

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF POPULISM IN TIMES OF CRISIS:
EXPLAINING THE CHÁVEZ PHENOMENON

By

Mariana Rodríguez Vargas

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Approved:

Mitchell A. Seligson, Ph.D.

Elizabeth J. Zechmeister, Ph.D.

Jonathan T. Hiskey, Ph.D.

Kirk A. Hawkins, Ph.D.

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Para mis abuelos Ivan y Marcelino, cuyo esfuerzo por el bienestar de sus familias y admiración por la educación me encaminaron e inspiraron a llegar aquí.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
A Failed Revolution? The Continued Deterioration of Macroeconomic and Democratic Conditions under Hugo Chávez	4
II. EXPLAINING THE CHÁVEZ PHENOMENON	21
Chávez’s Socioeconomic Agenda and the Targeting of the Poor.....	22
Chávez’s Populist Definition of Democracy and Agenda for Political Inclusion.....	27
Translating the Targeted Socioeconomic and Political Benefits and Ideological Appeals of Chávez’s Leftist- Populist Agenda into Mechanisms for Electoral Success	33
The Role of Voter Self-Interest.....	39
The Ideological Appeal of Chávez’s Leftist-Populist Ideology	49
Theory Summary, Observable Implications and Chapter Outline.....	56
Project Relevance and Potential Contributions.....	64
III. WHO SUPPORTS HUGO CHÁVEZ? THE ROLE OF SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS AND MISSION PARTICIPATION.....	68
Chávez’s Wealth Redistribution and Social Aid Policies.....	69
Explaining the Link between the Poor’s Socioeconomic Benefits and Chávez’s Electoral Success	74
The Missions.....	75
Mission Benefits, Economic Self-Interest and Support for Chávez	78
Data and Methods	83

Empirical Results and Discussion.....	88
The Relationship between Wealth Status and Support for Chávez	89
The Relationship among Mission Participation, Perceptions of Personal Economic Well-Being and Electoral Support for Chávez	96
Comparing the Venezuelan Poor to the Rest of Latin America.....	106
Summary of Findings and Conclusions	110
IV. WHO SUPPORTS HUGO CHÁVEZ? THE ROLE OF POLITICAL BENEFITS FOR THE POOR	119
Chávez’s Populist Definition of Democracy and Agenda for Political Inclusion.....	120
Explaining the Link between the Poor’s Political Benefits and Chávez’s Electoral Success	130
Data and Methods	139
Empirical Results and Discussion.....	142
Comparing Political Participation among Venezuelans of Different Wealth Status	142
The Relationship among Participation in Political Inclusion Initiatives, Perceptions of Personal Political Well-Being and Support for Chávez	150
Comparing the Venezuelan Poor to the Rest of Latin America.....	160
Summary of Findings and Conclusions	164
V. POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR HUGO CHÁVEZ IN THE FACE OF DETERIORATING ECONOMIC AND DEMOCRATIC CONDITIONS	171
The Appeal of Chávez’s Leftist-Populist Political Ideology	172
Chávez’s Populist Definition of Democracy	173
The Role of the State under Chávez	178
Translating the Appeal of Chávez’s Political Ideology into Continued Electoral Success	181
Data and Methods	188
Empirical Results and Discussion.....	194
Support for a Populist Definition of Democracy	194
Leftist Ideology and Attitudes about the Role of the State.....	208
Evaluations of National Conditions and Government Performance.....	210
The Relationship among Ideology, Evaluations of National Conditions and Government Performance and Support for Chávez.....	216

Summary of Findings and Conclusion.....	222
VI. CONCLUSION.....	241
Summary of Findings.....	242
Contributions.....	245
Implications.....	246
Project Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research.....	248
Final Thoughts	250
Appendix	
A. APPENDIX A.....	20
B. APPENDIX B	67
C. APPENDIX C.....	113
D. APPENDIX D.....	167
E. APPENDIX E	225
REFERENCES	251

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
3.1. Effect of Wealth on Vote for Chávez, 1998-2012	93
3.2. Mediation Effect of Idiotropic Evaluations on Vote for Chávez, Controlling for Participation in Missions, 2006 and 2010.....	103
3.3. Moderation Effects of Mission Participation on the Relationship between Idiotropic Evaluations and Vote for Chávez, 2006 and 2010.....	105
3.4. Comparing the Moderation Effect of Low Wealth on the Relationship between Idiotropic Evaluations and Vote Choice in Venezuela and Latin America, 2006-2012	109
4.1. Mediation Effect of Satisfaction with Democracy on Vote for Chávez, Controlling for Participation in Communal Councils, 2006-2012.....	157
4.2. Moderation Effects of Communal Council Participation on the Relationship between Satisfaction with Democracy and Vote for Chávez, 2006-2012	159
4.3. Moderation Effect of Low Wealth on the Relationship between Satisfaction with Democracy and Vote Choice in Latin America, 2006-2012	162
5.1. Summary of Mean Comparisons of Attitudes Related to a Populist Definition of Democracy, Venezuela 2006-2012.....	198
5.2. Summary of Mean Comparisons of Attitudes of Support, Identity and Empowerment Related to Chávez’s Government, Venezuela 2006-2012	203
5.3. Summary of Mean Comparisons of Leftist Ideology and Attitudes about the Role of the State, Venezuela 2006-2012	209
5.4. Distribution of Blame Attribution for Economic Crisis among Different Types of Venezuelans, 2010.....	213
5.5. Summary of Mean Comparisons of Economic and Government Performance Evaluations, Venezuela 2006-2012	214
5.6. Effects of Ideology, Evaluations of National Conditions, and Government Performance Evaluations on Electoral Support for Chávez, 2006-2012	219

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1.1. Average GDP Growth (annual %) in Venezuela, 1989-2012.....	5
1.2. Average Unemployment (% total labor force) in Venezuela, 1989-2012	7
1.3. Average Inflation, GDP Deflator (annual %) in Venezuela, 1989-2012.....	8
1.4. Venezuela's Freedom House Status, 1989-2013	12
1.5. Intentional Homicide Rate per 100,000 in Venezuela, 1995-2010.....	15
2.1. The Relationship among Chávez's Leftist-Populist Agenda, Individual-level Attitudinal Constraints, and Incentives for Reelecting Chávez	38
2.2. A Mediating Relationship among Participation in Chávez's Socioeconomic or Political Initiatives, Perceptions of Personal Well-Being, and Vote Choice.....	44
2.3. A Moderating Relationship among Participation in Chávez's Socioeconomic or Political Initiatives, Perceptions of Personal Well-Being, and Vote Choice.....	45
2.4. The Relationship among Adherence to Chávez's Leftist-Populist Ideology, Perceptions of National Conditions and Government Performance, and Vote Choice	54
3.1. Average Wealth of Voters in Favor or Against Chávez Over Time, 1998-2012	89
3.2. Vote Distribution by Wealth Level in Venezuela, 1998-2012	92
3.3. Predicted Probabilities of Vote for Chávez, 1998-2012	95
3.4. Average Wealth by Mission Participation in Venezuela, 2006 and 2010	97
3.5. Distribution of Mission Participation by Wealth Level in Venezuela, 2006 and 2010.....	98
3.6. Average Levels of Personal Economic Well-Being by Mission Participation in Venezuela, 2006 and 2010.....	99
3.7. Average Electoral Support for Chávez by Mission Participation, 2006 and 2010.....	101

3.1. Average Levels of Self-Reported Turnout by Wealth Level in Venezuela, 1995-2012	143
3.2. Average Levels of Party Identification by Wealth Level in Venezuela, 1995-2012	145
3.3. Average Levels of Identification with MVR/PSUV by Wealth Level in Venezuela, 1998-2012	146
3.4. Average Participation in Neighborhood Assoc. or Communal Councils by Wealth Level in Venezuela, 1995-2012	148
3.5. Average Participation in other Initiatives of the Chávez Administration by Wealth Level, 2006	149
3.6. Average Wealth by Communal Council Participation in Venezuela, 2006-2012	151
3.7. Average Levels of Satisfaction with Democracy by Communal Council Participation in Venezuela, 2006-2012.....	153
3.8. Average Electoral Support for Chávez by Wealth Level and Communal Council Participation, 2006-2012.....	155
4.1. Average Support for Democracy among Different Types of Venezuelans, 2006	195
4.2. Average Support for Democracy among Different Types of Venezuelans, 2010 and 2012.....	196
4.3. Proportion of Different Types of Venezuelans Supporting Populist Attitudes, 2006	200
4.4. Proportion of Different Types of Venezuelans Supporting Populist Attitudes, 2010 and 2012.....	200
4.5. Average External Efficacy Among Different Types of Venezuelans, 2010 and 2012.....	205
4.6. Average Internal Efficacy Among Different Types of Venezuelans, 2010 and 2012.....	206
4.7. Proportion of Different Types of Venezuelans who Perceived a Very Serious Crisis in 2010	212

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Hugo Chávez is often described as the inevitable political consequence of a failed two-party system that was once thought to be one of the most stable and democratic systems in Latin America (Karl 1990; Ellner and Tinker Salas 2007; Morgan 2007). Chávez's election represented the filling of a legitimacy void left by a "partyarchy" system that grew out of the Punto Fijo pact between AD (Acción Democrática) and COPEI (Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente) in 1958 to share control of the government as Venezuela transitioned into democracy (Karl 1987; Coppedge 1994, 1996; Buxton 2005). However, from the early 1980s, Venezuelan public opinion began reflecting deep discontent with this pacted two-party rule between AD and COPEI (Buxton 2005; Brewer-Carías 2010). The economic crisis that hit Venezuela following failures in neoliberal reforms and sharp drops in oil prices in the 1980s and 1990s was deemed too big a challenge for the existing two-party system. The discontent with and inevitable demise of the political legitimacy of the Punto Fijo party system eventually allowed Chávez to successfully campaign as an anti-establishment candidate who stood against what was viewed as an elitist and corrupt government that had increasingly ignored the socioeconomic and political inclusion of poor Venezuelans (Buxton 2005; Wilpert 2005; Castañeda and Morales 2008).

The power-sharing system between AD and COPEI that dominated Venezuelan politics after the country's democratic transition in 1958 had once been described by scholars as an example for representative democracy in transitioning democracies, with

an unexpectedly impressive level of party-system institutionalization (Myers 2004; Molina 2004; Eller and Tinker Salas 2007). In fact, the concept of “Venezuelan exceptionalism” was commonly used by scholars of Latin American politics and democratization to describe Venezuela’s apparent signs of democratic consolidation at a time when most of the region remained under military rule (Levine 1994; Karl 1995; Myers 2004; Eller and Tinker Salas 2007). However, growing discontent with the two-party system’s economic and democratic performance revealed the underlying weaknesses of this “Venezuelan exceptionalism,” which eventually degraded perceptions of AD and COPEI’s legitimacy and thus undermined their hold on political power in Venezuela.

Chávez’s election in December 1998 signaled not only the end of what had been erroneously perceived as a stable democratic two-party system, but also the beginning of a new era of politics for the country and the Latin American region. The downfall of this two-party system facilitated the electoral success of Chávez as an anti-establishment political figure who represented new possibilities for Venezuela’s future. Once Chávez took office, he began the implementation of what he termed the Bolivarian Revolution, a leftist-populist model of governance that included an increasing set of restrictions on many core civil liberties. His transformation of Venezuela was not alone in the Americas, as similar leftist-populist leaders were also elected to power in Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, and Nicaragua. Chávez’s socioeconomic and political agenda included both a complete remake of Venezuela’s constitution and a massive increase in state economic intervention into the private sector. The results of these vast changes in both politics and economics have been subjected to numerous reviews and evaluations. The general

consensus is that they produced a mixed, and generally, disappointing economic outcomes, and sharply weakened democracy in Venezuela (Gott 2008; Rodríguez 2008; Cannon 2009; Hidalgo 2009; Brewer-Carías 2010; Ellner 2010b; Webber 2010; Corrales and Penfold 2011). At the same time, a broad segment of the Venezuelan voting population seems to have been deeply supportive of President Chávez despite these limitations and difficulties. A worsening state of affairs in Venezuela during the Chávez administration, including unstable economic growth, oil revenue mismanagement, inflation, and deteriorating democratic rights and institutions, would have conceivably given voters enough reasons to punish the president at the polls. Yet, Chávez was popularly reelected three times after 1998 and defeated a recall referendum in 2004.

To explain this unlikely endurance in office, which I call the “Chávez Phenomenon,” I argue that Chávez’s repeated electoral success can be at least partly explained by the voting incentives generated for the poor majority by Chávez’s socioeconomic and political policy agenda. I claim that Chávez’s electoral success was largely due to the support he gained and maintained from the poor majority by providing targeted socioeconomic and political benefits to members of the lower classes in Venezuela. In essence, I argue that the Venezuelan poor were the driving force of Chávez’s repeated reelections.

Scholars and journalists alike have separately considered the role of socioeconomic redistribution policies and the changing participatory nature of the Venezuelan political system as factors that facilitated Chávez’s ability to maintain political power. In this dissertation, I will provide the first comprehensive explanation for the electoral survivability of Hugo Chávez by theoretically and empirically combining

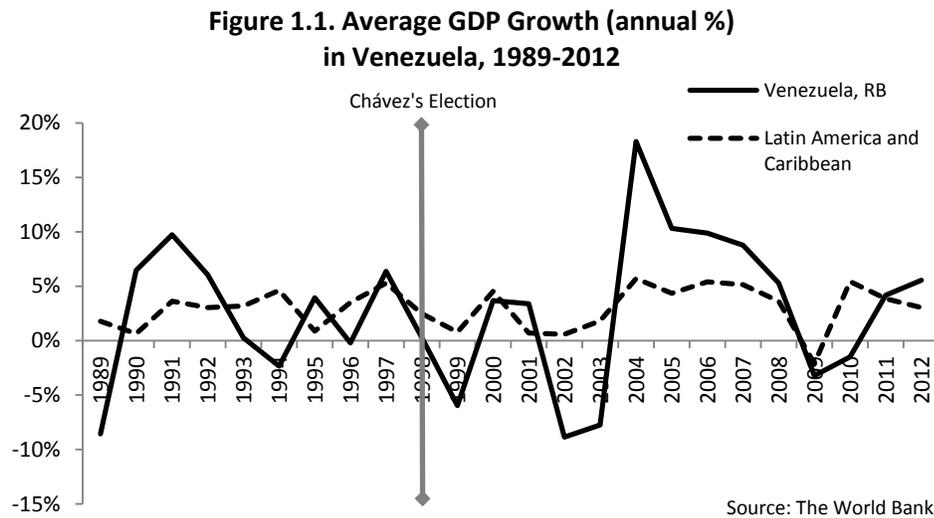
the role of both socioeconomic redistribution and political inclusionary policies that arguably fueled Chávez's electoral success. Specifically, I rely on survey data to investigate how and why President Chávez and his leftist-populist agenda continued to receive strong electoral support, particularly from the poor, in the face of deteriorating economic and democratic conditions in Venezuela. Furthermore, I address the implications of Chávez's electoral success for the dynamics of Venezuelan public opinion and the future of democratic government in the country. Overall, with this project, I aim to contribute to our scholarly understanding of the effects that leftist-populist leaders like Chávez can have on electoral politics in Latin America.

A Failed Revolution? The Continued Deterioration of Macroeconomic and Democratic Conditions under Hugo Chávez

Much like the previous period of two-party rule, Venezuela under President Hugo Chávez experienced over a decade of unstable economic conditions, especially when compared to the rest of Latin America. However, the range in volatility of annual national GDP growth, for example, was much greater under Chávez than under previous administrations.¹ As seen in the comparison of Venezuela to the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean in Figure 1.1, the administrations that preceded Chávez also struggled with economic performance. In particular, under President Carlos Andrés Pérez in 1989 GDP growth hit a low of nearly negative 9% growth rate. With the exception of 1994, the next decade in Venezuelan economics avoided drops into negative growth. This trend

¹ A similar lens through which to look at the macroeconomic health of Venezuela before and after Chávez is to examine the average annual per capital GDP growth. See Appendix 1.1 for an illustration of trends in average annual per capital GDP growth for Venezuela from 1989 through 2011, as compared to the rest of the region.

ended in 1998, when the country was faced with severe economic and political crises that provided a springboard of opportunity for a political outsider like Chávez. Yet, Chávez’s administration was also plagued with drastically fluctuating economic performance.



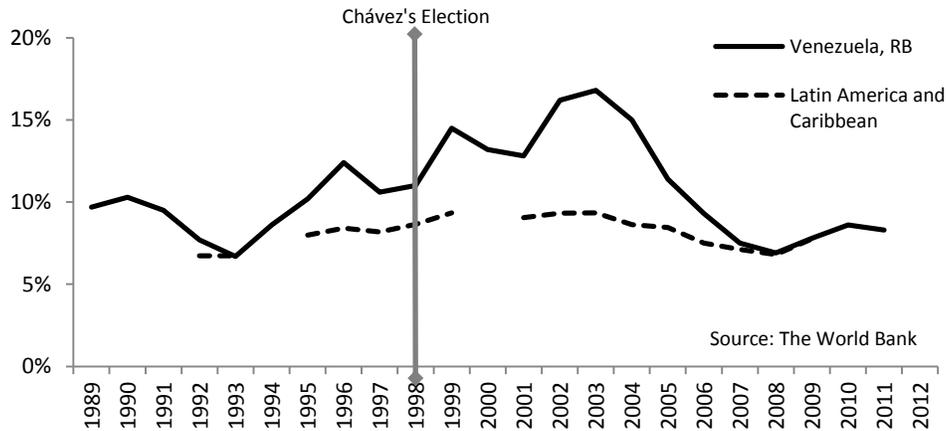
As shown in Figure 1.1, between 2002 and 2003, the average annual GDP growth in Venezuela once again reached negative 9%, mainly as the consequence of a failed coup against Chávez in 2002 that was accompanied with a prolonged strike from oil industry workers in protest against the government. Once the Chávez administration regained control of PDVSA (Petróleos de Venezuela S.A., the national oil company), considerable economic growth occurred in 2004 when national GDP growth rose to 18%, far above the average GDP growth rates in the rest of the region. However, that period of economic prosperity was short-lived, as Venezuela’s GDP growth rates began a steady decline, once again falling to negative growth rates in 2008. This negative trend was mainly a result of the global economic crisis and the Chávez administration’s insufficient response to the crisis. Although average GDP growth in Latin America and in the

Caribbean also dipped as a consequence of economic crisis in 2008, Venezuela's economic performance seems to have been especially hard hit. On the one hand, the global crisis was harsher on Venezuela mainly because oil prices plunged between 2008 and 2009. On the other hand, financial mismanagement with respect to Chávez's administration of the state oil company and a vast nationalization campaign that discouraged domestic and foreign investment, further worsened the negative effects of the global crisis on Venezuela's economy (Romero 2009, 2010a). A rapid fall in oil prices forced the Chávez administration to devalue the Venezuelan currency, reduce the federal budget, increase the value-added tax, and further deepen the national debt. After then, Venezuela only experienced positive GDP growth in 2011. According to the *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2012* report by the United Nations, Venezuela had the lowest (2%) growth forecasted among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for 2012.

Venezuela experienced additional forms of severe fluctuations in economic performance before and during the Chávez administration in regards to both unemployment and inflation. As can be seen in Figure 1.2, the average unemployment rate before the election of Chávez was about 10%, with a significant drop in 1993. Under Chávez, Venezuelan unemployment reached record highs and lows. Peaking at a high of almost 17% in 2003, unemployment under Chávez was almost twice the average unemployment rate in the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean. The percentage of unemployed Venezuelans proceeded to fall at a consistent pace to a low of 7% in 2008, only to continue to rise again between 2008 and 2009. These latter increases occurred mainly as a consequence of the Chávez administration's failed attempts to alleviate the

economic shocks of the global crisis and the effect of falling oil prices on the Venezuelan economy.

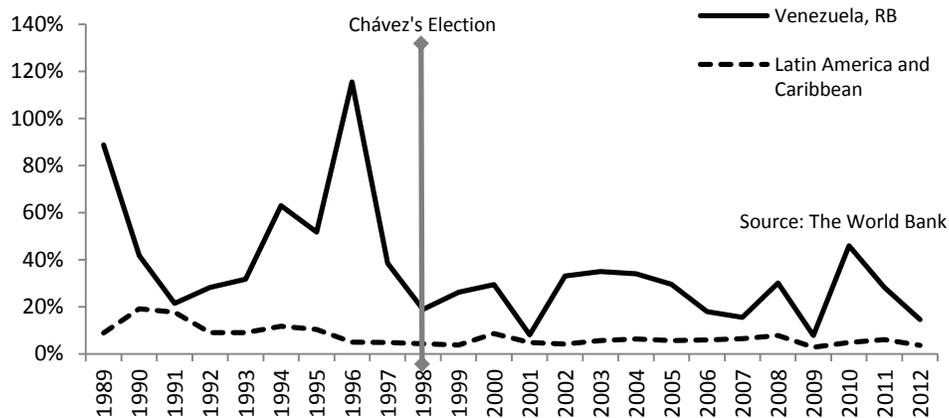
Figure 1.2. Average Unemployment (% total labor force) in Venezuela, 1989-2012



The rise and fall of inflation rates has been even more drastic than fluctuating unemployment in Venezuela's recent economic history. This was especially true under the administrations preceding Chávez, as can be seen in Figure 1.3.² Although inflation reached astronomical rates between 1989 and 1998, Venezuela seems to consistently suffer from higher inflation than regional average rates.

² Inflation as GDP deflator is used instead of inflation in consumer prices because World Bank data for the latter is not available for Venezuela until 2010.

Figure 1.3. Average Inflation, GDP Deflator (annual %) in Venezuela, 1989-2012



Even though inflation was less volatile under the Chávez administration, inflation rates remained much higher relative to the rest of Latin America between 1998 and 2012. As shown in Figure 1.3, despite the lack of severe spikes in inflation, such as those experienced prior to 1999, Venezuelans lived with over a 25% annual inflation rate for the majority of Chávez’s tenure. This was nearly three times the average inflation rate in the rest of the region (6%) between 1999 and 2011 (*The Economist* 2011b; World Bank 2011).

Although Chávez represented a clear ideological break from the two-party Punto Fijo system, the figures above seem to indicate that his policies fell short of being able to control Venezuela’s radically unstable economic conditions and maintain growth. Chávez’s nationalization campaign, in particular, deeply affected Venezuela’s private business environment, causing massive capital flight, an unprecedented increase in imported goods that are no longer produced by the domestic private sector, and economic stagnation (*The Economist* 2011b; Romero 2010a). Additionally, the Chávez administration engaged in unsuccessful currency policies and price controls that failed to

reduce inflation. Venezuelans' bout with severe inflation had a particularly negative effect on food prices, which the Chávez administration attempted to alleviate by setting price controls. Unfortunately, however, these price controls instead created severe food shortages and forced a record increase of food imports into Venezuela (*The Economist* 2011a; Neuman 2012b).

Lack of foreign and domestic investment, high inflation rates, and increases in imports of consumer goods previously produced in Venezuela are macroeconomic indicators that demonstrate how much the Chávez administration's economic policies failed to alleviate, and in some cases worsened, the unstable economic conditions that have plagued Venezuela since previous administrations. Like many presidents before him, Chávez depended on Venezuela's large oil reserves and revenues to fund many of his policies and continued to pin the health of the Venezuelan economy to the rise and fall of oil prices. However, unlike previous administrations, Chávez gained a particularly high level of control over oil revenues as a consequence of a nation-wide strike in 2002 and 2003 that included the majority of PDVSA. According to *The Economist* (2011c),

“[Chávez] packed [the oil company] with loyalists, starved it of investment and used it for social spending, cutting its output from 3.3m barrels per day (b/d) in 1998 to around 2.25m b/d, according to industry estimates. Of that, some 1m b/d is sold at subsidized prices at home or to regional allies, leaving just 1.25m b/d for full-price exports.”

Record high oil prices in the early years of the Chávez administration allowed the president to comfortably maintain his extensive social aid programs for the poor. However, the common volatility of global oil prices uncovered a high degree of mismanagement of PDVSA. The rates of public spending required by Chávez's socioeconomic redistribution policies were unsustainable under the constant threat of

possible falling oil prices and decreasing oil output. Additionally, the neglect of investment in the national oil company in terms of employee training and safety led to a severe degrading of Venezuela's oil industry infrastructure. Evidence of this mismanagement was illustrated by a deadly gas explosion in one of PDVSA's largest refineries in 2012 and a massive oil spill in a river in the state of Monagas in 2012 that contaminated drinking and irrigation water for over half a million people (*The Economist* 2012b, 2012e; Neuman 2012c). As explained by *The Economist* (2012a), "Under Mr. Chávez the oil company has been turned into a bloated, all-purpose development agency with which to dispense largesse."

When the global crisis hit in 2008 and the price of oil dropped, Venezuela's dependency on oil revenue was at 92% of GDP per capita, an astonishing increase from 64% in 1998 when Chávez was elected (*The Economist* 2008). Chávez's administration faced severe economic challenges beginning in 2008, as oil revenue continued to be the main form of payment for an increasing number of public employees, social programs for the poor, and rising food imports as a response to food scarcity. Additionally, the coupling of a global crisis and a fall in oil prices further complicated the ability of Chávez's administration to both effectively and efficiently manage the growing number of nationalized companies, inflation (*The Economist* 2008), and combat unemployment rates, which began to rise steadily after 2008 (see Figure 1.2).³

Although the price of oil recovered relatively quickly after its fall in 2008, Venezuela's economy continued to experience negative growth. The severe slowdown in Venezuela's economic growth beginning in 2008 forced Chávez to make unforeseen

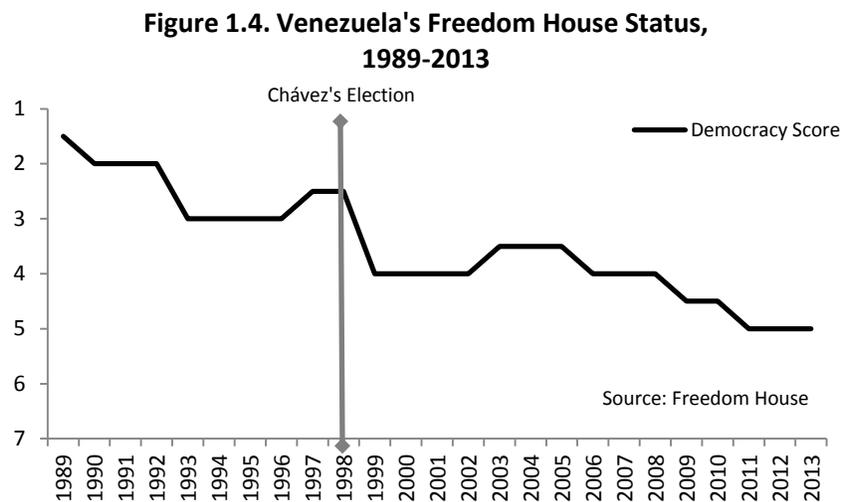
³ According to *The Economist* (2008), official unemployment rates for 2008 are to be interpreted with caution, as it is possible that the rate was actually "being held down by government grants to educational "missions" and unprofitable co-operatives."

federal budget cuts and raise value-added taxes (Romero 2009). These measures were not enough to prevent a recession and growing inflation. Consequently, the Chávez administration opted for currency devaluation in hopes of decreasing the foreign exchange rate and inflation, but this policy backfired. The price of the dollar doubled and Venezuelan inflation soared (*The Economist* 2010). Furthermore, Chávez was forced to expand the national debt by trading billions of dollars from China in exchange for oil in order to alleviate short-term domestic economic hardship. Loans were especially prominent with the onset of the global crisis in 2008, and signified an increase of net public debt as percentage of GDP from 14% in 2008 to 29% by 2010 (*The Economist* 2011b). More borrowing took place in 2012 in attempts to meet a 46% increase in federal spending, mostly as a response to it being an election year. While PDVSA had previously borrowed \$17.5 billion dollars in the form of bonds, these Chinese loans to the state oil company increased to about \$30 billion (Diehl 2012).

By the end of Chávez's presidency, Venezuela's economic prospects continued to look dire. According to analyses by *The Economist* (2012b), the country faced unsustainable levels of public spending amid an extensive increase in spending by the Chávez administration preceding the 2012 presidential elections. Indeed, in the midst of the protracted absence of Chávez due to his battle with cancer, the interim administration once again devalued the national currency in February 2013, which led to a further increase of already high inflation rates.

Beyond the Chávez administration's struggle to manage the troublesome national economic conditions that plagued Venezuela since before his election, the country also showed perturbing signs of democratic decay during Chávez's regime. As shown in

Figure 1.4, Freedom House scored Venezuela mainly as a “Free” country between 1989 and 1998. Under Chávez, the country became increasingly undemocratic according to the scores in Figure 1.4. As of 2012, Freedom House officially classified Venezuela as “Partly Free,” with a score of 5 (the highest score for a country to be considered “Partly Free” before being labeled “Not Free” on the 1-7 scale, ranging from most to least democratic). After a short-lived turn toward an improved democratic system between 2003 and 2004, the erosion of political rights and civil liberties in Chávez’s Venezuela rapidly deteriorated the quality of democracy in the country.



As stated by Freedom House (2012), by 2012 “Venezuela [was] not an electoral democracy. While the act of voting [was] relatively free and the count is fair, the political playing field favor[ed] government-backed candidates, and the separation of powers [was] nearly nonexistent.” Some of the Chávez administration’s most noticeable anti-democratic actions and policies included the blacklisting of citizens who signed a petition asking for recall referendum in 2004 from receiving a number of government services

and working for the government, the illegal use of state resources to fund Chávez's political campaign in 2006 and 2012, the threat of unemployment to state workers in exchange for votes, the elimination of term limits for both the president and other elected officials, sanctions on numerous opposition media outlets, legal restrictions on group protests and the functioning of non-governmental political organizations with foreign funding, packing of the judicial branch with government-friendly judges, violation of human rights of political prisoners, and violation of private property rights (Freedom House 2012; Human Rights Watch 2012; OAS 2009). In terms of human rights more specifically, Human Rights Watch (2012, 1) claims that the deteriorating quality of checks and balances in Venezuelan politics under Chávez created an environment of judicial impunity for a government that had "systematically undermined the right to free expression, workers' freedom of association, and the ability of human rights groups to protect rights."

For many scholars, Chávez's transformation of the Venezuelan political system included clear signs of authoritarianism (Brewer-Carías 2010; De Venanzi 2010; Wilpert 2005; Levitsky and Loxton 2013). According to Ellner (2010b), under the Chávez administration there were a number of important violations to the system of checks and balances that is typical of liberal democracy. These included the replacement of key leadership positions within the government that are supposed to be nonpartisan with politicians loyal to Chávez, such as Supreme Court judges, the attorney general, and the directing board of the National Electoral Council. Additionally, concentration of power in the executive grew exponentially under the Chávez administration (Ellner 2010b; Hidalgo 2009). According to Hidalgo (2009, 79), the degree of accountability in the

Venezuelan political system reached extreme lows as what “would be autonomous institutions [were] instead subordinated to the president and his lieutenants.”

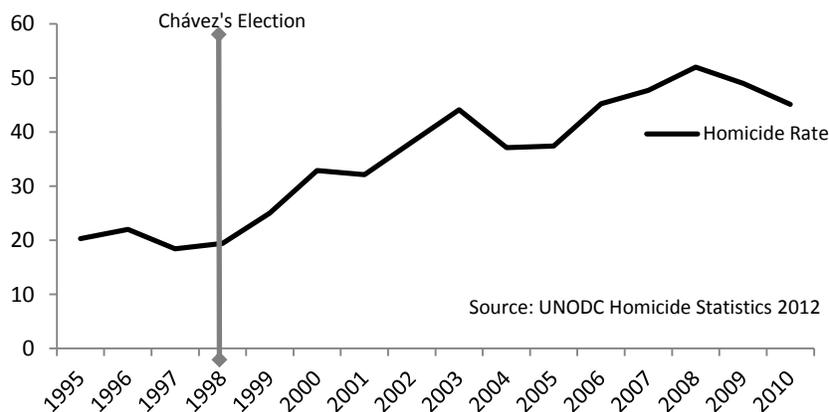
Furthermore, the Venezuelan political system under Chávez adopted a high plebiscitary nature that called into question the possibility of “free and fair” elections. This is because Chávez’s increased controls over the government financial apparatus and the National Electoral Council manifested themselves in the form of campaign finance violations through the use of government revenues to fund campaigns for the president and his allied politicians, the illegal mandatory mobilization of state employees for pro-government rallies and voting turnout, and the use of personal information from the citizens who signed a petition for a recall referendum in 2004 (the Tascón List) to intimidate voters. In fact, these anti-democratic tendencies have led scholars to categorize the Chávez administration under the label of “competitive authoritarianism” (Carrión 2007; Levitsky and Loxton 2013). These types of regimes are defined as “hybrid regimes in which formal democratic institutions are viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbent abuse so skews the playing field that the opposition’s ability to compete is seriously compromised” (Levitsky and Loxton 2013, 2).

The plebiscitary nature of the Chávez administration and the president’s ability to gain control over democratic institutions have been largely attributed to the cult of personality inherent in his charismatic populist political style (De Venanzi 2010; Hawkins 2010b; Wilpert 2005). Indeed, many consider Chávez a prototypical populist leader who signaled the resurgence of a populist wave of Latin American presidents (Schamis 2006; Seligson 2007; Castañeda and Morales 2008; Hawkins 2010b). Chávez embodied the use of fervent and polarizing populist rhetoric aimed at promoting and

defending the implementation of a number of constitutional changes and policies that were aimed at increasing participatory avenues for direct democracy and centralizing political power in the president as the leader of “el pueblo,” or the people. As Hawkins (2010b) explains, although Chavismo as a populist movement claimed a normative democratic agenda, Chávez’s ideology, “bellicose language,” and subsequent political actions in efforts to change the nature of democracy in Venezuela manifested a clear a rejection of political pluralism.

Social deterioration also took other forms under the Chávez administration. Although I mainly focus on the public opinion dynamics of Chávez’s electoral success as related to deteriorating economic and democratic conditions, it should also be noted that under the Chávez administration public safety conditions also suffered acute deterioration. In fact, under Chávez, Venezuela became one of the most dangerous countries in the region and the world in terms of violent crime.

Figure 1.5. Intentional Homicide Rate per 100,000 in Venezuela, 1995-2010



As shown in Figure 1.5, homicide rates steadily increased after 1999, reaching record numbers in 2008, with 52 intentional homicides per 100,000. Yet, these crime rates are often considered a large underestimation of the actual violence faced by Venezuelans during the Chávez regime given that his interior ministry suspended the reporting of official crime rates in 2004 and the press office for the national detective corps was shut down in 2005 (*The Economist* 2012f). In fact, Romero (2010) claimed that Venezuela was a deadlier place than Iraq in 2010 (Romero 2010b). In 2011, the country set a record high in murder rates between 50 and 70 killings per 100,000 people (depending on the source) (*BBC* 2011; *The Economist* 2012e). Understandably, Venezuelans of all socioeconomic and political backgrounds have grown to live in fear of crime. According to survey data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project's (LAPOP) AmericasBarometer, 40 to 50% of Venezuelans felt unsafe during the past six years. Moreover, the majority of Venezuelans have considered crime and security the most important problems in the country between 2006 and 2012 (www.lapopsurveys.org). Indeed the issue of crime is said to have affected Chávez's social programs and became a major concern for the Chávez campaign leading up to the 2012 elections (Watts 2012).

Often described as a growing epidemic (*The Washington Post* 2012), soaring violent crime under the Chávez administration was accompanied by a dramatic increase in ransom and “express” kidnappings (Lopez and Phillips 2011), as well as the presence of organized crime groups involved in drug trafficking (*The Washington Post* 2012), especially of cocaine (Carroll and Campbell 2008; Neuman 2012a). In fact, after the termination of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) operations in

2005 following spying accusations by the Chávez administration, Venezuela was described as acquiring a “central role as a transit point for drug shipments” (Neuman 2012a).

In addition to the growing rate of violent crime under the Chávez administration, Venezuela also suffered from high levels of impunity for both criminals and police officers involved in crimes (Freedom House 2012; Ramsey 2012). According to Freedom House (2012), police and military officials were said to be involved in nearly 20% of crimes, and that most acts of corruption, illegal arrest, torture, and murder go unpunished. To add to the troublesome crime conditions, Venezuela’s prison system remains in shambles. Venezuela’s prisons under Chávez displayed some of the most deplorable inmate living conditions and yearly murder rates in the Americas (Freedom House 2012).

Chávez’s 14-year hold on executive power in Venezuela is both impressive and perplexing. Classic accountability perspectives on voter choice hold that the public rejects incumbents who deliver poor outcomes (Key 1966; Fiorina 1981; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999). While dire political and economic crises during the two-party system that preceded Chávez’s regime resulted in the expected “throwing out” of incumbents as punishment for worsening national conditions, Chávez was able to survive repeated elections when facing somewhat similar circumstances. Although Chávez’s administration achieved some improved performance relative to previous administrations in terms of avoiding radical fluctuations inflation and a high GDP growth in the early 2000s, Venezuela under Chávez exhibited clear signs of economic and democratic deterioration. Given convincing evidence that voters tend to be quite myopic, focusing attention on recent government performance rather than making long-term comparisons

(Achen and Bartels 2004, 2008), it is difficult to argue that narrow episodes of relative progress compared to the past could be the sole reason for Chávez's ability to remain popularly elected for nearly 14 years. Not only does it run counter to the public's inclination with respect to voting decisions, but the task of objectively evaluating Chávez's relative macroeconomic performance in comparison to previous administration in order to make an educated guess about who would provide the best economic outcomes for the future would require an unrealistic degree of cognitive sophistication for the average voter (Achen and Bartels 2004, 2008).

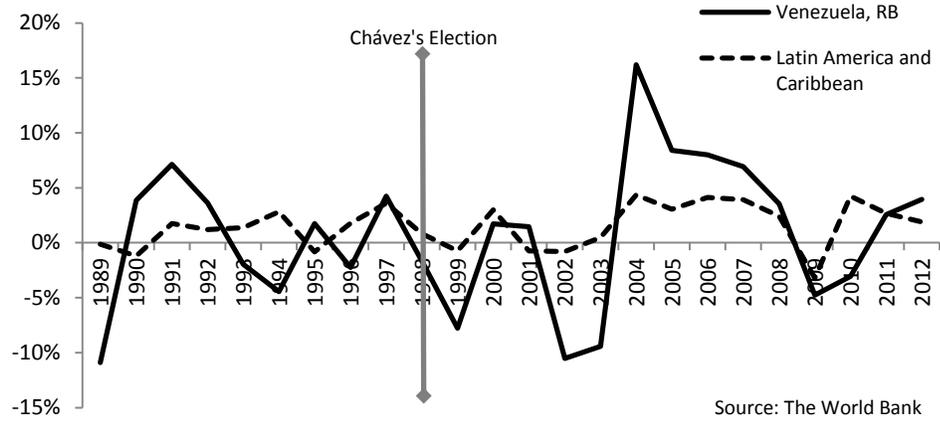
Therefore, despite some signs of positive macroeconomic outcomes relative to past administrations, overall worsening national economic and democratic conditions during the Chávez administration undermined the president's sociopolitical and economic revolutionary objectives. Examples of these worsening conditions include unstable economic growth, oil revenue mismanagement, inflation, food shortages, high murder rates, and deteriorating democratic rights and institutions. In a fashion similar to the turnover of previous administrations, in theory, these troubling circumstances should have led Venezuelan voters to punish a president at the polls, yet Chávez was popularly reelected three times after 1998 and defeated a presidential recall referendum in 2004.

In this dissertation, I aim to investigate what I call the "Chávez Phenomenon": the continued electoral support for president Chávez and his leftist-populist agenda after 1998 in the face of deteriorating economic and democratic in Venezuela. Specifically, I examine who supported Chávez and why, whether Chávez supporters had different policy preferences and/or time horizons than the opposition, the dynamics of socioeconomic and attitudinal characteristics of Chávez supporters and opposition supporters across good

and bad times, and whether Chávez's leftist-populism had a unique effect on public opinion that allowed him to remain in power in the face of significant failures. In the next chapter, I provide a theoretical argument that explains how Chávez's continued electoral success can be attributed to political support he gained and maintained mostly from the lower classes thanks to the achievements of his leftist-populist agenda. I also discuss the observable implications of my argument and outline how the remainder of the dissertation tests my hypotheses.

APPENDIX A

**Appendix 1.1. Average GDP per Capita Growth (% annual)
in Venezuela, 1989-2012**



CHAPTER II

EXPLAINING THE CHÁVEZ PHENOMENON

Hugo Chávez was the product of the demise of a 40-year old pacted Punto Fijo party system that collapsed as a consequence of economic and political legitimacy crises. Although AD and COPEI had once been perceived as the democratic exception of Latin America (Ellner and Tinker Salas 2007) and “an example of democratic success” (Morgan 2007, 80), the parties grew to be viewed as “unrepresentative, elitist and incompetent” (Buxton 2005, 334), especially by the lower classes (Canache 2004). The two-party system’s demise led to a social and economic polarization between the poor and the elite that was unprecedented in Venezuela’s modern political history. The lower classes grew especially discontent with the two-party system given that they were the most severely affected by failed neoliberal reforms, as well as subsequent oil and economic crises (Canache 2004). The public saliency of the socioeconomic and political negligence of previous administrations toward the need and demands of the lower classes paved the way for Chávez’s successful promotion of an anti-establishment, leftist-populist agenda that emphasized the socioeconomic and political inclusion of the poor majority (Roberts 2003; Canache 2004). Chávez achieved electoral success by breaking with previous attempts by AD and COPEI to garner support from across classes by instead targeting lower, marginalized citizens (Cyr 2005).

I argue that Chávez was electorally successful after 1998 despite deteriorating economic and democratic conditions due to the political support he gained and

maintained mostly from the lower classes thanks to the achievements of his leftist-populist agenda. He was able to combine targeted socioeconomically leftist policies with the political appeal of a populist political style to gain and maintain the vote of the poor majority. Chávez was able to provide targeted socioeconomic benefits by implementing a series of policies that improved the living conditions of the poor and also established important clientelistic linkages with the largest socioeconomic sector of Venezuelan society. In addition, Chávez transformed the political arena through a redefinition of the normative purpose of government, as well as the inclusion of previously marginalized (but large) sectors of society into the power play of politics. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss Chávez's leftist-populist agenda and describe the socioeconomic and political benefits that the poor majority gained under the Chávez administration. I then lay out a theoretical argument that provides an explanation for how these socioeconomic and political benefits as well as the appeal of Chávez's ideological message could have translated into Chávez's repeated reelection.

Chávez's Socioeconomic Agenda and the Targeting of the Poor

As the leader of a wave of leftist-populist presidents that swept over Latin America beginning in the early 2000s (Schamis 2006; Seligson 2007; Castañeda and Morales 2008; Hawkins 2010b), Chávez championed policies in favor of increasing “state-intervention in the economic sector, social reforms, and redistribution of wealth to the masses” (Nilsson 2011, 95). Indeed, scholars of Latin American politics have often described Chávez as exemplifying a resurgence of leftist governments in the region,

“characterized by the mobilization of poor voters and a return to the statist economic policies of the region’s populist past” (Lupu 2010, 7). Chávez’s leftist and anti-capitalistic/imperialistic ideology made him a political protégé of Fidel Castro’s Castro-Cuban model. Indeed, according to Urribarri (2008, 174), Chávez’s socioeconomic agenda represented the most “significant presence of the left in Venezuelan political history.” Furthermore, the Bolivarian Revolution and the push for 21st century socialism was a unique phenomenon in Latin America, as Chávez had the advantage of relying on an enormously profitable, even if economically volatile, natural resource like oil (Urribarri 2008).

Policies aimed at increasing the government’s control over major national industries, as well as providing Venezuelans of low socioeconomic status with easier access to economic, educational, and medical resources were pillars of Chávez’s Bolivarian Revolution. Chávez advanced an economic model based on the idea that Venezuela’s economy should become “humanist, self-managing, and competitive” (Cannon 2009, 80). In practice, Chávez’s push for greater economic nationalism through a transformation of the Venezuelan economic system constituted a high degree of state intervention in order to allow for more endogenous economic development that would reduce the country’s dependence on capitalist countries (Cannon 2009; Ellner 2010b; Corrales and Penfold 2011). Chávez’s interventionist efforts for a new economic model were facilitated by a virtually autonomous financial and administrative control of PDVSA, the national oil company, especially after he defeated strike by the opposition that shut down the oil industry in 2002 (Corrales and Penfold 2011).

State intervention under Chávez took two main forms. The first involved the nationalization of key industries such as the Orinoco Oil Belt; SIDOR (Siderúrgica del Orinoco C.A.), the largest Venezuelan steel company; CANTV (Compañía Anónima Nacional de Teléfonos), the largest telephone company; AES-Electricidad de Caracas and CADAFE (Compañía Anónima de Administración y Fomento Eléctrico), two of country's main electric companies; and the Bank of Venezuela (Gott 2008; Ellner 2010b). The second was the sponsorship of non-traditional forms of economic organization like cooperatives (Cannon 2009) that would “challenge oligopolistic control of the economy by opening opportunities for new sources of competition” (Ellner 2010b, 85). One important example in the efforts to achieve this included a series of controversial private land expropriations by the Chávez administration, which were intended to facilitate agriculture development (Gott 2008; Azzelini 2009; Aponte-Moreno and Lattig 2012).

Beyond policy changes that promoted the transformation of Venezuela's economic system, another key feature of Chávez's socioeconomic agenda was wealth redistribution. As mentioned above, Chávez believed that Venezuela's economic model should be “humanist.” Poverty alleviation was then one of the major policy objectives of the Chávez administration. In fact, despite mismanagement of PDVSA and oil revenues that led to poor macroeconomic performance, the Chávez administration was able to enjoy discretionary spending to fund policies that helped reduce the number of Venezuelans living in extreme poverty by half (Weisbrot 2012). According World Bank (2013) data on Venezuela's poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line as percentage

of the population,⁴ while 62.1% of Venezuelan's lived below the national poverty line in 2003, only 31.9% lived in the same conditions by 2011. Furthermore, according to the United Nations Development Programme (2011b), Venezuela's Human Development Index (HDI),⁵ a measure of social and economic development using measures for health, education, and income that ranges from 0 to 1, improved slightly but steadily after 2000, when the country received a score of 0.656, to a 2011 score of 0.735. As of 2011, Venezuela's HDI was slightly above the rest of Latin America (0.732) and almost on par with the HDI of high human development countries (0.742) (UNDP 2011b). As will be explained later in this chapter, Chávez's focus on targeting the living conditions and socioeconomic inclusion of the poor created important voting incentives that fueled his reelections.

After his first reelection in 2000, which followed a significant constitutional reform, Chávez implemented a number of social spending policies targeting the poor as part of his goal to transform Venezuela in a model for 21st century socialism. The constitutional reform of 1999 included a series of amendments that specifically delineated principles of socioeconomic equality. As De Venanzi (2010, 66) states,

⁴ The World Bank (2013) website describes the data as follows, "National poverty rate is the percentage of the population living below the national poverty line. National estimates are based on population-weighted subgroup estimates from household surveys. Global Poverty Working Group. Data are based on World Bank's country poverty assessments and country Poverty Reduction Strategies."

(<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC/countries/VE?display=graph>).

⁵ The UNDP (2011a) describes the HDI as "a new way of measuring development by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income into a composite human development index, the HDI. The breakthrough for the HDI was the creation of a single statistic, which was to serve as a frame of reference for both social and economic development. The HDI sets a minimum and a maximum for each dimension, called goalposts, and then shows where each country stands in relation to these goalposts, expressed as a value between 0 and 1." See <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/hdi/>

“Chapter V and VI of the [1999] Constitution guarantee public health and education for all, the public provision for care for the elderly and the disabled, public access to housing, public access to family planning, public provision of social security, full employment, [and] a dignified wage for all workers”

The best and most expansive examples of Chávez’s leftist redistributive socioeconomic policies aimed at targeting the living conditions of the poor majority in Venezuela were the government’s so-called “Missions.” They began in 2003 as a result of Plan Bolívar 2000, the first of Chávez’s social assistance programs that used military funds, equipment, and personnel to increase infrastructure quality in poor areas, and were funded directly from the revenues of PDVSA. The Missions were created primarily to target poverty alleviation by providing easier access to resources for healthcare (Misión Barrio Adentro), literacy (Misión Robinson), primary, secondary, and university education (Misión Robinson II, Misión Sucre, and Misión Ribas, respectively), subsidized food (Misión Mercal), vocational training (Misión Vuelvan Caras/Ché Guevara), identification cards, (Misión Identidad), and housing (Misión Habitat) (Penfold-Becerra 2007; Gott 2008; Hawkins 2010b).

True to the leftist policy positions of the Chávez administration, the Missions were efforts toward “endogenous development” and higher state involvement in local socioeconomic governance (Hawkins 2010b). The ability of Chávez and his administration to target Mission benefits to the poor was due to Chávez’s discretionary control over oil revenues (Penfold-Becerra 2007; Corrales and Penfold 2007; Hawkins 2010b). Missions were set to be financed by what Penfold-Becerra (2007, 65) describes as “opaque and nonbudgetary mechanisms” that allowed Chávez’s direct and unchecked access for transferring oil revenues from PDVSA into a special presidential discretionary fund. Only one year after its inauguration in 2003, the Missions initiative received over 5

billion dollars in funding, which amounted to approximately 4.5% of GDP that year (Penfold-Becerra 2007). According to Hawkins (2010b, 199), the Missions initiatives were “the best-financed of any of the new social programs of the Bolivarian Revolution and one of the most significant poverty alleviation programs in Latin America over the past two decades.”

Chávez’s Populist Definition of Democracy and Agenda for Political Inclusion

The political success of Chávez as a leftist-populist president, and hence why he is labeled as such, is not only due to his endorsement and implementation of leftist socioeconomic policies, but also his populist rhetoric and governing style. Chávez used his charismatic qualities to advance a political agenda based on the push for the institutional and social transformation of Venezuelan democracy in favor of the inclusion of the previously marginalized poor. Moreover, Chávez also used his charismatic appeal for self-promotion as the leader of a revolutionary movement that embodied and protected the will of the Venezuelan people.

