organize a Provisional Autonomic Assembly charged with developing a strategy to fight for departmental autonomy. Juan Carlos Urenda, one of the principal architects of that strategy, suggests that this *cabildo* had had an immediate effect, since President Mesa later that same day issued a decree (D.S. 27988) that allowed for prefects to be elected by popular vote (Urenda, 2009, p. 18). Shortly after, Costas stepped down as president of the CPSC in order to run for prefect of Santa Cruz in the December 2005 elections.[4]

The following months saw two other large-scale *cabildos* organized by the CPSC, this time with Germán Antelo at the head. The first was on 28 June 2006, held only three days before the simultaneous elections for Constituent Assembly delegates and a national referendum on departmental autonomy.[5] The purpose of the rally was expressly to support *Sí* on the autonomy referendum and drew an estimated 500,000 participants. The second was actually a series of *cabildos* held simultaneously on 15 December 2006 in the four departments that had voted for autonomy (Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando, and Tarija) to protest the Constituent Assembly's decision to incorporate departmental autonomy in its deliberations, based on the argument that the 'No' vote had won at the national level. Together, the *cabildos* drew an estimated one million participants across all four departments. This latter impasse catalyzed the *autonomía* movement and began another phase of radicalization.

By then both the prefecture and municipal government of Santa Cruz had begun using the slogan *autonomía al andar* ('[making] autonomy as we go'), and had even renamed their institutions (the Prefectura became the 'Gobierno Departamental'; the Municipio became the 'Gobierno Autónomo Municipal'). The election of Costas as prefect gave him a platform—one supported by the incumbent Mayor, Percy Fernández (another former CPSC president)—from which to repeatedly challenge the central government. By 2006, though the CPSC and other organizations remained active, the prefecture directly organized the *autonomía* movement's activities. Throughout this time, the Pre-autonomic Council worked on a departmental autonomy statute. It presented the final document to the Provisional Autonomic Assembly, which spent the next two years revising and amending the text (see Urenda, 2009, pp. 19–22). By 2008 the prefecture of Santa Cruz was acting as a de facto autonomous region, with little interference from the central state, despite mutual hostility and mistrust.

On 30 January 2008, the Departmental Council of Santa Cruz (a body created by the 1995 Law of Administrative Decentralization and comprised municipal council members from across the department) approved convoking a departmental referendum. The first of a series of unsanctioned, 'wildcat' referendums (others were held in Beni, Pando, and Tarija) gave voters an opportunity to approve the Estatuto Autonómico approved by the Provisional Autonomic Assembly on 15 December 2006 (the same day as the fourth of the major *cabildos*). Although Morales was openly hostile to the idea and pronounced the referendum illegal, he took no steps (other than calling on his supporters to boycott the vote) to prevent the vote from taking place.

The legal context of the 2008 referendum is complex: Originally, a 4 May referendum was approved by the National Congress (by special law, on 28 February 2008) and set to coincide with a referendum on the new constitution (the final draft had been approved by the Constituent Assembly on 14 December 2007). In March 2008, the National Electoral Court called for a suspension of the referendum, arguing that it did not have the technical capacity to organize the vote within the time frame provided. Ignoring the electoral court's ruling that departments could not go forward with autonomy referendums on their own, the Departmental Electoral Court of Santa Cruz announced that it would go ahead with the vote. In the absence of technical support from the National Police (on orders from the central government), the prefecture relied instead on volunteer precinct monitors, often drawn from groups like the UJC. In the end, voters approved the autonomy statute with a vote of 85.6% in favor, but in a process marked by high abstention (37.9%).

The next two years saw a whirlwind of activity, including a national recall referendum for president, vice president, and eight of the nine prefects[6] on 10 August 2008. In the aftermath of the 'wildcat' referendums held that year in other departments (on 1 June in Beni and Pando and on 22 June in Tarija, where voters also approved their own autonomic statutes), government and opposition legislators hammered out a compromise that substantially altered the document approved by the Constituent Assembly (nearly a quarter of the document's articles were altered). That final document included, among other changes, recognition of departmental autonomy for those departments that approved it in a popular referendum. On 25 January 2009, voters across Bolivia went to the polls on a referendum to approve a new constitution that included recognition of regional autonomy. Nearly a year later, on 6 December 2009, voters went to the polls in a general election, and voters in the five departments that had not approved autonomy in 2006 were given another chance to vote for autonomy—and this time *Sí* won by overwhelming supermajorities in

all five departments. Months later, on 4 April 2010, voters went to the polls, yet again, this time to vote for departmental governors (Costas and Fernández won reelection) and assemblies, as well as municipal governments.

A striking feature of the departmental assembly elections was that those departments in which voters had earlier approved autonomic statutes in 'wildcat' referendums used electoral rules reflecting those documents. This gave the autonomy statutes implicit sanction from the central government. Thus, after five years of conflict with the central government, the leaders of the Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement could claim a comprehensive victory: Santa Cruz was a constitutionally recognized autonomous region with a self-drafted autonomy statute and a wide range of jurisdictional competencies.

Placing the *Autonomía* Movement Conceptually

The Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement is analytically difficult to deal with in the context of contemporary scholarship on Bolivia. In the last decade—and particularly since the October 2003 crisis—the 'process of change' underway in Bolivia has generated a great deal of attention. But while indigenous and popular social movements have long been a focus of scholarship, other political actors—such as those involved in the Santa Cruz autonomy movement—have received comparatively little attention. Notably, Peña Claros (2010) argued that this is largely due to ongoing conceptual confusion. For her, the problem is that Bolivianists have long been accustomed to observing and analyzing 'traditional' (i.e. indigenous and *campesino*) social movements marked by their marginalization by and resistance to the state. The dilemma, of course, is that today the social movements that challenged neoliberal hegemony now (with MAS as their political vehicle) exercise state power and are in turn challenged by 'the mobilization of *Cruceño* society' (Peña Claros, 2010, p. 126). The result is uncertainty over how to describe or analyze political conflicts that pit social movements in power against previously less-than-marginal actors challenging the new power structure—a common pitfall of contemporary ethnic studies identified by Tilley (1997). Like Peña Claros and Tilley, I argue that such difficulty stems from conceptual confusion.

Part of the problem is that in Bolivia the term 'social movement' has been oddly defined. A major study of Bolivia's contemporary social movements by García Linera, Marxa, and Patricia (2004, p. 21) defined social movements as:

> [A] type of collective action which intentionally seeks to change the established social systems or defend some material interest for which it organizes and cooperates in order to carry out public actions around those goals or demands.

Such a definition seems to apply to any movement that (a) opposes the status quo or (b) defends some 'material interest' through public, collective, political action. If so, the Santa Cruz autonomy movement, which sought to (a) oppose the existing relationship between the state and regions and (b) defend the region's 'material interests' through mass political mobilization qualifies as a social movement. Recent literature has debated this conclusion: Zegada, Tórrez, and Cámara argue that 'the Comité Pro Santa Cruz—despite its ideological profile—can be considered a social movement' (2008, p. 29), even though it may not aim at 'progressive' social change. In contrast, Peña Claros and Boschetti argue that the 'Cruceño civic movement' cannot be considered a

social movement 'because neither its objectives, its demands, nor its platform have been built from below' (2008, p. 273).

However, there is a significant conceptual problem presented here that Peña Claros herself does not acknowledge; much of the literature on Bolivian social movements focuses on organizations, rather than on broad movements per se. In their work on Bolivian social movements, García Linera *et al* enumerate various 'social movements', such as the Central Obrera Boliviana (Bolivian Workers' Confederation—COB) and Federación de Juntas Vecinales de El Alto (El Alto Federation of Neighborhood Associations—FEJUVE-El Alto), that are better defined as interest groups. Even the indigenous or *campesino* movements are not seen holistically; García Linera *et al* list no fewer than three distinct, explicitly 'indigenous' organizations (all spatially defined) and six distinct *campesino* organizations (similarly spatially defined). Likewise, discussions of the Santa Cruz autonomy movement have hinged on how to define the CPSC—itself also best classified as an interest group.

We see here evidence of a broader pattern: rather than define a 'social movement' broadly by its goals and/or constituency (e.g. the US Civil Rights Movement or the Palestinian Intifada—both of which are movements involving a broad range of institutional actors and organizations), the tendency is to identify *political organizations* as 'social movements'. This collapses the categories 'social movement', 'interest group', and 'political organization'. Worse, still, sometimes the category 'political party' is also included, with MAS defined by some political actors and scholars as a 'social movement'. This is problematic beyond its implications for the study of the Santa Cruz autonomy movement. If the 'indigenous movement' in the Andean highlands is reduced to the goals, interests, tactics, and organizational structure of the Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (National Council of Ayllus and Markas of the Qullasuyu—CONAMAQ), what happens to individuals or other groups not affiliated with CONAMAQ? Are they ignored from the analysis of the 'indigenous' social movement unless they act through the organizational structures of CONAMAQ? Similarly, an exclusive focus on the role of CPSC in the Santa Cruz autonomy movement refuses to recognize the agency of individuals or organizations not affiliated to (and perhaps even antagonistic to) the CPSC but who also participate in the broader demand for regional autonomy.

The emphasis on the CPSC's role in the *autonomía* movement has led many to categorize it as a reactionary tactic by a socioeconomically dominant Cruceño elite. This is especially true for scholars who limit the conceptual category 'social movement' only to those that are also accepted as 'progressive' in ideological orientation. This is true even of those, like Sivak (2007) who take the *autonomía* movement as a serious political movement worthy of careful analysis. Again, the problems are twofold: (1) social movements are defined ideologically (as 'progressive' movements) and (2) social movements are conflated with organized interest groups of formal, institutionalized actors (hence the focus is on the CPSC). What is remarkable from such conceptual confusion is not that current (anti-Morales or anti-MAS) opposition groups are a priori defined as cases of elite efforts to maintain or re-impose their hegemony (and therefore cannot qualify as 'social movements'), but rather why studies of accepted Bolivian social movements do not look more closely at the role of elites (i.e. organization leaders) in the accepted (i.e. progressive) social movements. Without equating the *cruceño* elite with the indigenous intelligentsia, it is analytically problematic to define the political mobilization of one as merely driven by elite interests, but not the other. If Michels (1915) 'iron law of

oligarchy' still holds, analysis of the Bolivian social movements should, as Sivak does in his study of the *autonomía* movement, also look at the role of movement elites in other contexts.