Chávez’s use of charisma and the nature of his political rhetoric, in particular his normative conceptualization of participatory democracy, are typical of populist leaders (Canovan 1999; Abts and Rummens 2007; Barr 2009; Deiwiks 2009; Hawkins 2010b). The foundation of populism as a political style is the rhetorical promotion of a political ideology that endorses an “us versus them” mentality that places “el pueblo,” which populists refer to as the “us,” against the established political and economic elite, or

“them” (Hawkins 2010b).⁶ Populist leaders, like Chávez, encourage a normative institutional and social transformation of the political system by redefining the ideological meaning and purpose of democracy. They emphasize this “us versus them” concept in attempts to redefine politics into a participatory, or direct, type of democracy in which citizens are promised a shift of the traditional political elites’ institutional power inherent in a representative democracy (Hawkins 2010b). “El pueblo” is promised influence in governance through a more personal political relationship with leaders’ political decisions, especially with the president.

As exemplified by Chávez’s popularity, successful populist leaders aim to accomplish this direct relationship with the people by exploiting their charismatic appeal through a political discourse that constantly places themselves front and center by claiming that they embody el pueblo and protect the will of the people (Canovan 1999; Abts and Rummens 2007; Barr 2009; Deiwiiks 2009; Hawkins 2010b). According to Hawkins (2010b, 29), Chavismo was indeed based on a populist worldview, a particular moralistic ideology, or “Manichean outlook that identifies Good with a unified will of the people and Evil with a conspiring minority”. In Venezuela, Chávez successfully created a divided, “us versus them” political environment by targeting the traditional “political class” as the enemy (Weyland 1996). He continuously expressed his disdain for the oligarchy of Venezuela’s previous party system, criticizing them as exclusionary and

⁶ It should be noted that the definition of populism has been the focus of much debate among political scientists and sociologists. Scholars have also defined populism as a political strategy (Weyland 2001), an ideology (Koen and Rummens 2007), a political movement (Roberts 2006; Barr 2009), a political experiment (Frei and Kaltwasser 2008), or a form of political identification (Panizza 2008). Furthermore, scholars have also defined populism in Latin America specifically, based on the economic circumstances and policies, and the nature of the constituencies under which populist leader came to power. To this end, scholars have identified three main waves of populist movement in the region (De la Torre 2007): classical, neopopulist, and Chávez-related socialist populism.

corrupt, and pinning them against the “true” will of the Venezuela people (Hawkins 2010b). Chávez exploited his charismatic appeal and contentious populist political discourse to define himself as the embodiment of the will of the Venezuelan people against the corrupt elite. By doing this, he popularized the concept of a more personal political relationship between the president and “el pueblo.”

Chávez’s Bolivarian Revolution and quest for 21st century socialism had as one of its primary missions the redefinition of Venezuelan democracy toward a political system that was more participatory, and one which favored the representation of previously marginalized voters (Hawkins 2010b). To this end, Chávez used his contentious populist political ideology and discourse to justify executive command over the institutional structure of a direct and participatory. Contrary to the principles of representative democracy, Chávez also aimed to facilitate a personal relationship between himself and the people as the answer to defeating the corrupt and self-interested nature of established political elites associated with the Punto Fijo party system. Hence, this normative view of the purpose of democracy placed Chávez’s populist rhetoric and institutional efforts at odds with a more liberal, pluralist understanding of democracy, which encourages and accepts institutionalized debate of opposing political opinions (Hawkins 2010b).

Nevertheless, Chávez’s normative institutional transformation of the Venezuelan democratic system led to an unprecedented sociopolitical transformation of Venezuelan politics into a more participatory, even if less pluralistic, political structure. Chávez’s Bolivarian Revolution seems to be a true illustration of Oxhorn’s (1998, 221) claim that populism “has been the predominant political form of mass-based political mobilization in Latin America.” Chavismo employed what De la Torre (1997, 2007) argues is Latin

American populism's engine of political success: the provision of new avenues of political expression and political participation for previously excluded groups, usually belonging to lower socio-economic classes, providing motivation and clientelistic modes of organization and mobilization. Although Chavismo was quite "resistant to institutionalization", it was "grounded in a much higher level of grass-roots partisan and extrapartisan organization" compared to the public organizational patterns of similar regimes like the one under Alberto Fujimori in Peru (Roberts 2006, 141).

Over the course of 14 years in power, Chávez implemented a number of structural changes and policies that were aimed at transforming the Venezuelan political system into a more direct, or participatory, type of democracy that adhered to the populist normative in favor of greater inclusion of the poor and a closer relationship between the president and the people. The political foundation of these changes was based on a new constitution ratified in 1999, which included numerous measures aimed at the construction of a more inclusionary political system (Álvarez 2003; Canache 2007; De Venanzi 2010; Irazabal and Foley 2010; García-Guadilla and Álvarez 2011; Ellner 2010a). Specifically, the 1999 Constitution aimed at "the construction of citizenship where social rights are universal, and...the rescue of public space as the site upon which to build a participatory democracy" (De Venanzi 2010, 66). In fact, the preamble of the 1999 Constitution introduced a new definition for the Venezuelan political system as a "democratic, participatory and protagonist society" (Canache 2007). Article 62 of the new constitution was unprecedented in establishing the idea that it was the responsibility and duty of the government to provide the citizenry with the necessary tools and

conditions for successful participation in public spaces, especially at the community level (Irazabal and Foley 2010; Álvarez and García-Guadilla 2011).

Some important examples of Chávez's populist efforts to transform Venezuela into a participatory form of democracy by increasing popular mobilization and organization include identification and electoral registration Missions, the Bolivarian Circles, Community Councils, Health Committees, Urban Land Committees, and the creation of the Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) (Penfold-Becerra 2007; Gott 2008; Handlin 2008; Maloney-Risner 2009; Ellner 2010a, 2010b; Hawkins 2010a). As mentioned in the previous section, *Misión Identidad* was launched in barrios, or shantytowns, to provide poor citizens with the ability to simultaneously acquire an identity card and register in the national electoral database (Penfold-Becerra 2007). As a consequence, Venezuela's poor participated in unprecedented amounts numbers in subsequent presidential elections and political organization (Ellner 2010b).

Founded in 2001, the Bolivarian Circles (*Círculos Bolivarianos*) were the first example of voluntary associations aimed at providing avenues to promote and protect both community interest and the defense of the Bolivarian revolution. By 2008, the Bolivarian Circles had over two million participants (Hawkins 2010a). Similarly, the Community Councils (*Consejos Comunales*) were created in 2005 to serve as neighborhood associations to facilitate the "consolidation and administration of community development projects and municipal governance" (Hawkins 2010a, 52). In fact, the Community Councils were the most successful of the participatory initiatives under Chávez as they grew to nearly 18,000 and were able to mobilize and organize eight million participants by 2008, three times as many participants as the Bolivarian Circles

(Hawkins 2010a; Handlin 2012). Furthermore, they were considered a semi-official form of local government that received billions of dollars in grants to carry out other participatory and Mission initiatives (Gott 2008; Hawkins 2010a).

One of the most important efforts toward attempting to continue the inclusionary political agenda of the Chávez administration was the creation of the PSUV in 2007 (Maloney-Risner 2009). As a successor of the MVR (the leftist party Movimiento Quinta República), which was broken up in late 2006, the PSUV included leftist political parties that had supported Chávez in previous years (Handlin 2012). The creation of the PSUV represented the continued politicization of the party system along class cleavages (Handlin 2012) and it became the official political entity endorsing Chávez's 21st century socialism (López Maya 2008; Maloney-Risner 2009).

Other notable initiatives by the Chávez administration in establishing forms of participatory democracy included the Health Committees and Urban Land Committees (Hawkins 2010a). Health Committees (Comités de Salud) were created in 2003 to provide administrative support to the Misión Barrio Adentro clinics, and grew rapidly to approximately 6,500 committees by 2008 (Hawkins 2010a). Urban Land Committees (Comités de Tierra Urbana) were created in 2003 to help provide over two million residents of barrios legal ownership of the land they lived on (Hawkins 2010a).

Chávez's populist discourse and policies aimed at creating a more direct, participatory and protagonist democracy empowered and gave the poor majority a greater sense of identity and conviction that incentivized them to vote for Chávez in 2000, 2006, and 2012. As explained by Ellner (2010b, 81),

“The key role of popular mobilization in the Chavista political strategy and Chávez’s discourse emphasizing the ‘protagonist’ role of the people as spelled out in the 1999 constitution have contributed to a sense of empowerment among those who for decades had been largely excluded from decision making.”

The participatory initiatives of the Chávez administration were particularly successful in including and mobilizing women, the poor, and less educated, all traditionally politically marginalized sectors of Venezuelan society (Hawkins 2010a). According to Zúquete (2008, 102-104), by doing this Chávez empowered his followers by allowing them to feel that they were “part of a mission”, or “collective popular cause”. The goal of this mission was to create a participatory democracy that was more inclusive of the poor sector of Venezuelan society by encouraging citizen mobilization.

Translating the Targeted Socioeconomic and Political Benefits and Ideological Appeals of Chávez’s Leftist-Populist Agenda into Mechanisms for Electoral Success

*“Like never before:
Achievements and benefits for the people!
Defend your conquests
Vote for Chávez, Again!”
- Sign held at a Chavista political rally⁷*

Chávez’s ability to complement socioeconomically leftist policies with the appeal of a populist political style allowed him to be electorally successful by securing and maintaining votes that came especially from the poor majority in Venezuela. As a consequence of both the socioeconomic benefits the lower classes received through policies and clientelistic exchanges, the political benefits they experienced thanks to a more inclusive political system, and the resonating appeal of Chávez’s leftist-populist ideology, Chávez helped create a political decision-making incentive structure that led

⁷ Translated from a photograph originally printed in Ellner and Tinker Salas’ (2007) book, *Venezuela: Hugo Chávez and the Decline of an “Exceptional Democracy”* (See Appendix 2.1).

the poor majority to see it as beneficial to continue to vote for Chávez. As a result, and despite objective national signs of economic and democratic crises in Venezuela, the cost-benefit analysis of reelecting Chávez was more positive for the poor majority, who are argued to have made up most of Chávez's support base. As Hawkins (2010b, 45) explains, "Chavismo originally appealed to Venezuelans who had suffered under 15 years of economic stagnation, and it continue[d] to appeal to poor Venezuelans who benefit[ed] from the government's new social policies and general environment of oil-induced economic growth."

The main argument that I propose in this dissertation is that Chávez was able to secure the political favor of the lower classes in Venezuela thanks to the success of his leftist-populist agenda. Chávez combined socioeconomically leftist policies with a populist political style to induce radical economic, social, and political change in favor of the interests of the poor majority. In this way, Chávez supporters, particularly the poor who were the driving force of Chávez's electoral success, adopted a different voting calculus in favor of reelecting Chávez compared to opposition sympathizers. At first glance, possible differences between Chávez supporters and non-supporters as related to their different voting calculi could seemingly be attributed to the corresponding feelings toward the political system that winners and losers experience following presidential elections (Anderson and Tverdova 2001). According to (Anderson and Tverdova 2001, 321), "people's status as part of the political majority (winners or political minority (losers) affects their attitudes toward government and political institutions." Specifically, citizens who are part of the voting majority tend to have more positive evaluations of the government, and hence would be more likely to reelect the party or candidate in office,

while those in the minority will have more negative evaluations of the government and be less likely to provide incumbents with their vote. Hence, it is conceivable to explain the Chávez phenomenon by applying the winners and losers argument, where Chávez supporters, or the “winners,” evaluated Chávez’s incumbent governments’ economic, social, and political performance in a much more positive light in comparison to the country’s electoral “losers,” and therefore were more inclined to keep voting him into office. However, the Chávez phenomenon does not just entail politics as usual as suggested by the winners and losers in politics argument. The winners and losers explanation is unsatisfactory because, as Anderson and Tverdova (2001, 335) recognize, despite the strong winner-loser effects on government performance evaluations, there is still no identified mechanism that can theoretically explain “what precisely it is about being in the majority or being a winner that drives attitudes toward government.”

Another possible explanation for Chávez’s political survivability in the face of economic and democratic crisis is his undeniable charisma and its effect on government performance attitudes of supporters (Merolla and Zechmeister 2011). According to Merolla and Zechmeister (2011, 30), charismatic leaders are more likely to be “left unscathed by poor performance as individuals eschew negative reports to protect the image of their presumably heroic hero.” In fact, these scholars show that although the politically protective effect of charisma tends to fade in the long-term, survey data from 2007 shows that Chávez’s charismatic appeal did indeed shield him from criticism from his supporters, as those Venezuelans who perceived Chávez as being charismatic tended to have more positive perceptions of the country’s economic and security conditions. The argument and evidence regarding Chávez’s charismatic advantage are convincing; yet,

they only partially explain Chávez's ability to remain in power despite long-term deterioration of Venezuela's economic and democratic conditions. Beyond the protective effect that charisma gave Chávez in elections when faced with troubling national conditions, Chávez successfully promoted and implemented a leftist-populist agenda that, by providing targeted socioeconomic and political benefits to members of the lower classes, helped create a political decision-making incentive structure that incentivized his core supporters to keep pledging their allegiance to Chávez at the polls. That said, a "charismatic linkage" between a leader's skillful ability to use his personality traits to provide convincing promises of better policies and citizens' affective attachments to such leaders (Kitschelt 2000), certainly facilitated the popular success of Chávez's ideology, but rather than charisma by itself, it is also the material and political self-interest incentives that kept the poor majority voting for him.

Hence, explaining Chávez's reelections in the face of crises requires a more nuanced theoretical argument that goes beyond winners, losers, and charisma. A more comprehensive explanation of the electoral survivability of Chávez in the face of deteriorating economic and democratic conditions in Venezuela ought to be based on a broader understanding of attitudinal individual-level factors that influenced the voting calculi of Chávez's electoral base. I argue that Venezuelans' individual-level attitudinal characteristics were shaped by the appeal of a leftist-populist agenda that provided targeted socioeconomic and political benefits, which in turn influenced the reward/punishment behaviors toward Chávez in the voting calculi of citizens. According to Anderson (2007, 278), "principals/voters may fail to impose negative sanctions on the agents/representatives...because of the characteristics of the voters (the individual

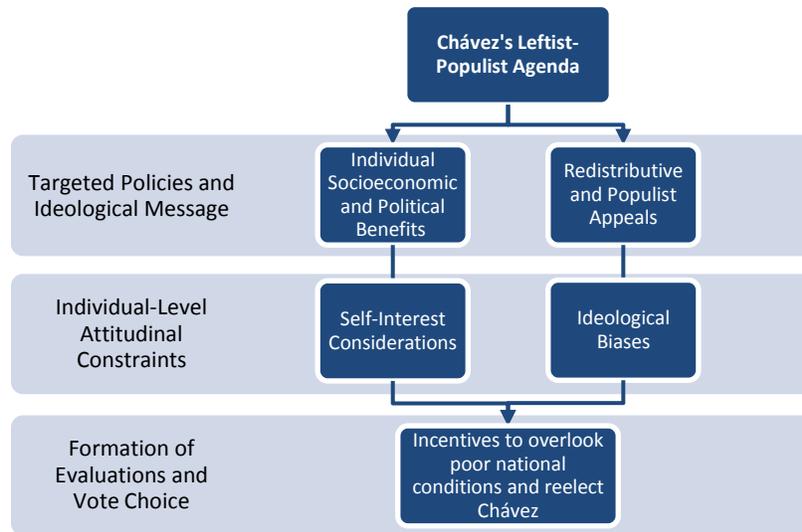
constraints on economic voting)”. Indeed, the economic voting literature has shown an important evolution in demonstrating how individual-level attitudinal differences result in heterogeneous economic voting behavior (Duch, Palmer, and Anderson 2000; Anderson 2007; Healy and Malhotra 2013). This means that individual-level attitudes can mitigate the accountability mechanisms of the reward-punishment model that constitutes economic voting. In other words, the accountability function of economic voting can be compromised by the impact of individual-level attitudinal biases that shape both economic evaluations and blame attributions (Anderson 2007).

I argue that Chávez was reelected more times than is consistent with classic retrospective voting theories despite his poor performance as a product of the socioeconomic and political policy benefits, as well as a compelling ideological message that led many to be unwilling to perceive poor performance at the national level. As discussed above, these benefits and ideology were especially designed to reach and appeal to the poor through inclusionary and redistributive leftist-populist policies such as Missions and Communal Councils. And indeed, this dissertation shows that the poor not only voted to reelect Chávez at greater levels than their wealthier counterparts, but they were also the most likely to both benefit from Chávez’s inclusionary policies and also adhere to his ideology. Thus, in these ways, the poor are the drivers of connections between Chávez’s leftist-populist agenda, public opinion, and reelection support for Chávez.

To explain the incentives that motivated voters to reelect Chávez, I argue that there are two (non-mutually exclusive) ways that the benefits and appeals of Chávez’s leftist-populist agenda prioritized individual-level attitudinal constraints that could have

shaped the political decision-making of Chávez's electoral base. Figure 2.1 illustrates these two lines of argument.

Figure 2.1. The Relationship among Chávez's Leftist-Populist Agenda, Individual-level Attitudinal Constraints, and Incentives for Reelecting Chávez



As displayed in Figure 2.1 the targeted socioeconomic and political benefits of Chávez's policies, on the one hand, could have prioritized *self-interest considerations* in his political base's choice to reelect Chávez. That is, Chávez sympathizers, particularly the targeted poor, could have chosen to reelect him because they had greater self-interest-based incentives for protecting their newly gained socioeconomic and political benefits than sympathizers of other presidential candidates. On the other hand, the ideological appeal of Chávez's leftist-populist political agenda for his electoral base and beneficiaries of targeted policies could have also acted as an individual-level attitudinal constraint that then biased his followers' economic and government performance evaluations and hence

significantly reduced their willingness to vote against Chávez. In the next two sections, I address these two lines of argument in more detail.

The Role of Voter Self-Interest

Considering the socioeconomic and political gains that the Venezuelan poor experienced from the initiatives of the Chávez administration, it is possible to understand how despite deteriorating national conditions, beneficiaries of such socioeconomic and politically inclusionary policies as described above had enough reason to continue voting for Chávez. Steady increases in social spending, mainly thanks to Chávez's control over oil rents and the boom of oil prices during his tenure in office, allowed his administration to provide the Venezuelan poor with easier and better access to basic material needs and political resources. Beyond aiming to increase socioeconomic and political inclusion of previously marginalized Venezuelans, these efforts also served as a major electoral strategy of the Chávez administration. The implementation of targeted socioeconomic policies, such as the Missions and Communal Councils, allowed Chávez to establish key clientelistic linkages with poor sectors of the Venezuelan population. According to Penfold-Becerra (2007, 65), beyond providing much needed wealth redistribution and a political voice to the poor majority in Venezuela, initiatives like the Missions and the Communal Councils allowed Chávez to both,

“consolidate electoral and political support among a group of poor voters previously excluded from the political and economic realm; it also helped to create a new constituency that has become an important part of his social coalition and has helped to strengthen his political movement.”

Scholars have shown that politicians like Chávez, especially in Latin America, have successfully employed this “portfolio diversification approach” to using public

spending as electoral strategy to establish successful clientelistic linkages that can secure political support and electoral victory (Magaloni, Díaz-Cayeros, and Estévez 2007). Clientelistic linkages, in contrast to programmatic linkages in which there is an indirect distribution of benefits to voters regardless of party affiliation through the implementation public policies, involve “selective material incentives in networks of direct exchange” (Kitschelt 2000, 845) between politicians and (potential) voters. While the establishment of programmatic party linkages between voters and politicians are efforts of “interest aggregation and program formation” (Kitschelt 2000, 849), clientelistic linkages on the other hand, tend to involve the creation of an “administrative-technical infrastructure” that facilitates strong reciprocal and accountable relationships between politicians and their supporters that “constitutes a logic of exchange with asymmetric but mutually beneficial and open-ended transactions” (Kitschelt 2000, 849). The reciprocal, or contingent, nature of clientelistic linkages are particularly defining when discussing clientelism because, according to Hicken (2011, 291),

“Politicians supply benefits only to individuals or groups that support or promise to support the politician. Likewise, the client supports on that politician who delivers, or promises to deliver, a valued benefit in return for the client’s electoral support.”

Thanks to the financial and strategic ability of Chávez to target the poor with social aid initiatives and politically inclusionary programs, he was able to establish reciprocal and politically loyal relationships with the largest segment of the Venezuelan population. The targeted delivery of social aid, like that provided by the Missions, for example, as a material incentive in exchange for political support is a common feature of clientelistic linkages (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007), especially when used to target the poor (Kitschelt 2000; Keefer and Khemani 2005; Weitz-Shapiro 2009). Chávez’s use of

targeted socioeconomic and political benefits speaks to how the successful use of delivered goods for clientelistic purposes depends on financial control over good delivery and the ability to identify groups that have or will provide political support in exchange according to (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Corrales and Penfold 2007). Chávez's targeting of the poor, specifically, is common practice in the exercise of clientelism (Weitz-Shapiro 2009). In fact, Handlin (2008) labels Chávez's political strategy as "affiliated associationalism," in which sociopolitical organizations are created by disproportionately targeting popular sectors of society. As explained by Penfold-Becerra (2007, 65), Chávez was able to build a strong and persistent political basis within the poor and previously marginalized in Venezuela, because programs like the Missions and Communal Councils were both "subject to political manipulation (to 'buy votes'), and they [also] allowed for a direct distribution of oil rents to the low-income population."

The record influx of oil revenues during the Chávez administration gave the president unparalleled opportunities and autonomy over funding and targeting social spending programs (Penfold-Becerra 2007; Corrales and Penfold 2007; Hawkins 2010b). According to Penfold-Becerra (2007), Chávez's unchecked control over PDVSA and the social spending budget allowed him to invest over 5 billion dollars into the Missions programs, for example, only one year after their inception. Indeed, Chávez's discretionary and unchecked control over the creation, distribution, and maintenance of the Missions programs, Bolivarian Circles, and Communal Councils are common features of clientelistic linkages (Kinchella and Wilkinson 2007).

The socioeconomic and political benefits that Chávez was able to give to the Venezuelan poor are also a good example of a populist's "ability to appeal to lower class-

needs, frustrations, and even aspirations” (Oxhorn 1998, 224). In this way, not only did Chávez help to raise the living standards of the Venezuelan poor, but he was able to incentivize core supporters to reelect him by increasing the weight, or priority, given to material and political self-interest in voting considerations. As Roberts (2002, 2) explains, “the stunning rise of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela left little doubt that even more traditional expressions of populism retained a capacity to mobilize the political and economic discontents of the masses in contemporary Latin America.” Following an economic crisis that was the result of the failures of neoliberal reforms and sharp drops in oils prices in the 1980s and 1990s, the lower classes grew discontent with the ruling elite. Chávez was able to tap into these feelings of frustration and discontent of the poor, who were too often political and economically marginalized, by targeting their poor living standards with both the numerous socioeconomic benefits of Mission initiatives and clientelistic exchanges, and also the political benefits of inclusionary, participatory, and organizational political initiatives. These individual-level material and political incentives are keys to “ensuring electoral allegiance” for populist’s targeted lower classes like Chávez (Oxhorn 1998, 224). Hence, according to Weisbrot (2012), “it should not be surprising that most Venezuelans would reelect a president who has improved their living standards.” Plainly but accurately stated by *The Economist* (2012a) prior to Chávez’s death, the Venezuelan poor majority

“like him for his charisma, humble background and demotic speech. They trust him to act in their interests. His years in power have coincided with a sustained surge in the price of oil, Venezuela’s main export, providing a windfall which he has used for wage increases and social programmes.”

In this way, Chávez supporters chose to reelect him because they had greater self-interest-based (material and political) incentives than supporters of other presidential

candidates to do so. What makes the Chávez case unique is that his strategic targeting of the poor allowed him to create a loyal electoral base even in the face of deteriorating economic and democratic national conditions. The unprecedented socioeconomic and political benefits provided by policy initiatives like the Missions, Bolivarian Circles, and Communal Councils prioritized strong self-interest motivations that incentivized participants, particularly members of the lower socioeconomic classes to want to keep Chávez in office despite troublesome national conditions. That is, the socioeconomic and political benefits of Chávez's inclusionary initiatives increased the influence of self-interest in the voting calculus of voters toward Chávez. Indeed, voters belonging to low socioeconomic strata have been argued to have shorter time horizons that would lead them to prioritize support for politicians who satisfy their immediate material, and perhaps even political, needs over longer-term policy initiatives (Kitschelt 2000; Keefer and Khemani 2005; Weitz-Shapiro 2009).

By continuing to vote for Chávez and his party, the poor majority seems to have prioritized the protection of their political voice and newly gained inclusionary socioeconomic and political benefits over deteriorating national conditions. For the poor, a vote for Chávez not only meant a vote for the continuation of social aid since programs like the Missions, but also a vote in favor of safeguarding their new status within the political system. The continued political appeal and success of Chavismo was then not only due to its ability to "satisfy the material self-interest of Venezuelans, but also in its credible moral message" (Hawkins 2010b, 46), a message that condemned the corruption of Venezuela's previous party system and called for a revolutionary transformation of the democratic structure of the country in favor of the true interests of "el pueblo."

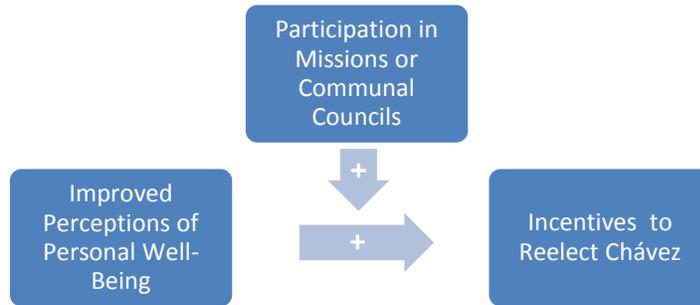
To further explain the relationship among individual benefits from Chávez's initiatives, self-interest considerations, and vote choice illustrated in Figure 2.1, I argue that there are two possible ways in which Chávez's socioeconomic and political initiatives may have served to influence the role of self-interest as an individual-level attitudinal motivation mechanism for choosing to reelect Chávez. Figures 2.2 and 2.3 illustrate these two possible forms of political preference formation for beneficiaries of Chávez's socioeconomic and political initiatives.

Figure 2.2. A Mediating Relationship among Participation in Chávez's Socioeconomic or Political Initiatives, Perceptions of Personal Well-Being, and Vote Choice



Figure 2.2 shows one way participation in Chávez's initiatives could have influenced vote choice for beneficiaries. Participation in these initiatives could have had a positive impact on perceptions of personal well-being as a consequence of experiencing significant individual socioeconomic benefits, such as healthcare and education through Chávez's Missions, and/or individual political benefits, such as more accessible ways to voice political needs and opinions through Communal Councils. In turn, the desire to protect self-interest in terms of easier access to material needs and a more inclusionary status in the political system could have motivated beneficiaries of Chávez's initiatives to be more likely than non-beneficiaries to continuously support the president at the polls.

Figure 2.3. A Moderating Relationship among Participation in Chávez’s Socioeconomic or Political Initiatives, Perceptions of Personal Well-Being, and Vote Choice



Alternatively, as shown in Figure 2.3, participation in Missions and Communal Councils could have acted as a moderating factor for the relationship between self-interest considerations, such as perceptions of personal well-being, and vote choice. That is, participating and benefiting from these initiatives increased the relevance of self-interest consideration on vote choice.

These arguments run contrary to a large field of literature that presents evidence against the claim that self-interest, especially economic self-interest (i.e. pocketbook or egocentric voting) greatly affects vote choice (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Feldman 1982; Kramer 1983; Markus 1988; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000). However, most of the scholarship that negates the role of self-interest in voting and insists that retrospective sociotropic evaluations dominate political decision-making is based on the behavior of citizens in highly developed countries, particularly the United States (Anderson 2007; Healy and Malhotra 2013; Singer and Carlin 2013). This makes it difficult to generalize to socioeconomic and political contexts of countries like Venezuela that are much different than the United States. Indeed, comparative studies have subsequently produced less convincing evidence against the role of self-interest on the vote. For example, Singer and Carlin (2013) use survey data on vote intentions in Latin America from 1995 to 2009

to show that citizens in less-developed countries are more likely than citizens in developed countries to base their vote choices on evaluations of personal well-being.

Furthermore, scholars have shown that there are particular circumstances under which self-interest can and does play an important role in shaping citizens' political preferences. First, citizens are more likely to vote on their self-interest when "their stakes in [a] policy are clear" (Chong, Citrin, and Conley 2001, 541). Young, Borgida, Sullivan, and Aldrich (1987) proposed something similar by arguing that issues at stake in an election that are high in priority on a voter's "personal agenda" display a strong relationship between self-interest and vote choice. Second, self-interest plays a significant role in political decision-making when people "have been primed to think about the personal costs or benefits of a policy" (Chong et al. 2001, 541). Young, Thomsen, Borgida, Sullivan and Aldrich (1991) agree as they show that priming subjects about how their well-being is affected by a policy makes self-interest consideration more cognitively accessible when making political decisions like voting. Third, self-interest matters more for voting when political decisions are made in the context of the near future, such a forthcoming election (Hunt, Kim, Borgida, and Chaiken 2010). Lastly, and as mentioned above, Singer and Carlin (2013) demonstrate that voters in less developed countries are more likely than those in wealthy, more developed countries to rely on their self-interest when forming political preferences.

The Venezuelan case under Chávez displays key contextual characteristics that justify taking seriously the importance of self-interest consideration in citizens' decision to vote for Chávez. First of all, Venezuela fits into the underdeveloped context in which Singer and Carlin (2013) argue that self-interest considerations tend to play a significant

role in forming political preferences like vote choice. Second, Chávez's targeted socioeconomic and political initiatives were particularly exemplary of the type of clientelistic tactics in Latin America used to target the poor, who are argued to have shorter time horizons in the political decision-making as they place higher value on receiving immediate material benefits in comparison to longer-term policy reforms (Kitschelt 2000; Keefer and Khemani 2005; Weitz-Shapiro 2009; Singer and Carlin 2013). In general, the poor are argued to place greater emphasis on their pocketbook when voting as a consequence of underdeveloped socioeconomic context in which they are both the common targets of clientelistic strategies, and also have the least amount of resources to cope with economic volatility (Singer and Carlin 2013). Hence, it is conceivable that Chávez's targeted socioeconomic and political initiatives not only succeeded in tapping into the poor's myopic political decision-making, but it also bolstered the electoral support of his political base even when Venezuela as a country was experiencing worrisome economic and democratic deterioration.

Third, self-interest becomes an important influence on the formation of political preferences when leaders like Chávez make problems such as the need for socioeconomic and political inclusion of the poor highly salient issues for the political landscape (Chong et al. 2001). By highlighting the socioeconomic benefits of Missions and political benefits of Communal Councils through his policy agenda and discourse, Chávez underscored the high stakes involved if he were voted out of office. As Chong et al. (2001, 541) show, and as is noted above, citizens are more likely to vote on their self-interest when "their stakes in [a] policy are clear". Chávez's priming of the need for "the people's" socioeconomic and political inclusion and provision of greater avenues of

socioeconomic and political participation made the protection of these targeted benefits of mobilization and organization a key priority of the poor majority's "personal agenda" (Young et al. 1987). Therefore, the need for socioeconomic inclusion and the continuation of programs like the Missions became highly cognitively accessible issues in the minds of program beneficiaries. This type of cognitive accessibility in the realm of political decision-making is said to increase the importance of self-interest considerations (Young et al. 1987). Finally, the high number of occasions in which Chávez's presidency was at stake after 1998 (2000, 2004, 2006, 2012) provided repeated circumstances in which voting decisions were made in the context of the near future. As shown by Hunt et al. (2010) self-interest matters more for voting when political decisions are made in the context of the near future, such as a forthcoming election. The constant "near future" context under which Venezuelan voters were forced to think about presidential elections also ensured the political saliency of the unprecedented socioeconomic and political benefits for the poor majority under Chávez.

While I argue that socioeconomic benefits affected the influence of material, or economic, self-interest in the voting calculus of the supporters toward Chávez, political benefits are similarly argued to have prioritized the importance of political self-interest for Venezuelans voting considerations. By continuing to vote for Chávez and his party, beneficiaries of Chávez's initiatives sought to protect their self-interest in terms of newly gained socioeconomic *and* political benefits. This makes sense since benefits provided through Mission and Communal Councils, for example, were explicitly linked to Chávez and his party (Wilpert 2005; Penfold-Becerra 2007; Hawkins 2010a). According to Hawkins (2010a, 37), "Chávez's charismatic authority [was] an omnipresent source of

identity and motivation among participants, and many of these organizations mimic (or wholeheartedly endorse) the party line of government.” Hence, voting for Chávez and his party represented a vote for the continuation of the inclusionary socioeconomic and political benefits that were tied to them. Since poor Venezuelans were the main targets of initiatives like the Missions and Communal Councils, and indeed this dissertation shows that the poor were the greatest beneficiaries of these programs, I argue that the poor were the key drivers of the connections between Chávez’s targeted socioeconomic and political initiatives, public opinion, and support for Chávez’s reelection. Voting to keep Chávez in office can be argued to have represented a means of political expression that allowed members of lower classes to voice their socioeconomic and political needs.

The Ideological Appeal of Chávez’s Leftist-Populist Agenda

Beyond self-interest, my second line of argument (illustrated in Figure 2.1) is that the adoption of Chávez’s leftist-populist political ideology could have also served as an individual-level attitudinal constraint on the willingness of Chávez’s electoral base to vote against Chávez. Chávez’s message is likely to have resonated most strongly with the poor majority as the president used his rhetorical appeal and policy initiatives to target their needs. As shown in Figure 2.1, this ideological affinity to Chávez’s leftist-populist message incentivized his electoral base and beneficiaries of socioeconomic and political inclusion programs to form biased evaluations of national economic and democratic conditions. These biased national performance evaluations then incentivized voters, particularly the poor, who were the driving force of Chávez’s electoral success, to keep reelecting him as president.

Chávez's political ideology constituted two features that are important for understanding the possible formation of the individual-level attitudinal biases of his political base and their influence on voting decisions. First, Chávez promoted a populist definition of democracy that strongly resonated with Venezuela's poor majority as it emphasized a strong relationship between the president and the masses, as well as the political inclusion of historically marginalized sectors of the population. Second, Chávez successfully advanced the idea of an increased role of the state in managing Venezuela's economy and welfare redistribution system.

As explained above, populist leaders, like Chávez, encourage a normative institutional and social transformation of the political system by redefining the ideological meaning and purpose of democracy. Chávez is a quintessential example of a populist leader who aimed at redefining politics toward a participatory, or direct, type of democracy in which citizens are promised a shift, or diffusion, of the traditional political elites' institutional power in favor of voters (Hawkins 2010b). Chávez's populist discourse and policies aimed at creating a more direct, participatory and protagonist democracy empowered and gave the poor majority a greater sense of identity and conviction that incentivized them to reelect Chávez in 2000, 2006, and 2012. Chávez presented himself and his Bolivarian project as the embodiments and protectors of el pueblo's will against the elitist political class (Hawkins 2010b). Chávez's ability to polarize the Venezuelan sociopolitical landscape and threaten the legitimacy of traditional political elites created the necessary motivational conditions for marginalized socioeconomic classes to mobilize and organize, even if with low levels formal institutional structures (Roberts 2006). In this way, Chávez filled the trust vacuum

between the lower classes and politicians left by the unraveling of the previous Punto Fijo system.

In addition to Chávez's populist redefinition of the purpose of democratic government for Venezuelans, his views about the role of the state are another feature of Chávez's leftist-populist ideology that are important for understanding the formation of the individual-level attitudinal biases of his political base and their influence on the poor's voting decisions. As previously explained, the essence of Chávez's leftist ideology was largely based on the promotion of greater economic nationalism for Venezuela (Ellner 2010b). Policies aimed at increasing both the government's control over major national industries, as well as providing Venezuelans of low socioeconomic status with easier access to economic, educational, and medical resources were pillars of Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution and 21st century socialism in Venezuela.

Chávez's leftist-populist political rhetoric and governing style gave a new importance to the material needs and political voice of the poor majority. It increased the opportunity and motivation for political participation, ultimately increasing the participatory nature of Venezuelan politics. Chávez's targeted policies also gave the Venezuelan poor unprecedented access to improved socioeconomic resources like healthcare, education, housing, and subsidized food. Consequently, it can be argued that historically marginalized poor citizens are highly likely to have fostered a strong identification with Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution. Furthermore, they are likely to have felt empowered by adopting the same populist moral and leftist ideology championed by Chávez regarding the normative purpose of government to serve "the people." Hence, poor members of Chávez's electoral base, who are argued to be the most

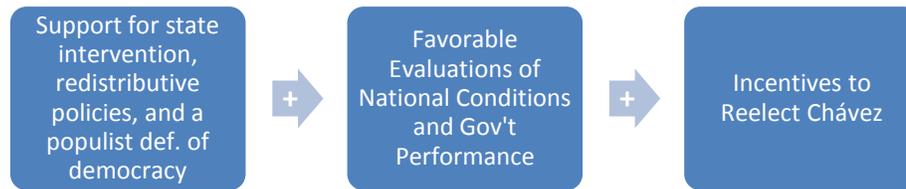
likely beneficiaries of Chávez's targeted initiatives for more inclusive socioeconomic policies, should have been particularly attracted to the appeal of Chávez's leftist interventionist and redistributive ideology.

Indeed, scholars have shown that support for redistributive policies is generally strong among the Latin American poor (Gaviria 2007; Blofield and Luna 2011; Camacho 2012). Similarly, the poor have been often associated with greater support for both left-leaning populist leaders like Chávez (Oxhorn 1998; De la Torre 2007, 2010; Seligson 2007; García 2012). The poor have also been historically linked to more authoritarian political attitudes than the wealthy (Lipset 1959), including in Latin America (Seligson 2008; Booth and Seligson 2009; Orces 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Hawkins and Riding 2010; Carlin and Singer 2011; Salinas and Booth 2011; Buchanan, DeAngelo, Ma, and Taylor 2012).⁸ This relationship between wealth and democratic attitudes has been mainly attributed to the positive effect that economic development can have on individuals' level of education, time, and money, as well as trust and tolerance, which then translate into greater incentives to participate in politics and support for liberal democracy (Krishna 2008; Singer and Carlin 2011). Hence, one could expect that if the Venezuelan poor also have greater populist and authoritarian tendencies, they should also have been more likely than their wealthier counterparts to adhere to Chávez's populist normative redefinition of purpose of Venezuelan democracy toward a more participatory, even if less liberally democratic, political system.

⁸ The positive relationship between low wealth and authoritarian attitudes is a highly debated topic in political science. Although some studies have shown that the poor are no more likely than the wealthy to support authoritarian or anti-democratic leaders or attitudes, at least in Latin America (Krishna 2008), the recent research noted above has mostly favored the argument that the Latin American poor do tend to display a greater willingness to support anti-democratic attitudes.

A strong ideological connection to Chávez likely incentivized his sympathizers more likely to give favorable evaluations of national conditions and government performance. Hence, to explain what I call the “Chávez Phenomenon,” the ability of Chávez’s to be popularly elected three times after 1998 and defeat a recall referendum in 2004 despite a worsening state of affairs in Venezuela during Chávez’s administration, I argue that Chávez’s political base came to overlook and/or accept a deterioration of the country’s conditions as a consequence of having strongly adhered to Chávez’s leftist-populist ideology. Consequently, Chávez’s electoral base should have been particularly ideologically motivated to organize, mobilize, and ultimately, vote for him. Indeed, popular mobilization and organization was a main source of Chávez’s political success (Roberts 2006; Ellner 2010b), especially in terms of his ability to survive repeated electoral challenges in the face of deteriorating economic and democratic conditions. Figure 2.4 illustrates how ideological closeness to Chávez could have acted as an individual-level attitudinal constraint that limited the accuracy with which his electoral base was willing to assess economic conditions and who is truly responsible for those conditions (Wlezien et al. 1997; Duch et al. 2000; Anderson et al. 2004; Evans and Anderson 2006; Anderson 2007; Ladner and Wlezien 2007; Gerber and Huber 2009; Evans and Pickup 2010; Healy and Malhotra 2013).

Figure 2.4. The Relationship among Adherence to Chávez’s Leftist-Populist Ideology, Perceptions of National Conditions and Government Performance, and Vote Choice



The argument illustrated in Figure 2.4 is based on the notion that individual-level attitudinal biases can and do produce differences in economic voting behavior (Duch, Palmer, and Anderson 2000; Anderson 2007; Healy and Malhotra 2013). According to classic economic voting theory, voters reward and punish political leaders in elections as a reaction to good and bad times (respectively). Specifically, there is a consensus among political scientists that retrospective evaluations of economic conditions, specifically, tend to dictate voters’ feelings and vote choice toward incumbent political leaders (Downs 1957; Key 1966; Fiorina 1981; Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; Duch and Stevenson 2005; Anderson 2007; Healy and Malhotra 2013). Indeed, some even argue that, “economic voting is used as a proxy for the concept of electoral accountability” (Gélineau 2007, 416).

However, voters lack the ability to form objective economic evaluations and these evaluations are unlikely to be accurately attributed to the government leaders when deciding whether to vote for or against an incumbent (Anderson et al. 2004; Anderson 2007; Evans and Pickup 2010). Indeed, research on economic voting has shown that individual-level constraints, such as partisanship and ideology, can and do mitigate the accountability mechanisms of the reward-punishment model that constitutes economic voting (Duch et al. 2000; Anderson 2007; Kayser and Wlezien 2010; Healy and Malhotra

2013). The idea that partisan and ideological affinities are central to voters' belief systems and political preferences is a well-established idea in political science (Converse 1964). Furthermore, according to the seminal work of *The American Voter*, "Identification with a party raises a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation" (Campbell et al. 1960, 133). This idea has been largely responsible for a growth in the economic voting literature regarding the significant individual-level political factors, such as partisanship and ideology, that can explain heterogeneity in economic voting behavior in American politics and beyond (Conover, Johnston, Feldman, and Knight 1987; Duch et al. 2000; Evans and Anderson 2006; Ladner and Wlezien 2007; Gerber and Huber 2009; Evans and Pickup 2010; Kayser and Wlezien 2011; Tilley and Hobolt 2011; Enns, Kellstedt, and McAvoy 2012).

Additionally, developments in the study of the mechanics of voters' political preferences and their relationship to economic evaluations has identified the psychological mechanism of that leads voters to seek cognitive consistency between their economic attitudes and their voting decisions (Anderson et al. 2004; Evans and Anderson 2006; Anderson 2007), Chávez's electoral base is likely to have attempted to "avoid inconsistencies in their behaviors and attitudes" (Anderson 2007, 280) by forming evaluations of the state of the economy [and who is responsible for it] to be consistent with their previously held beliefs (Anderson 2007, 280). In other words, the compelling message of Chávez's leftist-populist political agenda for his electoral base and beneficiaries of his targeted policies, compared to opposition sympathizers, acted as individual-level attitudinal constraints that then biased their economic and government performance evaluations and hence significantly reduced their willingness to vote against

Chávez. Adherence to Chávez's political ideology, then, acted as constraints on his political base's willingness to punish Chávez in elections for Venezuela's economic and democratic troubles because his supporters were less likely than opposition supporters to give poor evaluations of economic conditions and government performance.

Additionally, if Chávez's poor political base did indeed feel identified and empowered by adopting the same populist moral and political mentality championed by Chávez regarding the normative purpose of government to serve "the people", they are more likely than opposition supporters to have been willing to overlook, or even support, Chávez's authoritarian tendencies.

As illustrated in Figure 2.4 above, my argument essentially constitutes a mediating relationship between ideological closeness to Chávez biased evaluations of national conditions, which then influenced the formation of political preferences in choosing to reelect Chávez. Once again, I argue that the poor were the key drivers of this mediation story as this sector of the population should have been more likely to adopt Chávez's policy stances since they were the main targets of Chávez's leftist-populist ideology and political agenda.

Theory Summary, Observable Implications and Chapter Outline

Worsening national conditions, including unstable economic growth, oil revenue mismanagement, inflation, food shortages, high murder rates, and deteriorating democratic rights and institutions, would seemingly lead voters to punish a president at the polls. Yet, Hugo Chávez was handily reelected three times after 1998, and defeated a

presidential recall referendum in 2004. Hence, the main research question motivating this dissertation is: how was Chávez so impenetrable electorally in the face of deteriorating economic and democratic conditions in Venezuela? I argue that Chávez was able to secure the repeated political favor of Venezuelans, particularly those in the lower classes, thanks to the political success of his leftist-populist agenda. Chávez's discretionary control over revenues gave him the ability to use a portfolio of socioeconomic and political initiatives as a political strategy that allowed to him to establish resilient reciprocal and clientelistic relationships with the Venezuelan poor. The benefits of both targeted socioeconomic and political benefits to increase mainly the inclusion of the poor into the Venezuelan economic and political system, helped facilitate a political decision-making incentive structure that led his electoral base to see it as beneficial to continue to vote for Chávez. As a result, and despite objective national signs of economic, social, and political crises in Venezuela, the cost-benefit analysis of reelecting for Chávez was more positive among his electoral base, especially for the poor who were the targets of his leftist-populist political agenda and the driving force of his electoral success.

I argue that there are two (non-mutually exclusive) ways that individual individual-level attitudinal biases could have shaped the political decision-making of Chávez's electoral base (see Figure 2.1). First, Chávez's core supporters were incentivized to prioritize self-interest considerations in their vote choices as a product of the unprecedented socioeconomic and political benefits that they experienced thanks to Chávez's policies. The relationship among socioeconomic and political benefits, self-interest, and continued electoral support for Chávez could have, in turn, taken two forms. On the one hand, there could have been a mediating relationship where participating in

and benefiting from Chávez's initiatives positive affected self-interest considerations in the form of evaluations of personal well-being, which in turn increased the likelihood of reelecting Chávez (see Figure 2.2). On the other hand, participating in and benefiting from Chávez's initiatives could have increased the relevance (i.e. moderated) of self-interest considerations (also in the form of evaluations personal well-being) on vote choice (see Figure 2.3). Second, the appeal of Chávez's leftist-populist political agenda for his electoral base and beneficiaries of his inclusionary programs could have also acted as an individual-level attitudinal constraint that then biased his followers' economic and government performance evaluations and hence significantly reduced their willingness to vote against Chávez (see Figure 2.4).

Overall, my theoretical explanation attributes Chávez's repeated electoral success to the voting incentives that beneficiaries of Chávez's socioeconomic and political initiatives and adherents to his leftist-populist ideology had to reelect him. However, I further attribute Chávez's ability to stay in power specifically to the poor. Since Chávez's socioeconomic and political initiatives and ideology were especially designed to reach (through Missions and Communal Councils, for example) and appeal (through inclusionary and redistributive populist ideology) to the poor, I argue (and show in the subsequent chapters) that the poor are more likely than wealthier Venezuelans to have both experienced the benefits of Chávez's initiatives, as well as adhered to his leftist-populist ideology. Hence, the poor were the drivers of connections between Chávez's policies and ideology, public opinion, and his reelections.

Here, it is important to note that my theoretical argument attributes Chávez's repeated electoral success mainly to poor voters not because they processed information

about Chávez's policies or ideology differently than their wealthier counterparts, but because members of the Venezuelan lower classes were the main targets and greatest beneficiaries of Chávez's leftist-populist agenda. Still, an underlying implication of my argument is the possibility that poor and wealthy Venezuelans may have processed information relevant to politics and support for Chávez somewhat differently, such that certain attitudinal connections and biases could have been more amplified among the poor. In other words, Chávez's message could be expected to have resonated most strongly with the poor majority, given the president's use of targeted rhetorical appeal and policy initiatives, in ways that then affect not only the levels poor voters achieved on variables for certain behaviors (i.e. Mission or Communal Council participation) or attitudes (i.e. ideology or economic evaluations), but perhaps also in how those variables interacted or influenced other variables in modeling support for Chávez. To address this issue, the analytical strategies I employ in the rest of the dissertation test for possible differences in political preference formation between the poor and wealthy the context of Venezuelan politics in the Chávez era.

In sum, my theoretical explanation for Chávez's continued electoral success entails three main components:

- 1) The logic about the relationship among targeted socioeconomic and political benefits, self-interest considerations, and vote choice.
- 2) The logic about the relationship among adherence to Chávez's leftist-populist ideology and individual-level attitudinal constraints on the willingness to punish Chávez for deteriorating national conditions.

- 3) The claim that the poor were the drivers of connections between Chávez's policies and ideology, public opinion, and support for Chávez.

Considering all of these theoretical propositions, I derive the following hypotheses, which I test in the next chapters of the dissertation:

H₁: Venezuelans belonging to lower socioeconomic classes should be more likely than their wealthier counterparts to have voted for Chávez's in 2000, 2004, 2006, and 2012.

H₂: Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic status should have been more likely than their wealthier counterparts to benefit from redistributive programs like the Missions, easier access to voting registration, and membership in political organizations that were key policies of Chávez's agenda.

H₃: Participants of Chávez's initiatives should have more favorable perceptions of personal well-being than those who did not participate.

H₄: Participants of Chávez's initiatives should be more likely than non-participants to have provided reelection support for Chávez between 2006 and 2012.

H_{4a}: Poor participants of Chávez's initiatives should have provided the highest reelection support for Chávez between 2006 and 2012.

H₅: If there is a mediating relationship among participating in and benefiting from programs like the Missions and Communal Councils, evaluations of personal well-being, and vote choice, then participation in Chávez's initiatives should predict both perceptions of personal well-being and vote choice, and

measures of personal well-being should significantly predict vote choice when controlling for participation in Chávez's initiatives.

H₆: If participation in Chávez's initiatives moderates the relationship between evaluations of personal well-being and vote choice, there should be a similar or greater effect of perceptions of personal well-being on vote for Chávez compared to those who did not participate in the initiatives.

H₇: Those belonging to Chávez's electoral base and/or those who benefited from socioeconomic and politically inclusionary program should also be likely to have reported higher degree of support for a greater role of the state in Venezuela's economic system compared to opposition voters and respondents who did not participate in Chávez's initiatives.