Another related problem is the conflation of social movements and political parties. For its part, MAS vacillates between defining itself as a social movement or a 'political instrument' for other social movements. While a number of the social movements identified by García Linera *et al* have not openly participated in electoral politics (and hence do not qualify as 'political parties') many, such as the COB and CSUTCB, have highly complex organizational structures—often more institutionalized than many of the 'inchoate' parties that make up Bolivia's electoral landscape. Again, very little attention has been given to these institutions—as *institutions*—in the literature. Even less attention has been given to understanding the personalities, interests, and actions of their central leadership. One wonders what an analysis of, say, the COB during September and October 2003 of the kind Sivak presents for the CPSC would contribute to our understanding of the Gas War.

In a significant effort to resolve this conceptual confusion, Peña Claros (2010) suggests using the literature on populism to understand the Santa Cruz autonomy movement. The literature on populism is useful, because it allows the analysis to look simultaneously at the movement's elite leadership and its mass constituency. Her approach relies heavily on Laclau (2005), part of the new 'sociological' approach to the study of populism (see also De la Torre, 2000; Panizza, 2005). This approach emerged from another conceptual debate launched by the emergence of a new breed of Latin American political leader that did not fit the conventional definition of populist (see Weyland, 2001). Traditionally, populism was associated with figures such as Juan Perón and Getúlio Vargas, leaders who led mass political movements or parties, pursued state-led economic development models, and were engaged in nation-building projects. Because these three dimensions (political, economic, and cultural) coexisted in the populist leaders of the mid-twentieth century, many were sceptical of calling leaders like Alberto Fujimori or Fernando Collor de Mello 'populists'—which led to the introduction of 'neopopulism' into the lexicon. Whereas mainstream political science shifted to other conceptual categories ('delegative democracy' or 'competitive authoritarianism') this sociological approach explored the similar traits that placed both a Fujimori and a Perón in the same conceptual category.

The sociological approach to populism focuses not on content (ideological orientation or policy agenda), but rather on structure. Key elements of populism here are (Laclau, 2005, p. 74):

> (1) the formation of an internal antagonistic frontier separating the 'people' from power; and (2) an equivalential articulation of demands making the emergence of the 'people' possible.

Thus, populism—as a phenomenon—can erupt quite suddenly, once as a series of particular demands merge or are reduced through an chain of equivalence into an 'empty signifier' that forges them (and those who hold them) into a single, unified group: 'a people'. Such movements can cross socioeconomic, racial or ethnic, religious, or other divides within a society. The emergence of populism, however, creates its own antagonism in the form of some 'other' that stands in opposition to 'the people'. As Peña Claros (2010) argues, both the regional civic movements and the traditional social movements

aligned with MAS are products of equivalence chains. Both, therefore, could just as easily be defined as 'populist' movements. Madrid (2008, 2010) has taken this approach in his analysis of Morales and MAS, which he describes as a subtype of populism: 'ethnopopulism'—that is, populism mobilized within an 'ethnic' discursive framework (even if it seeks to appeal, at times, beyond a narrowly defined ethnic constituency).

Peña Claro's (2010) case for defining the Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement as a case of populist mobilization is quite convincing. Certainly in the highly charged political climate that followed the October 2003 crisis, if not before, Cruceño civic leaders actively engaged in efforts to forge a unifying, regionalist political discourse. From the start, the slogan *autonomía y trabajo* ('autonomy and work') served as a nascent empty signifier, one that reduced all political, social, and economic problems faced by residents of Santa Cruz to the lack of 'autonomy and work'. Over time, the slogan was further reduced to simply *autonomía* (though a recent academic conference, co-sponsored by the central and regional government, revived the previous slogan in a Foro Autonomía y Trabajo held in Santa Cruz on 24 August 2010). Overall, the *autonomía* movement fits the basic criteria of populism: it defines its members as constituting 'the people', it defines a frontier separating the people and an 'other', and it does so using a complex symbolic discourse meant both to unite its members, and reinforce the frontier dividing it, and those who opposed them.

Yet there is something distinctive of 'autonomist populism' (as Peña Claros calls the *autonomía* movement) that sets it apart from many other forms of populism. Unlike typical forms of populism, the Santa Cruz autonomy movement was very narrowly proscribed. Although it made early gestures to present itself as a 'national' alternative, it very quickly—and deliberately—narrowed its range to the confines of the territory of the department of Santa Cruz. Peña Claros recognizes this when she writes (2010, pp. 135–136, author's italics):

> In effect, being Cruceño is at the very core of the regional platform. It is the category that allows one to justify the difference between Cruceños and the rest of Bolivia . . . Being Cruceño as a totalizing element of the populist Cruceño phenomenon has made its mark on regional politics: stemming from a historical discourse that does not acknowledge the internal conflicts of the past, being Cruceño embodies an almost absolute *positivity*, making it very attractive but at the same time anchoring it in the past.