H_{7a}: Poor voters belonging to Chávez's electoral base and/or those who benefited from socioeconomic and politically inclusionary programs should have adopted the highest degree of support for a greater role of the state in Venezuela's economic system.

H₈: Those belonging to Chávez's electoral base and/or those who benefited from socioeconomic and politically inclusionary programs are more likely than opposition sympathizers and non-participants to have adopted political attitudes that supported Chávez's populist conception of democracy, expressed feelings of support, identity, and empowerment as related to Chávez's populist message, and accepted or supported Chávez's authoritarian tendencies.

H_{8a}: Poor voters belonging to Chávez's electoral base and/or those who benefited from socioeconomic and politically inclusionary programs should have adopted the strongest political attitudes that supported Chávez's populist conception of democracy, expressed feelings of support, identity, and empowerment as related to Chávez's populist message, and accepted or supported Chávez's authoritarian tendencies.

H₉: If Chávez supporters and/or inclusionary program beneficiaries indeed adopted similar ideological attitudes as Chávez's leftist ideology, then those attitudes should represent individual-level attitudinal biases that lead them to give more favorable evaluations of national economic conditions and government performance, and be less likely to blame Chávez for the country's problems.

H₁₀: More favorable evaluations of national conditions and government performance should in turn significantly increase the probability that members of Chávez's electoral base and participants of programs like Missions and Communal Councils would lend support for Chávez's reelection despite economic and democratic crises.

These observable implications assume that Chávez's leftist-populism had a unique effect on how the poor react and mobilize to populist appeals. Therefore, I will also test whether the political behavior of the Venezuelan poor and electoral success of Chávez political strategy of targeted socioeconomic and political benefits represent a unique political phenomenon or not. If the relationship between Chávez and the Venezuelan poor simply constitute politics "as usual," then we should observe a similar

relationship between evaluations of personal well-being and vote choice among the poor in the rest of the Latin American region.

In the remainder of this dissertation, I test the hypotheses outlined above. As a preview of my findings, the evidence in this dissertation shows that Chávez consistently drew greater electoral support from the poor across time. Moreover, my findings show that the poor were indeed the drivers of the links between Chávez's policies, public opinion, and support for Chávez. Poor Venezuelans were the most likely to adhere to Chávez's leftist-populist ideology and participate in initiatives like the Missions and Communal Councils. Such strong adherents of Chávez's ideology and beneficiaries of Mission and Communal Councils are shown to have reported more favorable evaluations of personal well-being and higher support for Chávez than those who did not adopt similar ideological attitudes or participate in the initiatives. Additionally, the findings yield little difference in how the poor versus the wealthy develop and report their pro/anti Chávez attitudes, meaning that although the poor were the key to Chávez's electoral success, poor and wealthy Venezuelans who benefited and believed in his leftist-populist agenda did not develop their political preferences all that differently.

The project proceeds as follows. Chapter III first examines possible evidence of class voting in Venezuela under Chávez and then tests the relationship among socioeconomic benefits of programs like the Missions, perceptions of personal economic well-being, and vote choice. Similarly, Chapter IV examines the relationship among political benefits of programs like the Communal Councils, perceptions of personal political well-being, and the decision to reelect Chávez. Chapter V investigates the possible adherence of Chávez's electoral base and inclusionary program beneficiaries to

his leftist-populist political ideology and whether the adoption of his ideology acted as individual-level attitudinal constraints on the willingness to punish Chávez at the polls for deteriorating national conditions. Finally, Chapter VI summarizes the dissertation's main findings, discusses the theoretical and empirical contribution and shortcomings of the dissertation, and explains the implications of the project for current Venezuelan politics and future research.

Project Relevance and Potential Contributions

This dissertation represents the first attempt to provide a truly comprehensive explanation, one that simultaneously considers the role of the changing socioeconomic and political nature of Venezuela under Chávez, to understand the electoral survivability of Chávez, what I call the Chávez Phenomenon, in the face of deteriorating economic and democratic conditions in Venezuela. I argue that Chávez was electorally successful despite these conditions due to the political support he secured from the poor majority by advancing a leftist-populist agenda that provided targeted socioeconomic and political benefits to members of the lower classes. The material and political incentives provided by Chávez's leftist-populist political strategy of redistributive policies and clientelistic exchanges, on the one hand, and a transformation of the participatory nature of the political system toward the inclusion of previously marginalized (but large) sectors of society, on the other, helped create and reinforce individual-level attitudinal constraints that inhibited the ability and willingness of Chávez's core electoral base (Venezuela's poor majority) to hold him accountable at the polls.

The argument and findings of this project have important contributions and implications for understanding the future of Venezuelan politics. Specifically, they are relevant for understanding how Chávez was an essential element for the sustainability of the Bolivarian Revolution. Recent developments in Venezuela indicate that perhaps there is no Chavismo without Chávez. Even though Chávez was reelected once again in 2012, his term was short-lived as he succumbed to cancer in early 2013. Chávez's death caused immediate political and institutional crises regarding the legitimacy political power holders in the Venezuelan government, including a highly contested and controversial presidential election between his handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro, and former candidate Henrique Capriles. Furthermore, since Chávez's death, Venezuelans have faced growing economic crisis, including soaring inflation, two currency devaluations, and a growing shortage of foods and basic goods. In this dissertation, I provide important evidence for explaining the key dynamics between government policies and public opinion that kept Chávez in office and that are now absent after his death.

This project also has important implications for our knowledge of the political dynamics of the entire Latin American region. The theory and findings I present in this project prove to be highly relevant for understanding and possibly predicting the present and future of the political dynamics of countries like Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina, which have experienced the rise of leftist-populist leaders similar to Chávez. Chávez's political strategy of targeting with policies that benefited the poor and promoted his leftist-populist ideology can provide an understanding of the vital ingredients for successful populist leaders and their seemingly unique ability to survive hard times. On the other hand, the Venezuelan case indicates that perhaps recurrent economic, social,

and political instability, in addition to electoral volatility and susceptibility to populist leaders, inhibit current Latin American democracies from developing the necessary individual-level incentives that prevent (mainly poor) voters' willingness to overlook (and even support) bad macro-socioeconomic policies and democratic decay, in exchange for immediate material and political benefits.

Finally, the nature of the theoretical argument regarding the individual-level constraints on economic voting apparent in the Venezuelan case represents a contribution for the study of electoral politics more broadly. With this dissertation project, I have the potential to contribute to our understanding of the electoral dynamics of a region, which has experienced constant economic, social, and political turmoil. Additionally, this project represents a step forward in the study of electoral politics by contributing to our knowledge about the role individual-level constraints, such as self-interest and ideology, on economic voting. In this way, I believe this project contributes to an understudied topic in comparative politics regarding the effects of individual-level attitudinal biases on the dynamics of economic voting in countries outside of the American context.

APPENDIX B

Appendix 2.1. Photograph of Sign at a Chavista Rally (Copyright Ellner and Tinker Salas 2007)



CHAPTER III

WHO SUPPORTS HUGO CHÁVEZ? THE ROLE OF SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS AND MISSION PARTICIPATION

Explaining *who* voted for Hugo Chávez is the first step toward understanding how and why it is that Chávez was able to maintain enough electoral support to remain president for nearly 14 years while Venezuela continued to suffer deteriorating economic and democratic conditions. I argue that Chávez's repeated electoral success is, at least in part, due to the implementation of a socioeconomic and political agenda that prioritized the inclusion of previously marginalized sectors of society in Venezuela. Chávez targeted the poor majority with both wealth redistribution programs that established strong clientelistic exchanges, as well as policy measures aimed at advancing a populist definition of democracy and increasing the participatory nature of the Venezuelan political system. This chapter focuses specifically on investigating the relationship between targeted redistributive policies and the repeated electoral success of Chávez after 1998 (see Figure 2.1). The unprecedented socioeconomic benefits poor Venezuelans received thanks to the Chávez administration's redistributive programs helped to create a political decision-making incentive structure that prioritized material self-interest considerations among voters' decisions to reelect Chávez. I use survey data from 1998, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2010, and 2012 to examine the relationship between socioeconomic characteristics and choosing to reelect Chávez. I also use this data to investigate the role of Mission programs as factors that help explain the role of self-interest motivations in choosing to reelect Chávez, and investigate the possibility that the poor differed from

their wealthier counterparts in their voting decisions about Chávez. I find that there is indeed a strong relationship between belonging to the lower socioeconomic classes and voting for Chávez. I also find that Mission participants, most of whom were poor, reported more favorable evaluations of personal economic well-being than non-participants, and expressed greater electoral support for Chávez. The findings also provide some evidence for a mediating effect of evaluations of personal economic well-being on the relationship between participation in Chávez's Missions and vote choice, but no difference between how the poor and wealthy formed their political preferences in choosing reelect Chávez.

Chávez's Wealth Redistribution and Social Aid Policies

As explained in Chapter I, Hugo Chávez emerged as a successful presidential candidate as a consequence of the widespread economic and political legitimacy crises that unraveled the 40-year old pacted Punto Fijo party system. Sharp drops in oil prices in the 1980s and 1990s were accompanied by a series of failed neoliberal reforms that produced an economic crisis that the two-party power-sharing system between Acción Democrática (AD) and Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (COPEI, the Christian Democratic Party) could not cope with. This resulted in the parties' loss of legitimacy among many Venezuelans, especially the poor whom were most affected by the economic crisis (Canache 2004). In addition, the two party-system's demise led to a kind of social and economic polarization between the poor and the elite that had never been present in Venezuela's political history. The lower classes grew especially

discontent with the two-party system as they were the most severely affected by failed neoliberal reforms, as well as the subsequent oil and economic crises (Canache 2004). The poor majority viewed the ruling elite as corrupt and unrepresentative. As a consequence, class cleavages became of key importance for Venezuela's political future (Ellner 2003; Roberts 2003). The public saliency of the socioeconomic negligence of previous administrations toward the need and demands of the lower classes enabled Chávez's successful promotion of a leftist-populist agenda that emphasized the socioeconomic inclusion of the poor majority (Roberts 2003; Canache 2004). Chávez achieved electoral success by breaking with previous attempts by AD and COPEI to garner support from across classes by instead targeting lower, marginalized citizens (Cyr 2005).

The idea that the Venezuelan poor were crucial for the electoral success of Chávez has been widely supported. Research on the nature of Chávez's political support has focused on studying the class basis of Chavismo and has consistently shown that the president's political success can be attributed to the mobilization of the marginalized poor who were neglected by and were discontent with the previous two-party system (Handelman 2000; Molina 2002; Roberts 2003; Canache 2004; Hellinger 2005; López Maya and Lander 2007; Cannon 2008; Heath 2009; Handlin 2012). According to Roberts (2003, 55), "*chavismo* [sic] signified a repoliticization of social inequality in Venezuela."

Chávez turned away from labor unions, previously allied with the two traditional parties, and sold his image as a political outsider coming to rescue of those ignored and marginalized by the political elite. The breakdown of the two-party party system and harsh socioeconomic conditions provided a perfect storm of discontent and economic

hardship among the majority of Venezuelans: the poor. As Roberts (2003, 55) explains, “The poor embraced [Chávez’s] vitriolic attacks on the political establishment, while many from the middle and upper classes recoiled before the uncertain scope and depth of impending changes.” What this meant for Venezuela was a transformation of socioeconomic inequalities into political cleavages between the elite and the masses (Roberts 2003).

In addition to the attraction that the Venezuelan poor are argued to have developed toward Chávez as an anti-establishment politician, there is a consensus among scholars of Venezuelan politics that Chávez’s leftist-populist agenda and charisma were key to gaining and securing the electoral support of the poor masses. Indeed, these scholars have found that survey items measuring socioeconomic status are strongly related with presidential approval and/or votes for Chávez. Specifically, the vast majority of research on this topic has confirmed the existence of class voting in Venezuela under Chávez, where the poor voted disproportionately in favor of Chávez in presidential elections between 1998 and 2006. Using 1990s public opinion data on the economy, politics, and Chávez, Canache (2004) shows that the poor were more frustrated with the two-party system, favored imminent economic intervention, supported a dramatic change in politics, and were more likely to vote for Chávez in 1998. Cannon (2008) also finds evidence of class-based support for Chávez using survey data from the 2000s. Using a larger time span of survey data (1973 to 2003), Heath (2009) shows that the collapse of the two-party Punto Fijo system in Venezuela left a political void that allowed a populist leader like Chávez to gain political support by making appeals to new “issue dimensions” that closely aligned with class-based attitudes about the ruling elite. Using occupation as

the measure for socioeconomic status, Heath shows that citizens of the working class were more interested and politically active in favor of Chávez.

Class voting is shown to have been particularly strong during the recall referendum of 2004 and Chávez's reelection in 2006. Also relying on survey data, Hellinger (2005), López Maya and Lander (2007), and Cannon (2008) demonstrate clear differences in the political preferences of the poor and more elite classes in Venezuela, the former having displayed significantly more support for Chávez. This research has added to the consensus among scholars of Venezuelan politics that the Chávez era was characterized by acute trends of socioeconomic and political polarization, with the poor showing strong and consistent political support for Chávez while the higher classes tended to favor the opposition alternative.

One exception to this consensus is recent work by Lupu (2010), who argues that class voting in Venezuela was only present in Chávez's first election in 1998 and that over time the relationship between socioeconomic status and support for Chávez has become "nonmonotonic" with an increase in support from the middle class. Lupu claims that a clear and persistent negative relationship between socioeconomic status and support for Chávez is not corroborated by his analysis of Venezuelan survey data. Instead, his results show an evening of the distribution of support for Chávez among socioeconomic classes. However, Lupu's conclusions rejecting the existence of class voting in Chávez's reelections are based on the use of an unweighted measure of household income that has been shown to be less valid and reliable than an aggregate scale or index that can take into account a larger number of socioeconomic factors of wealth (Handlin 2013).

Research supporting the argument that the poor were a key to Chávez's continued electoral success also displays some important shortcomings. First, as Lupu (2010, 11-12) correctly points out, a large part of the research supporting class voting of Chavismo fails to "consider the role of antecedent variables...such as gender or age", which are variables that exist "causally prior" to income level and vote choice. Second, there is inconsistency in the measures of socioeconomic status used. While some scholars have used individual-level measures of income or wealth, others have based their analyses on aggregate socioeconomic measures at the district level (Lupu 2010). The latter approach may lead to inferences about individual behavior that are misguided in terms of an ecological fallacy. Third, with the exception of Lupu (2010), the research examining the relationship between class and support for Chávez has focused on analyzing specific election years rather than looking at electoral trends throughout the Chávez era. Finally, and most importantly, the debate over the existence of class voting during the Chávez era has failed to provide a satisfying theoretical argument that identifies the mechanisms that can explain the link between Chávez's socioeconomic and political agenda and the poor majority's decision to reelect him time and time again.

One of the objectives of this chapter is to move beyond extant scholarship regarding the debate between those who may agree with Lupu (2010) and those who argue that class voting has been a key feature of Chávez's electoral success. Theoretically, this chapter seeks to provide a more nuanced explanation of the sociopolitical dynamics of the Chávez era, emphasizing a decision-making model of vote choice that takes into consideration the unique features of Chávez's socioeconomic agenda. I argue that the receipt of unprecedented socioeconomic benefit from Chávez's

targeted wealth redistribution programs enabled the establishment of clientelistic linkages between the Chávez administration and the lower classes. Furthermore, targeted programs like the Missions helped create a political decision-making incentive structure that secured the continued electoral support of the poor majority by influencing the role of economic self-interest for voting considerations. Empirically, the analyses in this chapter provide a more uniform, valid, and reliable strategy for testing the notion that class voting has been a key feature of Chávez's electoral success. This chapter also provides the first comprehensive effort to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and electoral support for Chávez for every presidential election in which Chávez was a candidate. More details on the data used and analytical strategy employed are discussed below in the methodology section.

Explaining the Link between the Poor's Socioeconomic Benefits and Chávez's Electoral Success

Chávez was able to secure reelections in 2000, 2006, and 2012, and defeat a recall referendum in 2004 by gaining the political support of the lower classes. More specifically, this chapter claims that Chávez's electoral success is due to the unprecedented individual socioeconomic benefits he provided for the poor majority (see Figure 2.1). Chávez's wealth redistribution policies aimed at the socioeconomic aid and inclusion of the Venezuelan lower classes placed the needs and demands of the poor as a top priority for his administration. The socioeconomic benefits provided by policy initiatives like the Missions are argued to have prioritized strong self-interest motivations that incentivized program beneficiaries to want to keep Chávez in office. The remainder

of this section expands on this argument and discusses the observable implications to be subsequently tested.

The Missions

As the champion and leader of a wave of leftist-populist presidents elected across Latin America in the last decade and a half or so, Chávez successfully overhauled the Venezuelan wealth redistribution system through policies aimed at providing Venezuelans of low socioeconomic status with easier access to economic, educational, and medical resources. Such policies were the pillars of Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution and have been described as exemplifying the strongest resurgence of the left in Venezuela and in the Latin American region, more generally (Schamis 2006; Seligson 2007; Urribarri 2008; Hawkins 2010b; Lupu 2010). The best and most expansive example of the leftist redistributive socioeconomic policies created and implemented by the Chávez administration to target the living conditions of the poor majority in Venezuela are the so-called "Missions." Funded directly through the Chávez administration's control over oil revenues, the Missions were launched in 2003 as community-based social aid programs aimed at poverty reduction by providing the poorest Venezuelans with easier access to resources for healthcare (Misión Barrio Adentro), literacy (Misión Robinson), primary, secondary, and university education (Misión Robinson II, Misión Sucre, and Misión Ribas, respectively), subsidized food (Misión Mercal), vocational training (Misión Vuelvan Caras/Ché Guevara), identification cards (Misión Identidad), and housing (Misión Habitat) (Penfold-Becerra 2007; Gott 2008; Hawkins 2010b).

The political foundation of social aid policies like the Missions was based on a new constitution ratified in 1999, which included numerous measures aimed at the construction of an inclusionary socioeconomic system. One of the main principles promoted by this new constitution was “equality, social solidarity, and social wellbeing” (De Venanzi 2010, 66). Additionally, guarantees for the provision of healthcare and education received special attention in the 1999 Constitution and are even defined as human rights (De Venanzi 2010).

Described as efforts toward “endogenous development” and higher state involvement in local socioeconomic governance (Hawkins 2010), the Missions are the chief illustration of the leftist nature Chávez’s governing agenda.⁹ According to Hawkins (2010, 199), the Missions are “the best-financed of any of the new social programs of the Bolivarian Revolution and one of the most significant poverty alleviation programs in Latin America over the past two decades.” In fact, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the Missions were largely responsible for the both reduction of the number of Venezuelans living in extreme poverty from nearly 62% in 2003 to less than 32% by 2012 (World Bank 2013), and also a substantial improvement in Venezuela’s Human Development index (UNDP 2011b).

Despite vast financial mismanagement of the oil industry under the Chávez, as discussed in Chapter I, there was a record influx of oil revenues during the Chávez administration gave the president unparalleled opportunities and autonomy over funding and targeting social spending programs (Penfold-Becerra 2007; Corrales and Penfold 2007; Hawkins 2010b). As explained by Penfold-Becerra (2007), Chávez’s unchecked

⁹ Most of the Missions initiated during the Chávez administration are continued under President Nicolás Maduro’s current tenure.

control over PDVSA (Petróleos de Venezuela, the national oil company) and the social spending budget allowed him to invest over five billion dollars into the Missions programs only one year after their inception. Moreover, Chávez's discretionary control over revenues allowed him the ability to use the Missions as a political strategy to establish important reciprocal and clientelistic relationships with the Venezuelan poor. Indeed, Chávez's discretionary and unchecked control over the creation, distribution, and maintenance of the Missions programs are common features of clientelistic linkages (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). The case of Chávez and the Missions is particularly exemplary of the type clientelistic tactics in Latin America used to target the poor. Chávez was able to "link the social benefits of the programs with his needs to assure the political mobilization of his popular base" through the services provided by the Misión Identidad (launched in 2004), which provided the poorest Mission beneficiaries with identification cards and voter registration (Penfold-Becerra 2007, 75). Missions like this, coupled with Chávez's virtual unilateral control over political institutions, allowed Chávez to ensure reciprocity of clientelistic relationships with his electoral base by being able to "monitor voters' behavior and exercise credible threats to citizens" considering switching their vote to the opposition (Penfold-Becerra 2007, 75). Furthermore, the allocation of resources for Missions like Barrio Adentro, Robinson, Ribas, and Mercal were motivated by political factors such as the presence of Chavista governors or mayors, percent of votes in favor of Chávez in the 2000 presidential elections, and number of households living under poverty conditions (Penfold-Becerra 2007). Using discretionary control over oil revenues and political influence at the sub-national level, the Chávez administration was able to establish a mutually accountable or reciprocal system of

benefits with Venezuelan's of low socioeconomic status. This created a context in which the poor majority had the incentive to vote for Chávez in order to ensure the continuation of social aid programs like the Missions. Indeed according to Penfold-Becerra (2007, 65), the Missions allowed Chávez to both,

“consolidate electoral and political support among a group of poor voters previously excluded from the political and economic realm; it also helped to create a new constituency that has become an important part of his social coalition and has helped to strengthen his political movement.”

Mission Benefits, Economic Self-Interest and Support for Chávez

The evident socioeconomic gains that the Venezuelan poor experienced from the Missions of the Chávez administration are unprecedented in the country's political history. Consequently, it is conceivable to argue that beneficiaries of Chávez's socioeconomic policies and programs, the historically marginalized in Venezuela, had sufficient reasons and motivation to have continuously reelected Chávez. While the discontent with the previous two-party government's neglect of the poorest Venezuelans is a key reason Chávez was able to win the presidency in 1998, the important socioeconomic benefits the poor experienced under the Chávez administration are crucial for explaining Chávez's ability to have been reelected three times after then and to have survived a recall referendum.

Chávez's wealth redistribution policies aimed at the social aid and inclusion of the Venezuelan poor placed the socioeconomic needs and demands of the poor as a top priority for his administration. Indeed, this chapter shows that the poor were the greatest participants and beneficiaries of the Mission programs. The unprecedented individual benefits provided by policy initiatives like the Missions prioritized strong self-interest

motivations that incentivized program beneficiaries to want to keep Chávez in office. That is, the socioeconomic benefits of the Missions influence the role of material, or economic, self-interest in the voting calculus of program participants toward Chávez. As previously mentioned, Chávez used the Missions as a political strategy to establish important reciprocal and clientelistic relationships with the Venezuelan poor. This meant that by continuing to vote for Chávez and his party Mission participants sought to protect their material needs and newly gained socioeconomic benefits, such as easier access to healthcare, education, subsidized food, and housing. For the poor, a vote for Chávez meant a vote for the continuation of this type of social aid since programs like the Missions were explicitly linked to Chávez (Wilpert 2005; Penfold-Becerra 2007; Hawkins 2010a).

As illustrated in Figures 2.2 and 2.3 of the previous chapter, there are two possible ways in which the receipt of Mission benefits could have served as a mechanism to explain the role of self-interest motivations in choosing to reelect Chávez. On the one hand, participation in these initiatives could have had a positive impact on perceptions of personal well-being, or idiosyncratic evaluations, as a consequence of experiencing significant individual socioeconomic benefits, such as healthcare and education. In turn, the desire to protect self-interest in terms of material gains and an improved personal economic situation could have motivated Mission beneficiaries to be more likely than non-beneficiaries to support Chávez. On the other hand, Mission participation could have acted as a moderating factor for the relationship between self-interest considerations, such as perceptions of personal economic well-being, and vote choice. That is,

participating in Missions may have increased the relevance of self-interest considerations on vote choice.

This emphasis on the role of self-interest on vote choice runs contrary to the majority of the economic voting literature, which has emphasized the dominating importance of retrospective national, or sociotropic, economic evaluations for political decision-making (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Feldman 1982; Kramer 1983; Markus 1988; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; Anderson 2007; Healy and Malhotra 2013; Singer and Carlin 2013). Nevertheless, the Venezuelan case under Chávez displays key contextual characteristics that justify the importance of self-interest consideration in poor citizens' decision to vote for Chávez. First, Missions are particularly exemplary of the type clientelistic tactics in Latin America used to target the poor, who are argued to have shorter time horizon in the political decision-making as they place higher value on receiving immediate material benefits in comparison to longer-term policy reforms (Kitschelt 2000; Keefer and Khemani 2005; Weitz-Shapiro 2009; Singer and Carlin 2013). In general, voters are argued to place greater emphasis on their pocketbook when voting as a consequence of living in underdeveloped socioeconomic contexts in which they are commonly targets of clientelistic strategies and have the least amount of resources to cope with economic volatility (Singer and Carlin 2013).

Second, self-interest becomes an important influence on political preferences when leaders like Chávez make problems such as poverty reduction and socioeconomic inclusions highly salient issues for the political landscape (Chong et al. 2001). By highlighting the socioeconomic benefits of Missions through his policy agenda and discourse, Chávez underscored the high stakes involved for Mission beneficiaries if he

was voted out of office. As Chong et al. (2001, 541) show, citizens are more likely to vote on their self-interest when “their stakes in [a] policy are clear”. Therefore, the need for socioeconomic inclusion and the continuation of programs like the Missions became highly cognitively accessible issues in the minds of the programs’ greatest participants: poor voters. This type of cognitive accessibility in the realm of political decision-making is said to increase the importance of self-interest considerations (Young et al. 1987). In this way, continuing socioeconomic benefits under the Chávez administration became a key priority for Mission beneficiaries’ “personal agenda” (Young et al. 1987). Moreover, the high number of occasions in which Chávez’s presidency was at stake after 1998 (2000, 2004, 2006, 2012) provided repeated circumstances in which voting decisions were made in the context of the near future. As shown by Hunt et al. (2010), self-interest matters more for voting when political decisions are made in the context of the near future, such as a forthcoming election. The constant “near future” context under which Venezuelan voters were forced to think about presidential elections also ensured the political saliency of the unprecedented socioeconomic benefits for the poor majority under Chávez.

In sum, the socioeconomic benefits of redistributive policies and the establishment of clientelistic linkages that constituted the core of Chávez’s leftist-populist agenda are the factors that motivated Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic status to become the most politically loyal and essential to Chávez’s repeated electoral success. The receipt of unprecedented socioeconomic benefits thanks to the Chávez administration’s Missions helped create a political decision-making incentive structure that secured the continued electoral support of the poor majority. Specifically,

participation in Missions could have served as an information processing mechanism to either mediate and/or moderate the effect of self-interest motivations on vote for Chávez. Since poor Venezuelans were the main targets and beneficiaries of Mission programs, they are argued to be the key drivers of the relationship between the receipt of individual socioeconomic benefits, improved perceptions of personal economic well-being, and support for Chávez's reelection.

To test the above argument, this chapter examines the observable implications laid out in Chapter II. As a reminder, I repeat them here. First, Venezuelans belonging to lower socioeconomic classes should be more likely than their wealthier counterparts to have who voted for Chávez's in 2000, 2004, 2006, and 2012 (H_1). Second, Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic status should have been more likely to benefit from redistributive programs like the Missions (H_2). Third, Mission participants should have more favorable perceptions of personal economic well-being than those who did not participate in Missions (H_3). Fourth, Venezuelans participating in Mission programs, especially the poor, should be the most likely to have provided reelection support for Chávez between 2006 and 2012 (H_4, H_{4a}).

Fifth, if there is a mediation relationship among Mission participation, evaluations of personal economic well-being, and vote choice, then Mission participation should predict both perceptions of personal well-being and vote choice, and measures of personal economic well-being should significantly predict vote choice when controlling for Mission participation (H_5). Sixth, if Mission participation moderates the relationship between evaluations of personal economic well-being and vote choice, there should be a similar or greater effect of perceptions of personal economic well-being on vote for

Chávez compared to those who did not participate in Missions (H_6). Additionally, I test for possibility that a mediating and/or moderating relationships among Mission participation, evaluations of personal economic well-being, and vote choice, may have been more pronounced among the poor's political decision-making compared to the wealthy. Finally, if the political behavior of the Venezuelan poor and electoral success of Chávez political strategy of targeted socioeconomic benefits simply constitute politics "as usual," then we should observe a similar relationship between evaluations of personal economic well-being and vote choice among the poor in the rest of the region.

The remainder of this chapter tests these observable implications. This chapter first tests my class-voting argument by comparing the socioeconomic profiles of those who voted, or not, for Chávez between 1998 and 2012. Additionally, I test the predictive power of Venezuelans' socioeconomic characteristics on vote choice. I then examine the socioeconomic characteristics and levels of idiosyncratic evaluations of Mission participants. Next, I examine the possible mediating and moderating effects of the relationship among Mission participation, evaluations of personal economic well-being, and voting for Chávez. Finally, I conduct a series of comparative analyses to test the uniqueness of the Chávez phenomenon.

Data and Methods

In order to test the observable implications outlined above, I employ a series of survey datasets pertinent to presidential election years in Venezuela during Chávez's

administration (1998, 2000, 2004, 2006, and 2012).¹⁰ Using survey data collected with close temporal proximity to these presidential election years ensures that the respondents' preference of presidential candidate in the survey will be as close to their actual vote choice in the election as possible. The particular datasets I employ are the 1998 pre-electoral survey by the Red Interuniversitaria de Cultura Política (REDPOL),¹¹ the 2000 World Values Survey (WVS) for Venezuela (www.worldvaluessurvey.org),¹² the 2004 Sondeo Paralelo Venezuelan survey by DATOS C.A.,¹³ and the 2006¹⁴ and 2012¹⁵ AmericasBarometer surveys for Venezuela, collected by the Latin American Public

¹⁰ I include data for 2004 given recall referendum in which Chávez's presidency was at stake.

¹¹ This survey was conducted by DATOS C.A. and the Red Interuniversitaria de Cultura Política (REDPOL) between November 27 and December 6, 1998. Sample size is 1,500 voting age Venezuelans.

¹² The WVS 2000 for Venezuela was conducted by DATOS C.A. and the Red Interuniversitaria de Cultura Política (REDPOL). It consisted of a random stratified sample of 1,200 voting age respondents from states and municipalities with a population of 5,000 residents or more. The sample has an estimated margin of error of ± 2 . Please see <http://www.wvsevsdb.com/wvs/WVSTechnical.jsp> for further technical information.

¹³ This survey was designed and carried out in 2003 by DATOS C.A. for Development Alternatives Inc. under the supervision of the Population Data Bank of the Simón Bolívar University. For simplicity, I refer to this dataset using the year 2004, which is the year of the election it references.

¹⁴ The 2006 survey was carried out by the Centro de Investigaciones en Ciencias Sociales (CISOR) under the direction of LAPOP and Vanderbilt University. It consists of a national probability sample design, with a total sample size of 1,510 voting age Venezuelans. The sample is stratified into six regions, including capital, Zuliana, West, Mid-West, east, and Los Llanos regions. The dataset contains 186 sampling units, with respondents selected in PSUs of 8 in urban areas and 12 in rural areas. The sample is unweighted and has an estimated margin of error of ± 2.5 . Please see <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/venezuela/2007-techinfo.pdf> for further technical information. This survey data was actually collected in 2007, but I refer to this dataset using the year 2006, which is the year of the election it references.

¹⁵ The 2012 survey was carried out by DATANALISIS under the direction of LAPOP and Vanderbilt University. It consists of a national probability sample, with a total sample size of 1,500 voting age Venezuelans. The sample is stratified into eight regions, or strata, including the Metropolitan (capital) area, Central, Mid-West, Guayana, Los Andes, East, Los Llanos, and Zuliana regions. The regional strata were sub-stratified by size of municipality and by urban and rural areas. The dataset contains 52 primary sampling units and 170 final sampling units. Respondents were selected in clusters of six interviews, with three clusters per municipality. The sample is unweighted and has an estimated margin of error of ± 2.53 . Please see <http://datasets.americasbarometer.org/datasets/312110274Venezuela-2012-Tech-Info-031213-W.pdf> for further technical information.

Opinion Project (www.LapopSurveys.org). I create a dichotomous measure of vote choice for every dataset,¹⁶ where the dependent variable is coded 1 if the respondent intends to vote for Chávez and 0 if the respondent intends to vote for another party/candidate.¹⁷ For the 2006 data, rather than using vote intention, I use vote choice in the previous election since the survey was conducted in the months following the December 2006 elections.¹⁸

These various datasets are also used to measure key explanatory factors that are argued to have influenced electoral support for Chávez. In terms of measures for socioeconomic status, I use the survey data to create variables to measure wealth level as the principal socioeconomic indicator of interest. Questionnaire items measuring household wealth vary by survey year, but are still comparable. Ideally, I would be able to employ a wealth quintile measure like LAPOP's wealth index that divides the sample into groups of respondents belonging to one of five quintiles of wealth based capital goods ownership rather than self-reported income, which can be less accurate of the true socioeconomic situation of respondents because of underreporting of income and a higher percentage of non-response (Córdova 2009; Handlin 2013). It is not possible to replicate this exact wealth index measure in the 1998, 2000, and 2004 datasets, so I opted for

¹⁶ See Appendix 3.1 for a distribution of the dependent variable for vote choice for 1998, 2000, 2004, 2006, and 2012.

¹⁷ VB20. If the next presidential elections were being held this week, what would you do?

- (1) Wouldn't vote
 - (2) Would vote for the incumbent candidate or party
 - (3) Would vote for a candidate or party different from the current administration
 - (4) Would go to vote but would leave the ballot blank or would purposely cancel my vote
- "I don't know", "wouldn't vote", and null vote answers were coded missing.

¹⁸ VB3. Who did you vote for in the last presidential elections of 2006?

- (0) None (Blank ballot or spoiled or null ballot)
- (1) Hugo Chávez (MVR, PPT, PODEMOS, PCV, other)
- (2) Manuel Rosales (Nuevo Tiempo, PJ, COPEI, MAS, other)
- (3) Other

"I don't know", "didn't vote", and null vote answers were coded missing.

approximating wealth quintile by using the index variables pre-created by REDPOL, WVS and DATOS that categorize individual respondents into socioeconomic classes: high, medium-high, medium-low, working, and low.¹⁹ Using these pre-created survey measures for socioeconomic classes into quintiles is a close approximation to the ideal wealth index discussed.

There are analytical advantages to using a quintile of wealth measure such as that developed by LAPOP, and similar socioeconomic class scales from REDPOL, WVS, and DATOS. First, it is more practical and reasonably accurate to estimate levels of individuals' economic status using "expenditure-based indicators", like capital goods ownership, than self-reported income because the latter is often under- and/or misreported (Cordova 2008; Handlin 2013). Second, wealth indexes are a better approach to measuring "patterns of long-term accumulation" than income measures that only provide a "snapshot of inflows" (Handlin 2013, 146). Third, wealth indexes allow for more comparable measures across survey years, since it is often too complicated to translate self-reported income responses into uniform currency units (across space and time) (Handlin 2013). Lastly, the use of a wealth index that divides respondents into distinct classes is particularly appropriate for the Venezuelan sociopolitical context as class differences, class marginalization, and class inequality are very salient concepts in the political rhetoric of the country (Handling 2013).

In addition to these socioeconomic variables, I also create a measure for the Chávez-created Mission participation to examine the relationship between receiving Mission benefits and electoral support for Chávez. Data on Mission participation is only

¹⁹ The 2003 DATOS survey's objective classification of socioeconomic wealth strata has only 4 categories: class ABC+ (wealthiest 5%), class C (high-middle 13%), class D (middle 30%), and class E (poorest 52%).

available after 2003, when the programs were started by the Chávez administration. LAPOP's AmericasBarometer for 2006 and 2010²⁰ have survey questions about respondent's reported receiving Mission aid that are comparable across time and hence useful for the purposes of this chapter. I create separate dichotomous variables for Mission participation in which a respondent is coded 1 if s/he participated in or received social aid from any of the government's Missions (Barrio Adentro, Mercal, Robinson, Ribas, Sucre, or Madres del Barrio), and 0 if no such aid is reported as having been received. Non-responses were coded as missing.

To test the effect that Mission participation may have on the relationship between self-interest and vote choice, I create a variable of personal economic well-being using a survey item that measures idiotropic wealth perceptions from the 2006 and 2010 AmericasBarometer survey. This variable is scaled from 0 to 100, where 0 represents the poorest evaluation of personal economic well-being.²¹ To investigate the relative effect of idiotropic economic evaluations to sociotropic evaluations, I also create a measure for perceptions of national economic well-being that employs the same survey data and is on the same 0 to 100 scale.²²

²⁰ The 2010 AmericasBarometer for Venezuela was conducted by CEDATOS under the direction of LAPOP and Vanderbilt University. It consists of a national probability sample design, with a total sample size of 1,500 voting age Venezuelans. The sample is stratified into six regions, including a capital, Zuliana, West, Mid-West, East, and Los Llanos regions. The dataset contains 178 sampling units, with respondents selected in PSUs of 6 to 8 in urban areas and 10 to 12 in rural areas. The sample is unweighted and has an estimated margin of error of ± 2.5 . Please see http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/venezuela/Venezuela_2010_Tech_Info.pdf for further technical information.

²¹ IDIO1. How would you describe your overall economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad?

²² SOCT1. How would you describe the country's economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad?

To take into account factors that may be causally prior to deciding to voting for Chávez, the analyses include controls for additional socioeconomic and demographic factors including level of education, age, sex, and place of residence. Education is measured equally cross data sets as level of education and operationalized ordinally as none, primary, secondary, and higher education. Age is measured as a respondent's classification into 5 to 6 age cohorts (depending on the survey year).²³ For the sex variable, respondents are coded 1 if female and 0 if male. Finally, place of residence is also a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent lives in an urban area and 0 if the respondent lives in a rural area. Appendix 2.1 displays the average age, percent of females, and percent of urban residents per year for Chávez and opposition voters.

Empirical Results and Discussion

This section presents three separate sets of analyses. I first examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and support for Chávez, and then focus on investigating the relationship among Mission participation, perceptions of personal economic well-being, and support for Chávez. The third section includes comparative analyses of the relationship among the poor, evaluations of personal economic well-being, and vote choice in the Latin American region.

²³ All of the LAPOP surveys include 6 age cohorts while the 2000 World Survey and 2004 DATOS survey only include 5.

The Relationship between Wealth Status and Support for Chávez

As a first step to testing whether Chávez indeed secured support from the poor and previously marginalized majority through redistributive policies and clientelistic exchanges, I compare the socioeconomic profiles of those did and did not vote for Chávez. To do this, I compare mean levels of wealth for Chávez supporters and non-supporters for 1998, 2000, 2006, and 2012.²⁴ Figure 3.1 illustrates the average wealth quintiles of Chávez and opposition voters from 1998 to 2012.

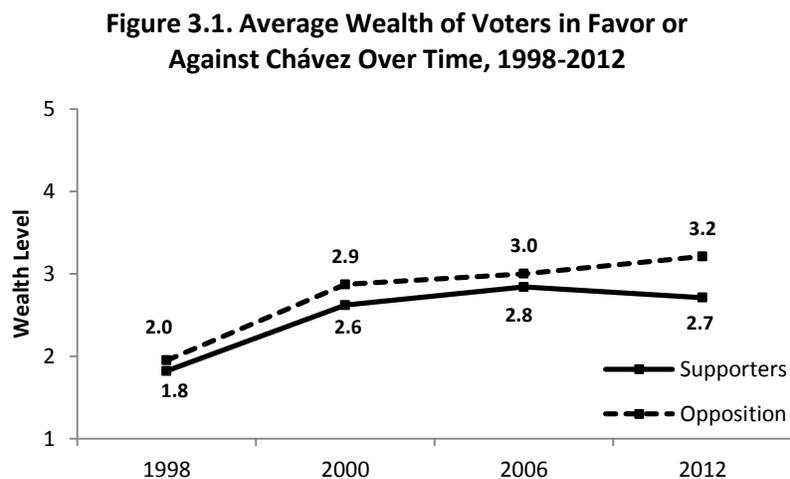


Figure 3.1 affirms the existence of class-based voting in Venezuela during the Chávez era. That is, the results in Figure 3.1 show that Venezuelans who supported Chávez belonged on average to poorer wealth quintiles than those who did not vote for

²⁴ I do not include data for 2004 in Figure 3.1 since the wealth variable in this year is on a 1 to 4 scale, which complicates the visual presentation of average wealth trends over time. However, Appendix 3.2 includes data for 2004 and in essence illustrates the same trend as in Figure 3.1.

him.²⁵ The differences in mean levels of wealth quintiles are statistically significant for all groups and across all four presidential election years.²⁶ With the exception of 1998, in which Venezuelan voters seem to on average belong to the second poorest quintile of wealth, Chávez supporters belonged, on average, to between half or one entire wealth quintile lower than opposition voters. In fact, for years in which Chávez was reelected (2000, 2006, 2012), between approximately 38 and 46% of Chávez voters belonged to the two lowest socioeconomic quintiles, while only about 17 to 37% of Chávez supporters belonged to the top two quintiles. By contrast, among those who voted for an opposition candidate in 2000, 2006, and 2012, about 23 to 34% belonged to the lowest wealth quintiles, and 24 to 47% belonged to the richest wealth quintiles in Venezuela.²⁷

The difference in wealth between voters in Figure 3.1 is especially pronounced in the 2012 elections, when one could argue that motivations for voting in favor of Chávez for the lower wealth quintiles were most ardent after almost a decade of experiencing benefits from redistributive social aid and political inclusion policies. At the same time, motivation for opposition voters, those belonging to the higher socioeconomic wealth

²⁵ Differences in average wealth are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. The difference in average wealth of voters is also statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level in 2004. See Appendix 3.1.

²⁶ An alternative survey used by scholars of Venezuelan Politics is the 2000 data from a survey conducted by Consultores21. Since this survey does not contain the necessary measures to construct a wealth index such as the ones I operationalize for the other survey years, I use the WVS 2000 survey for Venezuela instead. However, the Consultores21 2000 survey data does include a pre-created dichotomous wealth variable. Appendix 3.3 illustrates differences for 2000 in the percent of Venezuelan voters belonging to either the poor class or the middle-high classes. According to this data 2000, Chávez voters tended to be poorer than the opposition. This difference is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

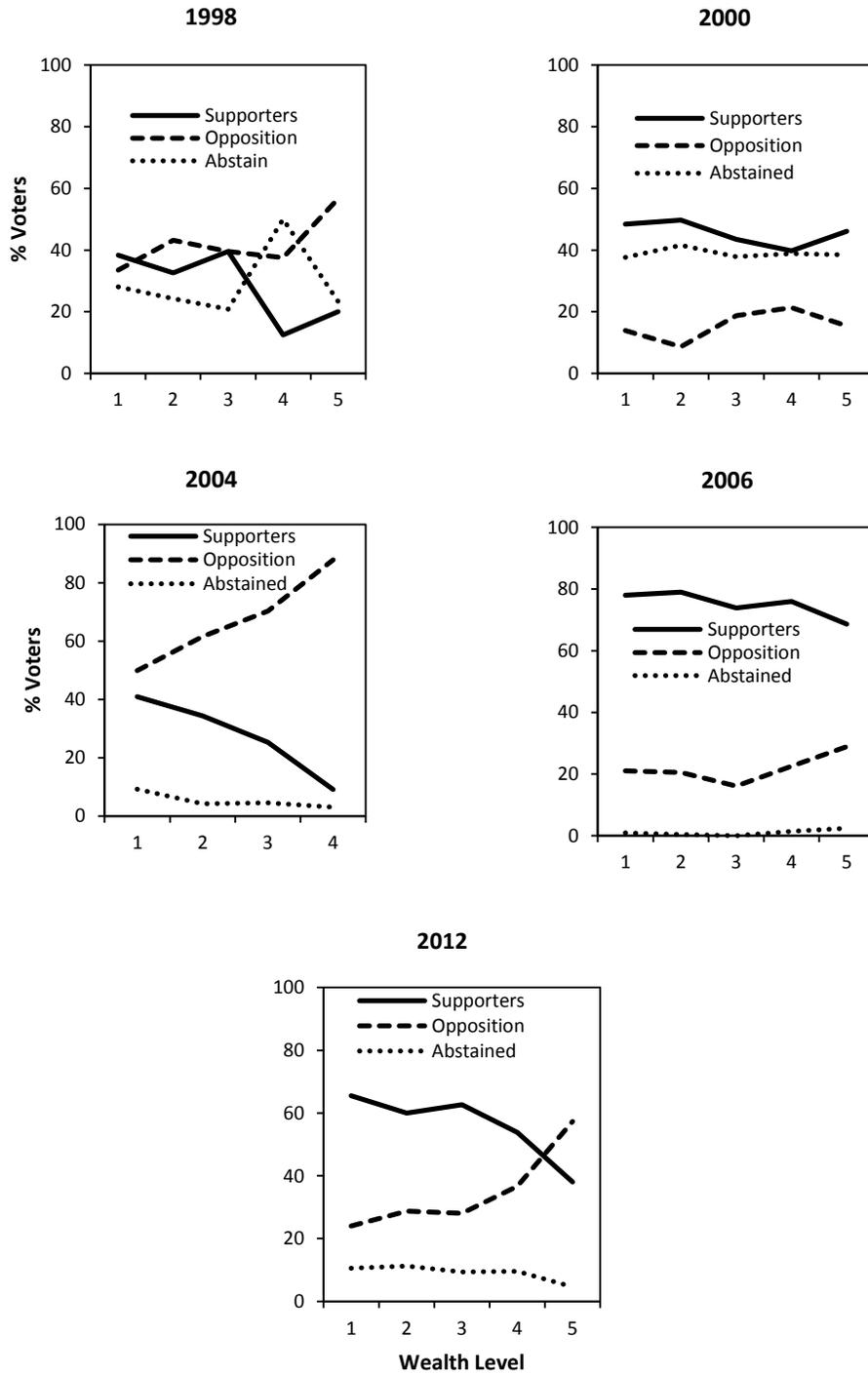
²⁷ See Appendix 3.1 for more detailed information on wealth quintile distribution across years. In terms of the middle class distribution of Chávez supporters and opposition, over 45% of supporters belonged to the middle class in 2000, while almost 53% of those who voted for an opposition candidate belonged to the middle class. In 2006, about 22% of Chávez voters and 19% of opposition voters belonged to the middle class. Finally, in 2012, almost 19% of Chávez voters and 21% of opposition voters belonged to the middle class.

quintiles, was probably mostly driven by the increased negative consequences these upper wealth quintiles experienced with a worsening economic crisis and a decay in political and civil democratic rights. In sum, Figure 3.1 shows that respondents who supported Chávez's reelection were more likely belong to the lower socioeconomic wealth quintiles, as hypothesized.

To further test the relationship between wealth and support for Chávez, I replicate some of Lupu's (2010) key analyses in Figure 3.2.²⁸ According to Figure 3.2, the distribution of voters across the years under observation indicates that class voting is indeed present across the Chávez era. For each election year, Figure 3.2 illustrates trending lines of the proportion of Chávez voters across wealth levels from poorest to wealthiest (and the opposite trend for opposition voters). In 1998, 2006, and 2012, there seems to be a consistent, monotonically decreasing relationship between wealth and support for Chávez. The relationship between wealth and vote for Chávez seems to also be negative in 2000 and 2004, but not as clearly monotonic as in other election years.

²⁸ However, instead of using self-reported income as Lupu does, I employ the wealth index described above. In Figure 3.2, I replicate Lupu's analyses of the percent of Chávez voters, opposition voters, and abstainers belonging to different wealth levels. While Lupu compares voters along self-reported income levels, I compare them using an index of wealth quintiles (with the exception of 2004, which includes only four wealth levels). Additionally, I include data for 2012.

Figure 3.2. Vote Distribution by Wealth Level in Venezuela, 1998-2012



Next, I conducted a series of regression analyses of the effect of Venezuelans' socioeconomic characteristics on vote choice. Table 3.1 displays the results of logit models for 1998, 2000, 2006, and 2012, where the dependent variable is a dichotomous measure of vote for Chávez, and the predictors are wealth quintile, education, age, sex, and place of residence. To recall, vote for Chávez is coded 1 if the respondent intends to vote for Chávez and 0 if the respondent intends to vote for another party/candidate.²⁹

Table 3.1. Effect of Wealth on Vote for Chávez, 1998-2012

VARIABLES	1998	2000	2004	2006	2012
Wealth	-0.15* (0.08)	-0.12 (0.10)	-0.37*** (0.10)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.27*** (0.05)
Education	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.65*** (0.14)	-0.08 (0.09)	-0.31*** (0.11)	-0.31*** (0.11)
Age	0.13*** (0.04)	-0.05 (0.07)	0.08 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.05)
Female	-0.60*** (0.12)	-0.62*** (0.18)	-0.37*** (0.13)	-0.07 (0.15)	0.10 (0.14)
Urban	0.08 (0.18)	0.06 (0.24)	0.03 (0.21)	-0.30 (0.43)	-0.01 (0.25)
Constant	0.09 (0.25)	3.16*** (0.46)	0.07 (0.33)	2.47*** (0.53)	2.01*** (0.37)
Observations	1,121	696	1,045	973	938

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

According to Table 3.1, wealth has a varying but significant effect on Venezuelans' vote choice. For Chávez's initial electoral victory in 1998, those belonging to poorer quintiles were more likely to vote for Chávez (statistically significant at the p<.10 level). Older and male voters were also more likely to vote for Chávez (statistically significant at the p<.01 level). Education level or place of residence did not matter for

²⁹ "I don't know" and "wouldn't vote" answers were coded missing. For 2006, the dependent variable is past vote choice as explained in the data and methods section.

vote choice. The findings for 2000, 2006, and 2012 in Table 3.1 are the most relevant for the purposes of understanding the relationship between socioeconomic factors and the decision to *reelect* Chávez. Wealth is statistically significant in the expected direction for 2004 and 2012. Although, the effects of wealth are not statistically significant for 2000 and 2006, level of education is consistently statistically significant across these years, indicating that voters with higher levels of education were less likely to reelect Chávez.³⁰ These logit regression results provide further evidence for the argument that Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic status were more likely to reelect Chávez in comparison to Venezuelans who belong to the higher socioeconomic wealth quintiles.