Here, Peña Claros's description of the particularness of the *autonomía* movement begins to resemble the description of a national or ethnic movement. In contrast, for someone like Panizza (2005), populism is a universalizing force. Yes, the populist movement defines both a 'people' and its antagonistic 'other', but it does so in starker—and much more dangerous—terms than Laclau acknowledges. For Panizza, populism is a 'dark underside of democracy' that equates the movement with the whole demos. Taken to the ultimate extreme, the 'other' in populism is not merely an opponent, or even an enemy, but someone who stands completely outside the boundaries of the polity. In fact, for Arditi (2005), populism is constant tension that exists within democracy because the latter presupposes a 'people' (the *demos*) and grants them (at least in theory, if never in practice) political sovereignty. Thus, persons who stand as obstacles to the people's ability to exercise sovereignty are, by definition, 'enemies of the people'.

The difficulty of this conception of populism is that—as analytically useful as it is—it covers too broad a range of examples. Panizza's edited volume includes the following cases of 'populism': skinhead conservatives, nationalist movements in Palestine and Yugoslavia, George Wallace, the New Right in Canada, South Africa's anti-apartheid United Democratic Front, religious populism in Greece, and Carlos Menem. As a subnational movement (by self-definition), the *autonomía* movement does not fit any of the above cases well. One exception would be the nationalist movements in the former Yugoslavia. Yet outside the relatively marginal (but not insignificant) Nación Camba movement, there is no serious consideration of civil war or secession. The broad sociological definition of populism advocated by Laclau, Panizza, and Arditi strays too close to the literature on nationalism to be indistinguishable. One could look at the constructivist nationalism literature (see Anderson, 1991; Hobsbawm, 1990; Gellner, 1983) as cases of successful populist movements that became institutionalized. Moreover, this perspective on populism also closely resembles that of Tilly (2004), who saw social movements as a combination of leaders and grassroots followers, but with a strong role for leaders, that articulated a claim based on popular sovereignty—which seems to be the hallmark of contemporary populism.

This paper does not suggest that populism is an unhelpful term. On the contrary, the acknowledgment that populism covers a diverse range of cases is helpful for providing a conceptual framework for studying otherwise 'different' cases. But, like the concept 'democracy', some adjectives would be helpful to differentiate subtypes. Madrid's introduction of the subtype 'ethnopopulism' provides one alternative, though he uses it to mean as '*inclusive* ethnically based parties that adopt classical populist electoral strategies' (2008, p. 475; my italics). The Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement does not seem to fit this definition. Even if one were to treat the CPSC as a political party (though it only participated in elections indirectly), one could hardly call it 'inclusive' in the national sense. In the process of emphasizing 'being *cruceño*' as a central element of their political discourse, the movement was explicitly *exclusive* in character. Where it did seek to become *inclusive* (by appealing to non-elite sectors of Santa Cruz society), it did so within a territorially (and culturally) defined space.

Advantages of Conceptualizing the *Autonomía* Movement as an 'Ethnic' Movement

An alternate approach is to take seriously the discourse of both leaders and participants of the Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement. This does not mean accepting at face value the claims *cruceños* might make about their own self-identification. It does, however, mean seriously analyzing how that discourse is constructed and how it manifests itself in political, cultural, economic, and other dimensions. It also means taking seriously the conventional consensus held by sociologists and anthropologists about how collective identities are socially constructed. This brings us into the theoretical literature on nationalism and national identity, which offers a way to tie the three key elements of the Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement: the important role played by elites, the equally important role played by mass publics, and a populist mode of discourse and symbolic politics.

It seems odd to suggest that recent studies of Bolivia have ignored key dimensions of ethnicity. After all, there is a significant—and growing—literature on both ethnicity and multiculturalism in Bolivia. But a look at the literature shows an almost exclusive focus

almost exclusively on 'indigenous' ethnicity. Without denying the critical importance of this dimension—and particularly the long-standing historical problem of the lack of inclusion, acceptance, and valorization of indigenous peoples in Bolivia—this focus presents important drawbacks. First of these is the problem of non-indigenous ethnic minorities that are too often under-analyzed in Bolivia. Three key examples are: Afro-Bolivians (who have recently gained some attention), Mennonites, and Japanese-Bolivians. A view of Bolivian multi-culturality that sees only a relationship between 'indigenous' and 'non-indigenous' cultures is problematic because it fundamentally ignores the multidimensional reality of the country's cultural pluralism.

A recent survey of ethnic groups in the Bolivian lowlands (Teijeiro, 2007) lists no fewer than 35 distinct ethnic groups, some with fewer than a hundred members. The survey is methodologically rigorous and takes care to point out the inherent problem of reifying what are in reality fluid, evolving cultural categories. Holding to the assumption that all individuals have some form of 'ethnic' identity, it creates a catch-all category *karai-catellano* (what we might otherwise call 'mestizo') for the bulk of the region's population (2.26 million or about 85% of the total). Yet the survey makes no mention of Mennonites (estimated at 40,000 population), almost all of whom live in small, rural communities across southern Santa Cruz, or Japanese-Bolivians (estimated at 8,000 population), many of whom still live in their original settled farming communities around San Juan de Yapacaní and Okinawa municipalities. It is remarkable that a survey that does not declare itself a survey of 'indigenous' communities, but rather of 'ethnic diversity' in the Bolivian lowlands—and one that takes great pains in its introductory chapter to discuss the debates in the literature about identity construction and problematic attempts to establish a stamp of 'authenticity' on living cultural communities—should make no mention of non-indigenous ethnic cultural communities in the region and create a catch-all, lump category *karai-catellano* for what it explicitly terms 'non-indigenous' population (many of which are not tied to Spanish language or culture).