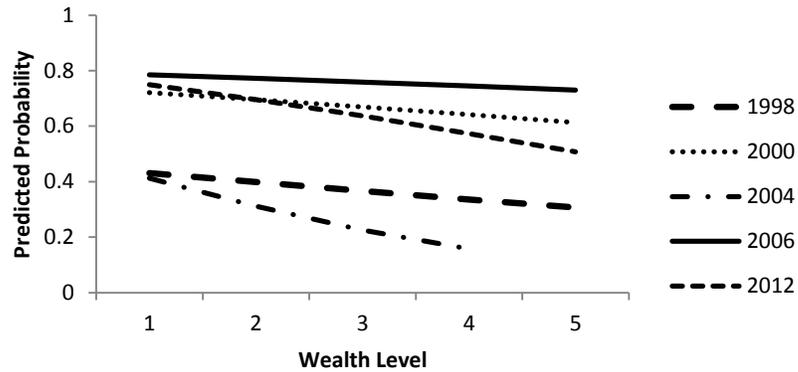
Since logit coefficients are difficult to interpret in terms of effect magnitudes, I conduct a series of predicted probabilities to further examine how variations in wealth can affect the probability of Venezuelans decision to reelect Chávez.³¹ To illustrate and compare the findings to Lupu (2010), I replicate a figure created by Lupu that displays the predicted probabilities of voting for Chávez by wealth level.³²

³⁰ Wealth is also a significant predictor of vote for Chávez when excluding education level from the 2000 and 2006 models. Although it is not specifically anticipated earlier in the chapter scholars of class-voting in Venezuela have also shown that education provides another proxy for measuring socioeconomic class.

³¹ A table of predictive probabilities is displayed in Appendix 3.4.

³² Again, unlike Lupu (2010), I include data for 2012.

**Figure 3.3. Predicted Probabilites of Vote for Chávez,
1998-2012**



According to Figure 3.3, the predicted probability of voting for Chávez significantly decreases with higher wealth level, though there is some variation in the slope effects for 2000 and 2006. The predicted probabilities for these years are not as meaningful as in 2004 and 2012. Overall, the poor are indeed more likely to have voted in favor of Chávez, especially in 1998, 2004, and 2012. As theorized, the effect of wealth on the probability of voting for Chávez seems especially pronounced in years in which Chávez was up for reelection and had established in his political agenda of targeted rhetorical and policies appeals towards the poor.

The marginal effect of decreasing a Venezuelan's wealth status by one wealth quintile on probability voting for Chávez is 3.2 percentage points in 1998, 2.7 percentage points in 2000, 10.1 percentage points in 2004, 1.4 percentage points in 2006, and 6.1 percentage points in 2012.³³ Explaining substantive effects a bit further, a shift from the highest to the lowest quintile of wealth increases the predicted probability of a Chávez vote by 12.5 percentage points in 1998, 10.7 percentage points in 2000, 25.4 percentage

³³ Marginal effects are reported in Appendix 3.4.

points in 2004, 5.5 percentage points in 2006, and an astonishing 24.1 percentage points in 2012. Level of education is also an important factor in predicting the probability of voting for Chávez. The difference between a voter who completed a university degree and one who does not have any education generates a change in the predicted probability of voting for Chávez by 6.5 percentage points in 1998, an impressive 30.2 percentage points in 2000, 15.2 percentage points in 2006, and 15.5 percentage points in 2012. The findings in Table 3.1 and the accompanying predicted probabilities seem to corroborate the hypothesis presented above, which states that Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic status were more likely to provide reelection support for Chávez in 2000, 2004, 2006, and 2012.

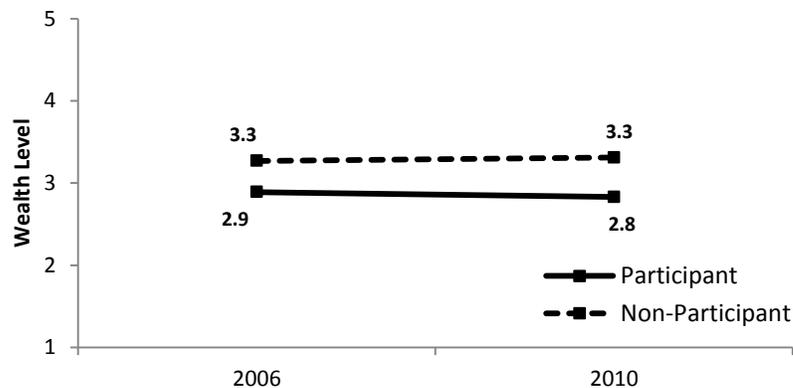
The Relationship among Mission Participation, Perceptions of Personal Economic Well-Being and Electoral Support for Chávez

Next, to explain the possible mechanisms for why and how Chávez was able to secure the vote of the poor, I examine the relationship among Mission participation, perceptions of personal economic well-being, and support for Chávez. Given that the Missions are the most clear and expansive example of the Chávez's administration's efforts to provide targeted socioeconomic benefits and establish clientelistic ties, analyzing survey data on Mission participation is particularly appropriate here. As explained above, since Mission data is only available after 2003, I take advantage of LAPOP's country specific questions about Mission participation in Venezuela in 2006 and 2010.

I first examine the characteristics of Mission participants and non-participants by conducting a series of mean comparisons of socioeconomic factors between the two

groups. The purpose of these tests are to both gain a better understanding of the socioeconomic profiles of those who benefited from the Chávez administration’s social aid programs, and also test the claim that those targeted and those who benefited most from these types of programs were Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic status.³⁴ While Figure 3.4 illustrates the average wealth of Mission participants across years, Figure 3.5 compares the percentage of voters from the poorest wealth quintiles and the middle to high quintiles who participated in Missions in 2006 and 2010.³⁵

Figure 3.4. Average Wealth by Mission Participation in Venezuela, 2006 and 2010



As shown in Figure 3.4, when comparing mean levels of wealth, Mission participants in 2006 and 2010 were more likely to belong to poorer wealth quintiles than those who did not participate in the programs. In fact, those who did benefit from Mission programs tended to belong to at least one wealth quintile lower, on average, than

³⁴ Appendix 3.5 reports average socioeconomic characteristics for Mission participants and non-participants.

³⁵ I create a dummy variable for wealth in which Venezuelans belonging to the bottom two quintiles are coded 1 and those belonging to the middle and higher quintiles are coded 0.

those who did not participate in any Mission programs. The differences in mean levels of wealth quintiles are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Figure 3.5. Distribution of Mission Participation by Wealth Level in Venezuela, 2006 and 2010

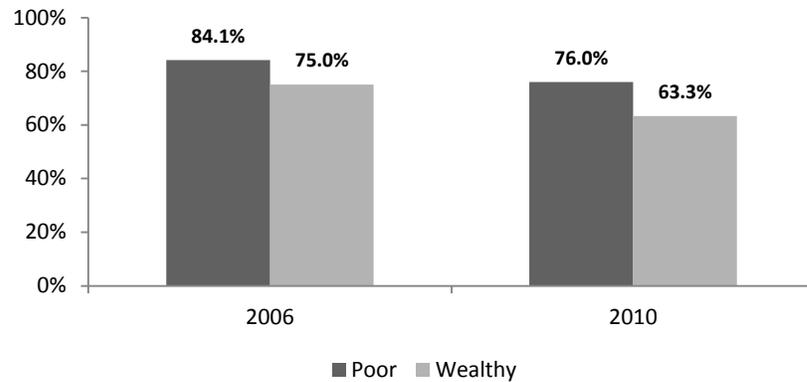


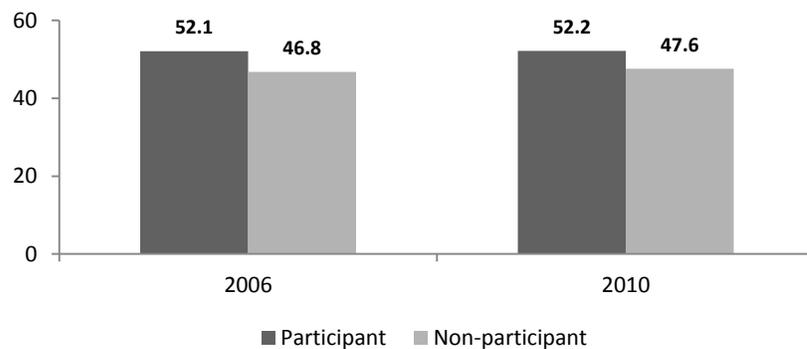
Figure 3.5 complements the findings in Figure 3.4 by showing that the poor tended to participate in Missions at a higher rate than their wealthier counterparts. In 2006, while over 84% of those belonging to the poorest quintiles participated in Missions, about 75% of those in wealthier quintiles participated in these initiatives. A similar difference can be observed in 2010, when almost 76% of poor respondents and about 63% of wealthier respondents participated in missions. The differences in Mission participation rates among wealth groups are all statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.³⁶ A further breakdown of Mission participation by wealth level (see Appendix 3.5), shows that participants and non-participants displayed some important socioeconomic

³⁶ A logit regression model testing the predictive effect of wealth quintile on Mission participation (controlling for education level, age, sex, and place of residence) revealed that decreases in wealth significantly increase the probability of Mission participation. Statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level. Education had a similar negative and significant relationship with Mission participation. See Appendix 3.6.

differences.³⁷ In 2006 and 2010, poor Mission participants displayed the lowest degree of education while wealthy non-participants were the most educated. Additionally, the group of poor participants included the highest percentage of females of all four groups.³⁸

Next, I compare average perceptions of personal economic well-being between participants and non-participants. The expectation is that participants will view their personal economic well-being more favorably than those who did not participate in Missions. Figure 3.6 displays these comparisons.³⁹

Figure 3.6. Average Levels of Personal Economic Well-Being by Mission Participation in Venezuela, 2006 and 2010



According to Figure 3.6, Mission participants, whether poor or wealthy, display significantly more positive perceptions of personal economic well-being on a 0 to 100

³⁷ Appendix 3.5 includes details of the demographic characteristics for all four groups.

³⁸ One-way ANOVA analyses reveal that differences in the average level education and proportion of females among the four groups is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. Appendix 3.6 also displays results for logit regression analyses across 2006 and 2010 for socioeconomic predictors of Mission participation.

³⁹ For Figure 3.6, numbers highlighted in bold represent statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level among all four groups.

scale (where 100 is the best possible evaluation).⁴⁰ As hypothesized, participating in Missions is correlated with favorable perceptions of personal well-being.⁴¹ An OLS regression model further shows that Mission participation significantly increased favorable idiotropic evaluations in 2006 and 2010.⁴² In fact, having participated in a Mission has the greatest effect on levels of personal economic well-being compared to other socioeconomic factors.

So far, the findings in this chapter have established that the poor were indeed the greatest participants and beneficiaries of Mission programs, and that there is a positive connection between Mission participation and perceptions of personal economic well-being. The next step is to disentangle the relationship among Mission participation, evaluations of personal economic well-being, and vote choice. To recall, this chapter argues that the benefits of participating in Missions influenced self-interest as an important predictor of vote choice. Specifically, there are two possible mechanisms that could explain the relationship among Mission participation, personal economic well-being, and electoral support for Chávez. On the one hand, the benefits provided by participation in Missions could have led participants to feel better about their personal well-being than non-participants, which in turn could have had a positive effect on voting for Chávez.⁴³ On the other hand, Mission participation may have moderated the effect of

⁴⁰ Statistical significant is at the $p < .05$ level. See Appendix 3.7 for a breakdown of idiotropic evaluations by wealth and Mission participation.

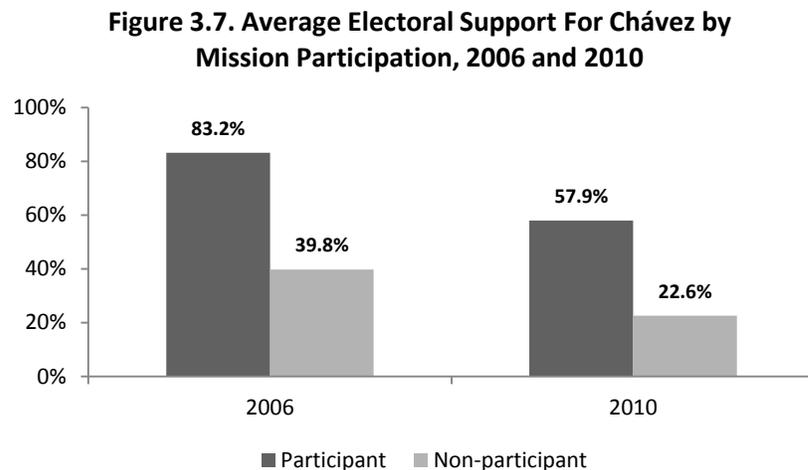
⁴¹ A stronger inference about the causal effect of Mission participation on the level or saliency of self-interest is not possible with the statistical test used in Figure 3.6.

⁴² Appendix 3.8 includes these regressions results, which control for education level, age, sex, and place of residence.

⁴³ It should be noted that there is a potential for an endogenous relationship between Mission participation and feelings of personal-economic well-being. The lack of resources, in terms of time and information, for example, of Venezuelans who live in dire poverty may have created a barrier for entry into social aid programs. However, it is difficult to determine if this was really

idiotropic evaluations on vote choice by increasing the relevance of personal economic well-being in voting decisions.⁴⁴

To test these two possibilities, I first compare the degree of support for Chávez between Mission participants and non-participants in Figure 3.7 and then display the results of regression models for a mediation test and also an interaction between Mission participation and idiotropic evaluations.



As expected, Mission participants displayed a much higher degree of support for Chávez in terms of proportion of voters in his favor compared to those who did not

the case in Venezuela using the survey data available. What we do know about Missions is that their headquarters were mostly located within slums, the poorest sectors of Venezuelan society. Furthermore, as is shown less than 10% of respondents belonging to the lowest wealth quintiles reported not having participated in Missions. And as stated in the previous chapter, not only did social aid programs like the Missions help significantly reduce the amount of Venezuelans living below the poverty line, but Venezuela's Human Development Index also increased during the Chávez era.

⁴⁴ Given the emphasis on Mission participation as a moderating variable between perceptions of personal economic well-being and voting for Chávez, it should be noted that no argument is made about the relationship of idiotropic economic evaluations and wealth status more generally. In fact, unsurprisingly, Venezuelan respondents belonging to the top three wealth quintiles had on average better evaluations of their personal economic status than the poor. See Appendix 3.7.

benefit from Mission participation. However, there is no difference in how poor and wealthy participants expressed their electoral support for Chávez (see Appendix 3.9). According to Figure 3.7, the proportion of Mission participants who indicated electoral support for Chávez is on average about 35 percentage points higher than those who did not participate in Missions.

Next, I conduct a series of mediation tests for the hypothesized relationship among Mission participation, idiotropic evaluations, and voting for Chávez. Although I find some evidence in favor of this mediating relationship, no significant differences exist between Venezuelan poor and wealthy's information processing regarding their participation in Missions, how this affected their perceptions of personal economic well-being, and their decision to reelect Chávez.

I employ Baron and Kenny's (1986) causal 4-step approach to test whether evaluations of personal economic well-being mediate the effect of Mission participation on reelecting Chávez. Given the significant differences in some demographic characteristics between poor Mission participants and non-participants (see Appendix 3.5), I control for wealth, education level, age, sex, and urban residency. To compare the effects of idiotropic evaluations on vote choice to the effect of sociotropic evaluations, I also control for perceptions of national economic well-being.

For Step 1 of the causal step mediation analysis, I test the relationship between Mission participation and vote choice, and find that participating in Missions significantly predicts voting for Chávez in 2006 and 2010.⁴⁵ In Step 2, I test the relationship between Mission participation and perceptions of personal well-being, and find that participating in Missions has a significant and positive effect on idiotropic

⁴⁵ Appendix 3.10 displays the mediation results for Step 1.

evaluations in 2006 and 2010.⁴⁶ For Step 3, I test the predictive effect of idiotropic evaluations (the mediating variable) on vote choice when controlling for Mission participation. The results of this third step are displayed in Table 3.2. I find that Mission participation does have a statistically significant effect on vote choice, even in the presence of idiotropic evaluations.

Table 3.2. Mediation Effect of Idiotropic Evaluations on Vote for Chávez, Controlling for Participation in Missions, 2006 and 2010⁴⁷

VARIABLES	2006	2010
Mission	1.84*** (0.20)	1.26*** (0.20)
Idiotropic Evals.	1.11** (0.49)	1.47*** (0.52)
Wealth	3.87*** (0.46)	4.36*** (0.46)
Sociotropic Evals.	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.06)
Education	-0.35*** (0.12)	-0.27** (0.14)
Age	-0.06 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.06)
Female	0.03 (0.18)	-0.26 (0.17)
Urban	-0.29 (0.47)	0.43 (0.41)
Constant	-1.08* (0.64)	-3.04*** (0.60)
Observations	965	840

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Finally, in Step 4, I compare the estimated coefficients for Mission participation between Step 1 and Step 3. I find that the size of the effect of Mission participation on

⁴⁶ Appendix 3.11 displays the mediation results for Step 2.

⁴⁷ The variables in this table for idiotropic and sociotropic evaluations are rescaled from 0 to 1 in order to provide more meaningful display of coefficients.

vote choice is reduced in both 2006 and 2010. As a further check on the mediating effect of idiotropic evaluations on the relationship between Mission participation and reelecting Chávez, I conduct Sobel (1982) tests for 2006 and 2010. The Sobel test for 2006 yielded a z-value of 3.41, $p < .01$, and an indication that only 6% of the effect of Mission participation on vote choice is mediated by idiotropic evaluations. The same test for 2010 yielded a z-value of 3.50, $p < .01$, and an indication that about 12% of the effect of Mission participation on vote choice is mediated by idiotropic evaluations.

In sum, results in Table 3.2 indicate that there is some evidence for a mediation effect of idiotropic evaluations on the relationship between Mission participation and voting for Chávez. However, the size of the effects calculated through the Sobel tests indicate that the mediating effect that perceptions of personal well-being have on the relationship between Mission participation and vote for Chávez is not very strong.

Next, I examine a possible moderating relationship among Mission participation, personal economic well-being, and vote for Chávez. The results are displayed in Table 3.3. The models include interactions between Mission participation and idiotropic evaluations on vote for Chávez, and controls for education, age, sex, urban residency.⁴⁸ Overall, the results do not provide convincing evidence for a moderating effect of Mission participation on the relationship between idiotropic economic evaluations and vote for Chávez.⁴⁹ Furthermore, sociotropic economic evaluations are once again consistent and statistically significant predictors of vote choice for Venezuelans in 2006 and 2010.

⁴⁸ Results are calculated through a series of logit regression analyses given that vote choice is operationalized as a dichotomous variable.

⁴⁹ I also do not find differences among the ways that Mission participation affects the relationship between idiotropic evaluations and vote choice between the Venezuelan poor and wealthy.

Table 3.3. Moderation Effects of Mission Participation on Relationship between Idiotropic Evaluations and Vote for Chávez, 2006 and 2010⁵⁰

VARIABLES	2006	2010
Mission*Idiotropic	0.39 (1.03)	-2.34** (1.12)
Mission	1.65*** (0.54)	2.53*** (0.65)
Idiotropic Evals.	0.82 (0.91)	3.17*** (0.99)
Sociotropic Evals.	3.87*** (0.46)	4.44*** (0.46)
Wealth	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)
Education	-0.35*** (0.12)	-0.28** (0.14)
Age	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.06)
Female	0.03 (0.18)	-0.26 (0.17)
Urban	-0.29 (0.47)	0.42 (0.42)
Constant	-0.93 (0.75)	-4.00*** (0.78)
Observations	965	840

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

The findings in Table 3.3 indicate that Mission participation is a strong predictor of reelection support for Chávez and that, consistent with classic economic voting theory, sociotropic evaluations are the strongest predictors of vote choice. The results also show that the interaction between Mission participant and idiotropic evaluations has no effect in 2006 and a negative effect on vote choice in 2012. One possible explanation for this finding could be better understood by taking the electoral cycle into consideration. 2010 was not a presidential election year, while 2006 was. So perhaps the temporal significance of the moderating effect of Mission participation on perceptions of personal

⁵⁰ The variables in this table for idiotropic and sociotropic evaluations are also rescaled from 0 to 1 in order to provide more meaningful display of coefficients.

well-being is most relevant when voters weigh self-interest considerations when deciding whom to vote for. Furthermore, Missions tended to be a cornerstone of Chávez's presidential campaigns, which means that voters were primed during election years to think about Missions and how these programs affected their personal well-being.

Comparing the Venezuelan Poor to the Rest of Latin America

So far, the empirical analyses in this chapter have provided important evidence in support of my hypothesized relationship between low wealth and support for Chávez, as well as strong evidence showing that the poor were the greatest beneficiaries of Mission programs. The findings also support my expectation that Mission participants felt both more improved perceptions of personal well-being, as well as greater support for Chávez than non-participants. Additionally, I find some evidence in favor of a mediating relationship among Mission participation, perceptions of personal economic well-being, and voting for Chávez.

A key emphasis of my argument is that Chávez and his political agenda had some unique effect on Venezuelan politics. Specifically, that Chávez's leftist-populist governing strategy represented a drastic change in the landscape of Venezuelan politics, as well as a leading force in the rise of populist governments in the rest of the Latin American region. Hence, the empirical results discussed up to this point lead to the question of whether the dynamics of the public opinion and political behavior of the poor in Venezuela are an exception to the region, or whether the Latin American poor tend to behave similarly to the poor in Venezuela in terms of voting on their self-interest. This section attempts to provide some clarity on this matter. Although I cannot compare the

role of Mission participation, or a similar measure, on the voting decisions of Latin American voters, I compare the differences in the influence of idiotropic for poor versus wealthy voters between Venezuela and Latin America.

Poor voters in Latin America have been shown to place high levels of consideration on their economic self-interest when making political decisions. According to Singer and Carlin (2013), this is due to the underdeveloped context in which the poor live in. These scholars argue that pocketbook voting is more prominent among the poor because they tend to be more vulnerable to financial instability and they are often targets of clientelism practices by political parties.

A comparison of means test indicates that, on average, the wealthy are more satisfied with their personal economic well-being between the poor in Venezuela and in Latin America, as a whole, in 2006, 2010, and 2012.⁵¹ Furthermore, comparison of means tests also indicate that, on average, there is a significant difference in levels of personal economic well-being between those who voted for an incumbent and those who did not in Venezuela and the rest of Latin America.⁵² Regardless of wealth level, respondents who favored an incumbent president tended to have more favorable perceptions of personal

⁵¹ The same variables used for the Venezuelan data to measure idiotropic evaluations and wealth are used for this comparative section. I also analyze comparative data for 2006, 2010, and 2012 for consistency with the previous analyses of Venezuelan data. I exclude data for the United States and Canada. In 2006, average idiotropic evaluations are 48.46 for the wealthy and 41.99 for the poor in Latin America, and 52.87 for the wealthy and 48.39 for the poor in Venezuela. In 2010, 53.43 for the wealthy and 46.27 for the poor in Latin America, and 52.13 for the wealthy and 48.72 for the poor in Venezuela. In 2012, 54.29 for the wealthy and 47.55 for the poor in Latin America, and 55.79 for the wealthy and 50.79 for the poor in Venezuela.

⁵² The difference is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

economic well-being than those who favored a challenging candidate, with the exception of 2006.⁵³

To test a possible difference in predictive effect of perceptions of personal economic evaluations on vote choice between the poor and wealthy in Latin America, Table 3.4 displays logit regression models for 2006, 2010, and 2012 for Venezuela and Latin America as a region. The dependent variable is a dichotomous measure of vote choice, in which those who favored the incumbent president were coded 1 and those who favored another candidate were coded 0.⁵⁴ Country dummies are included in the regional models but are not shown.

⁵³ For 2006, average idiotropic perceptions on a 0 to 100 scale are 41.98 for poor incumbent voters and 40.9 for poor non-incumbent voters in Latin America, and are 51.38 for poor incumbent voters and 41.4 for poor non-incumbent voters in Venezuela. In 2010, 50.54 for poor incumbent voters and 45.97 for poor non-incumbent voters in Latin America, and 57.86 for poor incumbent voters and 42.84 for poor non-incumbent voters in Venezuela. In 2012, 49.51 for poor incumbent voters and 46.68 for poor non-incumbent voters in Latin America, and 54.6 for poor incumbent voters and 43.97 for poor non-incumbent voters in Venezuela. In 2006, average idiotropic perceptions on a 0 to 100 scale are 49.36 for wealthy incumbent and 47.46 for wealthy non-incumbent voters in Latin America, and 58.31 for wealthy incumbent and 45.92 for wealthy non-incumbent voters in Venezuela. In 2010, 56.94 for wealthy incumbent voters and 52.75 for wealthy non-incumbent voters in Latin America, 61.7 for wealthy incumbent and 46.81 for wealthy non-incumbent voters in Venezuela. In 2012, 56.97 for wealthy incumbent voters and 53.6 for wealthy non-incumbent voters in Latin America, and 61.8 for wealthy incumbent and 49.7 for wealthy non-incumbent voters in Venezuela.

⁵⁴ For 2006, I used past vote choice as the AmericasBarometer surveys for 2006 does not include a survey item for vote intention. “I don’t know” and “didn’t or wouldn’t vote” answers were coded missing. Again for Venezuela in 2006, the dependent variable is past vote choice.

Table 3.4. Comparing the Moderation Effect of Low Wealth on the Relationship Evaluations of Personal Economic Well-Being on Vote Choice in Venezuela and Latin America, 2006-2012⁵⁵

VARIABLES	2006		2010		2012	
	Venezuela	LA	Venezuela	LA	Venezuela	LA
Poor*Idiotropic	0.07 (0.88)	-0.11 (0.16)	0.85 (0.95)	-0.10 (0.17)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)
Poor	0.26 (0.44)	0.16* (0.08)	-0.15 (0.52)	0.17* (0.09)	0.76 (0.51)	0.21*** (0.08)
Idiotropic Evals.	1.08* (0.58)	0.58*** (0.11)	1.15* (0.63)	0.45*** (0.12)	0.88 (0.65)	0.40*** (0.10)
Sociotropic Evals	4.16*** (0.43)	0.93*** (0.09)	4.63*** (0.44)	1.72*** (0.08)	5.47*** (0.47)	1.93*** (0.07)
Education	-0.43*** (0.12)	-0.16*** (0.02)	-0.34*** (0.13)	-0.13*** (0.02)	-0.50*** (0.13)	-0.15*** (0.02)
Age	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.08 (0.06)	0.06*** (0.01)	-0.08 (0.06)	0.06*** (0.01)
Female	0.10 (0.17)	0.11*** (0.03)	-0.16 (0.16)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.32* (0.16)	0.00 (0.03)
Urban	-0.23 (0.46)	-0.17*** (0.05)	0.80** (0.40)	-0.17*** (0.05)	0.13 (0.28)	-0.12*** (0.03)
Constant	-0.13 (0.63)	0.20 (0.13)	-2.65*** (0.63)	-1.63*** (0.12)	-1.80*** (0.55)	-1.34*** (0.10)
Observations	965	18,808	840	22,434	930	23,547

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

According to the results in Table 3.4, compared to wealthy voters, poor voters, both in Venezuela and Latin America, do not place greater weight on idiotropic evaluations when choosing to reelect an incumbent their vote choice. That is, when only considering the relationship between wealth status and evaluations of personal-economic well-being and their effects on vote choice, the poor in Venezuela seem to have similar voting calculi to poor voters in Latin America. Compared to the previous findings in this chapter regarding the relationship among Mission participation, idiotropic evaluations, and vote choice, the results in Table 3.4 can be interpreted as suggesting that Chávez's

⁵⁵ Given the large number of countries included in the analyses, I adjust the models to consider the effect of complex survey design.

provision of targeted socioeconomic policies in the form of Missions did seem to have at least some degree of unique effect on public opinion dynamics of the Venezuelan poor, particularly as related to their vote choices. That is, the importance of idiosyncratic evaluations for vote choice in Venezuela, only seem to matter when considered in conjunction with participation in Chávez's Missions.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

This chapter focuses on explaining *who* voted for Hugo Chávez as a first step toward understanding how and why Chávez was able to maintain enough political support to be reelected three times and defeat a recall referendum in a 14-year period. I argue that Chávez was able to secure reelections in 2000, 2006, and 2012, and defeat a recall referendum in 2004 by gaining the political support of the lower classes through targeted socioeconomic policies. Specifically, this chapter makes the claim that the benefits of social aid and inclusion provided by Chávez's policy initiatives like the Missions served as a mechanism that influence how self-interest motivations incentivized members of the lower socioeconomic classes to want to keep Chávez in office.

The empirical tests of this argument provide several indications of why and how the poor were the key drivers of connections between the individual benefits of Chávez's leftist-populist agenda, public opinion, and reelection support for Chávez. First, Chávez consistently drew greater electoral support from the poor across time. We see this in bivariate analyses and even when controlling for classic demographic measures. This finding contributes to settling the debate between those who may agree with Lupu (2010)

and those who argue that class voting has been a key feature of Chávez's electoral success. Second, Venezuelans of lower wealth status were more likely to benefit from targeted initiatives as they participated in Missions to a greater degree than the wealthy. However, the findings also show that Missions served a broader swath of sectors than one might have thought. Third, Venezuelans who participated in Missions had more favorable evaluations of personal economic well-being compared to those of the same wealth who did not participate. Fourth, and also in line with expectations, Mission participants displayed a much higher degree of support for Chávez in terms of proportion of voters in his favor compared to those who did not benefit from Mission participation.

Findings in this chapter also suggest that, although the poor were indeed the key drivers of the success of Missions for securing reelection support for Chávez, once becoming beneficiaries of Mission programs, wealthy and poor Venezuelans did not process information or develop their attitudes all that differently in regards to improved perceptions of personal economic well-being as a consequence of Mission participation and their decision to reelect Chávez. There is also little evidence that Mission participation increased the weight of idiotropic considerations in vote choice. If anything, Missions seem to have had their most important economic influence on support for Chávez by improving the level of personal economic evaluations. That said, the possibility of an endogenous relationship between idiotropic evaluations and Mission participation cannot be completely ruled out.

What these conclusions imply is the possibility that Mission participation led to support for Chávez in ways that go beyond the effect of Mission participation on idiotropic evaluations alone. Moreover, what the findings in this chapter also suggest is

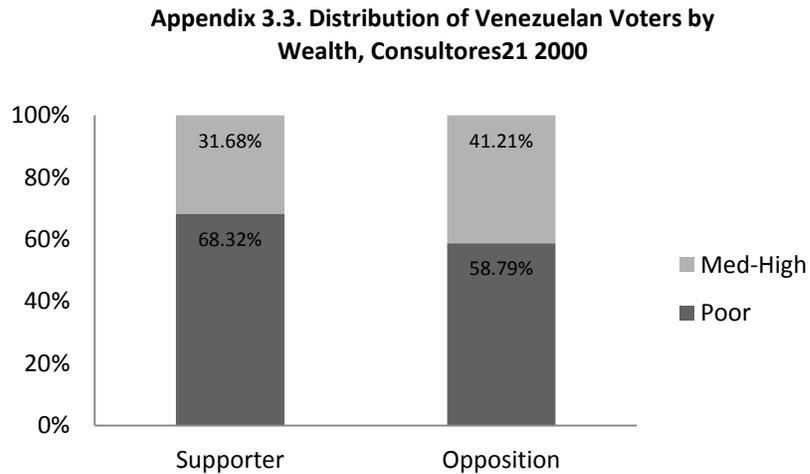
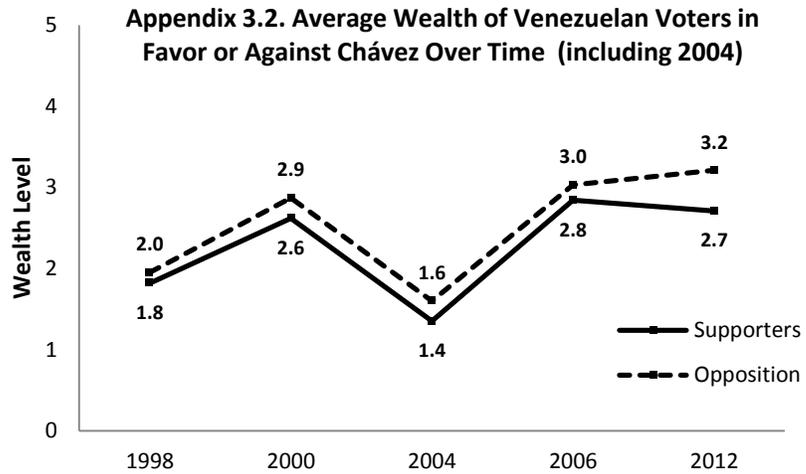
that socioeconomic benefits are only part of the story, and explaining Chávez's repeated electoral success must also consider the political factors that can help us understand the Chávez phenomenon. Chapter III addresses these political factors by using survey data to test the argument that Chávez gained and secured the electoral support of the poor majority in Venezuela by promoting a populist definition of democracy and implementing a series of political changes that increased the participatory nature of the political system toward the inclusion previously marginalized sectors of society.

APPENDIX C

Appendix 3.1: Average socioeconomic characteristics of Venezuelans by Vote Choice, 1998-2012

SES Variable	1998		2000		2004		2006		2012	
	Chávez	Other	Chávez	Other	Chávez	Other	Chávez	Other	Chávez	Other
Wealth	1.82	1.95	2.62	2.87	1.35	1.6	2.84	3.03	2.71	3.21
1%	42.57	34.31	18.5	14.36	71.71	58.82	21.94	19.05	25.96	17.71
2	34.94	42.71	19.29	9.04	21.93	26.45	24.36	20.35	20.47	17.71
3	21.19	19.55	45.28	52.66	5.74	10.74	17.09	19.48	22.3	17.28
4	0.19	0.51	15.75	22.87	0.61	3.99	21.27	20.35	18.8	20.95
5	1.12	2.92	1.18	1.06	-	-	15.34	20.78	12.48	26.35
Income	Bs. 284,487	Bs. 306,833	4.73	5.61	3.62	3.61	7.23	7.63	6.42	7.52
Education	1.67	1.8	2	2.36	1.59	1.76	2.04	2.24	2.02	2.19
Age	3.71	3.43	2.8	2.7	3.82	3.71	2.72	2.67	3.01	2.96
Female %	40.33	55.23	42.86	56.02	43.24	51.1	49.93	51.51	50.25	48.16
Urban %	83.09	83.7	78.86	82.2	88.35	89.62	95.15	96.97	90.52	90.5
N	538	583	511	191	488	726	743	231	601	463

Bold denotes statistical significant differences between Chávez supporters and non-Chávez supporters.



Appendix 3.4. Predicted Probabilities and Changes in Probabilities of Effects of Socioeconomic Factors on Vote for Chávez, 1998- 2012

	1998	2000	2004	2006	2012
Predicted Prob.*	0.402	0.68	0.33	0.76	0.64
Marg. Effect					
Wealth	-0.035	-0.027	-0.081	-0.014	-0.061
Education	-0.021	-0.143	-0.018	-0.057	-0.072
Age	0.032	-0.012	0.017	-0.005	-0.007
Female	-0.150	-0.118	-0.086	-0.013	0.024
Urban	0.019	0.014	0.008	-0.051	-0.002
Min → Max					
Wealth	-0.134	-0.109	-0.210	-0.055	-0.241
Education	-0.063	-0.354	-0.056	-0.156	-0.201
Age	0.163	-0.048	0.068	-0.028	0.036
Female	-0.149	-0.118	-0.086	-0.013	0.024
Urban	0.019	0.014	0.008	-0.051	-0.002

*Predicted probability for female urban resident of average wealth, education and age.

Appendix 3.5. Socioeconomic Characteristics of Mission Participants and Non-Participants in Venezuela, 2006 and 2010

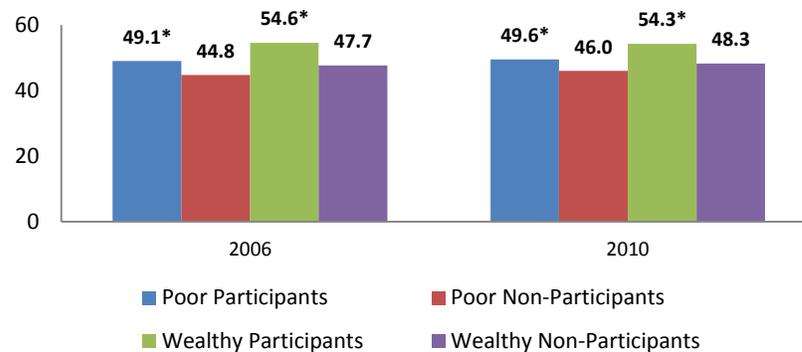
	2006			
	Poor Participant	Poor Non-Participant	Wealthy Participant	Wealthy Non-Participant
Wealth	1.53	1.48	4	4.1
Education	1.96	2.11	2.16	2.29
Age	2.56	2.45	2.58	2.48
Female	56.16	42.57	46.87	47.25
Urban	94.4	95.05	95.42	96.79
N%	35.5%	6.7%	43.4%	14.4%
	2010			
	Poor Participant	Poor Non-Participant	Wealthy Participant	Wealthy Non-Participant
Wealth	2.5	1.52	3.91	4.11
Education	1.77	1.95	2.21	2.34
Age	3.05	2.91	2.72	2.84
Female	51.41	45.21	54.69	45.73
Urban	95.88	95.21	97.52	93.9
N%	30.7%	9.7%	37.7%	21.9%

Appendix 3.6. Determinants of Mission participation in Venezuela, 2006 and 2010

VARIABLES	2006	2010
Wealth	-0.17*** (0.05)	-0.20*** (0.04)
Education	-0.21** (0.09)	-0.29*** (0.09)
Age	0.02 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.04)
Female	0.18 (0.13)	0.28** (0.11)
Urban	-0.16 (0.33)	0.58** (0.27)
Constant	2.31*** (0.41)	1.43*** (0.37)
Observations	1,509	1,492

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Appendix 3.7. Average Levels of Personal Economic Well-Being by Wealth and Mission Participation in Venezuela, 2006 and 2010

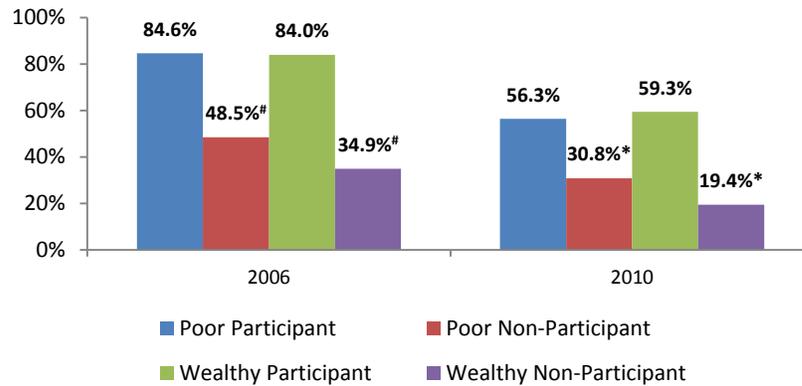


Appendix 3.8. Determinants of Idiomatic Evaluations in Venezuela, 2006 and 2010

VARIABLES	2006	2010
Mission Participation	6.31*** (1.28)	5.72*** (1.14)
Wealth	1.52*** (0.37)	0.98** (0.40)
Education	1.44** (0.71)	2.67*** (0.84)
Age	-0.02 (0.39)	0.37 (0.38)
Female	-3.87*** (1.04)	-1.69 (1.05)
Urban	0.01 (2.48)	-2.91 (2.66)
Constant	40.43*** (3.36)	40.92*** (3.66)
Observations	1,505	1,486
R-squared	0.04	0.03

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Appendix 3.9. Average Electoral Support For Chávez by Wealth and Mission Participation, 2006 and 2010



Appendix 3.10. Effect of Mission Participation on Vote for Chávez, 2006 and 2010 (Mediation Test Step 1)

VARIABLES	2006	2010
Mission	2.06*** (0.18)	1.50*** (0.17)
Wealth	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.05)
Education	-0.24** (0.11)	-0.27** (0.12)
Age	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.05)
Female	-0.16 (0.17)	-0.33** (0.15)
Urban	-0.38 (0.46)	0.03 (0.37)
Constant	0.83 (0.57)	-0.34 (0.49)
Observations	973	841

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Appendix 3.11. Effects of Mission Participation on Perceptions of Personal Economic Well-Being in Venezuela, 2006 and 2010 (Mediation Step 2)

VARIABLES	2006	2010
Mission	6.31*** (1.28)	5.72*** (1.14)
Wealth	1.52*** (0.37)	0.98** (0.40)
Education	1.44** (0.71)	2.67*** (0.84)
Age	-0.02 (0.39)	0.37 (0.38)
Female	-3.87*** (1.04)	-1.69 (1.05)
Urban	0.01 (2.48)	-2.91 (2.66)
Constant	40.43*** (3.36)	40.92*** (3.66)
Observations	1,505	1,486
R ²	0.04	0.03

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

CHAPTER IV

WHO SUPPORTS HUGO CHÁVEZ? THE ROLE OF POLITICAL BENEFITS FOR THE POOR

This chapter seeks to deepen our understanding of how and why it is that Hugo Chávez was able to maintain enough political support to be reelected three times in a 14-year period by examining the political motivations of those who voted for him. The previous chapter examined the socioeconomic profiles of Chavista voters and tested the relationship among targeted redistributive policies, clientelistic linkages, and the repeated electoral success of Chávez beginning in 1998. This chapter investigates the individual-level political benefits that I argue also allowed for the sustainability of Chávez's tenure in office. To review, my main theoretical argument claims that Chávez's repeated electoral success can be explained by the voting incentives generated for the poor majority by Chávez's socioeconomic and political policy agenda. Specifically, the implementation of targeted wealth redistribution programs and the establishment of clientelistic exchanges, as well as measures to advance a populist definition of democracy aimed at increasing the participatory nature of the political system, provided Venezuelans of low socioeconomic status the necessary incentives to keep reelecting Chávez.⁵⁶

This chapter focuses on the politically inclusionary policies that were aimed at creating a more direct, participatory, and protagonist democracy in favor of the inclusion of the Venezuelan poor. Just like the social aid programs and socioeconomic benefits examined in Chapter III, Chávez's politically inclusionary initiatives also contributed to a

⁵⁶ Recall Figure 2.1

political decision-making incentive structure that helped secure his repeated reelection by prioritizing political self-interest considerations among the poor's voting decisions. I use survey data from 1995, 1998, 2000, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012 to examine the relationship between political participation in Chávez's initiatives and attitudes related to Chávez's political agenda, on the one hand, and voting to reelect Chávez on the other. To anticipate, results show that Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic status were indeed more likely to benefit from targeted politically inclusionary initiatives than the wealthy. Additionally, participation in Chávez's initiatives has a positive effect on personal political well-being. The findings also provide some evidence for a mediating effect of evaluations of personal political well-being on the relationship between participation in Chávez's Communal Councils and vote choice, but, once again, no difference between how the poor and wealthy formed their political preferences in choosing reelect Chávez.

Chávez's Populist Definition of Democracy and Agenda for Political Inclusion

Hugo Chávez's rise to political power and his election in 1998 signaled the end of a failed two-party system that had once been seen as the democratic exception of Latin America (Karl 1990, 1995; Ellner and Tinker Salas 2007; Morgan 2007) and "an example of democratic success" (Morgan 2007, 80). Although oil rents had allowed this two-party system to establish an embedded system of clientelism and state patronage, the credibility of AD and COPEI increasingly deteriorated as they grew more exclusionary and unresponsive to demands for more socioeconomic and political equality. Beginning in the 1980s, Venezuelan public opinion began reflecting deep discontent with the pacted

democracy between AD and COPEI (Buxton 2005; Brewer-Carías 2010), and these two parties grew to be viewed as “unrepresentative, elitist and incompetent” (Buxton 2005, 334), especially by the lower classes (Canache 2004). Furthermore, the introduction of unpopular neoliberal policies and the onset of an oil crisis in the early 1980s further damaged Venezuelans’ trust in the traditional political parties (Ellner 2003). The growing lack of legitimacy of the two-party system led to massive partisan de-alignment, electoral abstention, and violent protests, including the infamous violent protests of el Caracazo, and the 1992 coup against President Carlos Andrés Pérez (Buxton 2005; Cyr 2005; Morgan 2007). As summarized by Morgan (2007, 94), “the mass exodus from the traditional party system was motivated largely by people’s frustration with the system’s shortcomings in providing a sense of voice and influence in government.”

The discontent with and demise of the political legitimacy of the Punto Fijo party system allowed Chávez to successfully campaign as an anti-establishment candidate by standing against what was viewed as an elitist and corrupt government that had increasingly ignored the necessary socioeconomic and political inclusion of poor Venezuelans (Buxton 2005; Wilpert 2005; Castañeda and Morales 2008). Chávez had previously made himself a known anti-establishment figure after his leadership role in the 1992 coup against President Pérez (Buxton 2005). In 1998, with the backing of Causa R and Fifth Republic Movement (the leftist party Movimiento Quinta República, MVR), Chávez broke with previous attempts by AD and COPEI to garner support from across classes by instead targeting lower, marginalized citizens (Cyr 2005). Indeed, the collapse of the Punto Fijo party system and the rise of Chávez provided an exceptional opportunity for political participation on behalf of the poor (Canache 2004).

Consequently, and as previously mentioned in Chapter III, Chávez's candidacy and election to the presidency contributed to the growing and deepening of a social polarization of Venezuelan society that had begun in the early 1980s after the implementation of neoliberal reforms (Ellner 2003; Cyr 2005; Roberts 2003).

In addition to being described as an anti-establishment candidate (and president), Chávez became increasingly identified as a populist after a new constitution was ratified in 1999 and he was reelected in 2000. He is considered a prototypical populist leader who signaled the resurgence of a populist wave of Latin American presidents (Schamis 2006; Seligson 2007; Castañeda and Morales 2008; Hawkins 2010b). Chávez embodied the use of fervent and polarizing populist rhetoric that promoted and justified the implementation of a number of constitutional changes and policies that were aimed at increasing participatory avenues for direct democracy and centralizing political power in the president as the leader of *el pueblo*. Indeed, the essence of populism as a form of politics constitutes the rhetorical promotion of a political ideology that endorses an “us versus them” mentality that places “*el pueblo*,” which populists refer to as the “us,” against the established political and economic elite, or “them” (Hawkins 2010b). It is based on anti-establishment appeals, personalism, and a normative institutional and social transformation of the political system by redefining the ideological meaning and purpose of democracy (De la Torre 1997; Barr 2009; Hawkins 2010b). As exemplified by Chávez, populism promises new avenues of political expression and political participation for previously excluded groups, usually belonging to lower socio-economic classes, and provides incentives for clientelistic modes of organization and mobilization (De la Torre 1997, 2007).

Chávez's populist agenda was characterized by a normative redefinition of Venezuelan democracy and the promotion of a politics of inclusion. Using his powerful charisma, defiant rhetoric, and strong leadership qualities (Merolla and Zechmeister 2011), Chávez transformed the way many Venezuelans defined democracy. According to Chávez, the normative meaning and purpose of democracy ought to be based on both a more personal political relationship between citizens and leaders, especially the president, and also the inclusion of previously marginalized poor sectors of society in the power play of politics. He endorsed a type of democracy in which citizens are promised a shift away from the traditional political elites' institutional power. Chávez employed a populist discourse that placed him as the epitome and protector of *el pueblo's* will. He was a self-proclaimed leader of a revolutionary movement that was supposed to embody the will of the Venezuelan people (Canovan 1999; Abts and Rummens 2007; Barr 2009; Deiwiks 2009; Hawkins 2010b). Like most populists do, Chávez helped generated an intense sociopolitical polarization by endorsing and promoting an "us versus them" ideology that placed "el pueblo" at odds with the established political and economic elite. He targeted "political class" as the enemy (Weyland 1996), labeling them as the oligarchy of Venezuela's previous party system and criticizing them as exclusionary, corrupt, and a threat to the true will of the Venezuela people (Hawkins 2010b).

Over the course of 14 years in power, Chávez implemented a number of structural changes and policies that were aimed at transforming the Venezuelan political system into a more direct, or participatory democracy in favor of greater inclusion of the poor and a closer relationship between the president and the people. As summarized by Buxton (2005, 329), "the policies and social constituency of Chávez and *Chavismo* are

understood as a product of exclusion from and reaction against the historically dominant parties, Acción Democrática (AD) and COPEI and the state apparatus that they moulded [sic].” The political foundation of these changes was based on a new constitution ratified in 1999, which included numerous measures aimed at the construction of an inclusionary political system (Álvarez 2003; Canache 2007; De Venanzi 2010; Irazabal and Foley 2010; García-Guadilla et al. 2011; Ellner 2010a). Specifically, the 1999 Constitution aimed at “the construction of citizenship where social rights are universal, and...the rescue of public space as the site upon which to build a participatory democracy” (De Venanzi 2010, 66). In fact, the preamble of the 1999 Constitution introduced a new definition for the Venezuelan political system as a “democratic, participatory and protagonist society” (Canache 2007). Article 62 of the new constitution was unprecedented in establishing the idea that it was the responsibility and duty of the government to provide the citizenry with the necessary tools and conditions for successful participation in public spaces, especially at the community level (Irazabal and Foley 2010; Álvarez and García-Guadilla 2011).

The ratification of the 1999 Constitution was followed by the establishment of numerous policies aimed at increasing avenues of participation for previously marginalized sectors of the Venezuelan population. The Chávez administration placed most of its policy efforts in two dimensions of political participation: electoral mobilization and political organizations. To give “the people” a more protagonist (i.e. central) role in the conduct of politics, Chávez sought to increase the ability of those previously excluded from the political process by funding extensive strategies for electoral mobilization of the poor, as well as grass-roots and community-based

organizations that increased local decision-making power (De Venanzi 2010, Irazabal and Foley 2010). According to De Venanzi (2010), Venezuelans belonging to the lowest social strata reported the highest degree of participation in grass-root organizations created by the government. Indeed, popular mobilization and organization was a main source of Chávez's political survival (Roberts 2006; Ellner 2010b). As explained by Ellner (2010b, 81),

“The key role of popular mobilization in the Chavista political strategy and Chávez's discourse emphasizing the ‘protagonist’ role of the people as spelled out in the 1999 Constitution have contributed to a sense of empowerment among those who for decades had been largely excluded from decision making.”

One key example of Chávez's efforts to increase the ability of marginalized sectors of society to participate in the political arena was through the implementation of strategies for electoral mobilization, such as the “Misión Identidad.” It was launched in barrios (i.e. shantytowns) to provide poor citizens with the ability to simultaneously acquire an identity card and register in the national electoral database (Penfold-Becerra 2007). It was strategically launched before the 2004 recall referendum to increase the number of poor voters registered. Misión Identidad was also used to publicize other social welfare Missions, like Barrio Adentro. According to Penfold-Becerra (2007, 74), “Misión Identidad became a powerful mechanism both to publicize the social programs and to guarantee that voters benefiting from the programs would be politically enfranchised.” Another example of an electoral mobilization strategy by the Chávez administration is the Comando Maisanta. This effort involved the organization of neighborhood-level groups, or “electoral battle units” in charge of a door-to-door voter mobilization campaign that not only increased the enfranchisement of the previously

marginalized poor but it also proved successful for Chávez's defeat of the 2004 recall referendum (Hellinger 2005, 13).

Chávez's leftist-populist agenda promoted a more "protagonist" democracy in favor of the inclusion of the poor not just because the poor were a historically excluded sector of Venezuelan politics, but also because he seemed to view the poor as an untapped resource of electoral mobilization. Chávez used the government's immense social spending ability to fund initiatives like Misión Identidad and Comando Maisanta to ensure that those most likely to benefit from social aid Mission were also made aware of the power of their vote to continue the political benefits the government was providing. In other words, the enfranchisement of the poor provided benefits both for the ability previously marginalized Venezuelans to express their voices through the vote, and also for Chávez's electoral ambitions. The poor proved essential to Chávez's political agenda as Venezuelans saw a record number of elections during his tenure in office, including four presidential elections, a recall referendum, and two referenda for constitutional amendments. These electoral contests, in which Chávez and the vast majority of his initiatives won handily, displayed the lowest degree of voter abstention in Venezuela's democratic history (Hellinger 2005; Ellner 2010b).

In addition to concentrating government efforts in increasing the electoral mobilization of the poor, the Chávez administration sought to build a more participatory democracy by funding the creation of key community-based political organizations like the Bolivarian Circles (Círculos Bolivarianos) and the Communal Councils (Consejos Comunales). Again, these efforts were carried out in the poorest sectors of Venezuelan society. These organizations provided important avenues of political participation for the

promotion and protection of both community interests and the defense of the Bolivarian Revolution (Hawkins 2010a). Chávez adopted what Handlin (2008) calls a strategy of “affiliated associationalism,” in which sociopolitical organizations are created by disproportionately targeting popular sectors of society. By doing this, the Chávez administration added to its social-welfare Missions program by providing political benefits in the form of increased avenues of political participation through local social organizations. Explained differently by Handlin (2012, 3), the Chávez administration “used state policy ‘from above’ to actively shape and institutionalize a new organizational foundation for the class cleavage, once centered on community-based organizations created through social policy.”

Founded in 2001, Bolivarian Circles were the first example of voluntary, community-based organizations aimed at the political inclusion for the poor in Venezuela. They were specifically designed to aid community improvement and promote the Bolivarian Revolution’s ideology and the 1999 Constitution by organizing and mobilizing civil society (Ramírez 2005; Hawkins 2010a). Each unit, or circle, consisted of up to 11 members who provided leadership roles, and were officially registered in the organization and sworn in at large ceremonies involving numerous Circles. By 2008, the Bolivarian Circles had over two million participants (Hawkins 2010a). However, they were criticized for promoting ideological radicalization and even violence, for exacerbating clientelistic linkages, and for failing to act independently from the government (Ramirez 2005; Hawkins and Hansen 2006). Nevertheless, the Bolivarian Circles were successful at promoting participation and the ideals of participatory democracy (Hawkins 2006). Unfortunately for Chavismo, the political relevance of and

participation in the Circles has experienced a steady decline, which Hawkins (2010) speculates is due to the creation of new government programs, like the Missions, which were more broadly aimed at providing socioeconomic needs, and the lack of autonomy and institutionalization of the Bolivarian Circles.

Like the Bolivarian Circles, Communal Councils were created in 2005 to serve as neighborhood associations that facilitated the “consolidation and administration of community development projects and municipal governance” (Hawkins 2010a, 52). In fact, Communal Councils are considered the most successful of the participatory initiatives under the Chávez administration (Gott 2008; Hawkins 2010a; Goldfrank 2011; Handlin 2012). The Communal Councils served as an executive committee selected by Citizens’ Assemblies (Asamblea de Ciudadanos) that were in charge of organizing volunteers and community projects (Hawkins 2010a). They grew to over 18,000 and were able to mobilize and organize eight million participants at the community level by 2008, three times as many participants as the Bolivarian Circles (Hawkins 2010a; Handlin 2012). Furthermore, they were considered a semi-official form of local government, or a “micro government at the community level” (Goldfrank 2011, 42), that received billions of dollars in grants to carry out other political participatory activities and Mission initiatives (Gott 2008; Hawkins 2010a). Like the Bolivarian Circles, the Communal Councils have also faced criticism for relying on government funding, which critics claim have reinforced patronage linkages between citizens and the government, and have threatened the viability of representative democracy (Álvarez and García-Guadilla 2011; Goldfrank 2011). Furthermore, the Communal Councils have been strongly linked with promoting the political ideology of the Chavista movement as the driving motivation for

initiating and completing community projects (Hawkins 2010 article). However, the Communal Councils have led to community-level improvements for which municipal and state governments have proven inefficient (Ellner 2010b).

One of the most important efforts toward attempting to continue the inclusionary political agenda of the Chávez administration was the creation of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) in 2007 (Maloney-Risner 2009). As a successor of the MVR, which was broken up in late 2006, the PSUV included leftist political parties that had supported Chávez in previous year (Handlin 2012). The creation of the PSUV represented the continued politicization of the party system along class cleavages (Handlin 2012) and it became the official political entity endorsing Chávez's 21st century socialism (Lopez Maya 2008; Maloney-Risner 2009). According to Ellner (2010b, 81), "the formation of the PSUV, which was designed to overcome the bureaucracy and lack of communication with the Chavista base, also promoted mass participation." Following the 2006 presidential elections, 75% of those who voted for Chávez were official members of the PSUV (Ellner 2010b). Furthermore, the rise of the PSUV contributed to the strengthening of linkages among the new political organizations created by the Chávez administration and its leftist ideology. By being actively involved in the activities of Missions and Communal Councils, for example, PSUV party officials and Chávez were facilitated the ability to both claim credit for the socioeconomic and political benefits provided by these initiatives, and also recruit and mobilize voters in their favor (Handlin 2012).

Other notable initiatives by the Chávez administration in establishing forms of participatory democracy include Health Committees and Urban Land Committees

(Hawkins 2010a). Health Committees (Comités de Salud) were created in 2003 to provide administrative support to the Misión Barrio Adentro clinics, and grew rapidly to approximately 6,500 committees by 2008 (Hawkins 2010a). Urban Land Committees (Comités de Tierra Urbana) were created in 2003 to help provide over two million residents of barrios legal ownership of the land they lived on (Hawkins 2010a).

According to Ellner (2010b), as a result of the initiatives for the enfranchisement of the poor and the creation of community organization as discussed above, Venezuela's poor were able and more willing to participate in unprecedented amounts numbers in both elections and political organizations (Ellner 2010b). The following section explains why this was the case by discussing how the political benefits of Chávez's inclusionary policies translated into his repeated electoral success.

Explaining the Link between the Poor's Political Benefits and Chávez's Electoral Success

This chapter argues that Chávez was able to secure multiple reelections by gaining the political support mainly of the lower Venezuelan classes thanks to the success of his transformation of the political arena of Venezuela through targeted political benefits. Chávez changed the Venezuelan political landscape through both a redefinition of the normative purpose of government toward citizens, and also the inclusion of previously marginalized (but large) sectors of society in the power play of Venezuelan politics. By providing targeted political benefits through new avenues of political participation, Chávez gave political voice to previously overlooked sectors of Venezuelan society. In fact, the participatory initiatives of the Chávez administration have been

particularly successful in including and mobilizing women, the poor, and less educated, all traditionally politically marginalized sectors of Venezuelan society (Hawkins 2010a). The targeted provision of these political benefits not only had the objective to construct a more inclusive political system, but also provide Chávez with a loyal following. Indeed, according to Hawkins (2010a, 37), “Chávez’s charismatic authority is an omnipresent source of identity and motivation among participants, and many of these organization mimic (or wholeheartedly endorse) the party line of government.”

Just like the socioeconomic benefits gained through the Missions, the Venezuelan poor under Chávez received unprecedented political benefits of inclusion into the political system. Therefore, it is not surprising that beneficiaries of Chávez’s initiatives for new political organizations to include the historically marginalized in Venezuela had sufficient reasons and motivation to have continuously reelected Chávez. While the discontent with the previous two-party government’s neglect of the poorest Venezuelans is a key reason Chávez was able to win the presidency in 1998, important gains in political inclusion for the poor under the Chávez administration are also crucial for explaining Chávez’s ability to remain in office with massive electoral support.

Most scholarship on the Venezuelans’ political behavior has focused on discussing and analyzing electoral participation trends and studying specific organizations like the Bolivarian Circles and/or the Communal Councils. This chapter provides a more comprehensive study of how new and facilitated avenues of political participation translated into a loyal electoral base among the Venezuelan poor that helped reelect Chávez in 2000, 2006, and 2012. I argue that just like the socioeconomic benefits gained by the Venezuelan poor through redistributive policies of the Missions, members

of the lower classes also received unprecedented political benefits of inclusion under the Chávez administration. The experience of such inclusionary policies also contributed to creating a political decision-making incentive structure that helped motivate the poor majority to provide continued electoral support for Chávez (see Figure 2.1). His populist message of inclusion and policies created new and more extensive avenues of political participation that helped motivate poor voters' self-interests in securing these acquired political benefits. Similar to the relationship between Missions and material self-interest discussed in the previous chapter, the political benefits of the initiatives like the Bolivarian Circles and Communal Councils influenced the role of political self-interest in the voting calculus of the poor toward Chávez. This meant that by continuing to vote for Chávez and his party, the poor majority sought to protect their political voice and newly gained inclusionary and organizational benefits. For the poor, a vote for Chávez not only meant a vote for the continuation of social aid since programs like the Missions, but also a vote in favor of safeguarding their new status within the political system. The continued political appeal and success of Chavismo was then not only due to its ability to "satisfy the material self-interest of Venezuelans, but also in its credible moral message" (Hawkins 2010b, 46), a message that condemned the corruptness of Venezuela's previous party system and called for a revolutionary transformation of the democratic structure of the country in favor of the true interests of "el pueblo."

Chávez's populist political rhetoric and policies of inclusion gave a new importance to the voice and needs of the poor majority, increasing the participatory nature of Venezuelan politics. According to Wilpert (2005, 21), "the policies of the Chávez government that promote[d] 'participatory democracy,' ... have allowed many

Venezuelans, but especially the poor, to feel included in Venezuelan democracy more than ever before.” Hence the Bolivarian Circles and Communal Councils, and other inclusionary initiatives similar to them, are also fundamental factors for understanding Chávez’s repeated electoral success.

I argue that the unprecedented political benefits experienced under the Chávez administration prioritized strong self-interest motivations that led members of the lower socioeconomic classes to want to keep Chávez in office. In essence, I extend the argument made in Chapter III about the relationship among Mission participation, economic self-interest, and voting for Chávez. Specifically, I mirror the logic of the argument for the role of economic self-interest in voting by proposing that there are two possible ways in which the benefits of Chávez’s political inclusion initiatives served as mechanisms to explain the role of political self-interest motivations in choosing to reelect Chávez (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3). On the one hand, participation in these initiatives could have had a positive impact on perceptions of personal well-being as a consequence of experiencing significant individual political benefits, such as more accessible ways to voice political needs and opinions through Communal Councils. In turn, the desire to protect self-interest in terms of political gains and an a more inclusionary status in the political system could have motivated Communal Council beneficiaries to be more likely than non-beneficiaries to vote for Chávez. On the other hand, participation in Communal Councils, for example, could have acted as a moderating factor on the relationship between self-interest considerations, such as perceptions of personal political well-being, and vote choice. That is, participating in Communal Councils increased the relevance of self-interest considerations on vote choice.

This argument is contrary to a large field of literature that presents evidence against the claim that self-interest, especially economic self-interest (i.e. pocketbook or egocentric voting), greatly affects vote choice (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Feldman 1982; Kramer 1983; Markus 1988; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000). However, the Venezuelan case under Chávez displays key contextual characteristics that can not only justify the importance of material self-interest considerations in poor citizens' decision to vote for Chávez, but could also help connect political self-interest factors to vote choice. First of all, Venezuela fits into the underdeveloped context in which Singer and Carlin (2013) argue that self-interest considerations tend to play a significant role in forming political preferences like vote choice. Second, programs like the Bolivarian Circles and Communal councils also had a clientelistic aspect to them as they targeted provision of inclusionary political benefits to provide Chávez with a loyal following. These types of electoral mobilization strategies are often used in Latin America used to target the poor, who are argued to have shorter time horizon in the political decision-making. This could mean that they not only place higher value on receiving immediate material benefits in comparison to longer-term policy reforms (Kitschelt 2000; Keefer and Khemani 2005; Weitz-Shapiro 2009; Singer and Carlin 2013), but also more tangible political benefits like the ability to voice their opinion and needs through Bolivarian Circles and/or Communal Councils.

Third, self-interest becomes an important influence on political preferences when leaders like Chávez make problems such as political marginalization by past administrations highly salient issues for the political landscape (Chong et al. 2001). Through his populist discourse and political agenda, Chávez prioritized and made more

salient the political rights and inclusion of the poor. Hence, it could be argued that political self-interest could have grown in its influence on vote choice for the poor, as Chávez made clear that they had high stakes in losing the political benefits gained under him if he was voted out of office. Chávez's priming of the need for "the people's" political inclusion and provision of greater avenues of political participation made the protection of political benefits of mobilization and organization both a key priority of the poor majority's "personal agenda" (Young et al. 1987), and also a matter that was highly cognitively accessible when making vote choices. Furthermore, the saliency of the protection of the gained political benefits under the Chávez administration could have played an important role in vote choice among Venezuelans given the high number of presidential elections in which Chávez was up for reelection after 1998 (2000, 2006, and 2012). As shown by (Hunt et al. 2010) self-interest matters more for voting when political decisions are made in the context of the near future, such as a forthcoming election. The constant "near future" context under which Venezuelan voters were forced to think about presidential elections also ensured the political saliency not only of the unprecedented socioeconomic benefits for the poor majority under Chávez, but also the unprecedented political benefits gained by this sector of the Venezuelan population during the Chávez era.

Just as socioeconomic benefits are argued to have affected the influence of material, or economic, self-interest in the voting calculus of the Mission beneficiaries toward Chávez, one could argue that political benefits could have had a similar effect on voting considerations for beneficiaries of initiatives like the Communal Councils or Bolivarian Circles. By continuing to vote for Chávez and his party, inclusionary program

participants sought to protect their self-interest in terms of newly gained political benefits, including easier access to voting registration and membership in political organizations. This makes sense since that the social protection benefits provided through social organizations promoted by the Chávez administration, were explicitly linked to Chávez and his party (Wilpert 2005). Hence, voting for Chávez and his party allowed members of lower classes to voice their socioeconomic and political needs and their support for the continued government support of such social organizations and of the inclusionary benefits that were tied to them.

In sum, this chapter argues that Chávez's populist redefinition of the purpose of democratic government toward a more participatory system in which the protagonist was the voice of the people resonated most with the poor sectors of Venezuelan society that had been historically marginalized by the previous two-party system. Chávez's message of inclusion, along with the participatory initiatives aimed at increasing the political needs of the poor, helped motivate poor voters' self-interests in securing these acquired political benefits. The political benefits of inclusion gained through organizations like the Bolivarian Circles and the Communal Councils were mechanisms by which Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic status could have become the most politically loyal and essential to Chávez's repeated electoral success. In this way, I argue that the poor are the drivers of connections between Chávez's policies for political inclusion, public opinion, and reelection support for Chávez. The receipt of unprecedented political benefits thanks to the Chávez administration's inclusionary initiatives helped create a political decision-making incentive structure that secured the continued electoral support of the poor majority. Specifically, participation in organizations like the Communal Councils could

have served as a mechanism to either moderate and/or mediate an increased effect of self-interest motivations on vote for Chávez.

To test the above argument, this chapter will test the observable implications laid out in Chapter III. As a reminder, I repeat them here. First, Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic status should have been more likely than their wealthier counterparts to benefit from politically inclusionary policies, such as easier access to voting registration and membership in political organizations formed to represent the needs of the poor (H_2). Hence, Venezuelans of low socioeconomic status should have been the most incentivized to participate politically through exercising their right to vote, political organizations, like the Communal Councils and the Bolivarian Circles, and/or identify with political parties associated with Chávez. Second, participants of Chávez's initiatives, like the Communal Councils, should have more favorable perceptions of personal political well-being than those who did not participate (H_3). Third, Venezuelans benefiting from Chávez's politically inclusionary programs, especially the poor, should be more likely than none beneficiaries to have provided reelection support for Chávez between 2006 and 2012 (H_4 , H_{4a}).⁵⁷

Fourth, if there is a mediation relationship among participation organizations like the Communal Councils, evaluations of personal political well-being, and vote choice, then Communal Council participation should predict both perceptions of personal well-being and vote choice and measures of personal economic well-being should significantly predict vote choice when controlling for Communal Council participation (H_5). Fifth, if

⁵⁷ To recall, the previous chapter shows that Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic status and those who received benefits from social aid missions were significantly more likely than Venezuelans of higher socioeconomic status that did not receive these benefits to vote for Chávez. Consequently, the relationship between wealth and vote choice is not considered in this chapter.

participation in organizations like the Communal Councils moderates the relationship between evaluations of personal political well-being and vote choice, there should be a significant interaction effect for Communal Council participation on the degree to which evaluations of personal political well-being affected vote choice (H_6). Additionally, I test for possibility that a mediating and/or moderating relationships among Communal Council participation, evaluations of personal political well-being, and vote choice, may have been more pronounced among the poor's political decision-making compared to the wealthy. Finally, if the political behavior of the Venezuelan poor and electoral success of Chávez political strategy of targeted political benefits simply constitute politics "as usual," then we should observe a similar relationship between evaluations of personal political well-being and vote choice among the poor in the rest of the region

The remainder of this chapter tests these hypotheses. I first examine the socioeconomic characteristics of those most likely to benefit from Chávez's inclusionary policies by looking at different forms of political participation. Although, I do not have access to panel data, I perform these comparisons using survey items from before and after Chávez's 1998 election in order to investigate whether there are the expected changes in aggregate political participation and attitudes regarding political participation. Next, I examine the relationship between Communal Council participation, perceptions of personal well-being, and vote choice, more specifically, and test for possible moderating and mediating effects. Finally, I conduct a similar set of comparative analyses as in Chapter III to test the uniqueness of the Chávez phenomenon.

Data and Methods

In order to examine the individual-level political factors that, in addition to the socioeconomic benefits analyzed in Chapter III, may have influenced electoral support for Chávez, I employ the same series of survey datasets used in Chapter III that are pertinent to presidential election years in Venezuela during Chávez's administration (1998, 2000, 2006, 2012). The datasets include REDPOL's 1998 survey, the WVS 2000 survey for Venezuela, and LAPOP's AmericasBarometer surveys for Venezuelan in 2006 and 2012.⁵⁸ However, in this chapter I also examine data from an earlier LAPOP survey conducted in Venezuela in 1995 in order to make general comparisons in key explanatory variables before and after Chávez's election.⁵⁹ Additionally, to complement the analyses and examine survey items that were not uniformly asked across survey years in the AmericasBarometer in Venezuela, I also use the 2008 and 2010 survey rounds.⁶⁰ The

⁵⁸ The technical information regarding the survey design of these survey data are detailed in Chapter III. As mentioned in Chapter III, the survey data for the 2006 AmericasBarometer in Venezuela was actually collected in 2007, but I refer to this dataset using the year 2006, which is the year of the election it references.

⁵⁹ Since there unfortunately is no panel data available for the time period of interest, the comparisons and references are made at the aggregate level instead of the individual level. The 1995 survey was carried out by the Center for Economic and Social Research of the Andrés Bello Catholic University (Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales de la Universidad Católica Andrés Bello-UCAB) under the supervision of Damarys Canache. The survey was conducted in Venezuela's two largest urban areas, Caracas and Maracaibo, and consists of a total sample size of 897 voting age respondents. The sample is stratified into five socioeconomic strata using census segments. The sample is unweighted.

⁶⁰ LAPOP's 2008 survey in Venezuela was carried out by the Centro de Investigaciones en Ciencias Sociales (CISOR) between January and February 2008. It consists of a national probability sample design, with a total sample size of 1,500 voting age Venezuelans. The sample is stratified into six regions, including a Capital, Zuliana, West, Mid-West, West, and Los Llanos regions. The dataset contains 178 sampling units, with respondents selected from 55 primary sampling units from 21 out of 23 states, including 1,221 respondents from urban areas and 279 from rural areas. The sample is unweighted and has an estimated margin of error of 2.5. Please see <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/venezuela/2008-techinfo.pdf> for further technical

main dependent variable is the same vote choice measure used in the previous chapter: a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent intends to vote for Chávez and 0 if respondent intends to vote for another party/candidate.⁶¹ For the 2006 data, rather than using vote intention, I use vote choice in the previous election since the survey was conducted in the months following the December 2006 elections.⁶²

I also use these various datasets to measure individual-level factors related to the political benefits gained by participating in Chávez's inclusionary initiatives. I examine self-reported turnout, party identification, and participation in programs specifically created by and linked to Chávez, including Communal Councils, Bolivarian Circles, Citizen Assemblies, and Urban Land Committees. All of these measures for political participation are operationalized as dichotomous variables, where respondents are coded 1 if they indicated having turned out to vote in the past presidential election,⁶³ identify with a party, and/or participated in any of the organizations listed, and coded 0 otherwise.

To test the effect that participation in Chávez's initiatives, such as Communal Councils, may have had on the relationship between self-interest and vote choice, I create a variable of personal political well-being using a survey item that a respondent's individual satisfaction with democracy in Venezuela using data from the 2006, 2010, and

information. See Chapter III for a technical description of the 2010 AmericasBarometer dataset for Venezuela.

⁶¹ "I don't know", "wouldn't vote", and null vote answers were coded missing.

⁶² See Appendix 4.1 for a distribution of the dependent variable for vote choice for 1998, 2000, 2004, 2006, and 2012.

⁶³ For 1998 and 2012 I use survey items for vote intention in the upcoming presidential election. The "previous" election referenced in the 1998 REDPOL survey is the same 1993 election that is asked about in the 1995 LAPOP survey. Because the REDPOL survey was conducted with very close temporal proximity to the 1998 election, and because I am theoretically interested in the 1998 election when Chávez was a first-time candidate, I use vote intention for 1998. A similar situation is present with the 2012 LAPOP survey, where the "previous" election referenced is the 2006 election which is already asked about in the 2006/2007 survey. Hence, for 2012 I also use vote intention as the survey in this year was also conducted with temporal proximity to the December 2012 presidential elections in Venezuela.

2012 AmericasBarometer survey.⁶⁴ This variable is scaled from 0 to 100, where 0 represents the poorest evaluation of personal political well-being. Unfortunately, the data employed for this chapter does not include a more direct measure of a respondent's personal political situation more comparable to the idiosyncratic economic evaluations used in Chapter III. Nevertheless, I believe a respondent's perceptions how much he or she is satisfied with democracy can be considered a close proxy to an ideal measure of personal political well-being.

To test the hypothesized differences in political benefits from Chávez's initiatives between poor Venezuelans and those of higher socioeconomic status, I use the same wealth measure for 1998, 2000, 2006, and 2012 employed in Chapter III.⁶⁵ For LAPOP's 1995, 2008, and 2010 datasets, I construct a wealth index with the equivalent specifications regarding the number capital goods owned as used for the construction of the wealth index using the 2006 and 2012 AmericasBarometer datasets.⁶⁶

Finally, the analyses control for a number of additional demographic factors including age, sex, level of education, and place of residence. Education is measured equally across data sets as "level of education" and operationalized ordinally as having completed none, primary, secondary, and higher education. Age is measured as a respondent's classification into 5 to 6 age cohorts (depending on the year). To create a variable for sex, respondents are coded 1 if female and 0 if male. Finally, place of

⁶⁴ PN4. And now, changing the subject, in general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in country?

⁶⁵ See previous chapter for a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of using a wealth index measure instead of self-reported income.

⁶⁶ For the 1995 wealth index, I weigh capital goods ownership by household type rather than the urban/rural divide as done in the later AmericasBarometer surveys since the 1995 survey is only conducted in large urban areas. (For an explanation of weighting of capital goods when creating the wealth index see Córdova 2009, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/I0806en.pdf>)

residence is also a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent lives in an urban area and 0 if the respondent lives in a rural area.

Empirical Results and Discussion

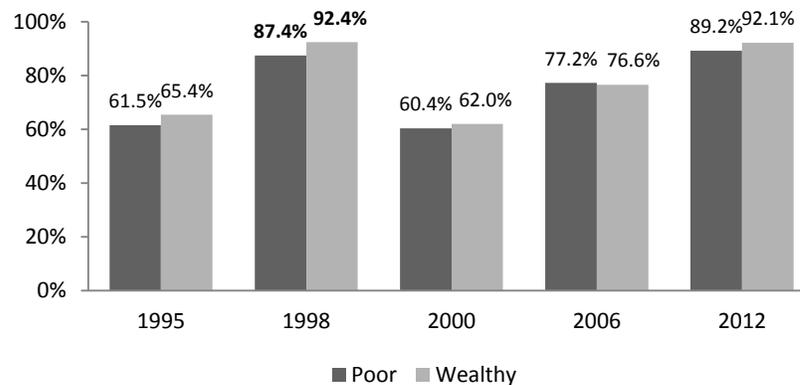
In order to test the hypotheses presented above, I conduct three separate sets of analyses. I first compare rates and types of political participation between poor and wealthy Venezuelans, and then focus on investigating the relationship among Communal Council participation, perceptions of personal political well-being, and support for Chávez. The third section includes comparative analyses of the relationship among the poor, evaluations of personal political well-being, and vote choice in the Latin American region.

Comparing Political Participation among Venezuelans of Different Wealth Status

One of the observable implications outlined above states that if the receipt of unprecedented inclusionary political benefits helped create a political decision-making incentive structure that allowed Chávez to secure the continued electoral support of the poor majority, Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic status should have been more likely than those in wealthier classes to benefit from policies targeted at the inclusion of the poor. Examples of these policy initiatives include strategies to increase the poor's enfranchisement, party identification, and participation in organizations like the Bolivarian Circles and the Communal Councils. Figures 4.1 through 4.5 illustrate differences in several forms of political participation between Venezuelans of low wealth

and those belonging to the middle or higher wealth quintiles. Wealth categories were constructed by classifying those who belong to the two lowest quintiles of wealth as “Poor” and those belonging to the middle (3rd quintile of wealth) or higher (4th or 5th quintiles) as “Wealthy.”⁶⁷ Data for 1995 is used as an aggregate point of reference with which to compare the impact of the election of Chávez and the implementation of his participatory initiatives. Statistically significant differences among wealth categories are highlighted in bold.⁶⁸

Figure 4.1. Average Levels of Self-Reported Turnout by Wealth Level in Venezuela, 1995-2012



The comparisons in Figure 4.1 reveal several important findings regarding differences in self-reported turnout between poor and wealthy Venezuelans. First, the wealthy reported turning out at higher rates in the 1995 survey, which asked whether respondents voted in the 1993 presidential elections. Although the difference between the poor’s self-reported turnout in 1995 (61.5%) and the wealthy’s turnout rate (65.4%) is not

⁶⁷ Although this latter category includes the middle wealth category, for simplicity I group them under the “Wealthy” label.

⁶⁸ For the figures in this section, a simple bold highlight denotes statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level, while bold italics denote statistical significance at the $p < .10$ level.

robustly statistically significant, a comparison of means test yielded a p-value of 0.11 for a one-tailed test in which the alternative hypothesis is that the wealthy reported higher turnout. This is a meaningful finding if one considers that during the mid to late 1990s, poor Venezuelans lacked many incentives to vote as the lower classes in Venezuelan society were often marginalized by the two-party system between AD and COPEI.

Second, Figure 4.1 also shows that in 1998, the year of Chávez's first candidacy, although the wealthy reported higher turnout,⁶⁹ both poor and wealthy Venezuelans seemed to be highly motivated to participate in the election. In fact, such high levels of self-reported turnout are only matched in 2012. 1998 and 2012, both represented crucial presidential election years in Venezuela. In 1998, the two-party system had collapsed and Chávez had stormed the political arena with a highly appealing anti-establishment political platform. In 2012, Chávez faced his most competitive elections yet against a newly unified opposition coalition. Hence, it is not surprising that the turnout rates for the 1998 and 2012 elections in Figure 4.1 reflect the high stakes of these two elections.

Finally, the findings in Figure 4.1 indicate that poor and wealthy Venezuelans reported displayed virtually equal (and rising) levels of turnout in 2000, 2006, and 2012. The lack of statistically significant differences in self-reported turnout between the poor and wealthy for any of the presidential elections after 1998 can be interpreted as suggesting that Chávez's efforts to include and mobilize the poor within the political arena were successful in motivating the poor to participate. That is, the poor seemed to have reaped the benefits of Chávez's policies for their enfranchisement by becoming increasingly politically active after Chávez's 2000 reelection following the ratification of the 1999 constitution that called for the implementation of the key participatory policies

⁶⁹ The difference in 1998 is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

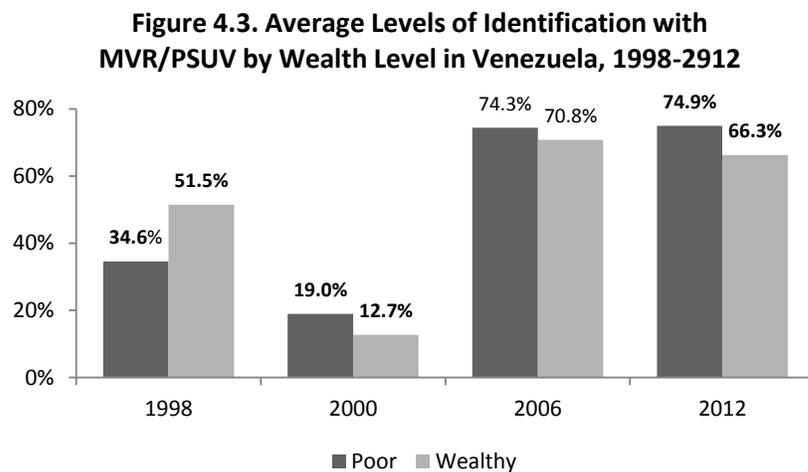
discussed above. In fact, the poor reported turning out to vote at equal rates than their wealthier counterparts even as the percentage of Venezuelans living under the poverty line declined from 46.5% in 2000, to 36.3% in 2006, and to 25.4% by 2012 (World Bank 2013). Next, Figure 4.2 compares differences in average rates of party identification between poor and wealthy Venezuelans.

Figure 4.2. Average Levels of Party Identification by Wealth Level in Venezuela, 1995-2012



Figure 4.2 displays a somewhat similar trend to differences in self-reported voter turnout. In 1995, wealthier Venezuelans tended to identify with a party at a significantly higher rate (18.8%) than the poor (14.1%). Overall, party identification was very low in 1995, which is understandable given the lack of legitimacy and party de-alignment suffered by the two-party system during this time. Nevertheless, higher party identification by the wealthy compared to the poor is not surprising given that the two-party system dominated by AD and COPEI prior to Chávez's election in 1998 was criticized for being elitist and neglecting the needs of Venezuelans of low socioeconomic status. After Chávez's election in 1998, however, poorer Venezuelans seem to display

higher rates of party identification than those belonging to the middle or upper wealth quintiles. The significant differences in average levels of party identification between the poor and wealth in 2006 and 2012 in Figure 4.2 lend supporting evidence to the expectation that the poor should have been more incentivized to participate in the political system after the implementation of electoral mobilization and political organization initiatives by the Chávez administration. To examine party identification a bit further, Figure 4.3 displays average levels of identification with the MVR or PSUV, the parties affiliated with Chávez, compared to identification with other parties.



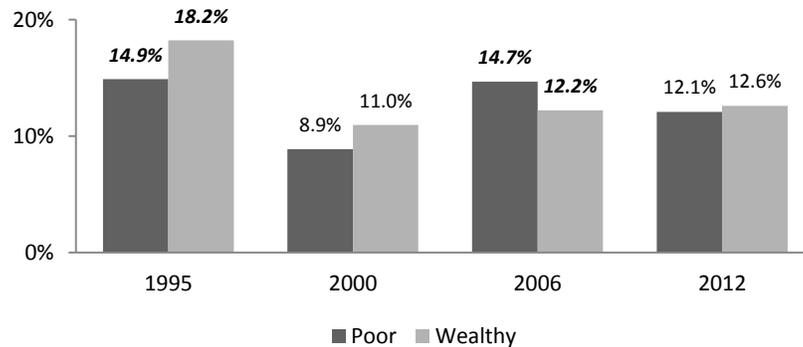
As illustrated in Figure 4.3, after Chávez’s election in 1998, poor Venezuelans were more likely than their wealthier counterparts to identify specifically with the leftist party MVR and later the PSUV than an opposition party. Those belonging to the middle and upper wealth quintiles reported a higher rate of identification (51.5%) with the MVR than the poor (34.6%) in 1998. However, this trend was reversed after Chávez’s reelection in 2000, and the difference became significant after the PSUV was created in

2007. In 2000, the poor reported a statistically significantly higher identification rate with the MVR (19%) than wealthier Venezuelans (12.7%). This significant difference became even more pronounced once the PSUV was an established party in the 2012 elections, when 74.9% of the poor said they identified with the PSUV, while 66.3% of Venezuelans of higher wealth expressed the same party identification. Figure 4.3 shows that the difference among wealth quintiles in party identification with the MVR/PSUV for the 2006 survey data is not statistically significant.⁷⁰ Once again, in the electoral years following a new constitution and Chávez's political initiatives, including the creation of the PSUV, the poor seemed to have been more active than wealthier Venezuelans in their identification with Chávez's PSUV.

Next, I examine differences in average participation in neighborhood associations (for 1995 and 2000) and in Communal Councils (for 2006 and 2012). The results are displayed in Figure 4.4. Since these Councils were not created until 2005 after Chávez had already been reelected once in 2000, I use a comparable variables for 1995 and 2000 that measure self-reported participation in neighborhood associations.

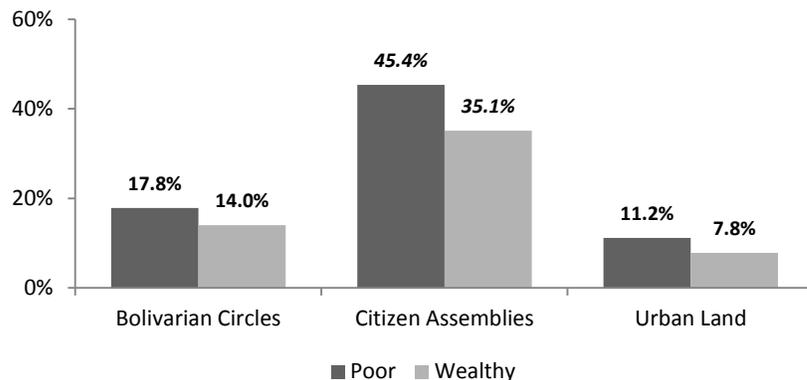
⁷⁰ However, a mean comparison of the same type of party identification in 2008 revealed that indeed the poor reported a significantly higher identification rate (74.9%) than wealthier Venezuelans (57.9%). In 2008, the PSUV had been formally functioning as a political party for a year, so it makes sense that more pronounced identification with this party some time after its creation. The difference in identification with the PSUV in 2008 is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Figure 4.4. Average Participation in Neighborhood Assoc. or Comunal Councils by Wealth Level in Venezuela, 1995-2012



As shown in Figure 4.4, the only statistically significant differences are present in 1995, when the wealthy participated more in these types of organizations, and in 2006, when the poor participated more. While those belonging to the middle and upper wealth quintiles participated significantly more in neighborhood associations (18.2%) than the poor (14.9%) in 1995 before Chávez’s election and creation of Communal Councils, the trend was reversed in 2006. By 2006, 14.7% of the poor reported having participated in Communal Councils, while 12.2% of wealthier Venezuelans did. The comparison of these two findings lends some empirical support to the hypotheses outlined in this chapter. However, the evidence is relatively weak given that no statistically significant differences exist for 2000 or 2012.

Figure 4.5. Average Participation in other Initiatives of the Chávez Administration by Wealth Level , 2006



Lastly, I examine differences in participation rates among Venezuelans of unequal wealth status in political initiatives created only during Chávez's tenure. Figure 4.5 illustrates differences in participation for three specific organizations created under the Chávez administration: the Bolivarian Circles, Citizen Assemblies, and Urban Land Committees. As seen in Figure 4.5, the poor once again reported having participated at a much higher rate than wealthier Venezuelans. As expected, the poor significantly participated more in Bolivarian Circles, Citizen Assemblies and Urban Land Committees. Given all of these results, it seems that Venezuelans of lower wealth status were indeed more likely to benefit from policies targeted at the political inclusion of the poor, as they seemed to have been more incentivized to participate politically through their enfranchisement, political organizations like the Communal Councils and the Bolivarian Circles, and/or identify with political parties associated with Chávez.

The Relationship among Participation in Political Inclusion Initiatives, Perceptions of Personal Political Well-Being and Electoral Support for Chávez

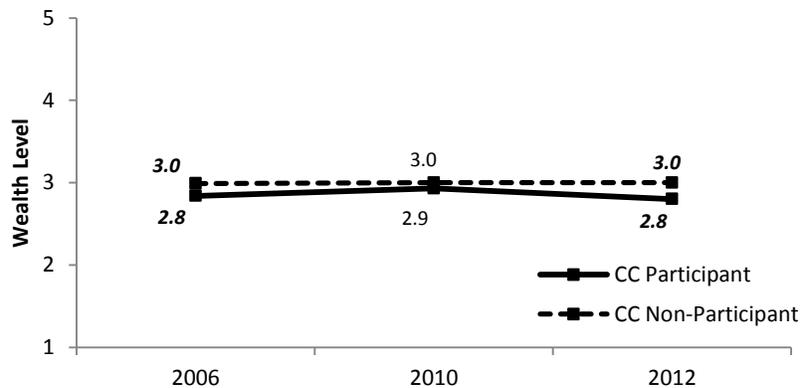
Next, I test the argument that targeted politically inclusionary programs helped incentivize Communal Council participants in their voting decisions to reelect Chávez by prioritizing self-interest considerations on their political decision-making. Furthermore, this section investigates whether Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic classes were also the key drivers of the argued connections between benefiting from Communal Council participation, improved evaluations of personal well-being, and reelection support for Chávez. I measure participation in Chávez's Communal Councils with survey item from the 2006, 2010, and 2012 AmericasBarometer for Venezuela that asks respondents about their involvement with these initiatives. Like the Missions, Communal Councils were also some of the most expansive and successful initiatives of the Chávez administration. Furthermore, survey questions about participation in Communal Councils are the only survey measures available for Venezuela from the AmericasBarometer across survey years (2006, 2010, and 2012).⁷¹

I first examine the characteristics of Communal participants and non-participants. I conduct a series of mean comparisons of socioeconomic factors between participants and non-participants of Communal Councils. The purpose of these tests are to both gain a better understanding of the socioeconomic profiles of those who benefit from the Chávez administration's political inclusion programs, and also test the claim that those targeted and those who benefit most from these types of programs are Venezuelans of lower

⁷¹ Survey questions for other initiatives like the Bolivarian Circles, for example, were only asked in 2006.

socioeconomic status.⁷² An initial comparison of the proportion of poor and wealthy voters who indicated participating in Communal Councils is shown in Figure 4.4 of the previous section. Overall, participation in these initiatives seems to have been quite low, which is surprising. Furthermore, although the poor did report having participating in Communal Councils at a higher rate than their wealthier counterparts, the difference is only statistically significant for 2006 (during the early inception of Communal Councils).⁷³ To further examine the relationship between wealth and Communal Council participation, Figure 4.6 illustrates the average wealth of Communal Council participants across years.⁷⁴

Figure 4.6. Average Wealth by Communal Council Participation in Venezuela, 2006-2012



⁷² Most of the Communal Councils initiated during the Chávez administration are continued under President Maduro’s current tenure. Appendix 4.1 reports average socioeconomic characteristics for Communal Council participants and non-participants.

⁷³ Statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level. The proportion of poor participating in Communal Councils in 2012 was 14.1%, while the wealthy participated at a rate of 12.6%. The difference in participation rates for 2012 is not statistically significant.

⁷⁴ As in the previous section, a bold highlight denotes statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level, while bold italics denote statistical significance at the $p < .10$ level.

As shown in Figure 4.6, Communal Council participants in 2006 and 2012 tended to belong to poorer wealth quintiles than those who did not participate in the programs.⁷⁵ For these years, those who did benefit from Communal Councils tended to belong to a fifth of wealth quintile lower, on average, than those who did not participate in Communal Councils. The differences in mean levels of wealth quintiles are statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level for 2006 and 2012. No statistical difference in wealth levels is found for 2010. The results in Figure 4.6 prove some evidence in favor of the argument that poor Venezuelans were marginally more likely than the wealthy to benefit from Communal Councils. However, the evidence is weakened by the results in for 2010,⁷⁶ and the differences in wealth are not as stark as the ones found regarding average levels of wealth for Mission participants in Chapter III.

However, an additional breakdown of Communal Council participation by wealth level (see Appendix 4.1), shows that participants and non-participants display some important socioeconomic differences.⁷⁷ Across 2006, 2010, and 2012, similar to Mission participants in Chapter III, poor Communal Council participants displayed the lowest degree of education while wealthy non-participants were the most educated. Additionally, the group of poor participants included the highest percentage of females of all four groups and Communal Council participants, in general, tended to be older.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ For 2006, participants of Bolivarian Circles also displayed significantly lower wealth levels (2.9) than non-participants (3) ($p < .10$ one-way).

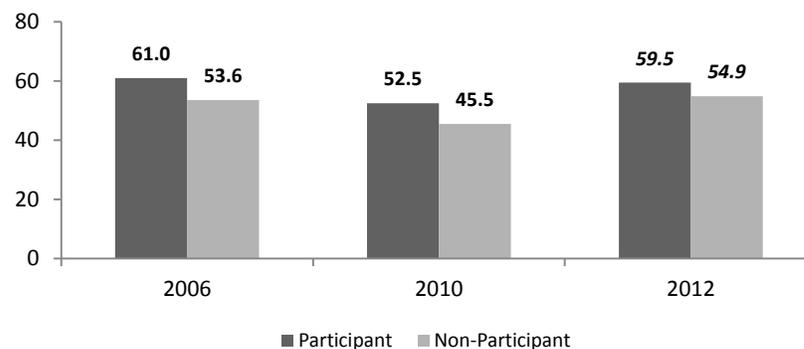
⁷⁶ It should be noted that analyses of 2008 data for Communal participation, also revealed a statistically significant difference at the $p < .10$ (one-tailed) between a lower wealth level for participants.

⁷⁷ Appendix 4.1 includes details of the demographic characteristics for poor and wealthy participants and non-participants.

⁷⁸ One-way ANOVA analyses reveal that differences in the average level education, age, and sex among the four groups is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. Appendix 4.2 displays results

Next, I compare average perceptions of personal political well-being in the form of personal satisfaction with democracy between participants and non-participant of Communal Councils. The expectation is that participants will display higher satisfaction with democracy, and hence view their personal political well-being more favorably, than those who did not participate. Figure 4.7 displays these comparisons.⁷⁹

Figure 4.7. Average Levels of Satisfaction with Democracy by Communal Council Participation in Venezuela, 2006-2012



According to Figure 4.7, Communal Council participants, whether poor or wealthy, display significantly more positive perceptions of personal political well-being on a 0 to 100 scale (where 100 is the best possible evaluation) than non-participants.⁸⁰ As

for logit regression analyses across 2006, 2010, and 2012 for socioeconomic predictors of Communal Council participation.

⁷⁹ For Figures 4.7 and 4.8, numbers highlighted in bold represent statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level among all four groups. *Denotes two-tailed statistical significance at the $p < .05$ for differences between poor and wealthy types of voters. #Denotes two-tailed statistical significance at the $p < .10$ for differences between poor and wealthy types of voters. ^Denotes one-tailed statistical significance at the $p < .10$ for differences between poor and wealthy types of voters.

⁸⁰ For 2006, participants of Bolivarian Circles also displayed significantly higher levels of personal satisfaction with democracy than non-participants. The differences among these groups is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. See Appendix 4.3 for a breakdown of average satisfaction with democracy by wealth and Communal Council participation.

hypothesized, participating in Communal Councils is correlated with favorable perceptions of personal satisfaction with democracy.⁸¹ An OLS regression of the determinants of personal satisfaction with democracy revealed that Communal Council participation significantly increases favorable evaluations of personal political well-being in 2006 and 2010.⁸² In fact, having participated in a Communal Council is has the greatest positive effect on levels of personal economic well-being compared to other socioeconomic factors.

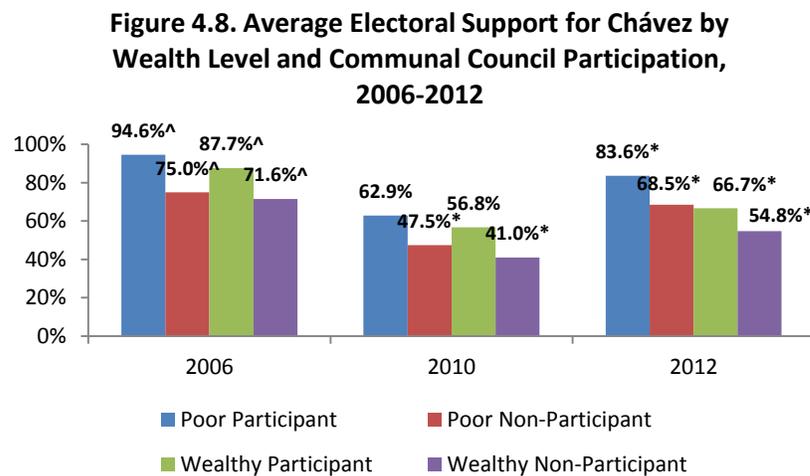
So far, the findings in this chapter have established that the poor were indeed the greatest participants and beneficiaries of Communal Council programs, at least in the early years of their inception. The findings also show a positive connection between Communal Council participation and perceptions of personal political well-being, as measured by personal satisfaction with democracy in Venezuela. The next step is to disentangle the relationship among Communal Council participation, evaluations of personal political well-being, and vote choice. To recall, this chapter argues that the benefits of participating in initiatives like the Communal Councils influence self-interest as an important predictor of vote choice. Specifically, there are two possible mechanisms that could explain the relationship among Communal Council participation, satisfaction with democracy, and electoral support for Chávez. On the one hand, the benefits provided by participation in Communal Councils could have led participants to feel better about their personal well-being than non-participants, which in turn would have a positive effect on voting for Chávez. On the other hand, Communal Council participation may

⁸¹ A stronger inference about the causal effect of Communal Councils participation on the level or saliency of self-interest is not possible with the statistical test used in Figure 4.7.

⁸² Appendix 4.4 includes these regressions results, which control for education level, age, sex, and place of residence. Communal Council participation is not a significant predictor of satisfaction with democracy and 2012.

instead moderate the effect of personal satisfaction with democracy on vote choice by increasing the relevance of personal political well-being in voting decisions.

To test these two possibilities, I first compare the degree of support for Chávez between Communal participants and non-participants in Figure 4.8. A comparison of means test reveals that a larger number of Communal Council participants display reelection support for Chávez (91% in 2006, 59.4% in 2010, and 73.9% in 2012) compared to those who did not benefit from Communal Council participation (73.5% in 2006, 43.6% in 2010, and 60.3% in 2012).⁸³



Furthermore, according to Figure 4.8, poor participants reported significantly more support for Chávez than their wealthier counterparts in 2006 and 2012, when Chávez was up for reelection.⁸⁴ This result lends support to the hypothesis that poor

⁸³ Differences in average proportions are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

⁸⁴ For 2006, participants of Bolivarian Circles also displayed significantly higher levels of electoral support for Chávez. 96.1% of poor participants and 95.3% of wealthy participants expressed support for Chávez. For non-participants, 73.9% of poor respondents and 68.3% of wealthy respondents expressed electoral support for Chávez. The differences among these four

beneficiaries would exhibit the highest degree of electoral support for Chávez. Also somewhat in line with the expectations in this chapter, even poor voters who did not participate in Communal Councils reported significantly higher electoral support for Chávez than their wealthier counterparts in 2006, 2010, and 2012.⁸⁵

Next, I conducted a series of mediation tests for the hypothesized relationship among Communal Council participation, evaluations of personal satisfaction with democracy, and voting for Chávez. Although I find convincing evidence in favor of this mediating relationship, no consistent or significant differences exist among the ways the Venezuelan poor and wealthy processed information regarding their participation in Communal Councils, how this affected their perceptions of personal political well-being, and their decision to reelect Chávez.⁸⁶

I once again employ Baron and Kenny's (1986) causal 4-step approach to test whether evaluations of personal satisfaction with democracy mediate the effect of Communal Council participation on reelecting Chávez. Given the significant differences in some demographic characteristics between poor Communal Council participants and non-participants (see Appendix 4.1), I control for wealth, education level, age, sex, and urban residency

For Step 1 of the causal step mediation analysis, I test the relationship between Communal Council participation and vote choice, and find that participating in

groups is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. Additionally, the difference between poor non-participants higher degree of support for Chávez compared to wealthy non-participants is also statistically significant ($p < .10$ two-way).