Yet another problem with the traditional approach to using an 'ethnic studies' frame in Bolivia is that it falls back on discredited assumptions about culture and social identity construction. Long after the scholarly community has accepted the argument that culture and identity is socially constructed, scholars continue to use a-priori-defined cultures as the building block for studies. The implication has been that many recent works on Bolivia take indigenous identity at face value, without fully exploring the complex realities, practices, and socio-historical conditions that gave rise to those identities.

Serious scholars have, of course, continued to explore the ways in which indigenous identity has been—and continues to be—socially constructed. One recent example is Alvizuri's (2009) analysis of the construction of 'Aymarannes' in Bolivia. Looking at elite discourse and public policy, focusing on the period since the 1952 National Revolution, Alvizuri uncovers that (non-indigenous) dominant Bolivian elites had regularly gravitated towards elevating Aymaran culture as a 'national' one. In an effort to forge a strong national identity, Bolivian political elites needed to root their nation deep into history. As in many other Latin American countries, the choice was to find a pre-Colombian, indigenous community that could supply the symbolic elements for a unique national identity. Two possible paths were already blocked: Peru had earlier embarked on such a project using the Inca Empire and Paraguay had recently done so with the Guaraní. This left one significant, recognized ethnic group: the Aymara. Although fewer in number than the Quechua, the Aymara had the added advantage of being concentrated in the region around the

national capital: the Bolivian altiplano. As she demonstrates—especially in her chapter on public school textbooks (Alvizuri, 2009, pp. 71–82)—a strong Aymaran cultural identity was in place well before the rise in the 1970s of the Aymara-based *katarista* movement (which she argues was in part a product of earlier state cultural policies). Not surprisingly, Gellner and Anderson, as well as other 'constructivists' of the French school openly influence Alvizuri's work. None of this, of course, suggests that Alvizuri believes that Aymaran identity today is in any way 'false' or that its members do not intensely feel themselves to 'be' Aymaran.

One of the striking features of the Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement is that both its leaders and their supporters regularly articulate a 'cultural' discourse. Dismissing those elements as merely rhetorical dressing for a white/*mestizo* minority defending its interests does little to aid our understanding of the movement—or how it was able to galvanize support from a wide cross-section of the Santa Cruz public. This is where more careful attention to the theoretical tools of the study of identity construction becomes critical. The *autonomía* exhibits characteristics of an elite-driven reactionary movement (particularly the CPSC's strong animosity towards Evo Morales); it exhibits characteristics of a social movement; and it exhibits characteristics of a populist movement, as Peña Claros (2010) argues. Yet all of these frameworks are incomplete because they lack an important adjective: 'ethnic'. The Santa Cruz elites are, obviously, fighting to defend their interests. But in doing so they are deliberately appealing to—and working to *construct*—popular attachment to a 'Cruceño' identity. Likewise, whether as a case of populism or a social movement, the 'empty signifiers' (Laclau, 2005, p. 74) or symbolic representations of 'program, identity, and standing' (Tilly, 2004, p. 12) are categorically different from those advocated by non-ethnic 'social' or 'populist' movements. Again, being careful to avoid the trap of conceptual stretching, some conceptual 'frontier' must exist between social movements that do not articulate a specific 'ethnic' identity from those that do. The cultural discourse—which advances the idea that Cruceños share a common cultural bond that both unites them and simultaneously sets them apart from other Bolivians—is a key characteristic of an ethnic movement.

Cultural Production in Santa Cruz

The key to understanding the contemporary Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement is to place it within a broader sociological framework. From a distance, it seems that the movement suddenly 'erupted' only on the heels of the election of Evo Morales in December 2005, or even the October 2003 crisis. But doing so would be the equivalent to suggesting that the contemporary indigenous movement in Bolivia dates back only to the October 2003 crisis, or even the last decade or two. Obviously, the indigenous movement has a long—and complex—historical trajectory that cannot be ignored. The same is true of the Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement. Although October 2003 had a 'radicalizing' effect on what it meant 'to be Cruceño', as Peña Claros and Jordán Bazán (2006) suggest—that point of rupture could not have been possible without some preexisting 'Cruceño' identity. Although a process of 'cultural production' has rapidly increased in the past few years, it is important to note that the preceding decades were marked by a growing tendency within Santa Cruz to promote a distinctive 'Cruceño' identity within the population in various ways.

I argue that regional identities are 'constructed imaginaries' of the kind described by Gellner (1964), Hobsbawm (1990), and Anderson (1991). Of course, political imaginaries have material bases, drawing on social and economic relationships that link members of the community together and distinguish them from others. As do indigenous movements, the Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement built upon preexisting traditional communal identities that idealize rural folk communities, promoting regional folklores (music, food, clothing, dialect, and local folk heroes) that accent the region's cultural difference and establish it as an 'other' relative to an (equally *imagined*) Andean Bolivia.

Cruceño regionalism provides a clear example: beginning in the 1980s, the city of Santa Cruz went on a monument-building spree, erecting statutes to regional heroes such as the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista's Jorge Roca and Gumercindo Coronado, renaming what was once Avenida Kennedy to Avenida Roca y Coronado in the process.[7] Other monuments are more inclusive, such as the Madre India monument, described as representing the 'enduring cultural values that *Cruceño society* practices' (Acuña, 1996, p. 40, my emphasis). That monument—like other representations of lowland indigenous peoples or the shouting of the Guaraní *Ore jae iyambe*! ('We have no masters!') at *autonomista* rallies—connects Santa Cruz society with a pre-colonial, indigenous past, but one different from that of the Andean highlands. In effect, Cruceño elites are using the established Latin American template for national myth making, merely replacing 'Guaraní' for 'Aymara'. Others monuments, such as a mural depicting the 1957–1959 Once Por Ciento movement, memorialize earlier regional movements.[8] Beyond emphasizing difference, these present the image of a prolonged struggle with a distant, foreign, centralist government.

At the same time as the public landscape began to consciously project a Cruceño identity, cultural production expanded in other ways. In 1988, the CPSC and the alcaldía hosted the first Día de la Tradición Cruceña. The festival, which continues to be held annually, was meant as a showcase of unique cultural practices, primarily through a celebration of the region's 'folklore' in food, dance, and music. The following year, schools across the city of Santa Cruz participated in the first Festival Intercolegial Elay Puej. This was a watershed moment. Bolivian schools have a long-standing tradition of requiring students to participate in activities meant to teach them 'national patrimony'. The Festival Intercolegial Elay Puej was different in that it explicitly showcased only *regional* folk music and dance (including a significant lowland indigenous content). Additionally, the name Elay Puej—a uniquely Cruceño phrase for 'there it is'—was an early public use of Cruceño dialect in the formal public sphere. Since then, such festivals have multiplied. 2010 saw the inaugural Festival Costumbrista 'Mojon con Cara',[9] sponsored by the Comité del Bicentenario—itself established specifically to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the start of the independence struggle in Santa Cruz (24 September 1810) under the banner *siempre libres* ('always free').

Not surprisingly, cultural production has extended into the literary field. The Comité del Bicentenario was a major sponsor of the 2010 XI Feria Internacional del Libro, under the slogan *200 años de letras cruceñas* ('200 years of Cruceño letters'). The last several decades have seen a rise in self-consciously produced 'Cruceño' poetry and other literature. In addition, there is a growing production of sociological or historical literature meant to explain, express, defend, or rescue Cruceño culture. Interesting examples include: Roca's (2007b) *Breve historia del habla cruceña y su mestizaje* (a primer on the history of Cruceño dialect); Waldmann's (2008) *El hábitus camba* (an exploratory

ethnography of *camba* identity);[10] Sandoval Rodríguez's (2003) *Historia de Santa Cruz* (a standard history of Santa Cruz); Schelchkov's (2008) *Andrés Ibáñez: La revolución de la igualdad en Santa Cruz* (a brief history of the leader of the region's 1876 'federalist' uprising); Román's (2009) *Cambas y Collas* (an exploration of the cultural, historical, physical, and psychological differences between *cambas* and *collas*); and Sanabria Fernández's (2009) *Contribución de Santa Cruz a la formación de la nacionalidad* (which argues that Santa Cruz has historically contributed in significant ways to the Bolivian national identity). Works such as these have carved out a significant space for thinking about what 'being Cruceño' (or 'being Camba') means within the context of Bolivian nationalism. And then there are the polemical works, such as: Urenda's (2009) *El sueño imperturbable* (a history of Bolivia's 'autonomic process'). Not surprisingly, such works have produced an interest in understanding this phenomenon: Paula Peña et al's (2003) *La permanente construcción de lo cruceño* (a study of Cruceño identity construction); Peña Claros and Boschetti's (2008) *Desafiar el mito camba-colla* (a study of multiculturalism within Santa Cruz); Medina's (2008) *Las dos Bolivias* (a critical analysis of the growing polarization between Andean and lowland Bolivia); Boschetti and Peña Claros's (2009) *Los cruceños según sus intelectuales* (an exploration of different visions of 'being Cruceño' based on a series of interviews with regional intellectuals); Claudia Peña Claros and Nelson Jordán's (2006) *Ser cruceño en octubre* (a close analysis of the role of the October 2003 crisis as a catalyst for a resurgence in Cruceño identity politics); and Mitre's (2008) *Nosotros que nos queremos tanto* (a historical–institutional analysis of the cause for regionalist movements as a function of modernization). Taken as a whole, these works reflect a growing intellectual debate over Cruceño identity, its meaning, and political relevance—and reflect the kind of cultural identity production described by Anderson (1991) and Hobsbawm (1990) as the basic elements for emerging political imaginaries.