⁸⁵ This is also the case for 2008.

⁸⁶ I actually find contradicting evidence in differences between the poor and the wealthy, where a mediating relationship among Communal Council participation, higher satisfaction with democracy, and support for Chávez is present only for the poor in 2006 and 2010, but only for the wealthy in 2012.

Communal Councils significantly predicts voting for in 2006, 2010 and 2012.⁸⁷ In Step 2, I test the relationship between Communal Council participation and personal satisfaction with democracy, and find that participating in Communal Councils has a significant and positive effect on levels of satisfaction with democracy only in 2006 and 2010.⁸⁸ This means that there is no mediating relationship in 2012. For Step 3, I test the predictive effect of personal satisfaction with democracy (the mediating variable) on vote choice when controlling for Communal Council participation. The results of this third step are displayed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Mediation Effect of Satisfaction with Democracy on Vote for Chávez, Controlling for Participation in Communal Councils, 2006-2012⁸⁹

VARIABLES	2006	2010	2012
CC Participation	1.18*** (0.33)	0.59** (0.25)	1.44*** (0.45)
Satisf. with Dem.	4.90*** (0.39)	6.74*** (0.47)	8.38*** (0.78)
Wealth	-0.04 (0.07)	-0.08 (0.07)	-0.17 (0.11)
Education	-0.28** (0.13)	-0.39** (0.15)	-0.18 (0.23)
Age	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.16** (0.07)	-0.14 (0.10)
Female	-0.11 (0.18)	-0.14 (0.19)	0.05 (0.28)
Urban	-0.14 (0.50)	0.46 (0.46)	0.38 (0.45)
Constant	-0.32 (0.65)	-2.39*** (0.64)	-3.27*** (0.83)
Observations	946	810	454

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

⁸⁷ Appendix 4.5 displays the mediation results for Step 1.

⁸⁸ Appendix 4.6 displays the mediation results for Step 2.

⁸⁹ The variable in this table for personal satisfaction with democracy is rescaled from 0 to 1 in order to provide more meaningful display of coefficients.

The results in Table 4.1 indicate that Communal Council participation has a relevant statistically significant effect on vote choice, even in the presence of personal satisfaction with democracy in 2006 and 2010. Although there is no mediation story in 2012, I find that Communal Council participation and satisfaction with democracy are both separate but significant predictors of voting for Chávez.

Finally, in Step 4, I compare the estimated coefficients for Communal Council participation between Step 1 and Step 3. I find that the size of effect of Communal Council participation on vote choice is reduced in 2006 and 2010. These findings indicate the presence of a significant mediating effect by satisfaction with democracy on the relationship between Communal Council participation and vote choice in 2006 and 2010.⁹⁰

Following the same robustness check as in Chapter III, I conduct Sobel (1982) tests for the results in Table 4.1 for 2006 and 2010. For 2006, the Sobel test yielded a z-value of 4.00, $p < .01$, and an indication that 43% of the effect of Communal Council participation on vote choice is mediated by satisfaction with democracy. The same test for 2010 yielded a z-value of 3.16, $p < .01$, and that 57% of the effect Communal Council participation on voting for Chávez is mediated by satisfaction with democracy. Overall, the results in Table 4.1 show that there is strong evidence for the hypothesized mediating relationship among participating Communal Council, personal satisfaction with democracy, and choosing to reelect Chávez in 2006 and 2010.

⁹⁰ For 2006, following the same four-step causal mediation analysis and Sobel (1982) test, I also find a strong mediating effect of satisfaction with democracy on the relationship between participating in Bolivarian Circles and electoral support for Chávez. However, no difference is observed among wealth categories. The Sobel test yielded a z-value of 3.94, $p < .01$, and indicated that 38% of total effect of participation in Bolivarian Circles on vote for Chávez is mediated through personal satisfaction with democracy.

Next, Table 4.2 displays the results of tests for a moderating relationship among Communal Council participation, personal political well-being, and vote for Chávez. Specifically, it includes interactions between Communal Council participation and levels of personal satisfaction with democracy on vote for Chávez. I also control for wealth, education, age, sex, urban residency.⁹¹

Table 4.2. Moderation Effects of Communal Council Participation on the Relationship between Satisfaction with Democracy and Vote for Chávez, 2006-2012⁹²

VARIABLES	2006	2010	2012
CC*Satisf. Dem	-0.03 (1.25)	-0.40 (1.23)	-2.60 (2.00)
CC Participation	1.19** (0.60)	0.77 (0.62)	2.65** (1.04)
Satisf. with Dem.	4.91*** (0.42)	6.81*** (0.51)	8.76*** (0.86)
Wealth	-0.04 (0.07)	-0.08 (0.07)	-0.17 (0.11)
Education	-0.28** (0.13)	-0.39** (0.15)	-0.18 (0.23)
Age	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.16** (0.07)	-0.15 (0.10)
Female	-0.11 (0.18)	-0.14 (0.19)	0.02 (0.28)
Urban	-0.14 (0.50)	0.45 (0.46)	0.37 (0.45)
Constant	-0.32 (0.65)	-2.41*** (0.65)	-3.47*** (0.85)
Observations	946	810	454

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Overall, the results in Table 4.2 do not provide evidence for a moderating effect of Communal Council participation on the relationship between personal satisfaction with

⁹¹ Results are calculated through a series of logit regression analyses given that vote choice is operationalized as a dichotomous variable.

⁹² The variable in this table for personal satisfaction with democracy is rescaled from 0 to 1 in order to provide more meaningful display of coefficients.

democracy and vote for Chávez. Furthermore, I do not find differences in the ways that Communal Council participation affected the relationship between satisfaction with democracy and vote choice between poor and wealthy Venezuelans.⁹³ These findings indicate that participating in Communal Council does not increase the relevance of personal political well-being for deciding to vote for Chávez. Nevertheless, Communal Council participation is a significant predictor of voting for Chávez when he was up for reelection in 2006 and 2012. Table 4.2 also shows that even for those who did not participate in Communal Councils, personal satisfaction with democracy is an important predictor for vote choice.

Comparing the Venezuelan Poor to the Rest of Latin America

The empirical analyses in this chapter have so far provided important evidence in support of my hypothesized mediating relationship among Communal Council Participation, personal satisfaction with democracy, and voting for Chávez, but no evidence of a moderating relationship among these variables. As in Chapter III, I take a further step in examining the public opinion dynamics of the Venezuelan poor and their continued support for Chávez by conducting a comparative analysis of the behavior of poor voters in the rest of Latin America. Although I cannot compare the role of Communal Council participation, or a similar measure, on the voting decisions of Latin American voters, I examine whether Chávez and his inclusionary programs like the Communal Councils had some unique effect on Venezuelan politics by comparing the

⁹³ For 2006, I did not find a significant interaction effect between Bolivarian Circle participation and satisfaction with democracy for the poor. However, I did find a significant negative interaction effect for the wealthy.

differences in the influence of satisfaction with democracy for poor versus wealthy voters between Venezuela and Latin America.

A comparison of means test indicates that, on average, there is no difference in levels of satisfaction with democracy between the poor and wealthy in 2006 and 2010 in Venezuela and the rest of Latin America.⁹⁴ However, in 2012, the wealthy reported a high satisfaction with democracy than the poor in both Venezuela and Latin America.⁹⁵ Comparisons of means tests also indicate that, on average, there is a significant difference in levels of personal satisfaction with democracy between those who voted for an incumbent and those who did not.⁹⁶ Regardless of wealth level, respondents who favored an incumbent president tended to have greater satisfaction with democracy than those who favored a challenging candidate in 2006, 2010, and 2012.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ The same variables used for the Venezuelan data to measure evaluations of personal satisfaction with democracy and wealth are used for this comparative section. I also analyze comparative data for 2006, 2010, and 2012 for consistency with the previous analyses of Venezuelan data. I exclude data for the United States and Canada.

⁹⁵ For 2006, average personal satisfaction with democracy is 47.5 for the wealthy and 47.8 for the poor in Latin America, and 54.6 for the wealthy and 53 for the poor in Venezuela. In 2010, 51.86 for the wealthy and 51.79 for the poor in Latin America, and 45.85 for the wealthy and 47.79 for the poor in Venezuela. In 2012, 52.4 for the wealthy and 51.8 for the poor in Latin America, and 57.21 for the wealthy and 54.03 for the poor in Venezuela. The differences in 2012 are statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level.

⁹⁶ The differences are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

⁹⁷ For 2006, average personal satisfaction with democracy on a 0 to 100 scale is 51.28 for poor incumbent voters and 44.8 for poor non-incumbent voters in Latin America, and 63.72 for poor incumbent voters and 34.43 for poor non-incumbent voters in Venezuela. In 2010, 61.43 for poor incumbent voters and 47.44 for poor non-incumbent voters in Latin America, and 68.05 for poor incumbent voters and 31.35 for poor non-incumbent voters in Venezuela. In 2012, 59.02 for poor incumbent voters and 48.53 for poor non-incumbent voters in Latin America, and 65.68 for poor incumbent voters and 41.81 for poor non-incumbent voters in Venezuela. In 2006, average personal satisfaction with democracy on a 0 to 100 scale is 51.8 for wealthy incumbent and 44.61 for wealthy non-incumbent voters in Latin America, and 65.22 for wealthy incumbent and 33.57 for wealthy non-incumbent voters in Venezuela. In 2010, 61.46 for wealthy incumbent voters and 47.09 for wealthy non-incumbent voters in Latin America, and 69.47 for wealthy incumbent voters and 29.61 for wealthy non-incumbent voters in Venezuela. And in 2012, 60.38 for wealthy incumbent voters and 45.86 for wealthy non-incumbent voters in Latin America, and 73.33 for wealthy incumbent voters and 31.75 for wealthy non-incumbent voters in Venezuela.

To test a possible difference in predictive effect of perceptions of personal satisfaction with democracy on vote choice between the poor and wealthy in Venezuela and Latin America, Table 4.3 displays logit regression models for 2006, 2010, and 2012. The dependent variable is a dichotomous measure of vote choice in which those who favored the incumbent president were coded 1 and those who favored another candidate were coded 0.⁹⁸ Country dummies are included but not shown.

Table 4.3. Moderation Effect of Low Wealth on the Relationship between Satisfaction with Democracy and Vote Choice in Latin America, 2006-2012⁹⁹

VARIABLES	2006		2010		2012	
	Venezuela	LA	Venezuela	LA	Venezuela	LA
Poor*Satisf. Dem.	0.37 (0.77)	-0.17 (0.15)	0.39 (0.94)	-0.10 (0.15)	-7.71*** (1.64)	-0.76*** (0.20)
Poor	0.08 (0.39)	0.15* (0.08)	-0.05 (0.48)	0.12 (0.09)	4.69*** (0.97)	0.44*** (0.12)
Satisf. with Dem.	4.66*** (0.48)	1.16*** (0.10)	6.49*** (0.57)	2.04*** (0.11)	12.49*** (1.39)	2.83*** (0.14)
Education	-0.23* (0.12)	-0.13*** (0.02)	-0.38*** (0.15)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.21 (0.22)	-0.15*** (0.03)
Age	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.15** (0.07)	0.05*** (0.01)	-0.20* (0.11)	0.03** (0.01)
Female	-0.12 (0.18)	0.08** (0.03)	-0.17 (0.19)	0.06** (0.03)	0.08 (0.28)	-0.01 (0.04)
Urban	-0.08 (0.46)	-0.13*** (0.05)	0.46 (0.45)	-0.14*** (0.05)	0.32 (0.45)	-0.02 (0.05)
Constant	-0.51 (0.63)	0.23* (0.13)	-2.50*** (0.67)	-1.86*** (0.12)	-5.81*** (1.10)	-1.68*** (0.17)
Observations	963	18,435	823	21,930	462	13,141

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

⁹⁸ For 2006, I used past vote choice as the AmericasBarometer surveys for 2006 do not include a survey item for vote intention. “I don’t know” and “didn’t or wouldn’t vote” answers were coded missing.

⁹⁹ Given the large number of countries included in the analyses, I adjust the models to consider

According to the results in Table 4.3, there is no difference in how evaluations of personal satisfaction with democracy affect vote choice for either the poor and wealthy in Venezuela or Latin America, except in 2012 where being poor actually significantly decreases the effect that satisfaction with democracy have on the probability of voting for an incumbent. Additionally, personal satisfaction with democracy is a significant predictor of voting for the incumbent across countries and wealth levels for 2006, 2010, and 2012.

As in Chapter III, when only considering the relationship between wealth status and evaluations of personal satisfaction with democracy and their effects on vote choice, the poor in Venezuela seem to have similar voting calculi to poor voters in Latin America. Also similar to the preliminary conclusions reached in the comparative section for Chapter III, and taking into account findings in this chapter regarding the relationship among Communal Council participation, satisfaction with democracy, and vote choice, the results in Table 4.3 can be interpreted as suggesting that Chávez's provision of targeted political inclusionary policies in the form of Communal Councils and Bolivarian Circles did seem to have at least some degree of unique effect on public opinion dynamics of the Venezuelan poor, particularly as related to how participation in Chávez's initiatives positively affected their levels of satisfaction with democracy and, in turn, influenced their decision to reelect Chávez.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

In this chapter, I provide a framework for linking the poor's political benefits with Chávez's repeated electoral success by testing theoretical connections made among Chávez's populist redefinition of Venezuelan democracy, new politically inclusionary policies and avenues of participation, self-interested motivations, and deciding to reelect Chávez. The Chávez administration radically transformed the participatory nature of Venezuelan society in politics. The 1999 Constitution laid out the ideological foundation for changes to come during Chávez's tenure, which included strategies for electoral mobilization and the formation of more inclusive political organizations, such as the Communal Councils and the Bolivarian Circles.

I argue that just like the socioeconomic benefits gained by the Venezuelan poor through redistributive policies like the Missions, members of the lower classes also received unprecedented political benefits of inclusion as a consequence of the Chávez administration's efforts aimed at creating a more direct, participatory and protagonist democracy. The empirical analyses in this chapter show that Venezuelans of lower wealth status were indeed more likely to benefit from policies targeted at the political inclusion of the poor. Poor Venezuelans as they seemed to have been equally or more incentivized than the wealthy to participate politically through voting, political organizations like the Communal Councils and the Bolivarian Circles, and/or identify with political parties associated with Chávez. However, like the Missions, the Communal Councils and Bolivarian Circles also served a broader swath of sectors than one might have thought. Yet, participation rates for the poor in Communal Councils, specifically,

were much lower in comparison with their participation in Missions as shown in Chapter III.

The findings in this chapter additionally show that, as hypothesized, Venezuelans who participated in Communal Councils and Bolivarian Circles had more favorable evaluations of personal political well-being compared to those of the same class who do not participate. Also in line with expectations, Communal Council participants display a much higher degree of support for Chávez in terms of proportion of voters in his favor compared to those who did not benefit from Communal Council participation. Moreover, poor participants reported significantly more support for Chávez than their wealthier counterparts in 2006 and 2012.

However, as with Missions, there is little evidence that participation in Communal Councils or Bolivarian Circles increased the weight of satisfaction with democracy on vote choice. If anything, participation in these initiatives seems to have had its most important political influence on support for Chávez by improving evaluations of personal political well-being. Yet, findings suggest that there is not much difference in how poor and wealthy Venezuelans process information about their participation in Communal Council and personal political well-being to develop and report their support for Chávez.

Nevertheless, in line with the conclusions in Chapter III, the findings in this chapter further support the idea that the poor were the drivers of connections among Chávez's leftist-populist agenda, public opinion, and reelection support for Chávez. On the one hand, the poor were more likely than the wealthy to benefit from inclusionary initiatives like the Communal Councils. On the other hand, poor Communal Council participants, whose perceptions of personal political well-being were likely increased

through their participation in these initiatives, reported the highest electoral support for Chávez in 2006 and 2012.

Despite increased levels of participation and satisfaction with democracy for the poor, Chávez's newly formed political organizations and fiery rhetoric aimed at redefining the purpose of Venezuelan democracy received extensive criticism for doing quite the opposite of promoting a higher degree of democracy in Venezuela. Critics of the Chávez administration have suggested that efforts for creating a more participatory democracy have come at the expense of increasing polarization and politicization of the Venezuelan society. I address some of these issues in the next chapter, where I examine how individual-level ideological factors translated into cognitive constraints that prevented the poor majority from punishing Chávez at the polls for deteriorating economic and democratic national conditions.

APPENDIX D

Appendix 4.1. Socioeconomic Characteristics of CC Participants and Non-Participants in Venezuela, 2006-2012

	2006			
	Poor Participant	Poor Non-Participant	Wealthy Participant	Wealthy Non-Participant
Wealth	1.55	1.52	3.98	4.03
Education	2.05	1.97	2.18	2.19
Age	2.85	2.49	2.71	2.53
Female	55.91%	53.52%	52.83%	46.19%
Urban	92.47%	94.81%	91.51%	96.33%
N%	6.20%	35.98%	7.06%	50.77%

	2010			
	Poor Participant	Poor Non-Participant	Wealthy Participant	Wealthy Non-Participant
Wealth	1.58	1.49	3.96	3.98
Education	1.83	1.82	2.31	2.25
Age	3.18	2.99	2.78	2.77
Female	52.17%	49.80%	45.53%	51.11%
Urban	92.48%	95.97%	97.56%	95.91%
N%	6.26%	33.76%	8.37%	51.60%

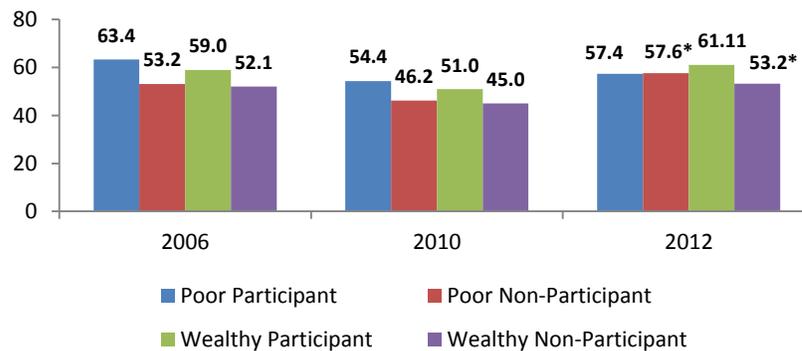
	2012			
	Poor Participant	Poor Non-Participant	Wealthy Participant	Wealthy Non-Participant
Wealth	1.48	1.47	2.78	4.01
Education	1.91	1.84	2.27	2.28
Age	3.1	2.9	3.16	2.99
Female	68.67%	51.98%	51.35%	46.16%
Urban	89.16%	91.50%	83.78%	92.33%
N%	5.65%	34.45%	7.56%	52.35%

Appendix 4.2. Socioeconomic Determinants of Communal Council Participation in Venezuela, 2006-2012

VARIABLES	2006	2010	2012
Wealth	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.13** (0.06)
Education	0.17 (0.10)	0.11 (0.12)	0.20 (0.13)
Age	0.15*** (0.06)	0.06 (0.05)	0.10* (0.06)
Female	0.21 (0.15)	-0.12 (0.15)	0.38** (0.16)
Urban	-0.66** (0.31)	-0.03 (0.37)	-0.71*** (0.24)
Constant	-1.88*** (0.42)	-1.99*** (0.50)	-1.79*** (0.39)
Observations	1,500	1,461	1,420

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Appendix 4.3. Average Levels of Satisfaction with Democracy by Wealth Level and Communal Council Participation in Venezuela, 2006-2012



Appendix 4.4. Determinants of Satisfaction with Democracy in Venezuela, 2006-2012

VARIABLES	2006	2010	2012
CC Participation	8.15*** (2.10)	6.26*** (2.04)	3.94 (2.81)
Wealth	-0.69 (0.51)	-0.57 (0.56)	-1.91** (0.75)
Education	-3.02*** (0.97)	-2.24* (1.17)	-2.10 (1.52)
Age	0.39 (0.54)	0.36 (0.52)	1.02 (0.72)
Female	-2.17 (1.42)	-5.45*** (1.45)	-2.89 (1.92)
Urban	-6.00* (3.54)	-2.71 (3.60)	-6.82** (3.26)
Constant	66.84*** (4.44)	56.15*** (4.86)	69.54*** (4.78)
Observations	1,450	1,400	684
R ²	0.03	0.02	0.04

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

**Appendix 4.5. Effect of Communal Council Participation on Vote for Chávez, 2006-2012
 (Mediation Test Step 1)**

VARIABLES	2006	2010	2012
CC Participation	1.31*** (0.29)	0.62*** (0.19)	0.59*** (0.21)
Wealth	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.09* (0.05)	-0.26*** (0.05)
Education	-0.34*** (0.11)	-0.37*** (0.11)	-0.34*** (0.11)
Age	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)
Female	-0.10 (0.15)	-0.23 (0.14)	0.12 (0.14)
Urban	-0.20 (0.43)	0.41 (0.35)	0.07 (0.25)
Constant	2.33*** (0.53)	0.69 (0.46)	1.91*** (0.37)
Observations	966	828	925

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Appendix 4.6. Effects of Communal Council Participation on Satisfaction with Democracy, 2006-2012 (Mediation Step 2)

VARIABLES	2006	2010	2012
CC Participation	8.15*** (2.10)	6.26*** (2.04)	3.94 (2.81)
Wealth	-0.69 (0.51)	-0.57 (0.56)	-1.91** (0.75)
Education	-3.02*** (0.97)	-2.24* (1.17)	-2.10 (1.52)
Age	0.39 (0.54)	0.36 (0.52)	1.02 (0.72)
Female	-2.17 (1.42)	-5.45*** (1.45)	-2.89 (1.92)
Urban	-6.00* (3.54)	-2.71 (3.60)	-6.82** (3.26)
Constant	66.84*** (4.44)	56.15*** (4.86)	69.54*** (4.78)
Observations	1,450	1,400	684
R ²	0.03	0.02	0.04

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

CHAPTER V

POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR HUGO CHÁVEZ IN THE FACE OF DETERIORATING ECONOMIC AND DEMOCRATIC CONDITIONS

My objective in this project has been to explain how and why Hugo Chávez was able to gain and maintain enough political support to remain president elect of Venezuela in a 14-year time period in which the country faced deteriorating economic and democratic conditions. So far, the previous chapters have provided evidence that Chávez's repeated electoral success was largely due to the support of the Venezuelan poor as a consequence of implementation of targeted socioeconomic and political policies that prioritized the inclusion of previously marginalized sectors of society. Chapters III and IV examined how self-interest considerations motivated voters to reelect Chávez as a product of having received individual-level benefits from wealth redistribution programs, as well as policy measures that aimed at increasing the participatory nature of the Venezuelan political system.

This chapter looks beyond self-interest, and focuses on the argument that the adoption of Chávez's leftist-populist also served as an individual-level attitudinal constraint on the willingness of Chávez's political base to punish him at the polls for the an economic crisis that began in 2008, as well as a decay in the government's democratic checks and balances. Using survey data from 2006, 2010, and 2012, this chapter investigates whether respondents who belonged to Chávez's electoral base and/or participated in either the Mission or Communal Councils differed on both political attitudes related to Chávez's ideology, and also on evaluations of government

performance. Additionally, I examine the degree to which populist-related attitudes and evaluations of national economic conditions and government performance affected the probability of voting for Chávez. Overall, the findings show that members of Chávez's electoral base indeed displayed greater ideological affinity with Chávez's leftist-populist message, and as hypothesized, the poor were the greatest adherents to Chávez's ideology, particularly in their support for populist attitudes. In line with theories of working class authoritarianism, poor voters displayed the strongest support for populist ideas that characterized Chávez's rhetorical messages and authoritarian tendencies. Additionally, I found evidence supporting a mediating effect of evaluations of national conditions and government performance on the relationship between ideology and vote choice, as well as evidence for the claim that poor voters were they key drivers of this mediation story.

The Appeal of Chávez's Leftist-Populist Political Ideology

I argue that Chávez achieved repeated electoral success thanks to his ability to secure the repeated political favor mainly of the lower classes through to the political success of his leftist-populist agenda. Chávez was able to combine leftist socioeconomic policies with the political appeal of a populist governing style to secure the vote of the poor majority. His political ideology constituted two conceptual principles that are important for understanding the formation of individual-level ideological constraints of his political base and their influence on the poor's voting decisions. First, Chávez promoted a populist definition of democracy that strongly resonated with Venezuela's poor majority as it emphasized a strong relationship between the president and the

masses, as well as the political inclusion of historically marginalized sectors of the population. Second, Chávez advanced the idea of an increased the role of the state in managing Venezuela's economic and welfare redistribution system.

Chávez's Populist Definition of Democracy

Populist leaders like Chávez encourage a normative institutional and social transformation of the political system by redefining the ideological meaning and purpose of democracy. Chávez was a quintessential example of a populist leader who aimed to redefine politics toward a participatory, or direct, type of democracy in which citizens are promised a shift away from the traditional political elites' institutional power favor of voters (Hawkins 2010b). The ideological foundation of populism's normative understanding of democracy is an "us versus them" mentality that places "el pueblo," which populists refer to as the "us," as protagonists against the established political and economic elite, or "them" (Hawkins 2010b). To promote this ideology, populist leaders like Chávez often employ their charismatic and rhetorical appeal. As exemplified by Chávez's popularity, successful populist leaders aim to accomplish this direct relationship with the people by exploiting their charismatic appeal through a political discourse that constantly places themselves front and center and claims that they embody el pueblo and protect the will of the people (Canovan 1999; Abts and Rummens 2007; Barr 2009; Deiwiks 2009; Hawkins 2010b). Chávez's use of charisma and the nature of his political rhetoric, in particular his normative conceptualization of participatory democracy have indeed been described as typical of populist leaders (Canovan 1999; Abts and Rummens 2007; Barr 2009; Deiwiks 2009; Hawkins 2010b).

As Hawkins (2010b, 29) explains, Chavismo was based on a populist worldview, a particular moralistic ideology, where there exists a “struggle between Good and Evil, one in which the side of Good is ‘the will of the people,’ ... while the side of Evil is a conspiring elite that has subverted this will” (Hawkins 2010, 5). This contentious type of political discourse is the engine of political success for populist leaders. Chávez exploited his charismatic appeal and contentious populist political discourse to place himself front and center as the embodiment of the will of the Venezuelan people against the corrupt elite, popularizing the concept of a more personal political relationship between the president and “el pueblo.” In this way, populists like Chávez promise “el pueblo” greater influence in governance through a more personal political relationship with leaders’ political decisions, particularly in regards to the president. According to Spanakos (2011, 19), Chávez opened “political space and discourse to the excluded and established himself as the representative of the will of the people and its sole defender.”

Chávez’s populist discourse and policies aimed at creating a more direct, participatory and protagonist democracy that gave the poor majority a greater sense of identity and conviction that incentivized them to vote for Chávez in 2000, 2006, and 2012. Chávez presented himself and his Bolivarian Revolution as the embodiments and protectors of el pueblo’s will against the elitist political class (Hawkins 2010b). According to Zúquete (2008, 102-104), by doing this Chávez empowered his followers by allowing them to feel that they were “part of a mission”, or “collective popular cause”. The goal of this mission was to create a participatory democracy that was more inclusive of the poor sector of Venezuelan society by encouraging citizen mobilization against established elites (Spanakos 2011). Ellner (2010, 81) also argues that the fundamental

role of popular mobilization for Chávez's political agenda did indeed empower sections of the Venezuelan population because it emphasized "the 'protagonist role of the people'". Moreover, according to Spanakos (2011, 19), "Chávez identifie[d] 'the people' as the fundamental social and moral unit of the nation."

Chávez's discursive and policy efforts to promote a more inclusive political system were a radically different experience for poor sectors of Venezuelan society compared to the political exclusion they suffered under the previous two-party system. Hence, Chávez filled the trust vacuum between the lower classes and politicians that was the consequence of an unraveling Punto Fijo party system. Indeed, according to Wilpert (2005, 21), "the policies of the Chávez government that promote[d] 'participatory democracy,' ... allowed many Venezuelans, but especially the poor, to feel included in Venezuelan democracy more than ever before." Consequently, it can be argued that historically marginalized poor citizens are highly likely to have fostered a strong identification with Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution. Furthermore, they are likely to have felt empowered by adopting the same populist moral and political mentality championed by Chávez regarding the normative purpose of government to serve "the people." What this meant at the time of casting a vote in presidential elections in 2000, 2006, and 2012, is that Chávez's core supporters, especially the poor, were almost certain to favor the option that gave them an unprecedented feeling of political identification and empowerment: Chávez.

The downside of the normative understanding of democracy often promoted by populist like Chávez is that it actually tends to lead to the decay in the rights and institutions promoted by the concept of liberal democracy. As explained above,

successful populist leaders exploit their charismatic appeal through a political discourse that constantly places themselves front and center and claims that they embody el pueblo and protect the will of the people (Canovan 1999; Abts and Rummens 2007; Barr 2009; Deiwiks 2009; Hawkins 2010). They use this argument to justify executive command over the institutional structure of a direct and participatory, rather than representative, democracy that reflects the direct relationship between leader and people needed to overcome the corrupt nature of established political elites. Ultimately, this leads populist leaders to resort to authoritarian means to maintain sufficient political power to promote their normative beliefs about the purpose of government.

The debate about the normative relationship between populism and democracy is a defining feature of the literature on populism (Barr 2009; Abts and Rummens 2007; Arditì 2003, 2004; Canovan 1999; De la Torre 1997). Some have argued that populism is simply a symptom of the failures of democracy because it is a reaction to the tendency of liberal, representative democracy to alienate certain groups of citizens from influencing government in terms of both having their voices heard and their ability to make politicians accountable (Canovan 1999). However, historical patterns tend to show that although populist politicians sell their political program as “democratic,” they often resort to political strategies that violate democratic rules of the game in attempts to gain political leverage over political system and among the masses (Conniff 2012). Hence, most populism scholars agree that populist leaders, their policies, and their discourse place stress on democratic systems. According to (Hawkins 2010, 36), “populism regards procedural rights associated with liberal democracy as instrumental and may violate them in order to better express the will of the people” (Hawkins 2010, 36).

Populism, as endorsed by Chávez, tends to promote a “vertical structure of antagonisms” between the people and the elite, rather than a horizontal accountability mechanisms essential for liberal democratic institutions of mediated representation, secret-ballot elections, and constitutionally protected civil rights (Abts and Rummens 2007). Moreover, populism is based on anti-establishment appeals, personalism, and the rejection of the idea of pluralism (De la Torre 1997; Barr 2009), all of which lead populist leaders to often interpret democratic institutions as “impediments to the expression of the authentic and homogenous will of the people” (De la Torre 2007, 394). Consequently, populist regimes, like Chávez’s in Venezuela, tend to be characterized by constitutional reforms and executive-led policy changes that reflect authoritarian tendencies (Panizza 2008). Examples include executive rule by decree, bypassing of the legislature and courts, and restrictions on civil rights like freedom of speech and right to due process, especially toward opposition members (Roberts 2002; De la Torre 2007; Seligson 2007; Panizza and Miorelli 2009; Philip and Panizza 2011).

These authoritarian tendencies of populism were indeed present during Chávez’s regime when the quality of Venezuela’s democratic checks and balances, as well as citizen rights suffered acute deterioration. As discussed in Chapter I, after a short-lived turn toward an improved democratic system between 2003 and 2004, the erosion of political rights and civil liberties in Chávez’s Venezuela rapidly deteriorated the quality of democracy after 2008. As of 2012, Freedom House officially classified Venezuela as “Partly Free,” with a score of 5.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ This is highest score for a country to be considered “Partly Free” before being labeled “Not Free” on the 1-7 scale, ranging from most to least democratic). See Figure 1.4 in Chapter I.

The Role of the State under Chávez

Particular views about the role of the state were another feature of Chávez's leftist-populist ideology that are important for understanding the formation of the individual-level ideological constraints that shaped his political base's voting decisions. As discussed in the first chapter, Chávez was considered the leader of a wave of leftist-populist presidents that swept over Latin America beginning in the early 2000s (Schamis 2006; Seligson 2007; Castañeda and Morales 2008; Hawkins 2010b; Philip and Panizza 2011). Following his 1998 election, Chávez implemented policies aimed at both increasing the government's control over major national industries, as well as providing Venezuelans of low socioeconomic status with easier access to economic, educational, and medical resources. This increased role of the state in the Venezuelan economic system was a pillar of Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution, which displayed strong affinities with the leftist and anti-capitalistic/imperialistic ideology of Fidel Castro's Cuban model. Unlike the Castro regime, however, the Bolivarian Revolution and the push for 21st century socialism was the "first Socialist experiment in Latin America" that had the advantage of relying on an enormously profitable, even if economically volatile, natural resource such as oil (Urribarri 2008, 174).

The essence of Chávez's leftist ideology consisted on the promotion of greater economic nationalism for Venezuela (Ellner 2010). To do this, Chávez advanced an economic model based on the idea that Venezuela's economy should become "humanist, self-managing, and competitive" (Cannon 2009, 80). In practice, Chávez's push for a transformation of the Venezuelan economic system constituted a high degree of state intervention aimed at more endogenous economic development and the reduction of the

country's dependence on capitalist countries (Cannon 2009; Ellner 2010; Corrales and Penfold 2011). Chávez's interventionist efforts for this economic model were facilitated by a virtually autonomous financial and administrative control of PDVSA, the national oil company, especially after defeated a strike by the opposition that shut down the oil industry in 2002 (Corrales and Penfold 2011).

State intervention under Chávez took two main forms. The first involved the nationalization of key industries such as the Orinoco Oil Belt; SIDOR (Siderúrgica del Orinoco C.A.), the largest Venezuelan steel company; CANTV (Compañía Anónima Nacional de Teléfonos), the largest telephone company; AES-Electricidad de Caracas and CADAFE (Compañía Anónima de Administración y Fomento Eléctrico), two of country's main electric companies; and the Bank of Venezuela (Gott 2008; Ellner 2010). The second was the sponsorship of non-traditional forms of economic organization like cooperatives (Cannon 2009) that would "challenge oligopolistic control of the economy by opening opportunities for new sources of competition (Ellner 2010, 85). One important example in these efforts included a series of controversial private land expropriations by the Chávez administration that were intended to facilitate agriculture development (Gott 2008; Azzelini 2009; Aponte-Moreno and Lattig 2012).

Beyond policy changes that Chávez promoted for the transformation of Venezuela's economic system, another key feature of Chávez's socioeconomic agenda was wealth redistribution. As mentioned above, Chávez's believed that Venezuelan's economic model should be "humanist." Hence, poverty alleviation was one of the major policy objectives of the Chávez administration (Rodríguez 2008). The best and most expansive example of the redistributive socioeconomic policies created and implemented

by the Chávez administration targeting the living conditions of the poor majority in Venezuela were the administration's so-called "Missions." As explained in Chapter III, these Missions were launched in 2003 as community-based social aid programs aimed at poverty reduction by providing the poorest Venezuelans with easier access to resources for such as easier access to healthcare, education, subsidized food, and housing. The record influx of oil revenues during the Chávez administration gave the president unparalleled opportunities and autonomy over funding and targeting social spending programs (Penfold-Becerra 2007; Corrales and Penfold 2007; Hawkins 2010b).

Chávez's 21st century socialism, however, failed to produce the results promised on many fronts, as is explained in detail in Chapter I. Although redistributive programs like the Missions helped reduce the number of Venezuelans living in extreme poverty by half (Weisbrot 2012), Venezuela under President Chávez experienced over a decade of unstable macroeconomic conditions, especially when compared to the rest of Latin America. Problems like poor and volatile GDP growth rates and increasing inflation were made worse with the hit of an economic crisis beginning in 2008. In fact, the global crisis was harsher on the Venezuela as a result of the financial mismanagement of state oil company, a vast nationalization campaign that significantly discouraged domestic and foreign investment (Romero 2009, 2010a), and unsustainable public spending needed to maintain Chávez's social aid programs. Moreover, the global crisis was accompanied by a rapid fall in oil prices that forced the Chávez administration to devalue the Venezuelan currency, reduce the federal budget, increase the value-added tax, and further deepen the national debt. As of 2013, Venezuela has continued to suffer from the highest rates of

inflation in Latin America, and has undergone two additional currency devaluations since the death of Chávez.

Translating the Appeal of Chávez's Political Ideology into Continued Electoral Success

A worsening state of affairs in Venezuela during Chávez's administration, including unstable economic growth, oil revenue mismanagement, inflation, and deteriorating democratic rights and institutions, would have conceivably given voters enough reasons to punish a president at the polls. Chávez's electoral survivability under these conditions presents a puzzle for the well-established economic voting literature. The notion that voters reward and punish political leaders in elections as a reaction to good and bad times (respectively) is widely accepted political science. Scholars have repeatedly shown that retrospective evaluations of economic conditions tend to dictate voters' feelings and vote choice toward incumbent political leaders (Downs 1957; Key 1966; Fiorina 1981; Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; Duch and Stevenson 2005; Anderson 2007; Healy and Malhotra 2013). Indeed, some even argue that, "economic voting is used as a proxy for the concept of electoral accountability" (Gélineau 2007, 416).¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Among the modest number of studies examining developing democracies, economic voting theory receives favorable support relative to advanced democracies. The leaders of transitional democracies in Latin America and Eastern Europe are also "held accountable for bad economic policies, at least to some degree" (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2008, 320). Yet research is not as systematic as for advanced democracies, given that it has been mostly limited to regional and/or case studies. This is especially true for the Latin American region, where countries like Peru, Mexico and Argentina have received the greatest degree of scholarly attention, with Chile, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Venezuela coming in second (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2008).

To explain what I call this “Chávez Phenomenon,” I argue that Chávez’s repeated electoral success can be explained by the voting incentives generated for the poor majority by Chávez’s socioeconomic and political policy agenda. This chapter assesses the extent to which the electoral survivability of Chávez in the face of deteriorating economic and democratic conditions in Venezuela after 2008 can be explained by understanding how individual-level ideological factors affected the electoral behavior of his political base.

I argue that individual-level attitudinal characteristics of Chávez’s electoral base were shaped by the appeal of a leftist-populist agenda that provided targeted socioeconomic and political inclusionary benefits. Historically marginalized citizens were particularly likely to have fostered a strong identification with Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution as Chávez’s leftist-populist political rhetoric and governing style gave a new importance to the material needs and political voice of the poor majority. On the one hand, the poor should have been particularly attracted to the appeal of Chávez’s leftist interventionist and redistributive ideology as they were the most likely beneficiaries of Chávez’s targeted initiatives for more inclusive socioeconomic policies. In line with this reasoning, scholars have shown that support for redistributive policies are generally high among the Latin American poor (Gaviria 2007; Blofield and Luna 2011; Camacho 2012).

On the other hand, I also expect the Venezuelan poor to also have adhered most strongly to Chávez’s populist normative redefinition of purpose of Venezuelan democracy toward a more participatory, even if less liberally democratic, political system. Just as scholars have shown that the poor tend to support left-leaning populist

leaders like Chávez (Oxhorn 1998; De la Torre 2007, 2010; Seligson 2007; García 2012), and exhibit more authoritarian political attitudes than the wealthy (Lipset 1959; Seligson 2008; Booth and Seligson 2009; Orces 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Hawkins and Riding 2010; Carlin and Singer 2011; Salinas and Booth 2011; Buchanan, DeAngelo, Ma, and Taylor 2012), I expect the Venezuelan poor to display greater populist and authoritarian tendencies than the wealthy.

Adherence to particular attitudinal preferences related to Chávez's leftist-populist ideology by members of Chávez's electoral base and socioeconomically and politically targeted members of Chavismo consequently biased voters' reward/punishment attitudes toward Chávez, which in turn influenced their voting calculi. In this way, I argue that Chávez's political base came to overlook and/or accept a deterioration of the country's conditions as a consequence of having strongly adhered to Chávez's leftist-populist ideology. The appeal of Chávez's leftist-populist political agenda for his electoral base acted as an individual-level attitudinal constraint that then biased their economic and government performance evaluations and hence significantly reduced their willingness to vote against Chávez. In essence, this is a mediation argument running from political ideology to economic and performance evaluations to voter choice.

Growing research on economic voting has shown that individual-level constraints can and do mitigate the accountability mechanisms of the reward-punishment model that constitutes economic voting (Duch et al. 2000; Anderson 2007; Kayser and Wlezien 2010; Healy and Malhotra 2013). In other words, individual-level attitudinal differences have been shown to produce heterogeneous economic voting behavior. Specifically, there are certain psychological factors that shape how "actual economic conditions are

translated into voter behavior most truthfully via citizens' subjective perceptions of economic conditions" (Anderson 2007, 278). This means that individual-level ideologies can bias evaluations of government performance to the extent of weakening the accountability mechanisms of the reward-punishment model that constitutes economic voting.

The most basic form of economic voting theory assumes that voters have the ability to form objective economic evaluations and that these evaluations are accurately attributed to the government leaders when deciding whether to vote for or against an incumbent (Anderson et al. 2004; Anderson 2007; Evans and Pickup 2010). However, a voter's previously held political beliefs and preferences, especially as related to the incumbent, can significantly limit the accuracy with which he or she can assess economic conditions and who is truly responsible for those conditions (Wlezien et al. 1997; Duch et al. 2000; Anderson et al. 2004; Evans and Anderson 2006; Anderson 2007; Ladner and Wlezien 2007; Gerber and Huber 2009; Evans and Pickup 2010; Healy and Malhotra 2013). Indeed, the evolution of the economic voting literature has consistently shown that voters are restricted in their ability to form objective evaluations of economic conditions and accurately attribute blame politicians for changes in economic conditions as a consequence of their partisan and ideological affinities (Conover et al. 1987; Duch et al. 2000; Evans and Anderson 2006; Ladner and Wlezien 2007; Gerber and Huber 2009; Evans and Pickup 2010; Kayser and Wlezien 2011; Tilley and Hobolt 2011; Enns et al. 2012).

Individual-level attitudinal biases have been argued to limit the willingness of some voters to punish a leader in elections because people tend to "avoid inconsistencies

in their behaviors and attitudes” and will hence “form evaluations of the state of the economy [and who is responsible for it] to be consistent with their previously held beliefs (Anderson 2007, 280). This argument is based on theories of psychology that argue that individuals are cognitively motivated to avoid inconsistencies between their beliefs, attitudes, and values and their behavior (Anderson et al. 2004; Evans and Anderson 2006; Anderson 2007). Political scientists have applied this theory to argue that voters engage in selective perception when it comes to forming evaluations of the economy and government performance (Anderson et al. 2004). That is, voters seek cognitive consistency between their individual-level partisan and ideological preferences, their government performance evaluations, and their voting decisions (Anderson et al. 2004; Anderson 2007).

In this chapter, I argue the appeal of Chávez’s leftist-populist political agenda for his electoral base and beneficiaries of his targeted policies acted as individual-level attitudinal constraint that then biased their economic and government performance evaluations and hence significantly reduced their willingness to vote against Chávez.¹⁰² Moreover, as in the previous chapters, I expect the poor to have been the drivers of connections between Chávez’s ideology, public opinion, and support for Chávez as Venezuelans of lower socioeconomic status are the most likely to have adhered to Chávez’s leftist-populist ideology.

By adopting Chávez’s leftist-populist ideology his supporters and inclusionary program participants can be argued to be more likely than non-supporters and non-participants to have developed more favorable evaluations of national economic conditions and government performance. Furthermore, if Chávez’s political base

¹⁰² Recall Figure 2.4.

perceived a crisis after 2008, they can also be expected to be less likely than opposition supporters to have blamed the Chávez administration for Venezuela's economic problems. Additionally, if Chávez's political base did indeed feel identified and empowered by adopting the same populist moral and political mentality championed by Chávez regarding the normative purpose of government to serve "the people", they are more likely than opposition supporters to have been willing to overlook, or even support, Chávez's authoritarian tendencies. Ultimately, adherence to Chávez's political ideology, acted as an individual level-attitudinal constraint on his political base's willingness to punish Chávez in elections for Venezuela's economic and democratic troubles. This is because his supporters were less likely to give poor evaluations of economic conditions and government performance as they sought cognitive consistency between their economic attitudes, their ideological stances, and their voting decisions.¹⁰³

If the logic of this argument is an accurate depiction of the public opinion dynamics that helped keep Chávez in office, then the following observable implications should be tested.¹⁰⁴ First, those belonging to Chávez's electoral base and those who benefited from socioeconomic and politically inclusionary programs, particularly the poor, are more likely than opposition sympathizers and non-participants to have adopted political attitudes that support Chávez's populist conception of democracy, expressed feelings of support, identity, and empowerment as related to Chávez's populist message,

¹⁰³ A rival hypothesis might argue that the charismatic bond between Chávez and his core followers compelled the latter to see fewer differences between themselves and Chávez on policy and to see his economic performance in a better light. As addressed in Chapter I, although I agree that Chávez and his electoral base certainly displayed strong characteristics of a charismatic linkage, I believe that the story of Chávez's electoral success can also be attributed to factors beyond Chávez's charisma.

¹⁰⁴ These observable implications are originally laid out in Chapter I, but I repeat them here to clarify the analytical objectives of this chapter.

and accepted or supported Chávez's authoritarian tendencies (H_7 , H_{7a}). Second, those belonging to Chávez's electoral base and those who benefited from socioeconomic and politically inclusionary program should also be likely to have reported higher degree of support for a greater role of the state in Venezuela's economic system compared to opposition voters and respondents who did not participate in Chávez's initiatives (H_8 , H_{8a}). Third, if Chávez supporters and inclusionary program beneficiaries indeed adopted similar ideological attitudes as Chávez's leftist ideology, then those attitudes should represent individual-level attitudinal biases that led them to give more favorable evaluations of national economic conditions and government performance, and be less likely to blame Chávez for the country's problems (H_9). Finally, more favorable evaluations should in turn significantly affect the probability that voters and inclusionary program participants would lend support for Chávez's reelection despite economic and democratic crises (H_{10}). Additionally, I test for possibility that a mediating relationship among adherence to Chávez's leftist-populist ideology, evaluations of national conditions and government performance, and vote choice, may have been more pronounced among the poor's political decision-making compared to the wealthy.

The remainder of this chapter tests these hypotheses. Specifically, I compare political attitudes, as related to Chávez's leftist-populist ideology, among Venezuelans of different socioeconomic status. Since this chapter argues that electoral support for Chávez persisted despite deteriorating national conditions, particularly the democratic and economic downturns after 2008, these attitudinal comparisons will be made using survey data before and after 2008. Although I do not have access to panel data, I take advantage of LAPOP's Venezuelan survey data available for 2006, 2010 and 2012 in

order to investigate whether there are changes in aggregate ideological attitudes, evaluations of national conditions, and support for Chávez before and the 2008. In addition, I test the mediation argument proposed in this chapter by examining the predictive power that affinity toward Chávez's leftist-populist ideology had on economic and government performance evaluations and vote choice for years after the economic crisis (2010 and 2012).

Data and Methods

In order test the observable implications outlined above, I analyze data from the 2006, 2010, and 2012 AmericasBarometer.¹⁰⁵ I use data from LAPOP's 2010 round in addition to examining the 2006 and 2012 surveys, which are pertinent to presidential election years, to complement the analyses and examine survey items that were not asked in the 2006 AmericasBarometer in Venezuela. Specifically, the 2010 AmericasBarometer data contains important survey items about perceptions of economic crisis and blame attribution for the crisis that hit Venezuela after 2008.

To determine membership in Chávez's electoral base I use a measure of past voice choice. Respondents are coded 1 if they voted for Chávez and 0 if the respondent voted another candidate.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, I used the same coding strategy as in Chapters III and VI to divide voters into participants and non-participants of Mission and

¹⁰⁵ Technical information for these surveys is available in Chapter III.

¹⁰⁶ "I don't know", "didn't vote", and null vote answers were coded missing.

Communal Councils. To differentiate voter's wealth level, I employ the same wealth index variable used in previous chapters.¹⁰⁷

I measure affinity to and identification with Chávez's populist definition of democracy through an additive index of average populist attitudes that for 2006 includes survey items that measure support for limiting the voice of the opposition, allowing the president to govern by ignoring Congress or the Supreme Court, granting the president unlimited power, allowing the president to override laws if it is in the interest of the people, having a government in which the people govern directly through the president instead of representatives, thinking about the political world as "us versus them" or "good versus evil," prohibiting dissenters to oppose the people's will, and agreeing that those who oppose the majority's will are a threat to the country's interests.¹⁰⁸ Subsequent AmericasBarometer surveys in 2010 and 2012 only include survey measures for attitudes regarding limiting the voice of the opposition, allowing the president to ignore Congress or the Supreme Court, supporting a direct relationship with the president, and viewing those who disagree with the majority as a threat to the country's interests.¹⁰⁹ The populism index is coded on a 0 to 100 scale, where 100 is the highest degree of support for a populist definition of democratic rule. Although this populism index includes variables that measure support for Chávez's possible authoritarian tendencies, I also include a dichotomous measure of support for a leader who governs with an iron fist, or

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter II for a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of using a wealth index measure instead of self-reported income.

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix 5.1 for a list of the question wording of these items.

¹⁰⁹ To test the internal reliability of the populism indices for 2006 and 2010/2012, I conducted Cronbach's alpha tests on the combination of variables. For 2006, I obtained an alpha of 0.70, and for 2010/2012 an alpha of 0.78.

“mano dura,” and a dichotomous measure for support for a strong leader who does not have to be democratically elected.¹¹⁰

I also employ a more general measure of support for democracy as the best form of government.¹¹¹ This variable is also coded onto a 0 to 100 scale, in which 100 is the highest degree of support for democracy. Additionally, I generate indicators for attitudes of identity and empowerment as related to Chávez’s populist message. These include perceptions of the degree of representativeness of Chávez’s government, system support and pride, external and internal efficacy, trust in the president, pride in being associated with Chávez, respect for Chávez, belief that Chávez governs morally and ethically, and belief that Chávez represents a good vision of the future.¹¹² With the exception of the 2006 measures of government representatives and attitudes specific to Chávez governing style, which are measured as proportions, these measures of identity and empowerment as related to Chávez’s populist message are coded on a 0 to 100 scale, where 100 is the highest degree of affinity to Chávez’s message.