Bolivian Regionalisms and Internal Colonialism

Discussions of 'internal colonialism' in Bolivia typically address the relationship between indigenous communities and the state. This is particularly true of those adopting a left perspective (Fuentes, 2007; Hylton & Thomson, 2007; Webber, 2005), which tends to privilege indigeneity over social class (or to fuse the two and treat them as synonymous). Building upon the works of Albó (1989), Rivera Cusicanqui (1986), and Larson (2004), such perspectives borrow a Marxist understanding of imperialism to describe a postcolonial Bolivian reality in which a modernizing, neoliberal state perpetuates racialized structures of exploitation and exclusion. Indigenous movements themselves use the discourse of internal colonialism when articulating their social, economic, and political demands.

Regional movements—such as the Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement—borrow the rhetoric of internal colonialism. The success of new regional movements across Bolivia's lowlands, seen in their ability to bring tens (even hundreds) of thousands of supporters to the street and the substantial electoral support for autonomy in both the 2006 and 2008 autonomy referenda, suggests that similarly articulated regionalist claims resonate with large segments of the population. Regional movements have, in other words, shifted the modes of identity construction. The enduring, popular support for *autonomía* in Santa Cruz is one example.

In the 1970s, the *katarista* cultural–political movement mobilized the rural indigenous people of the Altiplano as such, rather than as *campesinos*. By the late 1980s, some middle-class activists (such as Álvaro García Linera) began to see the *kataristas* as a substitute for the labor movement (which had collapsed as an effective political instrument in the aftermath of the 1985 neoliberal structural reforms) and were crafting a new political movement that used indigeneity—not class—to challenge the neoliberal state. Regional movements worked in the other direction, anchoring political mobilization in a specific regional cultural identity to challenge the centralist state. Both cases were products of and contributions to the continued erosion of the national identity narrative crafted by the protagonists of the 1952 National Revolution.

The Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement, like indigenous movements, built upon an emerging political imaginary—based on 'being Cruceño'—to challenge the central state. Of course, such imaginaries gloss over numerous details. While historically Bolivia has been a highly centralized unitary state, public spending and infrastructure building in the Media Luna increased dramatically after 1952 as the new, integrationist Bolivian state sought 'national' socioeconomic development to integrate its 'interior' regions. Increases in public spending and state loans to local entrepreneurs were accompanied by a significant population shift as 'Andean' Bolivians migrated in search of new economic opportunities. One of the most remarkable features of Santa Cruz regionalism is how so many second- (and even first-) generation immigrants embrace their new *camba* or *cruceño* identity.

In the 1979 introduction to *Fisonomía del Regionalismo Boliviano*, José Luis Roca asserted: 'The history of Bolivia is not the history of class struggle. It is instead the history of regional struggles' (2007a, li). Roca opposed 'Marxist' explanations of Bolivian history and instead pointed to a history of regional conflicts, dating from the colonial period. The three regions Roca identifies are each dominated by a city: La Paz in the North, Sucre in the South, and Santa Cruz in the Orient (2007a, pp. 9–18). Roca's account is equally reductionist; by reducing all of Bolivian history to the struggle between regions, he discounts class, ethnic, or other cleavages. The book is nevertheless a seminal piece of Bolivian historiography, particularly for those interested in understanding the internal (regional) conflicts between Bolivian elites during the early republic. Recently, there has been renewed attention to regional histories and identities, particularly as the discourse of decentralization shifted from the municipal level to the 'intermediate' departmental level. By the early 2000s, Bolivian intellectuals were regularly meeting to discuss the issue, believing that regional decentralization was inevitable (ILDIS, 2003). Such conferences built upon the successes and limits of the 1994 Ley de Participación Popular. As the idea of regional-level decentralization began to take hold, some proposed radical territorial reorganizations: Becerra (2006) proposed reorganizing the country into at least 24 departments. Like Roca, Becerra based each new department (e.g. Chaco, Chiquitos, Chichas) on an urban center (e.g. Villamontes, San José, Tupiza) and its own historical 'regional aspirations'.

By the 2000s, in the context of a new 'pluricultural' consensus, neoliberals and *indigenistas* alike agreed that the existing Bolivian state was too 'centralist' and not pluralist enough, and regional movements began articulating their demands. Their discourse contains three common elements:

- Claims of a unique cultural or historic heritage, both different from and marginalized by the dominant national one.

- Remembrances of specific historical 'humiliations' or injustices.
- Criticism of the state's 'smothering centralism' and calls for a new political system that respects cultural communities.

The first two are similar to the discourse of indigenous movements, which point to the Bolivian state's long history of exclusion, exploitation, and denigration of indigenous peoples. Though the third is currently more pronounced in regional movements, indigenous movements also increasingly seek autonomy for their communities.

What we see in Santa Cruz, then, is a sort of 'mirror' of the indigenous movements, but one that is not merely a 'reaction' to the latter. There are important points of convergence that need to be more carefully understood. Those who analyze the new Bolivian politics as a struggle between an indigenous majority and a resistant non-indigenous minority (this is particularly true for those who make analogies between recent Bolivia and South Africa under apartheid) may actually contribute to political polarization that makes positive multiculturalism less likely. Using the theoretical tools of 'ethnicity' allows us to find points of convergence between two otherwise unrelated political phenomena. Doing so, not only helps add another layer of understanding to the process unfolding in Bolivia today, but also it helps us find points of dialogue between otherwise antagonistic poles.

Conclusions

This paper has tried to identify a source of 'conceptual confusion' in the study of political social movements (in Latin America and beyond). In particular, despite broad consensus around constructivism, much of the scholarship on ethnic movements remains linked to primordialist assumptions. Studies of 'ethnic' political movements often implicitly accept primordialist definitions of what constitutes an 'ethnic' group. This has important methodological implications. Studies that look at differences in the strategies or tactics of different 'ethnic' movements will suffer from selection bias if they limit their case selection to those that are a priori accepted as 'ethnic' movements. Selecting cases of ethnic movements in this way introduces primordialist assumptions (and related biases), which need to be carefully addressed.

For example, in a review of 'ethnic mobilization' since 1945, Susan Olzak takes careful steps to define ethnic movements as 'collective action that takes some set of ethnic markers (e.g. skin color, language, territorial identification) as criteria for membership' (1983, p. 357). As such, the definition seems inclusive and could accommodate the Santa Cruz *autonomía* movement. After all, her cases include a range of similar regional movements (Catalonia, Scotland, Eritrea, Bangladesh, and others). Still, despite a highly detailed and rigorous analysis of differences in the trajectories of such movements, Olzak does not provide a clear operational definition of what would constitute an 'ethnic' movement (at least not one that relies on using the word 'ethnic' in the definition). Thus, underlying them, even careful constructivist studies of ethnic movements, depends on pre-defined ethnic entities ('the Scots', 'the Catalans', 'the Bengalis', 'the Eritreans', etc.) that are themselves a social construction.

This is not to say that any movement can lay claim to being an 'ethnic' movement—otherwise we face the problems of 'conceptual stretching'. Rather, movements should be defined as 'ethnic' movements if they meet certain definitional criteria. More carefully

developing—and articulating—such criteria would help identify 'ethnic' movements, as well as help us disentangle them from related concepts, such as 'social movement' or 'populism'. It is also important to note that this paper is not arguing for carelessly defining regionalist autonomy movements (in Bolivia or elsewhere) as 'ethnic' movements. Rather, this paper suggests that the analytical and theoretical tools used to study the concept of 'ethnicity' are helpful in investigating the claims, strategies, and rhetoric of various kinds of social movements—particularly those that make a geographically based, cross-sectional political claim. In other words, rather than merely accept (or reject) different political movements as 'ethnic' ones, this paper proposes that we use the theoretical tools of the study of ethnopolitics to *investigate* social movements to determine if and how their leaders and adherents make 'ethnic' claims, and to take as a starting point that the movement itself is in the process of constructing some sort of collective identity—which may or may not be an 'ethnic' one.

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Notes

1. This is problematic in two ways: first, because it implies that other social groups lack 'ethnicity.' But second because it reduces multiculturalism to something similar to the earlier 'integrationist' tendencies in Latin America that sought to accommodate 'Indians' into the accepted, dominant culture. If multiculturalism is to mean the living together of culturally pluralist societies, then it becomes imperative to approach all groups as having a cultural—or 'ethnic'—identity.
2. The so-called 'Gas War' was a series of sustained popular mobilizations that lasted throughout September and October 2003. Although the protests involved a variety of divergent social movements, by October these had been reduced to a common opposition to government plans to export natural gas to the United States through a Chilean port (what Laclau, 2005 might call an 'empty signifier').
3. The original petition included 498,039 signatures, but was reduced through the verification process by the National Electoral Court (see Casazola, 2009, p. 15).
4. Because it is technically an 'apolitical' organization, CPSC members cannot be publicly elected officials.
5. According to the convocation law, the Constituent Assembly was charged with approving departmental autonomy for departments in which the 'Sí' (Yes) vote won.
6. On 29 June 2008, voters in Chuquisaca elected a new prefect, Savina Cuéllar, after the MAS prefect resigned over a regional crisis there (see Centellas, 2010b). The new prefect was exempt from the recall vote.
7. The UJC was founded during a 1957 revolt against the MNR government's land reform policies. That revolt (in which Roca and Coronado died) was put down by a combination of military forces and Andean *campesino* militias.
8. The 1957–1959 Once Por Ciento movement demanded that producing departments retain 11% of oil and gas rents.

9. A 'mojon' is simply a post, literally a boundary marker. But within Santa Cruz there is a long-standing legend of a 'mojon con cara' (a post with a face) that stood protectively near the city square until it was accidentally destroyed during street work in 1947. More recently, the CPSC and other *autonomía* supporters have sponsored the installation of numerous *mojones* etched with pro-autonomy phrases and symbols.

10. '*Camba*' identity has a complex relationship to '*Cruceño*' identity. There are two ways to differentiate the two. The first major difference is that '*camba*' includes not only Santa Cruz, but also Beni and Pando. In fact, the Nación Camba movement explicitly identifies these three departments (but not Tarija)) as part of one 'nation' that deserves independence from Bolivia. Another major difference is that '*camba*' has typically been used to mean something like '*cholo*' in the Andes, a person of *mestizo* origins. Increasingly, however, most Cruceños also identify themselves as Cambas, at least culturally.

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