To measure the degree of support for the type of a leftist socioeconomic model promoted by Chávez I create variable for leftist ideology and an index variable that assesses respondents’ views about the role of the state in Venezuela’s economic system. Although the classical left-right ideological identification scale has been shown to be a relatively weak indicator of vote choice and true policy preferences of citizens of Latin

¹¹⁰ DEM11. Do you think that our country needs a government with an iron fist, or that problems can be resolved with everyone's participation?
AUT1. There are people who say that we need a strong leader that does not have to be elected. Others say that although things may not work, electoral democracy, or the popular vote, is always the best. What do you think?

¹¹¹ Original answer scale is from 1 to 7, with 7 representing the strongest degree of support.
ING4. Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree?

¹¹² See Appendix 5.2 and 5.3 the question wording of these items.

America, work by Zechmeister (2013) shows that using this scale in Venezuela is appropriate for a number of reasons. First, Venezuelans are among the most willing of Latin Americans to place their overall ideological stances on a left to right scale. This is important since one of the most common problems with the validity and relevance of the left-right scale in Latin America is the significantly high rate of non-responses to survey items that ask about this type of ideological identification (Zechmeister 2013). Second, left-right identification is a good predictor of vote choice for Venezuelans, which indicates that the “left-right” concept is indeed relevant for the political decision-making of Venezuelans. Finally, Venezuelans display a relatively strong programmatic connection between policy stances and the left-right identification scale when compared to voters of other Latin American countries. In sum, Zechmeister (2013) shows that the left-right ideological scale is indeed a relevant factor for the political preferences and decisions of Venezuelans. For the purposes of testing my hypotheses about the relationship between ideological affinities to Chávez’s leftist-populist agenda and voting behavior, I create a measure of leftist ideology that is operationalized on a 0 to 100 scale, with 100 representing extreme leftism.¹¹³

To ensure that I can more accurately measure policy stances, I also include a measure for attitudes about the role of the state. For this measure, I generate an index of variables for a respondent’s degree of support for the state’s involvement in private

¹¹³ L1. On this card there is a 1-10 scale that goes from left to right. One means left and 10 means right. Nowadays, when we speak of political leanings, we talk of those on the left and those on the right. In other words, some people sympathize more with the left and others with the right. According to the meaning that the terms "left" and "right" have for you, and thinking of your own political leanings, where would you place yourself on this scale?

property, welfare, job creation, inequality reduction, and healthcare.¹¹⁴ This index is also operationalized on a 0 to 100 scale, where 100 signifies support for the highest degree of state involvement.¹¹⁵

Lastly, I generate measures of evaluations of economic conditions and government performance in order to test key comparisons outlined in the hypotheses above.¹¹⁶ The analyses include measures for both current and retrospective national economic conditions. Both of these measures are operationalized from 0 to 100, where 100 represents the best possible evaluation of economic conditions. For 2010, specifically, I also include a dichotomous measure of perceptions of an economic crisis and a measure of blame attribution for the crisis.¹¹⁷ Respondents who perceived a very serious crisis were coded 1, while respondents perceived a not-so-serious crisis or no

¹¹⁴ Original answer scale is from 1 to 7, with 7 representing the strongest degree of support.
ROS1. The Venezuelan government, instead of the private sector, should own the most important enterprises and industries of the country. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?
ROS2. The Venezuelan government, more than individuals, should be the most responsible for ensuring the well-being of the people. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

ROS3. The Venezuelan government, more than the private sector, should be primarily responsible for creating jobs. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

ROS4. The Venezuelan government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

ROS6. The Venezuelan government, more than the private sector should be primarily responsible for providing health care services. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

¹¹⁵ The Cronbach's alpha measure of internal consistency for this index is 0.70.

¹¹⁶ SOCT1. How would you describe the country's economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad?

SOCT2. Do you think that the country's current economic situation is better than, the same as or worse than it was 12 months ago?

¹¹⁷ The survey item for blame attribution in the 2010 AmericasBarometer for Venezuela is only asked for those respondents that reported perceiving any degree of economic crisis in the country.

CRISIS1. Some say that our country is suffering a very serious economic crisis; others say that we are suffering a crisis but it is not very serious, while others say that there isn't any economic crisis. What do you think?

CRISIS2. Who is the most to blame for the current economic crisis in our country from among the following: (01) The previous administration (02) The current administration (03)

Ourselves(04) The rich people of our country (05) The problems of democracy (06) The rich countries (07) The economic system of the country, or (08) Never have thought about it

crisis at all were coded 0. Blame attribution is a categorical variable for which respondents place the blame of crisis in 2010 on the current or previous governments, the Venezuelan people, rich citizens, the problems of democracy, rich countries, or the economic system.

I also analyze several measures of evaluations of government performance. The government's economic performance is measured through an index generated by including variables for the degree to which respondents feel the government handles poverty, unemployment, and the economy as a whole.¹¹⁸ The government's political performance is measured with variables for perceptions of the government's fight against corruption and perception of the government's protection and promotion of democratic principles.¹¹⁹ Additionally, I include a variable that measures respondents' perceptions of Venezuela's level of democracy. All of these government performance variables are also measured on a 0 to 100 scale, where 100 represents the best evaluation of government performance.

Finally, the analyses once again control for a number of demographic factors including age, sex, level of education, and place of residence. Age is measured as a respondent's classification into 5 to 6 age cohorts (depending on the year). Sex is coded 1 if the respondent is female and 0 if male. Education is measured equally across data sets as "level of education" and operationalized ordinally as having completed none, primary,

¹¹⁸ Original answer scale is from 1 to 7, with 7 representing the strongest degree of support.

N1. To what extent would you say the current administration fights poverty?

N12. To what extent would you say the current administration combats unemployment?

N15. To what extent would you say that the current administration is managing the economy well?

¹¹⁹ N9. To what extent would you say the current administration combats government corruption?

N3. To what extent would you say the current administration promotes and protects democratic principles?

secondary, and higher education. Place of residence is also a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent lives in an urban area and 0 if the respondent lives in a rural area.

Empirical Results and Discussion

This section provides empirical analyses aimed at testing whether members of Chávez's electoral base indeed adhered to individual-level attitudes related to the president leftist-populist political ideology that biased their evaluations of national economic and democratic conditions and government performance, and whether these factors in turn predict willingness to reelect Chávez. To do this, I first conduct a series of mean comparisons of ideological attitudes between poor and wealthy Chávez and opposition voters and participants and non-participants of Chávez's inclusionary programs. I test differences in ideological attitudes related to a populist definition of democracy and attitudes about the leftist ideology and the role of the state across groups and before and after the 2008, when economic crisis hit Venezuela and the country began displaying a steady decline in its quality of democracy. I then take a closer look at differences in economic evaluations and government performance. Lastly, I test the mediating argument among ideological closeness to Chávez's leftist-populist agenda, evaluations of national conditions and government performance, and electoral support for Chávez.

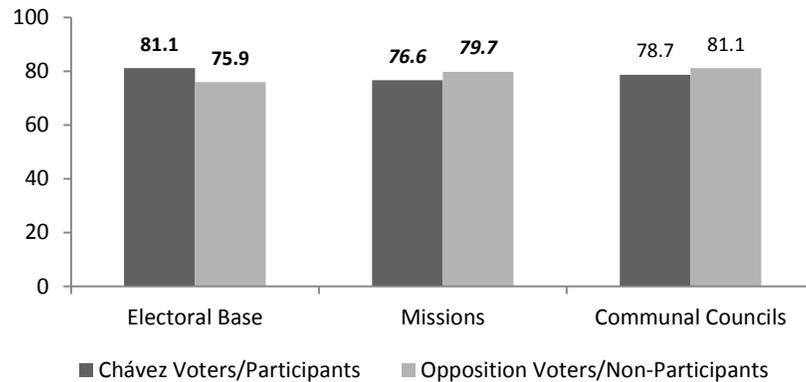
Support for a Populist Definition of Democracy

Among the observable implications outlined above, I hypothesize that those belonging to Chávez's electoral base and participants of Missions and Communal

Councils, especially the poor, are more likely than opposition voters and non-participants to display political attitudes that supported both Chávez’s populist conception of democracy, as well as possible authoritarian tendencies by a president like Chávez. Moreover, I claim that respondents who voted for Chávez in the past and those associated with his inclusionary programs should display greater affinity toward Chávez’s populist message even after 2008, when an economic crisis struck Venezuela and the country began displaying clear signs of institutional democratic deterioration.

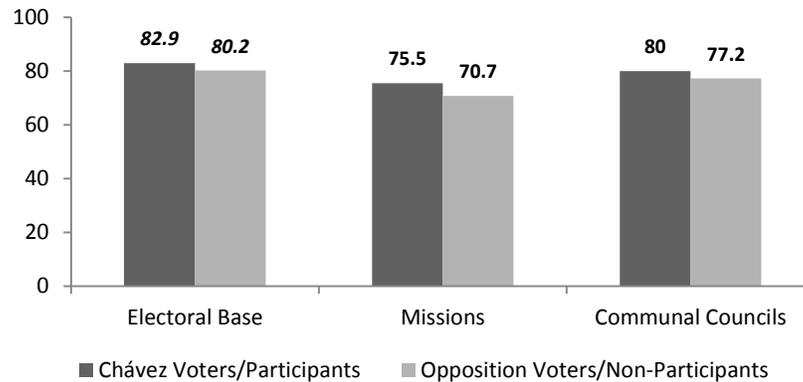
As a first step for testing these expectations, Figure 5.1 and 5.2 compare average levels of support for democracy between Venezuelan respondents who voted for Chávez or participated in Mission or Communal Councils, and those who voted for the opposition or did not participate in these initiatives before and after 2008.¹²⁰

Figure 5.1. Average Support for Democracy among Different Types of Venezuelans, 2006



¹²⁰ For Figures 5.1 and 5.2, a bold highlight denotes statistical significant at the $p < .05$ level, while bold italics denote statistical significant at the $p < .10$ level.

Figure 5.2. Average Support for Democracy among Different Types of Venezuelans, 2010 and 2012



According to Figures 5.1 and 5.2, Venezuelans generally tended to be highly supportive of democracy as the best system of government. In fact, according to LAPOP's 2012 report on political culture in the Americas, Venezuela is second after Uruguay in support for democracy in the region (Seligson, Smith, and Zechmeister 2012). Interestingly, past Chávez voters and participants of Missions and Communal Councils displayed higher average support for democracy in 2010 and 2012. However, these findings and the comparisons displayed in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 should be interpreted by keeping in mind that “democracy” in Venezuela could have possibly come to mean different things for different types of voters given Chávez's populist message about the normative purpose of democratic government. Chávez and opposition electoral bases may have different ideas about what kind of democracy they think is the best form of government. Unfortunately, Figures 5.1 and 5.2 do not allow me to disentangle this question.

To further examine what kind of definition of democracy Venezuelans support, I next compare average attitudes about populism.¹²¹ I expect that those who voted for Chávez in the past or benefited from Missions or communal Councils will have reported a greater affinity toward populist and authoritarian ideas than those who favored opposition candidates or did not benefit from Chávez's initiatives. I compare average support for populist attitudes and authoritarian leadership between Venezuelan respondents who voted for Chávez or the opposition in previous elections, and those who did or did not participate in Mission or Communal Councils. Additionally, I calculate mean comparisons of key attitudinal variables between poor and wealthy members of Chávez and opposition electoral bases, and between poor and wealthy inclusionary program participants and non-participants to test possible differences between poor and wealthy respondents. Table 5.1 displays the results of mean comparisons between 2006 and 2010/2012 among groups of Venezuelans respondents on their support for populist ideas about government, support for an iron fist president, and support for a strong leader who does not have to be democratically elected.¹²²

¹²¹ To recall, populist attitudes are measured through a populism index that includes survey items about support for limiting the voice of the opposition, allowing the president to govern by ignoring Congress or the Supreme Court, granting the president unlimited power, allowing the president to override laws if it is in the interest of the people, having a government in which the people govern directly through the president instead of representatives, thinking about the political world as "us versus them" or "good versus evil," prohibiting dissenters to oppose the people's will, and agreeing that those who oppose the majority's will are a threat to the country's interests. The populism index is coded on a 0 to 100 scale, where 100 is the highest degree of support for a populist definition of democratic rule.

¹²² I am only able to calculate differences in average attitudes between 2006 and 2010/2012 for support for an iron fist president and support for a strong, unelected leader. Unfortunately, the populist survey items in 2006 were asked as "yes" or "no" questions, while the 2010 and 2010 items were asked on an interval scale, which makes comparison among years problematic.

Table 5.1. Summary of Mean Comparisons of Attitudes Related to a Populist Definition of Democracy, Venezuela 2006-2012

Variable	Higher Average Support among:		
	Chávez's Electoral Base	Mission Participants	CC Participants
Populism Index			
2006	✓	✓	✓
2010/2012	✓	✓	✓
Mano Dura			
2006	✓	✓	
2010/2012	✓		✓
No Elections			
2006	✓		
2010/2012	✓	✓	✓

✓ Difference among types of group respondents is statistically significant ($p < .05$)

■ Poor group respondents displayed higher support than their wealthy counterparts.

According to Table 5.1, those belonging to Chávez's electoral base and participants of Missions and Communal Councils did generally display greater support for populist ideas of democratic government, as well as the possibility of an authoritarian president.¹²³ The results also indicate that, as hypothesized, poor Chávez supporters and inclusionary program participants tended to display the highest degree of populist attitudes and support for an iron fist or an unelected president, especially in 2010 and 2012. Attitudinal differences among those who voted for Chávez or opposition in previous elections are the most clear, as Chávez voters consistently displayed higher support for populist concepts of governance and for a president who functions under authoritarian conditions.

In terms of differences in average attitudes before and after the economic crisis and democratic decay that started in 2008, comparisons between 2006 and 2010/2012

¹²³ Exceptions include average support for an iron fist president between participants and non-participants of Missions in 2010/2012 and of Communal Councils in 2006, and support for a strong unelected leader between participants and non-participants of Missions and Communal Councils in 2006.

revealed that among past Chávez voters and inclusionary program participants, only wealthy Mission participants displayed lower support for a “mano dura” president in 2010/2012 than the same types of respondents in 2006. 2010/2012 respondents who voted for Chávez in previous elections, and other inclusionary program participants, exhibited no differences in attitudes related to an iron fist president in comparison to those in 2006.¹²⁴ On the other hand, wealthy members of the opposition’s electoral base indicated higher support for a “mano dura” president in 2010/2012, while wealthy participants of both Missions and Communal councils reported lower support for this type of president than similar respondents in 2006. Regarding support for a strong leader who does not have to be democratically elected, poor and wealthy Chávez voters and Mission participants reported lower support in 2010/2012. Only wealthy Communal Council participants reported lower support for a strong, unelected leader in 2010/2012 than the same type of respondents in 2006.¹²⁵

The results for differences in Table 5.1 regarding populist attitudes provide the strongest evidence in favor of the hypotheses in this chapter. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 display average populist attitudes for different groups of Venezuelans in 2006¹²⁶ and 2010/2010.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ To recall, although I do not have access to panel data, I take advantage of LAPOP’s Venezuelan survey data available for 2006, 2010 and 2012 in order to investigate whether there are changes in aggregate ideological attitudes, evaluations of national conditions, and support for Chávez before and after the 2008 economic crisis.

¹²⁵ These differences in average attitudes between 2006 and 2010/2012 are all statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

¹²⁶ The 2006 AmericasBarometer populism survey items only include “yes” or “no” answer categories for support of different types of populist attitudes. Therefore, the analyses of these items for 2006 will be discussed as proportions rather than a score on a 0 to 100 scale.

¹²⁷ Appendices 5.5 through 5.8, display similar data for support for an iron fist or strong, unelected leader. For these appendices, as well as Figures 5.3 and 5.4 numbers highlighted in bold represent statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level among all four groups.

*Denotes two-tailed statistical significance at the $p < .05$ for differences between poor and wealthy

Figure 5.3. Proportion of Different Types of Venezuelans Supporting Populist Attitudes, 2006

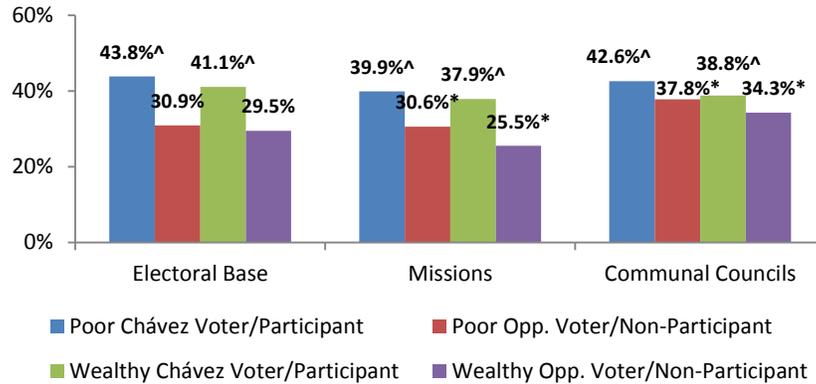
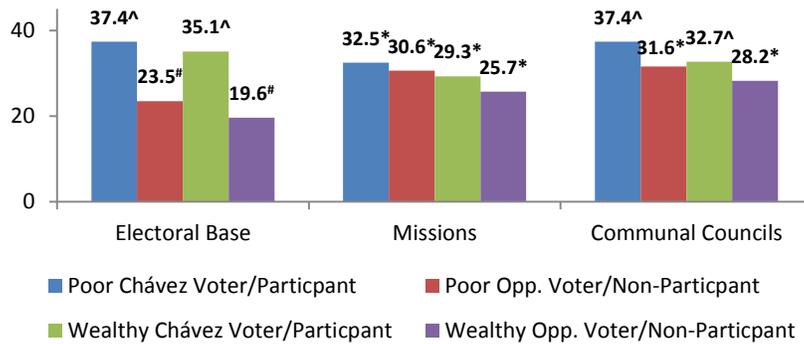


Figure 5.4. Proportion of Different Types of Venezuelans Supporting Populist Attitudes, 2010 and 2012



A breakdown of the distribution of populist attitudes among different types of Venezuelan respondents shows the degree to which, compared to opposition sympathizers and non-participants, those belonging to Chávez's electoral base and participants of Mission and Communal Councils, especially among the poor, expressed significantly higher support for limiting the voice of the opposition, allowing the

types of voters. [#]Denotes two-tailed statistical significance at the $p < .10$ for differences between poor and wealthy types of voters. [^]Denotes one-tailed statistical significance at the $p < .10$ for differences between poor and wealthy types of voters.

president to ignore Congress or the Supreme Court, giving the president unlimited power, allowing the president to override laws in favor of the people's will, the idea that the people should govern directly through the president and not through representatives, limiting the freedom of citizens to oppose the will of the people, and the idea that citizens against the will of the majority are a threat to the country's interests. In fact, poor Chávez voters and program participants consistently displayed populist attitudes that were at least two points higher than their wealthier counterparts on the populist index scale.

Interestingly, poor opposition voters and non-participants also expressed greater populist attitudes than their wealthier counterparts.

These findings provide evidence suggesting that Chávez's political base and inclusionary program participants, particularly the poor, did indeed feel the same populist moral and political mentality championed by Chávez regarding the normative purpose of government to serve "the people," and they were more likely than opposition supporters to have been willing to overlook, or even support, the authoritarian tendencies of populism. Furthermore, even poor Venezuelans who did not vote for Chávez or benefit from Mission or Communal councils also seemed to have adhered more strongly to Chávez's populist message in comparison to their wealthier counterparts. These results lend further support to the idea that the poor, or working class citizens, tend to exhibit more authoritarian attitudes than the wealthy. Moreover, it suggests that populist leaders like Chávez can effectively appeal to the masses by activating the poor's tendencies to support populist ideology and policies that often endorse antidemocratic means of maintaining political power.

Beyond hypotheses about differences in populist and authoritarian attitudes, I also hypothesize that Chávez's electoral base and inclusionary program beneficiaries should have expressed strong feelings of support, identity, and empowerment as related to Chávez's governing style. Following the same analytical strategy of Table 5.1, I compare average attitudes between 2006 and 2010/2012 that measure pride in the system, feelings of the government's representativeness, external and internal efficacy, and trust in the president among group of voters. Additionally, I calculated mean comparisons of these key attitudinal variables between poor and wealthy respondents who voted for Chávez or opposition in past elections, and between poor and wealthy inclusionary program participants and non-participants to test possible differences between poor and wealthy respondents. Table 5.2 displays the results of these analyses.

Similar to the results in Table 5.1, the findings in Table 5.2 indicate that past Chávez voters and participants of Missions and Communal Councils did generally display greater feelings of support, identity, and empowerment towards Chávez's government. However, contrary to expectations, the results provide weak evidence that poor Chávez supporters and inclusionary program participants tended to display the highest degree of support, identity, and empowerment towards Chávez. In comparison to opposition sympathizers and non-participants of inclusionary programs, those belonging to Chávez's electoral base and participants of Missions and Communal Councils felt better represented by the Chávez government, had greater system support and pride, felt greater external and internal political efficacy, had greater trust in the president, felt a greater sense of pride in being associated with Chávez, had greater respect for Chávez,

believed Chávez government morally and ethically, and thought that Chávez represented a good vision of the future for the country.

Table 5.2. Summary of Mean Comparisons of Attitudes of Support, Identity and Empowerment Related to Chávez’s Government, Venezuela 2006-2012¹²⁸

Variable	More Positive Attitudes among:		
	Chávez’s Electoral Base	Mission Participants	CC Participants
Chávez Reps.			
2006	✓	✓	✓
2012	✓	n/a	✓
System Support			
2006	✓	✓	✓
2010/2012	✓	✓	✓
Pride in System			
2006	✓	✓	✓
2010/2012	✓	✓	✓
External Eff.	✓	✓	✓
Internal Eff.	✓	✓	✓
Trust in Pres.	✓	✓	✓
Chávez Pride	✓	✓	✓
Chávez Respect	✓	✓	✓
Chávez Moral/Ethical	✓	✓	✓
Chávez Future	✓	✓	✓

✓ Difference among types of group respondents is statistically significant ($p < .05$)

■ Poor group respondents displayed higher support than their wealthy counterparts.

Comparisons of average political system support and pride in the political system between 2006 and 2010/2012, revealed some significant differences across time. Poor members of Chávez’s electoral base reported lower system support in 2010/2012 than the

¹²⁸ I am only able to calculate differences in average attitudes between 2006 and 2010/2012 for support for political system support and pride in the political system. Government representativeness questions in the 2006 AmericasBarometer were asked as “yes” or “no” questions, while the 2010 and 2010 items were asked on an interval scale, which makes comparison among years problematic. Mission participation data from the AmericasBarometer is only available for 2006 and 2010. Measures for both efficacy variables and trust in the president are only available in 2010 and 2012. In contrast, Chávez specific survey items (Chávez pride, respect, moral/ethical, and future) were only asked in 2006.

same type of respondents in 2006, while there was no difference in aggregate system support among wealthy Chávez supporters and opposition supporters.¹²⁹ Participants of Missions and Communal Councils, as well as Communal Council non-participants, also reported lower system support in 2010/2012.¹³⁰ Similarly, participants of Missions and Communal Councils also displayed lower levels of pride in the political system in 2010/2012, while only wealthy Communal Council non-participants reported the same levels of system pride in 2006 than similar respondents in 2010/2012.¹³¹

The findings in Table 5.2 regarding internal and external political efficacy are particularly important for my argument that those belonging to Chávez's electoral base and those who benefited from socioeconomic and politically inclusionary programs are more likely than opposition sympathizers and non-participants to have expressed feelings of empowerment under the Chávez administration. According to Table 5.2, past Chávez voters and participants of Mission and Communal Councils tended to feel that the government served the best interest of the Venezuelan people and that they understood the challenges faced by the country. In Figures 5.5 and 5.6, I break down the distribution of average attitudes of efficacy for different types of Venezuelan respondents.¹³²

¹²⁹ Differences are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

¹³⁰ Differences are statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level.

¹³¹ Differences are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

¹³² Appendices 5.9 through 5.19 provide a breakdown of other average attitudes in Table 5.2. For Figures 5.5 and 5.6, numbers highlighted in bold represent statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level among all four groups. *Denotes two-tailed statistical significance at the $p < .05$ for differences between poor and wealthy types of voters. #Denotes two-tailed statistical significance at the $p < .10$ for differences between poor and wealthy types of voters. ^Denotes one-tailed statistical significance at the $p < .10$ for differences between poor and wealthy types of voters.

Figure 5.5. Average External Efficacy among Different Types of Venezuelans, 2010 and 2012

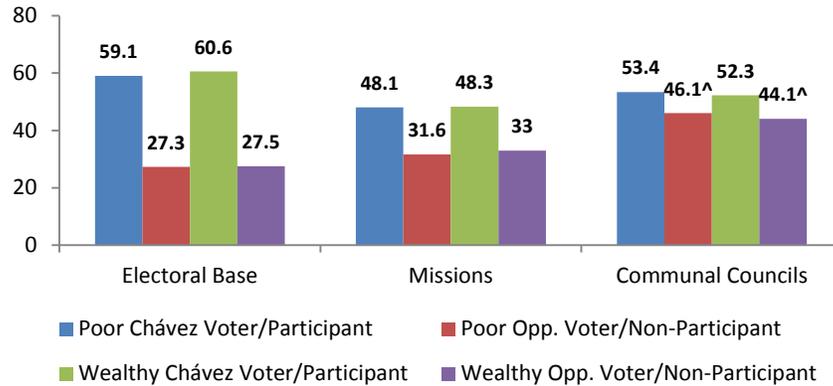
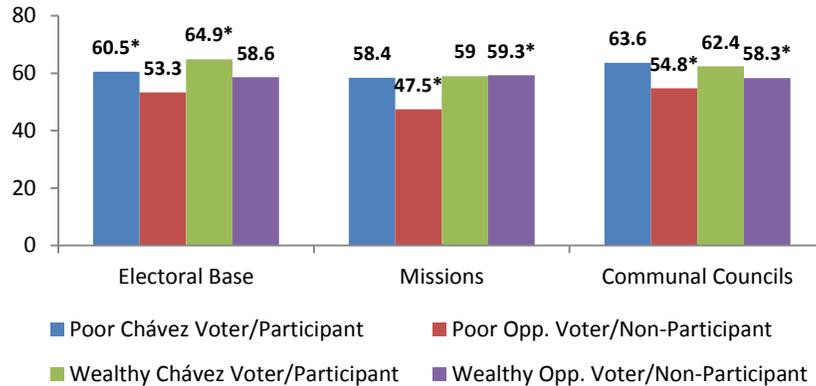


Figure 5.5 shows the degree to which Chávez’s electoral base and inclusionary program participants displayed higher average levels of external efficacy than opposition voters and non-participants. Differences are particularly stark between past Chávez voters and opposition sympathizers, as the former reported nearly double the average level of external efficacy than opposition voters. Additionally, and in line with my argument in this chapter, it seems that having benefited from Mission aid and having participated in the political activities of Communal Councils had strong correlations with a greater sense of external efficacy among program beneficiaries. Similar results are observed in Figure 5.6 for average levels of internal efficacy.

Figure 5.6. Average Internal Efficacy among Different Types of Venezuelan Voters, 2010 and 2012



As shown in Figure 5.6, those in Chávez’s electoral base and inclusionary program participants also felt higher degrees of internal efficacy than opposition voters and non-participants. That is, Chávez supporters and beneficiaries of Mission and Communal Councils felt higher degrees of empowerment, as expected. Compared to differences in average levels of external efficacy, it should be noted that the differences between poor and wealthy voters and inclusionary program participants regarding internal efficacy are much smaller. This is an important finding given that I argue that Chávez’s populist discourse and policies was aimed at creating a more direct, participatory and protagonist democracy that could have given the poor majority a greater sense of identity and empowerment. Hence, smaller differences among levels of internal efficacy between the poor and the wealthy lend some evidence that the poor, specifically, do seem to have felt particularly empowered under the Chávez regime.¹³³

¹³³ Using data from before and after Chávez’s 1998 election (which is described in more detail in Chapter III), Appendix 5.20 shows how feelings of internal efficacy grew exponentially for the poor under Chávez. However, it must be kept in mind that the problem with cross-time comparisons could be due to a change in the group composition of the poor. If Chávez’s socioeconomic policies succeeded in pulling people out of poverty and into a higher class, then

Overall, the evidence so far suggests that compared to opposition sympathizers and inclusionary program non-participants, those belonging to Chávez's electoral base and beneficiaries of Missions and Communal Councils, on average, tended to display greater support for populist ideas of democratic governance, were more tolerant of an authoritarian president, and felt more support, identity, and empowerment as related to Chávez's governing style. However, only differences in attitudes about populism and an authoritarian leader provided convincing evidence for the hypothesized differences between poor and wealthy types of voters. Not only did poor Chávez voters and participants of Missions and Communal Councils display the highest support for populist ideas about democracy, but they also expressed the highest levels of support for the authoritarian tendencies that often come with the electoral success of populist leaders like Chávez. Additionally, I find important evidence that the poor, even among opposition sympathizers, seem to have felt particularly empowered, in the form of internal efficacy, by the Chávez administration.

Regarding differences in average attitudes before and after the economic crisis and democratic decay that started in 2008, comparisons between 2006 and 2010/2012 revealed that although respondents in 2006 and 2010/2012 did report some differences in attitudes about populism and tolerance for an authoritarian president, past Chávez voters and participants and of Missions and Communal Councils consistently displayed stronger populist attitudes and support for an iron fist or strong, unelected leader in comparison to

the "wealthy" category should become diluted over time with his beneficiaries while the "poor" group would potentially be left to contain a higher proportion of marginalized poor that may have not reaped the benefits of Chávez's leftist-populist agenda. However, if this is the case, finding differences in internal efficacy between the poor and wealthy should be substantially more difficult, making the findings in Appendix 5.20 even more important for the theoretical argument of this dissertation.

opposition sympathizers and non-participants of inclusionary programs. However, even though Chávez supporters and inclusionary programs also exhibited consistently greater support and pride in the political system, even after the beginning of severe economic and democratic deterioration in 2008, I found lower political system support among poor Chávez voters in 2010 and 2012, as well as a significantly lower degrees of support and pride in the system among Mission and Communal Council participants in 2012/2012 in compared to similar respondent in 2006. These findings indicate that deteriorating economic and democratic conditions in Venezuela beginning in 2008 could have negatively affected the legitimacy of Chávez's government even among his most loyal supporters. Nevertheless, any degree of decline in average system support or pride was not enough to throw Chávez out of power in 2012.

Leftist Ideology and Attitudes about the Role of the State

Beyond differences in support for a populist definition of democracy and feelings of identity and empowerment with Chávez's governing style, I also hypothesize that members of Chávez's electoral base and participants of Mission and Communal Councils, especially the poor, would display significantly stronger leftist ideological tendencies and attitudes about the role of the state in comparison to opposition voters and non-participants. Furthermore, I expect that past Chávez voters and those associated with his inclusionary programs will display greater affinity toward Chávez's leftist ideology even after the 2008 economic crisis. To test these claims, I once again calculate a series of mean comparisons for key attitudinal variables measuring ideology before and after 2008. Similar to the analyses in the previous section, Table 5.3 compares average leftist

ideology and attitudes about the role of the state in Venezuela among groups of respondents to see if those who voted for Chávez or benefited from Missions or communal Councils tended to display a greater affinity toward populist ideas than those who favored opposition candidates or did not benefit from Chávez’s initiatives. To examine the hypothesized differences between poor and wealthy respondents, I also calculated mean comparisons of key attitudinal variables between poor and wealthy Chávez and opposition voters and between poor and wealthy inclusionary program participants and non-participants.

Table 5.3. Summary of Mean Comparisons of Leftist Ideology and Attitudes about the Role of the State, Venezuela 2006-2012¹³⁴

Variable	Stronger Attitudes among:		
	Chávez’s Electoral Base	Mission Participants	CC Participants
Leftist Ideology			
2006	✓	✓	
2010/2012	✓		✓
Role of State	✓	✓	

✓ Difference among types of group respondents is statistically significant ($p < .05$)

■ Poor group respondents displayed higher support than their wealthy counterparts.

Once again, the results in Table 5.3 indicate that Chávez supporters and inclusionary program participants consistently displayed greater affinity with Chávez’s leftist socioeconomic agenda in comparison to opposition sympathizers and non-participants.¹³⁵ Members of Chávez’s electoral base and participants of Missions and Communal Councils displayed greater average left-leaning ideologies and higher support

¹³⁴ I am only able to example possible differences in average attitudes between 2006 and 2010/2012 for the degree of leftist ideology, as survey items about the role of the state for the AmericasBarometer is only asked in 2010/2012.

¹³⁵ The exception involves the lack of difference in attitudes about the role of the state between Communal Council participants and non-participants in 2010/2012.

for state involvement in private property, welfare, job creation, inequality reduction, and healthcare. However, poor Chávez supporters and inclusionary program participants only displayed greater adherence to Chávez's ideology in comparison the wealthier counterparts as measured by attitudes about the role of the state.¹³⁶

According to comparison of average ideologies between 2006 and 2010/2012, the wealthy respondents who indicated having participated in Missions reported more left-leaning ideologies in 2010/2012 than similar respondents in 2006, while poor respondents who participated in Communal Councils and all respondents who did not indicate having participated in Communal Councils reported less left-leaning ideologies in 2010/2012.¹³⁷ The differences among Communal Council participants and non-participants seem particularly important given that by 2010 and 2012 significant differences in leftist ideology between these two groups seem to have disappeared (see Appendix 5.22).

In sum, the evidence in this section suggests that compared to opposition sympathizers, those belonging to Chávez's electoral base, regardless of wealth, tended to display more left leaning ideologies and greater support for an increased role of the state in the Venezuelan economic system. Only the findings regarding the poor's higher support for a greater role of state supports the expectation that poor Chávez voters would display the most left leaning attitudes.

Evaluations of National Conditions and Government Performance

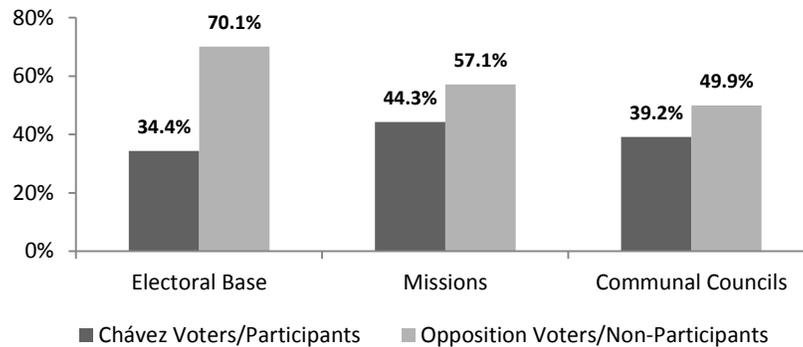
This section moves on from comparisons of ideological affinities to Chávez's leftist-populism to examine possible differences between those belonging to Chávez's

¹³⁶ Appendices 5.21 Through 5.23 display breakdowns of the distribution of average support for leftist ideology and an increased role of the state.

¹³⁷ Differences are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

electoral base and opposition sympathizers, Mission participants and non-participants, and Communal Council participants and non-participants in regards to examining their evaluations of national economic conditions and government performance. To recall, in this chapter, I argue that Chávez's electoral base and participants of his socioeconomic and political initiatives are likely to have displayed attitudes related to the president leftist-populist political ideology that could have biased their evaluations of national economic and democratic conditions, government performance, and attributions of responsibility for bad national conditions.. Moreover, I claim that this should be true even after an economic crisis struck Venezuela in 2008 and the country began displaying worrisome signs of democratic decay. To test this argument, I first examine perceptions of crisis and crisis blame attributions among different types of respondents to test for differences between those who voted for Chávez in previous elections or participated in Missions or Communal Councils, and those who voted for the opposition or did not participate in these programs. Figure 5.7 and Table 5.4 display the results of these analyses. I then calculate mean comparisons of average current and retrospective national economic evaluations, as well as evaluations of government performance for different types of respondents before and after 2008.

Figure 5.7. Proportion of Different Types of Venezuelans who Perceived a Very Serious Economic Crisis in 2010



In line with expectations, Figure 5.7 shows that, in comparison to those belonging to Chávez’s electoral base and inclusionary program participants, a larger percentage of opposition voters and those who did not participate in either Missions or Communal Councils perceived a very serious economic crisis in Venezuela in 2010.¹³⁸ In fact the vast majority of opposition sympathizers and Mission non-participants perceived a very serious crisis, while practically half of Communal Council non-participants also did so. To examine crisis perceptions further, Table 5.4 displays the distribution of crisis blame targets among different types of respondents who perceived any degree of crisis in Venezuela.

¹³⁸ Differences are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 5.4. Distribution of Blame Attribution for Economic Crisis among Different Types of Venezuelans, 2010¹³⁹

	Electoral Base		Missions		Communal Councils	
	Chávez	Opposition	Participant	Non	Participant	Non
Previous Gov't.	18.1%	0%	10%	5.1%	10.8%	7.9%
Current Gov't.	19.2%	75.7%	37.5%	65.8%	39.9%	48.7%
Venezuelans	16.3%	8.6%	15.9%	13.9%	11.4%	15.3%
Rich People	5.2%	2.5%	4%	2.1%	3.8%	3.3%
Probs. with Dem.	5.4%	1.2%	5.3%	3.1%	10.1%	3.7%
Rich Countries	11.2%	2.1%	7%	2.6%	16.5%	14%
Econ. System	21.8%	8.2%	1.8%	1.3%	1.9%	1.6%
Other	1.7%	2.9%	1.3%	1.8%	1.6%	1.9%

Also in line with the hypotheses of this chapter, compared to Chávez's electoral base, opposition supporters overwhelmingly blamed Chávez's administration for the economic crisis. As shown in Figure 5.4, the vast majority of opposition sympathizers (75.7%) and Mission non-participants (65.8%), as well as nearly half of Communal Council non-participants (48.7%), placed blame for Venezuela's crisis on the current administration in 2010. While only 19.2% of Chávez supporters blame the current administrations, a much larger proportion of Mission participants (37.5%) and Communal Council participants (39.9%). In fact, inclusionary program participants seemed to agree with opposition voters in placing the most blame on the Chávez's government. Those belonging to Chávez's electoral base mostly blamed the government previous to Chávez and the economic system.

Next, to test the hypothesized differences among different types of Venezuelans regarding economic and government performance evaluations, Table 5.5 displays the results of mean comparison of average current and retrospective national economic

¹³⁹ Proportions of blame attribution for "Have not thought about this" are coded as missing.

evaluations, as well as evaluations of government performance, among groups of respondents before and after 2008.

Table 5.5. Summary of Mean Comparisons of Economic and Government Performance Evaluations, Venezuela 2006-2012

Variable	More Favorable Evaluations among:		
	Chávez's Electoral Base	Mission Participants	CC Participants
Current Econ. Evals.			
2006	✓	✓	✓
2010/2012	✓	✓	✓
Retro. Econ. Evals.			
2006	✓	✓	✓
2010/2012	✓	✓	✓
Gov't. Econ. Perf.			
2006	✓	✓	✓
2010/2012	✓	✓	✓
Level of Democracy			
2006	✓	✓	✓
2010/2012	✓	✓	✓
Gov't. Dem. Perf.			
2006	✓	✓	✓
2010/2012	✓	✓	✓
Gov't. Corruption Perf.			
2006	✓	✓	✓
2010/2012	✓	✓	✓
Pres. Approval			
2006	✓	✓	✓
2010/2012	✓	✓	✓

✓ Difference among types of group respondents is statistically significant (p<.05)

The results displayed in Table 5.5 show strong evidence for the hypotheses that members of Chávez's electoral base and participants of Missions and Communal Councils were consistently more likely than opposition voters and non-participants to express favorable evaluations of economic conditions and government performance, even after the onset of economic and democratic crises in 2008. In terms of differences in average attitudes before and after the economic crisis and democratic decay that began in 2008, comparisons between 2006 and 2010/2012 showed that the vast majority

respondents reported significantly less favorable economic and democratic evaluations in 2010/2012 than their counterparts in 2006, even among those who previously voted for Chávez and those who benefited from Mission and Communal Councils.¹⁴⁰ These findings indicate that even those most loyal to Chávez also felt the negative effects of the economic crisis and democratic decay that struck Venezuela beginning in 2008.

However, previous findings in this chapter show that Chávez voters and participants of inclusionary programs still displayed the greatest ideological affinity to Chávez leftist-populist political agenda and the greatest support for Chávez governing style. Furthermore, these types of respondents were less likely to place blame on the Chávez administration for the economic crisis of 2010. Along the same lines, Table 5.4 clearly shows that despite any decay in evaluation of economic or democratic conditions or government performance, those who voted for Chávez or participated in inclusionary programs consistently displayed much more favorable evaluations than opposition voters and non-participants. Hence, although the onset of economic and democratic crises does seem to have had somewhat of a significant impact on Venezuelans' economic and democratic evaluations of national conditions and government performance, even among Chávez's electoral base, the negative effects were not sufficient to significantly decrease the level of adherence and support for Chávez's leftist-populist agenda or warrant voting against him at the polls.

¹⁴⁰ Given the extensive number of comparisons I provide a detailed account of changes in evaluations between 2006 and 2010/2012 in Appendix 5.24. For the sake of clarity, I discuss the most noticeable changes in the main text.

The Relationship among Ideology, Evaluations of National Conditions and Government Performance and Support for Chávez

The last step for testing the validity of the observable implications of the theoretical argument in this chapter is to test the mediating argument among ideological closeness to Chávez's leftist-populist agenda, evaluations of national conditions and government performance, and electoral support for Chávez. This chapter argues that having an ideological affinity to Chávez's leftist-populist political ideology should lead voters in his electoral base to have more favorable government performance evaluations than those who supported the opposition. In turn, a more positive outlook on Venezuela's economic and democratic conditions should then significantly decrease the probability of wanting to vote against Chávez's reelection. Moreover, given that the poor were most likely to adhere to Chávez's leftist-populist ideology (as the findings so far show), I argue that poor were the key drivers of this mediating relationship between Chávez's ideology, public opinion, and reelection support for Chávez.

To test these claims, I conducted a series of mediation tests following Baron and Kenny's (1986) causal 4-step approach, as in previous chapters, to test whether evaluations of economic and democratic conditions, as well as government performance mediate the effect of ideology on reelecting Chávez. Although I found convincing evidence in favor of a mediating relationship among adherents to Chávez's leftist-populist agenda, evaluations of national conditions and government performance, and support for Chávez, no meaningful differences exist among the ways the Venezuelan poor and wealthy processed information regarding their ideologies, how this affected their evaluations of national conditions and government performance, and their decision to vote Chávez.

I used data from 2006 and pooled data from the 2010 and 2012

AmericasBarometer given that these are the surveys relevant to the years before and after the onset of the economic crisis in Venezuela. Although I will only be comparing aggregate level effects as these are not panel data, by using data before and after the beginning of crisis in 2008, I can test the validity of my argument that adherence to Chávez's leftist ideology not only acted as individual-level attitudinal constraints that increased the willingness of his electoral base and beneficiaries of his programs to vote for him in relatively good times, but also in the face of deteriorating national economic and democratic conditions

The dependent variable for 2010/2012 is intention to vote for Chávez, which is a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent intended to vote for Chávez and 0 otherwise. Since the 2006 survey does not have a vote intention item, I use past vote choice as the dependent variable.¹⁴¹ I include the three measures of ideology used in previous sections: a populism index, degree of leftist ideology, and a role of the state index.¹⁴² Mediating variables for evaluations of economic and democratic conditions and government performance include retrospective evaluations of national economic conditions¹⁴³ and evaluations of government performance (economic, corruption, and democratic). To make sure the analyses is a valid test of the direction of causality of my argument, I control for having voted for Chávez in previous elections for the pooled 2010/2012 data.

¹⁴¹ To recall, this AmericasBarometer survey was conducted in the months immediately following the December 2006 elections.

¹⁴² For the 2010/2012 analyses, I run two separate models. One that includes the leftist ideology variable (Model 1), and another that includes the role of state index (Model 2).

¹⁴³ I do not include current national economic evaluations because it has a relatively strong correlation with retrospective economic evaluations (0.56). I choose to only include retrospective economic evaluations as it is the most common measure used in the economic voting literature that I make reference to in this chapter.

Also, because there are significant differences in some demographic characteristics between Chávez and the opposition's electoral bases (see Appendix 5.4),¹⁴⁴ I control for education level, age, sex, and urban residency. Lastly, I control for year in the analysis for the 2010/2012 pooled data.

In Step 1 of the causal mediation step analysis, I test the relationship among various measures of ideological affinity to Chávez's leftist-populist agenda and vote choice and find that the populism index, leftist ideology, and the role of state index significantly predict vote choice in the expected directions for 2006 and 2010/2012.¹⁴⁵ In Step 2, I test the relationship between ideology variables and economic and performance evaluations, and find that the populism index, leftist ideology, and the role of state index all have significant positive effects on retrospective evaluations of national economic conditions and evaluations of government performance (economic, corruption, and democratic) for 2006 and 2010/2012.¹⁴⁶ For Step 3, I test the predictive effect of economic, democratic, and government performance valuations (the mediating variables) on vote choice when controlling for ideology variables. The results of this third step are displayed in Table 5.6.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Appendix 5.4 includes details of the demographic characteristics for all four groups. Poor Chávez voters display the lowest degree of education while wealthy non-participants are the most educated. The vast majority of voters live in urban areas, with some significant differences in place of residence in 2008. One-way ANOVA analyses reveal that differences in the average level education and place of resident is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

¹⁴⁵ Appendix 5.25 displays the mediation results for Step 1.

¹⁴⁶ Appendix 5.26 displays the mediation results for Step 2.

¹⁴⁷ The results in Table 5.6 were calculated with logit regression models.

Table 5.6. Effects of Ideology, Evaluations of National Conditions, and Government Performance Evaluations on Electoral Support for Chávez, 2006-2012

VARIABLES	2006	2010/2012	
Populism Index	0.29 (0.63)	0.54 (0.55)	0.73 (0.54)
Leftist Ideology	2.27*** (0.46)	0.92 (0.58)	-
ROS Index	-	-	-0.00 (0.01)
Retrospective Econ. Evals.	1.91*** (0.38)	2.52*** (0.48)	2.71*** (0.47)
Gov't. Econ. Perf.	1.73** (0.77)	4.95*** (0.97)	4.65*** (0.95)
Gov't. Corr. Perf.	0.98 (0.70)	-0.21 (0.66)	-0.16 (0.66)
Gov't. Dem. Perf.	2.83*** (0.68)	0.83 (0.71)	1.23* (0.70)
Past Vote Chávez	-	4.95*** (0.54)	4.83*** (0.47)
Wealth	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.24** (0.11)	-0.26** (0.10)
Education	-0.74*** (0.19)	0.39* (0.24)	0.36 (0.23)
Age	-0.18* (0.11)	-0.11 (0.11)	-0.16 (0.11)
Female	-0.05 (0.26)	-0.02 (0.28)	0.00 (0.28)
Urban	0.51 (0.62)	0.29 (0.60)	0.35 (0.58)
Year	-	0.76*** (0.29)	0.82*** (0.29)
Constant	-1.11 (0.89)	-8.20*** (1.16)	-7.47*** (1.21)
Observations	756	1,118	1,172

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

I find that retrospective national economic evaluations, the index of the government's economic performance, and evaluations of the government's democratic performance have statistically significant positive effects on vote choice, even in the presence of ideology variables. Furthermore, predicted probabilities show that a female

urban resident of average education and age with average economic and government performance evaluations had nearly a 93% probability of having voted for Chávez in 2006. The same type of respondent who indicated having voted for Chávez in the previous elections had over 87% probability of intending to vote for Chávez in 2010/2012.¹⁴⁸

Finally in Step 4, I compare the estimated coefficients for ideological variables between Step 1 and Step 3. I find that the size of the effects of the populist index, leftist ideology, and the role of state index on vote choice are indeed reduced. These findings indicate a significant mediating effect of economic and government performance variables on the relationship between adherence to Chávez's leftist-populist ideology and having voted for him in 2006 and intending to vote for him 2010/2013, despite worsening national economic and democratic conditions.

As a further check on the mediating effect of economic and democratic national evaluations, and evaluations of the government's economic performance on the relationship between ideology and reelecting Chávez, I conduct a series of Sobel (1982) tests. For the sake of simplicity, I mainly focus on discussing the results for 2006 and compare them to the findings of Model 1 for 2010/2012, since they both have the most similar measures of leftist ideology. Overall, I find that evaluations of economic conditions and government performance significantly mediate the effects of leftist-populist ideology in both 2006 and 2010/2012. A Sobel test on the mediation effect of retrospective economic evaluations on the populism index yielded a z-value of 5.97, $p < .01$, in 2006 and a z-value of 9.75, $p < .01$, in 2010/2012. For both 2006 and 2010/2012, 39% of the effect of populist attitudes on vote choice is mediated by national

¹⁴⁸ See Appendix 5.27 for a table of predicted probabilities.

retrospective economic evaluations. A Sobel test on the mediation effect of retrospective economic evaluations on leftist ideology yielded a z-value of 5.83, $p < .01$, in 2006 and a z-value of 12.67, $p < .01$, in 2010/2012. While in 2006 24% of the effect of leftist ideology on vote choice is mediated by national retrospective economic evaluations, the proportion of the total effect mediated in 2010/2012 is 32%.

Turning to the mediating effects of evaluations of the Chávez government's economic performance, a Sobel test yielded a z-value of 7.12, $p < .01$, in 2006 and a z-value of 15.29, $p < .01$, in 2010/2012. While in 2006 56% of the effect of populist attitudes on vote choice is mediated by evaluations of the government's economic performance, the proportion of the total effect mediated in 2010/2012 is 83%. A Sobel test on the mediation effect of evaluations of the government's economic performance on leftist ideology yielded a z-value of 8.05, $p < .01$, in 2006 and a z-value of 19.11, $p < .01$, in 2010/2012. Similar to the mediating effects on populist attitudes, evaluations of the government's economic performance mediate 39% of the effect of leftist ideology on vote choice in 2006 and 64% in 2010/2012.

Next, I calculated the proportion of the mediating effect of evaluations of the government's democratic performance on the relationship between leftist-populist ideology and choosing to vote for Chávez. For 2006, a Sobel test yielded a z-value of 7.26, $p < .01$, and an indication that 61% of the effect of populist attitudes on vote choice is mediated by evaluations of the government's democratic performance. For this same year, a Sobel test on the mediation effect of evaluations of the government's democratic performance on leftist ideology yielded a z-value of 8.91, $p < .01$, and an indication that 48% of the effect is mediated.

While evaluations of the government's democratic performance do not seem to have a significant mediating effect when controlling for leftist ideology in 2010/2012, they do have a significant positive effect on vote choice in Model 2. For this model, a Sobel test yielded a z-value of 15.29, $p < .01$, for the mediating effect of evaluations of the government's democratic performance on the populism index, and a z-value of 9.81, $p < .01$, for the mediating effect on the role of the state index. Evaluations of the government's democratic performance mediate 83% of the effect of populist attitudes and 77% of attitudes about the role of the state on vote choice.

Overall, the results in this section show convincing evidence for a mediating relationship among adherence to Chávez's leftist-populist ideology, evaluations of national economic conditions and government performance, and a vote for Chávez in 2006 and reelecting him in 2010/2012, even in the face of deteriorating national economic and democratic conditions. In fact, the findings show that, as hypothesized, evaluations of national economic and democratic conditions and government performance mediate the majority of the effects that populist attitudes and leftist ideology have on voting for Chávez, especially in 2010 and 2012 when economic and democratic conditions in Venezuela seemed most dire.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

A worsening state of affairs in Venezuela during Chávez's administration, including volatile GDP growth, oil revenue mismanagement, inflation, and deteriorating democratic rights and institutions, would have conceivably given voters enough reasons

to punish a president at the polls. Yet, Hugo Chávez was reelected three times after 1998 and defeated a recall referendum in 2004. This chapter argues that the adoption of Chávez's leftist-populist political ideology among Venezuela's also served as an individual-level attitudinal constraint on the willingness of Chávez's political base to punish him at the polls for the an economic crisis that began in 2008, as well as a decay in the government's democratic checks and balances.

Using survey data mainly from 2006, 2010, and 2012, this chapter tests this argument and finds that compared to opposition sympathizers and non-participants of Missions and Communal Councils, those belonging to Chávez's electoral base and beneficiaries of inclusionary programs did adhere more strongly to Chávez's leftist-populist ideology. The findings also show that, compared to opposition sympathizers, those belonging to Chávez's electoral base also tended to be less likely to perceive an economic crisis in Venezuela, give more favorable current and retrospective national economic evaluations, and give better evaluations of government economic and democratic performance. Moreover, I find that these types of evaluations significantly mediate the relationship between adherence to Chávez's leftist-populist ideology and voting for him.

Although, there is no meaningful difference in this mediation effect for poor and wealthy voters, the findings in this chapter still suggest that the poor were indeed the key drivers in the connection between Chávez's ideology, public opinion, and support for Chávez. In line with the results for Chapters III and IV, the poor were the most likely to adopt populist and left-leaning attitudes. Not only did poor Chávez voters and participants of Missions and Communal Councils display the highest support for populist

ideas about democracy, but they expressed the highest levels of support for the authoritarian tendencies that often come with the electoral success of populist leaders like Chávez. This has important implications for the political future of Latin American countries with populist leaders, as Chávez demonstrated that one of the best ways to appeal to the masses and secure the vote of the poor is through rhetoric and policies that endorse both a populist definition of direct democracy and the willingness to resort to anti-democratic means to maintain political power.

The next chapter concludes this dissertation by summarizing its main findings, discussing theoretical and empirical contributions and shortcomings, and explaining the theoretical and practical implications of the project for future research.

APPENDIX E

Appendix 5.1. Survey Items from the AmericasBarometer Measuring Support for Populism.

For 2006, respondents are asked which of the two options they support the most. For 2010 and 2012, respondents are asked on a scale from 1 to 7 how much they support the populist attitude, with 7 representing the strongest degree of support.

POP1.

- (1) Para el progreso del país, es necesario que nuestros presidentes limiten la voz y el voto de los partidos de la oposición, [o al contrario],
- (2) Aunque atrase el progreso del país, nuestros presidentes no deben limitar la voz y el voto de los partidos de la oposición.

POP2

- (1) La Asamblea Nacional impide mucho la labor de nuestros presidentes, y debería ser ignorada, [o al contrario],
- (2) Aun cuando estorbe la labor del presidente, nuestros presidentes no debieran pasar por encima de la Asamblea Nacional.

POP3.

- (1) Los jueces con frecuencia estorban la labor de nuestros presidentes, y deberían ser ignorados, [o al contrario],
- (2) Aun cuando a veces los jueces estorban la labor de nuestros presidentes, las decisiones de los jueces siempre tienen que ser obedecidas.

POP4.

- (1) Nuestros presidentes deben tener el poder necesario para que puedan actuar a favor del interés nacional, [o al contrario],
- (2) Se debe limitar el poder de nuestros presidentes para que nuestras libertades no corran peligro.

POP5.

- (1) Nuestros presidentes deben hacer lo que el pueblo quiere aunque las leyes se lo impidan, [o al contrario],
- (2) Nuestros presidentes deben obedecer las leyes aunque al pueblo no le guste.

POP6.

- (1) Los gobernantes tienen que seguir la voluntad del pueblo, porque lo que el pueblo quiere es siempre lo correcto, [o al contrario]
- (2) Los gobernantes a veces tienen que tomar decisiones que al pueblo pueden no gustarle

POP7.

- (1) La forma más efectiva de que los ciudadanos expresen sus puntos de vista al Presidente es a través de sus representantes electos. [o, al contrario]
- (2) La forma más efectiva para que los ciudadanos expresen sus puntos de vista al Presidente es directamente a él, y no a través de sus representantes electos.

POP8.

- (1) Hay solamente dos clases de personas: las que trabajan para el bienestar del pueblo y las que trabajan en su contra [o, al contrario]
- (2) No se puede dividir a la gente en dos clases de personas.

POP9.

- (1) En el mundo de hoy hay una lucha entre el bien y el mal, y la gente tiene que escoger entre uno de los dos [o, al contrario]
- (2) Tal lucha realmente no existe; el mundo es muy complejo, no únicamente el bien y el mal.

POP10.

- (1) Una vez que el pueblo decide qué es lo correcto, no podemos dejar que los que están en contra se opongan [o, al contrario]
- (2) A pesar de que el pueblo ha decidido qué es lo correcto, los que **no** están de acuerdo siempre deben tener toda la libertad de oponerse.

POP11.

- (1) Una persona puede estar en desacuerdo con la mayoría, y aún así tratar de defender los intereses del país. [o, al contrario]
- (2) Aquellos que no concuerdan con la mayoría representan una amenaza a los intereses del país.

Appendix 5.2. Survey Items from the AmericasBarometer Measuring Feelings of about Chávez.

The original answer scale are (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Disagree (4) Strongly disagree

C1CH. Usted se siente orgulloso de estar asociado con Hugo Chávez

C2CH. Hugo Chávez actúa más por el interés de todos que por el suyo propio

C3CH. Las acciones de Hugo Chávez hacen que usted le respete más

C4CH. Hugo Chávez mide las consecuencias éticas y morales de lo que hace

C5CH. Hugo Chávez expresa una visión convincente del futuro

Appendix 5.3. Survey Items from the AmericasBarometer Measuring Feelings of System Support, Efficacy, and trust in the President.

B6. To what extent do you think that one should support the political system of (country)?

B14. To what extent do you trust the Central Government?

EFF1. Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

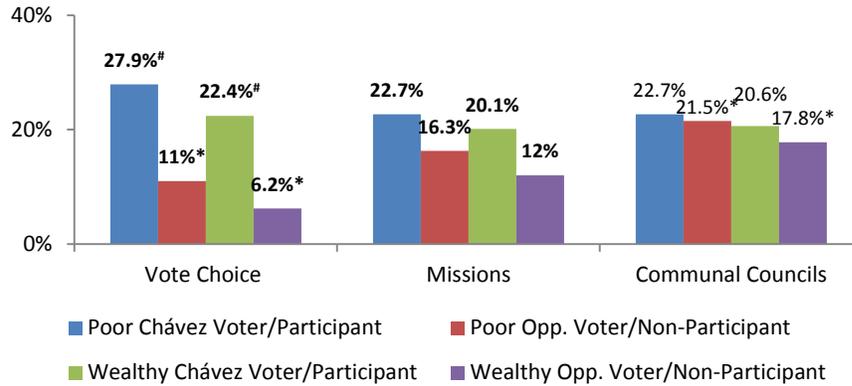
EFF2. You feel that you understand the most important political issues of this country. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

B21A. To what extent do you trust the President?

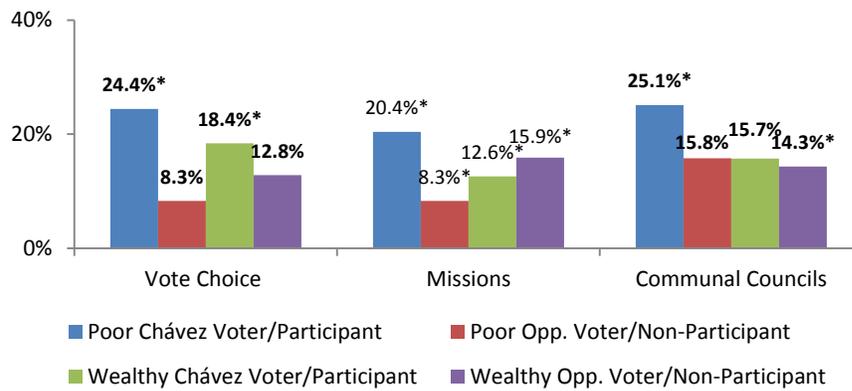
Appendix 5.4. Socioeconomic Characteristics of Chávez and Opposition Past Voters

	2006			
	Poor Chávez Voter	Poor Opp. Voter	Wealthy Chávez Voter	Wealthy Opp. Voter
Wealth	1.53	1.52	3.97	4.02
Education	1.92	2.16	2.15	2.29
Age	2.76	2.59	2.68	2.71
Female	54.07%	56.04%	46.37%	48.57%
Urban	94.19%	95.60%	95.99%	97.86%
	2010			
	Poor Chávez Voter	Poor Opp. Voter	Wealthy Chávez Voter	Wealthy Opp. Voter
Wealth	1.44	1.52	3.91	4.02
Education	1.72	1.97	2.16	2.31
Age	3.34	3.24	3	3.23
Female	46.81%	52.63%	50.34%	44.05%
Urban	95.32%	96.84%	97.97%	92.86%
	2012			
	Poor Chávez Voter	Poor Opp. Voter	Wealthy Chávez Voter	Wealthy Opp. Voter
Wealth	1.44	1.58	3.84	4.3
Education	1.78	1.8	2.18	2.48
Age	3.19	3.51	3.38	3.31
Female	51.69%	53.95%	51.33%	41.89%
Urban	90.26%	93.42%	92.04%	92.57%

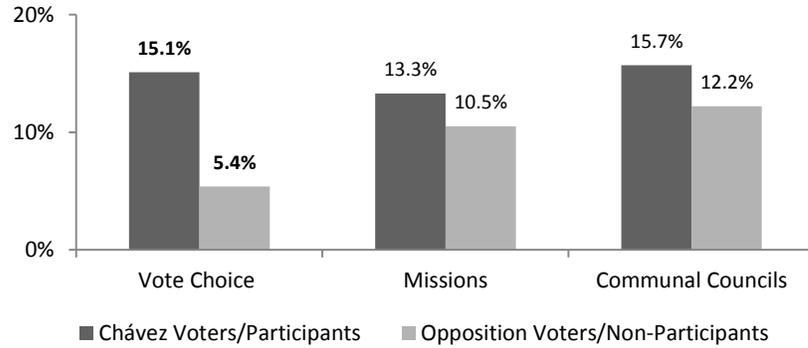
Appendix 5.5. Proportion of Venezuelans Supporting a President with Mano Dura, 2006



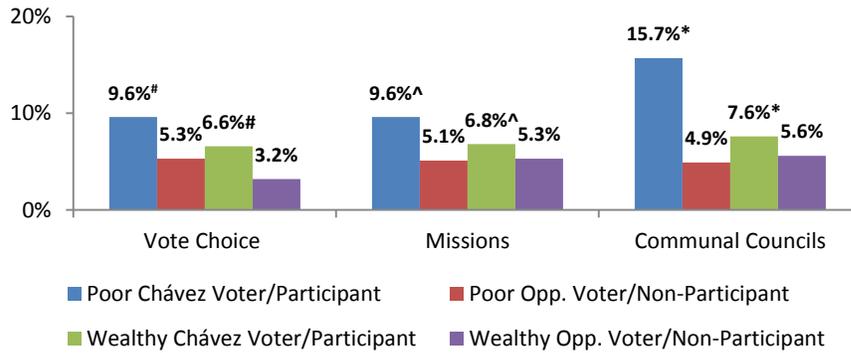
Appendix 5.6. Proportion of Venezuelans Supporting a President with Mano Dura, 2010 and 2012



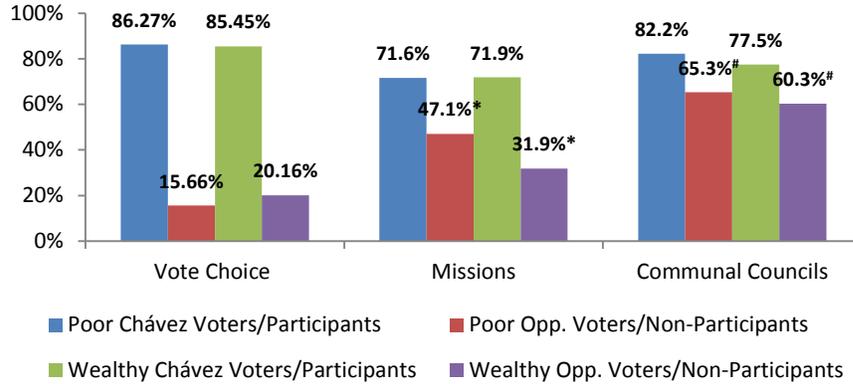
Appendix 5.7. Proportion of Venezuelans Supporting a Strong Leader that Does Not Need to be Democratically Elected in Venezuela, 2006



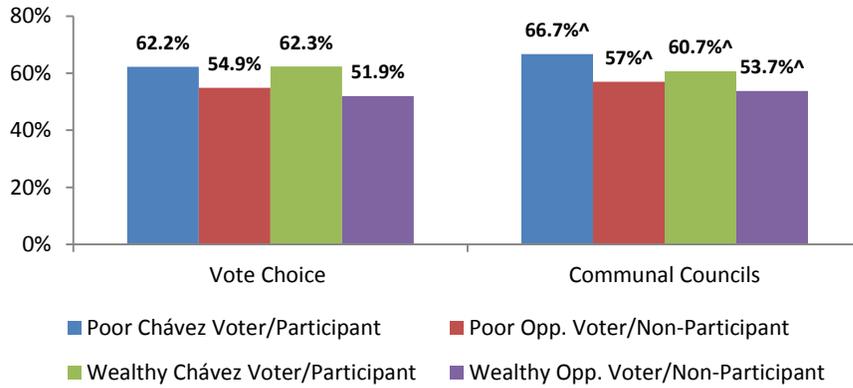
Appendix 5.8. Proportion of Venezuelans Supporting a Strong Leader that Does Not Need to be Democratically Elected in Venezuela, 2010-2012



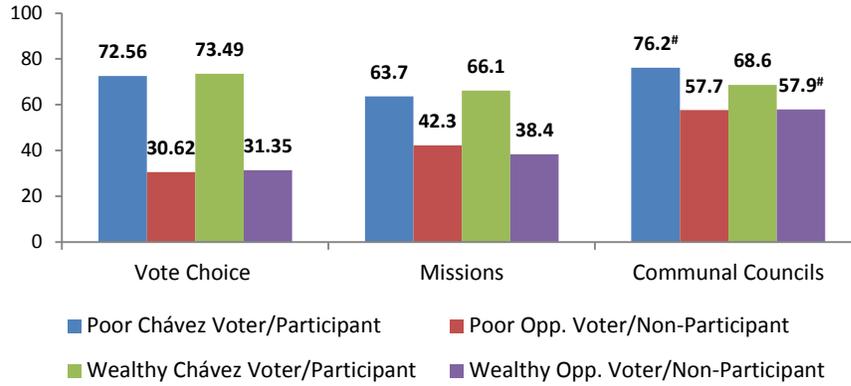
Appendix 5.9. Proportion of Venezuelans that Think the Chávez Government Represents All, 2006



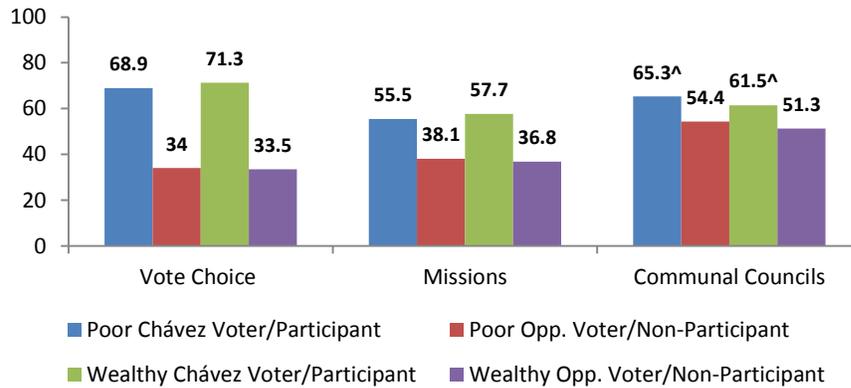
Appendix 5.10. Proportion of Venezuelans that Think the Chávez Government Represents All, 2010 and 2012



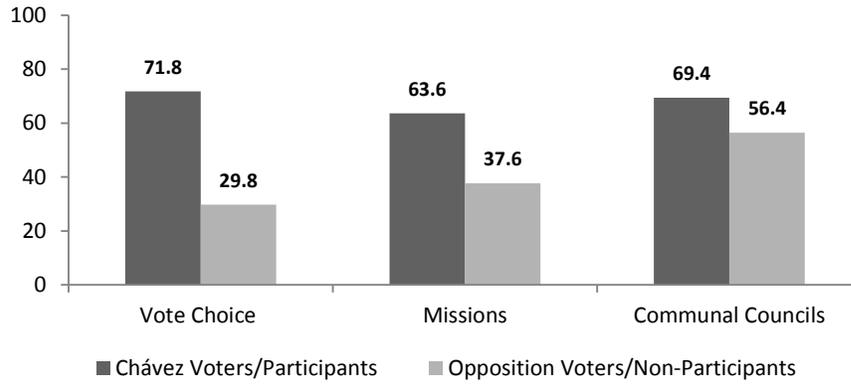
Appendix 5.11. Average System Support among Different Types of Venezuelan Voters, 2006



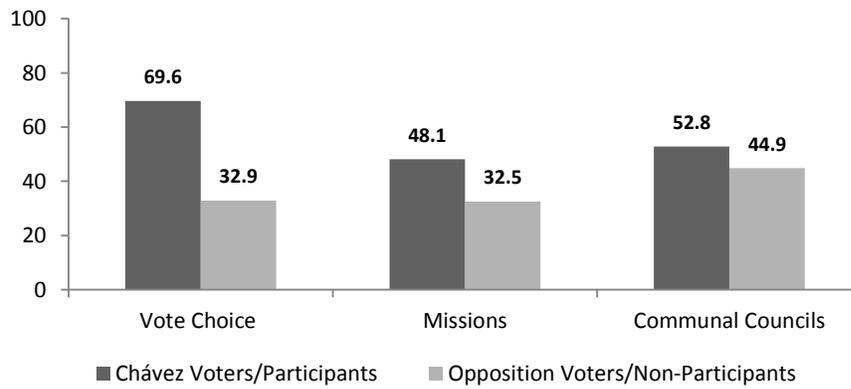
Appendix 5.12. Average System Support among Different Types of Venezuelan Voters, 2010 and 2012



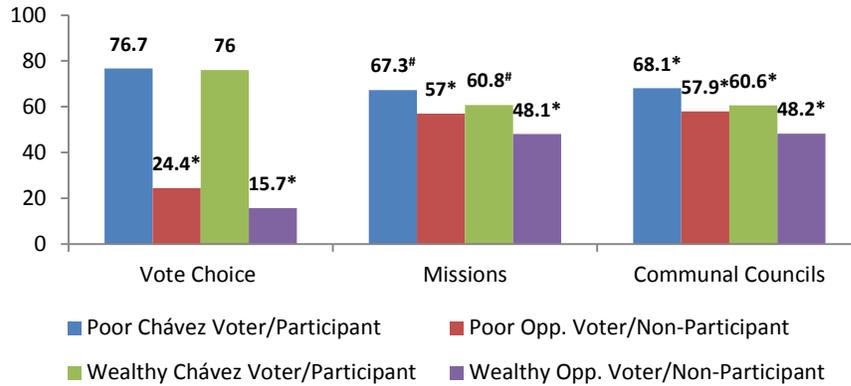
Appendix 5.13. Average System Pride among Different Types of Venezuelan Voters, 2006



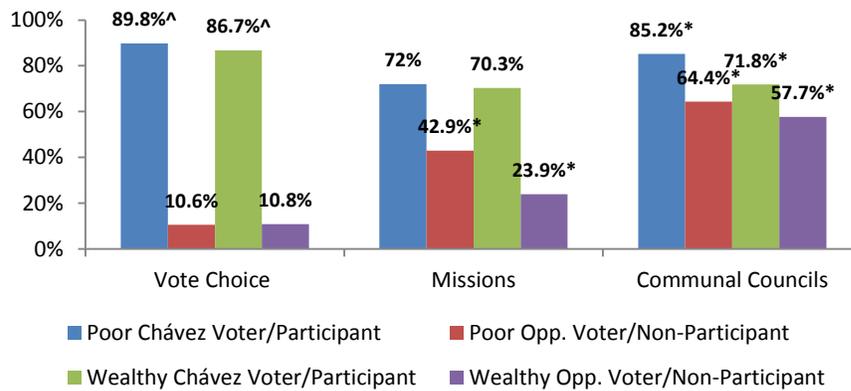
Appendix 5.14. Average System Pride among Different Types of Venezuelan Voters, 2010 and 2012



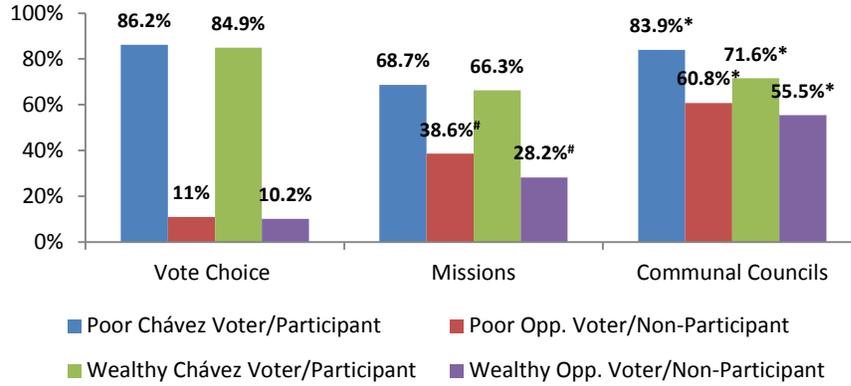
Appendix 5.15. Average Trust in Chávez among Different Types of Venezuelan Voters, 2010 and 2012



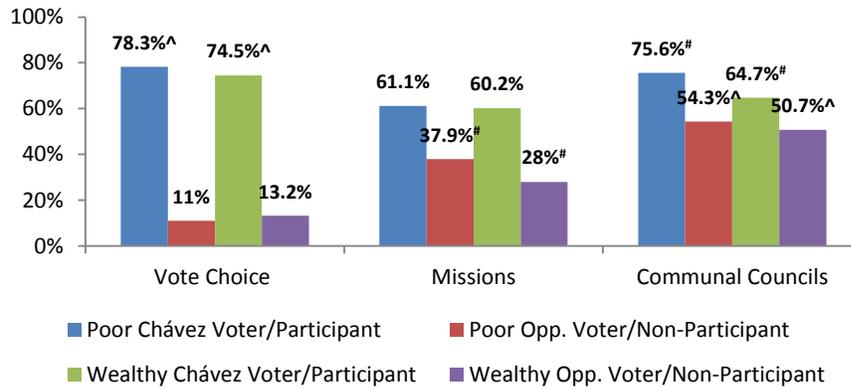
Appendix 5.16. Proportion of Venezuelans that felt Pride in Chávez, 2006



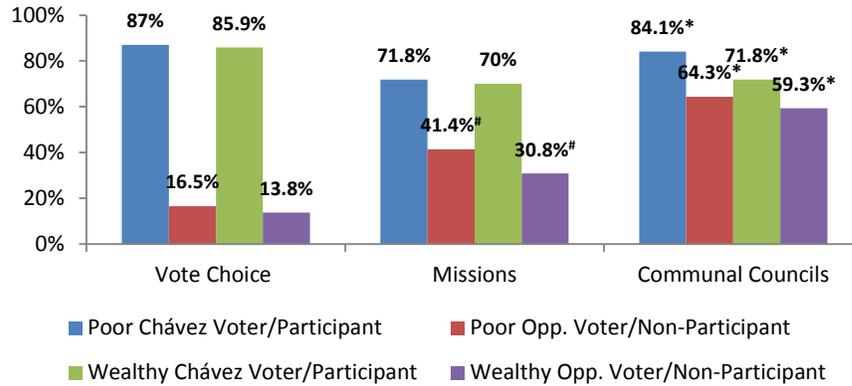
Appendix 5.17. Proportion of Venezuelans that felt Respect in Chávez, 2006



Appendix 5.18. Proportion of Venezuelans that felt Chávez Governed Morally/Ethically, 2006



Appendix 5.19. Proportion of Venezuelans that felt Chávez Represented a Good Vision of the Future, 2006



Appendix 5.20. Average Levels of Internal Efficacy Across Time in Venezuela 1995-2012

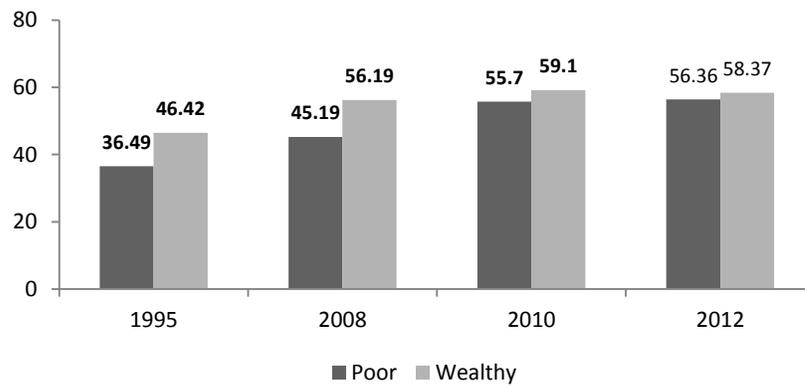


Figure 5.21. Average Leftist Ideology among Different Types of Venezuelan Respondents, 2006

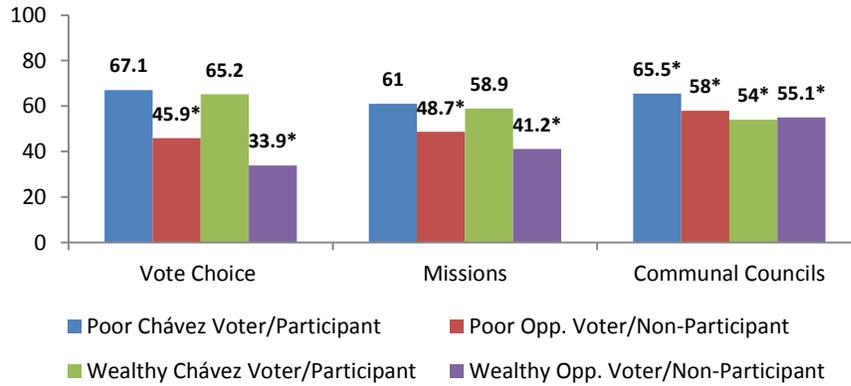
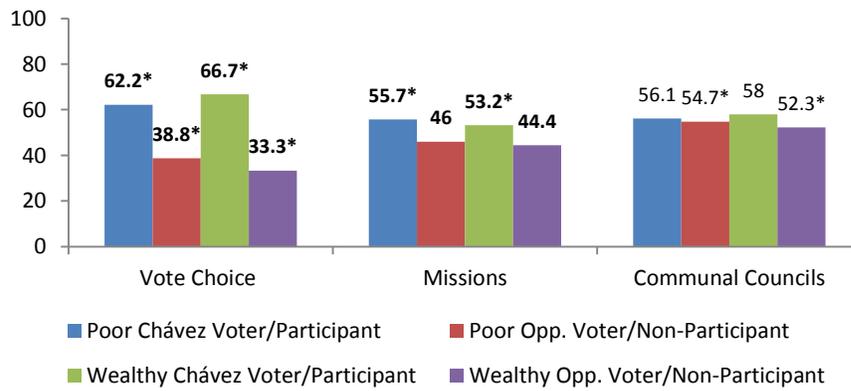
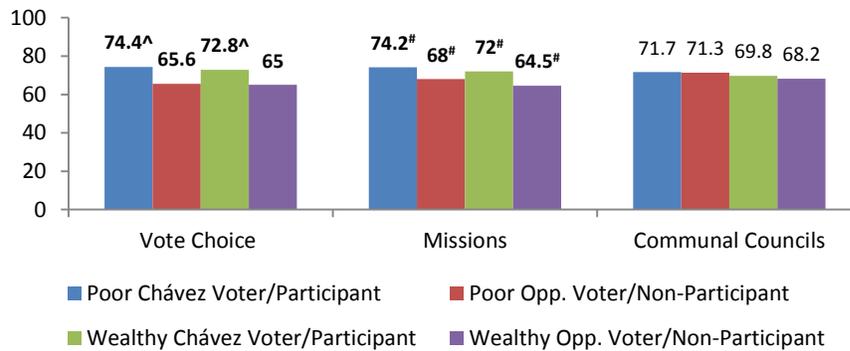


Figure 5.22. Average Leftist Ideology among Different Types of Venezuelan Respondents, 2010 and 2012



Appendix. 5.23. Average Support for an Increase Role of the State among Different Types of Venezuelan Voters, 2010 and 2012



Appendix 5.24. Changes in Average Economic and Government Performance Evaluations among Venezuelans between 2006 and 2010/2012

Evaluation	Vote Choice		Missions		Communal Councils	
	Chávez	Opp.	Participant	Non	Participant	Non
Current Econ.	=	↓	↓	=	↓	↓
Retro. Econ.	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Econ. Perf. Index	↓	=	↓	↓	=	=
Level of Dem.	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Dem. Perf. Index	=	=	↓	=	↓	=
Corruption Index	↑	=	=	=	=	=
Pres. Approval	=	=	↓	=	↓	↓

= No difference in average evaluation between 2006 and 2010/2012

↓ Worse average evaluation between in 2010/2012 (p<.05)

↑ Better in average evaluation in 2010/2012 (p<.05)

Appendix 5.25. Effect of Ideology on Electoral Support for Chávez (Mediation Step 1)

VARIABLES	2006	2010/2012	
Populism Index	2.29*** (0.48)	1.75*** (0.45)	1.77*** (0.43)
Left Ideology	2.92*** (0.33)	2.22*** (0.39)	-
ROS Index	-	-	1.02* (0.58)
Past Vote Chávez	-	5.47*** (0.44)	5.34*** (0.35)
Wealth	-0.00 (0.07)	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.08)
Education	-0.51*** (0.15)	0.19 (0.17)	0.06 (0.16)
Age	-0.10 (0.08)	0.03 (0.08)	0.03 (0.08)
Female	-0.12 (0.19)	-0.42** (0.21)	-0.34* (0.20)
Urban	0.11 (0.49)	-0.16 (0.44)	0.11 (0.42)
Year	-	0.98*** (0.22)	1.12*** (0.21)
Constant	0.27 (0.66)	-5.85*** (0.84)	-5.31*** (0.85)
Observations	782	1,147	1,206

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Appendix 5.26. Effect of Ideology on Evaluations of Government Performance in Venezuela (Mediation Test Step 2)

VARIABLES	Retro. Econ. Evals.			Gov't. Econ. Perf.			Gov't. Corr. Perf.			Gov't. Dem. Perf.		
	2006	2010/2012		2006	2010/2012		2006	2010/2012		2006	2010/2012	
Populism Index	0.37*** (0.05)	0.20*** (0.04)	0.19*** (0.04)	0.26*** (0.04)	0.22*** (0.03)	0.23*** (0.03)	0.25*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.03)	0.25*** (0.03)	0.29*** (0.04)	0.16*** (0.03)	0.17*** (0.03)
Left Ideology	0.25*** (0.04)	0.26*** (0.03)	-	0.23*** (0.03)	0.24*** (0.03)	-	0.21*** (0.03)	0.21*** (0.03)	-	0.26*** (0.03)	0.33*** (0.03)	-
ROS Index	-	-	0.12** (0.05)	-	-	0.16*** (0.04)	-	-	0.12*** (0.04)	-	-	0.19*** (0.04)
Past Chávez Vote	-	0.22*** (0.02)	0.28*** (0.02)	-	0.32*** (0.02)	0.37*** (0.02)	-	0.26*** (0.02)	0.31*** (0.02)	-	0.30*** (0.02)	0.37*** (0.02)
Wealth		0.65 (0.67)	0.86 (0.67)	1.37** (0.59)	0.66 (0.50)	0.64 (0.50)	0.31 (0.66)	-0.01 (0.60)	-0.00 (0.59)	1.40** (0.64)	-0.36 (0.56)	-0.24 (0.57)
Education	0.93 (0.82)	-0.34 (1.40)	-0.15 (1.38)	0.20 (1.16)	-2.32** (1.04)	-1.54 (1.02)	-0.94 (1.28)	-2.46** (1.24)	-2.33* (1.22)	1.19 (1.26)	-1.61 (1.16)	-1.14 (1.17)
Age	2.19 (1.60)	0.93 (0.68)	1.10 (0.67)	0.96 (0.63)	-0.59 (0.50)	-0.39 (0.50)	-0.60 (0.70)	-1.10* (0.60)	-0.96 (0.59)	1.30* (0.69)	0.13 (0.56)	0.22 (0.56)
Female	-0.20 (0.87)	-2.09 (1.76)	-2.15 (1.75)	-3.49** (1.64)	-2.29* (1.30)	-2.40* (1.30)	1.62 (1.81)	-1.62 (1.56)	-1.64 (1.54)	-2.30 (1.78)	-4.48*** (1.45)	-4.99*** (1.47)
Urban	-5.70** (2.26)	-4.22 (3.64)	-3.31 (3.63)	-1.79 (3.88)	-2.94 (2.67)	-2.06 (2.66)	-3.06 (4.28)	-5.75* (3.20)	-4.27 (3.14)	-5.84 (4.20)	-4.85 (2.99)	-3.59 (3.01)
Year	-	4.16** (1.78)	5.58*** (1.76)	-	7.42*** (1.31)	9.37*** (1.31)	-	1.02 (1.58)	2.98* (1.55)	-	7.23*** (1.47)	9.38*** (1.48)
Constant	21.56*** (7.52)	2.43 (5.83)	1.02 (6.64)	21.90*** (5.46)	14.43*** (4.31)	8.30* (4.88)	24.58*** (6.02)	20.19*** (5.16)	16.46*** (5.79)	24.79*** (5.91)	16.98*** (4.81)	13.10** (5.51)
Observations	1,156	1,409	1,483	1,169	1,423	1,500	1,150	1,412	1,487	1,144	1,408	1,481
R-squared	0.10	0.22	0.19	0.12	0.45	0.42	0.09	0.29	0.28	0.13	0.41	0.36

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Appendix 5.27. Predicted probabilities and Changes in Probabilities of Effects of Ideology and Evaluations on Intention to Vote for Chávez

	2006	2010/2012	
Predicted Prob.*	0.917	0.871	0.878
Marg. Effect			
Populism Index	0.022	0.060	0.078
Left Ideology	0.173	0.104	-
ROS Index	-	-	-0.000
Retro. Econ. Eval.	0.145	0.284	0.289
Govt. Econ. Perf.	0.131	0.558	0.495
Govt. Corr. Perf.	0.074	-0.023	-0.017
Govt. Dem. Perf.	0.216	0.094	0.131
Past Chávez Vote	-	0.825	0.824
Wealth	-0.008	-0.027	-0.027
Education	-0.056	0.044	0.038
Age	-0.014	-0.013	-0.017
Female	-0.003	-0.002	0.000
Urban	0.048	0.037	0.042
Year	-	0.088	0.091
Min → Max			
Populism Index	0.022	0.056	0.071
Left Ideology	0.182	0.095	-
ROS Index	-	-	-0.018
Retro. Econ. Eval.	0.170	0.263	0.271
Govt. Econ. Perf.	0.144	0.665	0.613
Govt. Corr. Perf.	0.072	-0.024	-0.017
Govt. Dem. Perf.	0.286	0.098	0.141
Past Chávez Vote	-	0.825	0.824
Wealth	-0.034	-0.108	-0.111
Education	-0.126	0.176	0.134
Age	-0.079	-0.065	-0.086
Female	-0.004	-0.002	0.000
Urban	0.048	0.037	0.042
Year	-	0.088	0.091

* For predicted probability is for a female urban resident of average education and age with average economic and government performance evaluations that voted for Chávez in the previous elections (only for the 2010/2012 analyses).

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation project, I set out to explain what I call the “Chávez Phenomenon:” the continued electoral support for president Hugo Chávez and his leftist-populist agenda in the face of deteriorating economic and democratic conditions in Venezuela. Who and why supported Chávez despite worrisome national circumstances? Did Chávez supporters have different policy preferences and/or time horizons than opposition voters? What were the dynamics of socioeconomic and attitudinal characteristics of Chávez and opposition supporters before and after the 2008 economic crisis, specifically? Finally, was there something unique about Chávez’s leftist-populism and his targeting of the poor that enabled him to remain in power? To provide a possible explanation for these questions, I argue that Chávez was electorally successful despite deteriorating economic and democratic conditions thanks to the political support he gained and maintained mainly from the Venezuelan poor majority as a result of the achievements of his leftist-populist agenda.

Chávez was able to combine socioeconomically leftist policies with the political appeal of a populist political style to gain the vote of the poor majority in two ways. First, he provided targeted socioeconomic benefits by implementing a series of policies that improved the living conditions of the poor and also established important clientelistic linkages with sectors of the lower classes. Second, Chávez was able to transform the political arena of Venezuela through both a redefinition of the normative purpose of

government, as well as the inclusion of previously marginalized (but large) sectors of society in the power play of politics. On the one hand, the targeted socioeconomic and political benefits helped prioritize self-interest considerations in the voting decisions of his political base. On the other hand, the appeal of Chávez's leftist-populist political agenda for his electoral base also acted as individual-level attitudinal constraints that then biased his followers' economic and government performance evaluations and hence significantly reduced their willingness to vote against Chávez. In this way, Chávez helped create a political decision-making structure that incentivized his electoral base to keep pledging their allegiance to Chávez at the polls.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this dissertation show that the Venezuelan poor were indeed the key drivers of the argued connections between Chávez's leftist-populist agenda, public opinion, and reelection support for Chávez. Chapter's III and IV show that not only did the poor vote for Chávez's reelections in greater levels than the wealthy, but they were also the greatest beneficiaries of the individual-level socioeconomic and political benefits of Chávez's targeted policies. However, the findings in Chapter III and IV show that once becoming beneficiaries of Mission programs and Communal Councils, wealthy and poor Venezuelans did not process information or develop their attitudes all that differently in regards to improved perceptions of personal well-being or their decision to reelect Chávez. Overall, for Venezuelans who benefited from participating in Missions and/or Communal Councils, their incentives to reelect Chávez were mostly a product of

improved perceptions of personal well-being. Nevertheless, the possibility of an endogenous relationship between evaluations of personal well-being and Mission or Communal Council participation cannot be completely ruled out.

The findings in Chapter V also show that the poor were the strongest adherents to Chávez's leftist-populist ideology, particularly to populist attitudes associated with anti-democratic or authoritarian tendencies. Additionally, compared to opposition sympathizers, those belonging to Chávez's electoral base also tended to be less likely to perceive an economic crisis in Venezuela, give more favorable current and retrospective national economic evaluations, and give better evaluations of government economic and democratic performance. Moreover, I find that favorable evaluations of national conditions and government performance were largely the consequence of ideological closeness to Chávez's leftist-populism even when controlling for having voted for Chávez in a previous election. In turn, this willingness to overlook or accept deteriorating national economic and democratic conditions provided voters sufficient incentives to keep Chávez in office. However, similar to the findings in Chapters III and IV there were no meaningful differences between poor and wealthy voters in regards to this mediating relationship among ideological closeness to Chávez, favorable evaluations of national conditions and government performance and vote choice.

In sum, these findings suggest that the Chávez's targeted socioeconomic and political policies succeeded in improving the living standards of the poor and that the poor were indeed an important mobilizing force for reelecting Chávez, especially in 2006 and 2012. All things considered, the findings also indicate that there did seem to be a unique relationship between Chávez's leftist-populist and the public opinion dynamics

Venezuelans' voting decisions. Though there may not be much of a difference in how the poor versus the wealthy develop and report their pro/anti Chávez attitudes, this dissertation shows that what might have been most essential to Chávez's success is simply his effective winning over of a large segment of the population, mostly but not entirely poor, by way of economic benefits, political benefits, and a compelling ideology.

The socioeconomic and political benefits Chávez provided through initiatives like the Missions and Communal Councils had a significant positive impact on the economic and political attitudes of his electoral base, particularly as related to the poor's self-interest and ideological considerations. Furthermore, ideological affinity toward Chávez's leftist-populist agenda had a significant impact on his political base's attitudes, to the extent that it biased voters' evaluations of national economic and democratic conditions, as well as their evaluations of government performance. Even after experiencing some degree of deterioration in attitudes about the political system and government performance with the onset of an economic crisis in 2008 that was accompanied by a decline in the quality of democracy, Chávez's political base displayed a significantly more favorable outlook than opposition voters and those who did not benefit from programs like the Missions or Communal Councils. More importantly, any negative effects that economic and democratic crises had on attitudes about political system and government performance were not sufficient to significantly decrease incentives among previous supporters and inclusionary program participants to reelect Chávez at the polls.

Contributions

My motivation for this project was to understand both the implications of Chávez's electoral success for the dynamics of Venezuelan public opinion and the future of democratic government, as well as the effects that leftist-populist leaders like Chávez can have on electoral politics in Latin America. The theoretical argument and empirical findings in this project have important contributions for both the study of Venezuelan politics and the study of electoral politics, more generally. First, this dissertation represents an original attempt to provide a comprehensive explanation, one that simultaneously considers the role of the changing socioeconomic and political nature of Venezuela under Chávez, to understand the electoral survivability of Chávez in the face of deteriorating economic and democratic conditions in Venezuela. Second, this project moves beyond extant research in Venezuelan politics that disputes class voting as a key feature of Chávez's electoral success. Third, my theory and findings shed some light on the public opinion dynamics of the Chávez era and perhaps similar populist leaders in the Latin American region.

Fourth, this study contributes to our knowledge about electoral politics, more generally. The findings in Chapters III, IV, and V contribute to our understanding of the individual-level factors that can constrain economic voting. The findings in Chapters III and IV, specifically, show that self-interest can indeed play an important role in the formation of political preferences. Beyond economic self-interest, which is measured as perceptions of personal economic well-being, political self-interest, measured as personal satisfaction with democracy, can also affect vote choice. The findings in Chapter V show

that voter's individual-level attitudinal biases as related to their political ideology can also alter the reward-punishment voting calculus debated in the economic voting literature. Overall, my theoretical argument, analytical strategy, and empirical findings represent an important application of the theories of economic voting and the individual-level constraints of the formation of objective performance evaluations and political preferences beyond the context of the United States and other developed countries.

Implications

The findings in this project show how the presence of a charismatic and popular populist leader like Chávez can have a particularly weakening effect on voters support for a liberal definition of democracy. Presidents like Chávez can not only bring significant changes to a democratic political system, but they can also influence the nature democratic culture of a country. Despite the accomplishments of Chávez's populist strategy toward a more participatory political system, Venezuelan democracy moved further away from a liberal representative political system under his regime. Additionally, the sociopolitical landscape in Venezuela grew to display a typical side effect of populism in that it was accompanied with high degrees of social fragmentation and polarization (Arditi 2003; Barr 2009). Furthermore, this dissertation shows that Chávez supporters, especially the poor, displayed worrisome attitudes that may pose a difficult obstacle for reaching democratic consolidation in Venezuela. Although Venezuelans remain among the most avid supporters of democracy relative to citizens of other Latin

American countries, the type of democracy that Venezuelans of different socioeconomic and political background supports remains less clear.

As shown in Chapter V, poor Chávez's supporters became comfortable accepting and even supporting Chávez's authoritarian tendencies, which creates worrisome uncertainties about the future of democratic consolidation in Venezuela, at least in the attitudinal sense. The fact that the poor tended to display the strongest populist and anti-democratic attitudes may suggest that one of the most effective ways for populist leaders to appeal to the masses and secure the vote of the poor is through rhetoric and policies that endorse both a populist definition of direct democracy and the willingness to resort to anti-democratic means to maintain political power. Moreover, evident in Chávez's 14-year hold on power in Venezuela, the mass appeal of populist rhetoric that endorses authoritarian ideas can often lend legitimacy to anti-democratic efforts to silence the opposition and increase executive power. This has important implications for Venezuela and for other Latin American countries that currently have similar populist leaders. Scholars have shown that democratic consolidation is not only dependent on the development of democratic institutions, but also the strengthening of attitudes which reflect support for liberal democracy as the best type of government. Attitudinal democratic consolidation has been considered a fundamental requirement for the survivability, stability, and strength of democracy as a political system (Dahl 1971; Przeworski 1991; Linz and Stepan 1996; Weingast 1997; Schedler 2001).

Additionally, I have shown that there are important insights to be gained by applying accepted theories of political science, like economic voting, to the underdeveloped contexts of countries like Venezuela. The political, economic, and social

contexts of countries in Latin America provide rich contexts in which to study if and how voters use evaluations of economic and political conditions to reward or punish incumbents. Moreover, this study shows that the economic voting literature, more generally, can gain explanatory power by integrating theories of political psychology that help explain the individual-level factors that bias voters political preference formation. Not only do countries in Latin America vary in terms of their socioeconomic development, but the rise of leftist-populist leaders in the region also provides important political contexts under which test theories of economic voting and the individual factors that influences ability and willingness of voters to punish or reward incumbents.

Project Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite important findings and contributions, this dissertation exhibits some notable limitations. First, the comparison of survey data between poor and wealthy Venezuelans over time would have been a more appropriate test of my theoretical argument if I had used panel data. Unfortunately, panel data for Venezuela across all the years under observation in this dissertation are not available. The growing availability of survey data and panel data in Latin America should give scholars of comparative politics increasing opportunities to make important strides in understanding the nature of public opinion in the developing world.

Second, my argument about the public opinion dynamics that kept Chávez in power despite deteriorating economic and democratic conditions is only a partial explanation of the “Chávez Phenomenon.” Although my argument and findings in this

dissertation provide an important contribution to our understanding of Venezuelan politics in the Chávez era, other scholars have shown that understanding Chávez's grip on political power also requires a more institutions-focused explanation of how the president was able to gain autonomy over the government apparatus, in particular of democratic institutions, to ensure his power in a "top-down" fashion (Corrales and Penfold 2007; Cannon 2009; Hidalgo 2009; Brewer-Carías 2010)

Third, this dissertation presents a relatively narrow focus on the effects of Chávez's leftist-populist leadership on the nature of public opinion and elections in Venezuela. Future research on similar topics could provide further knowledge about the effect of populists on the political culture of countries like Venezuela by conducting research that provides a more comparative look at the public opinion dynamics of other populist countries. Fourth, an important question that my dissertation leaves unanswered is how self-interest and ideological factors compare to one another in their constraints on economic voting. Although I believe I demonstrate a useful application of theories of economic voting and the individual-level factors that can influence voter's performance evaluations and voting decisions, future research should continue to examine the generalizability of established theories of electoral politics and how individual-level attitudinal factors can affect the accountability mechanisms of elections, especially in developing countries, which exhibit important variations in their socioeconomic and political contexts.

Final Thoughts

The study of Venezuelan politics, particularly as related to the Chávez era, has been a popular topic in recent comparative politics research. Unfortunately, the nature of this intellectual interest has not been the consequence of signs of great economic or democratic progress in Venezuela. Rather, scholarly interest in Venezuela has mostly been due to the ability of unique leader like Chávez to remain a popularly elected for over 14 years (and probably longer if not for his death) despite the negative consequences of his regime for Venezuela's economic growth and quality of democracy. Chávez certainly represented a break from a traditional party system that proved to be a failure in its ability to represent and govern efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, Chávez was able to bring to the forefront the importance of the inclusion of previously marginalized classes not just for Venezuela, but for the Latin American region and the world. Nevertheless, most studies about Chávez and the subsequent changes he induced in the economic and political system of Venezuela have shown how the discourse and policies of a leader like Chávez can jeopardize a country's economic and democratic well-being. As a Venezuelan, though one certainly appreciates the scholarly interest in such a fascinating country, it is not so encouraging to understand the reasons why Chávez and Venezuela have gained fame in recent political history. Hence, my aim with this project has been to provide an objective look at how and why Venezuelan voters felt such attachment to Chávez, with the hope to not only contribute to the general study of Venezuelan politics, but also to gain a more personal understanding of the people and politics of my country.

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