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Chávez no se va: Exploring Hugo Chávez's Governance of Venezuela

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Submitted to the Department of Political Science of Allegheny College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

I hereby recognize and pledge to fulfill my responsibilities as defined in the Honor Code and to maintain the integrity of both myself and the College community as a whole.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Nature of Venezuelan Democracy Under Chávez	5
Chapter Two: Measuring Support for Chávez and Democracy	26
Capítulo Tres: Simón Bolívar, Hugo Chávez y la resimbolización de un prócer	42
Conclusions	63
Appendix A: LAPOP Data	71
Appendix B: Latinobarómetro Data	80
References	96
Acknowledgements	100

INTRODUCTION



I took the above photo during my semester abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in March of 2013, just a few short days after the death of former Venezuelan president Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías. This hand-painted banner, which was placed at one of the busiest intersections in the city, reads: "Our most sincere condolences to the Venezuelan people for the loss of their leader Hugo Chávez." The sign was erected on behalf of the Sindicato de Obreros Marítimos Unidos, or the Union of United Maritime workers. After I quickly snapped this photo, I stood at the corner of las Avenidas 9o de Julio y Santa Fe, bemused by the complexity that was unfolding around me in the wake of Chávez's death.

I was quite understandably a little conflicted about what to make of the situation of Chávez's death. Coming from my U.S. context, where Chávez had been portrayed as a political

villain, I did not immediately comprehend what possessed a large segment of the Latin American population to support the president and disregard basic democratic freedoms, such as political pluralism and a constitutionally mandated system of checks and balances. Yet, I could also see the other side: Chávez utilized his natural charisma to effectively paint himself as a man of the people, created expansive social programs for the lower class, and demonized the United States and capitalism.

My deep interest in exploring citizen's attitudes towards democracy in the regime of Hugo Chávez led me to propose two central research questions: First, what was the nature of Venezuelan democracy under Chávez? Second, what motivated the people of Venezuela to so continuously and strongly support Chávez during his presidency? Fascinated by how *chavista* Venezuelans conceive of democracy and how they applied this conception to their support of Chávez, I was imbued to explore what it was that won support for the Venezuelan leader through this lens. I also had a burning desire to evaluate these questions from a cultural perspective by examining Chávez's rhetorical employment of Simón Bolívar, a national historic hero whose persona is oft romanticized and deified. The yearning to satisfy those questions and curiosities has manifested itself in this senior comprehensive project.

As such, I will approach the exploration of Chávez's governance of Venezuela from three different angles: unpacking and classifying Chávez's brand of government; analyzing opinion surveys and evaluating what they may tell us about Venezuelan conceptions of democracy; and discussing Chávez's capitalization on the cultural climate created by the glorification of hero Simón Bolívar. In Chapter One: The Nature of Venezuelan Democracy Under Chávez, I aim to explore the characteristics of Chávez's presidency in order to classify it. I will begin by

measuring the regime type against various standards of democracy to determine if it fits into that category, and if it does, what stripe of democracy it can be classified as. To this end, I will examine four predominant theories of democracy—procedural, substantive, liberal, and delegative—and determine which, if any, is most applicable to the case of Venezuela under Chávez. I will also consider the characteristics of autocratic, socialist, and populist governments as I work to further refine the classification of the Chávez government. Throughout, I will demonstrate that while the *chavista* government can be categorized as a democracy, it does not fit as snugly into that classification as Chávez himself would have claimed. Furthermore, as a substantive, delegative, populist democracy with socialist policies and governing practices that tend towards the autocratic, Chávez's brand of government carries some menacing prospects for the future of democracy in Venezuela.

In Chapter Two: Measuring Support for Chávez and Democracy, I will attempt to answer the question of why Venezuelans continued to elect Chávez in such overwhelming numbers even when the Bolivarian government's respect for individual political and civil rights seemed to be dwindling. I will begin by providing a brief description of the methodology used, and follow by performing a qualitative analysis on a selection of data sets pertaining directly to Venezuelan support for democracy, confidence in state institutions, and material well-being. I will then examine the socio-psychological theory of post-materialism and its sub-theory of survival vs. self-expression values in order to further explain why Chávez continued to enjoy strong support, even in light of mounting concerns regarding his seemingly undemocratic behaviors. As I believe viewing the data through a post-materialist, survival vs. self-expression values lens shows, citizen survival—the Chávez government's addressing their needs as impoverished persons—is

dependent upon their continued self-expression—demonstrating support for Chávez at the ballot box.

I will explore the cultural aspect of the Bolivarian Revolution in Capítulo Tres: Simón Bolívar, Hugo Chávez y la resimbolización de un prócer. The manner in which Chávez utilized the cultural and ideological symbol that is Bolívar effectually constituted a gap between the theory—what the national hero Bolívar represents—and practical history—Bolívar, the human being. By analyzing Venezuelan cultural norms and how they are represented in films and documentaries that are flattering portraits of Bolívar and Chávez, I will demonstrate how Chávez *could* successfully utilize the hero as a political tool through the lens of the cultural theory of representation. Similarly, through an analysis of cinematic works that are less favorable towards the *Libertador* and the ex-president, in combination with a discussion of Chávez's actions to capitalize on Bolívar's image, one can see that the relationship between Bolívar and Chávez constitutes the resymbolization of the former by the latter.

This strategy of approaching the research questions from various angles and exploring numerous facets helps to formulate a more robust understanding of the issue at hand: the nature of Hugo Chávez's governance of Venezuela.

Chapter One: The Nature of Venezuelan Democracy Under Chávez

Introduction

In my study of the regime of former Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, I seek to understand what sustained popular support for his brand of government, which, though it has elicited much debate amongst scholars, has evaded a consensus on specific classification. I aim to explore the characteristics of Chávez's regime in order to classify it. I will begin by measuring the regime type against various standards of democracy to determine if it fits into that category, and if it does, what stripe of democracy it can be classified as. To this end, I will examine four predominant theories of democracy—procedural, substantive, liberal, and delegative—and determine which, if any, is most applicable to the case of Venezuela under Chávez. I will also consider the characteristics of autocratic, socialist, and populist governments as I work to further refine the classification of the Chávez government. Throughout, I will demonstrate that while the *chavista* government can be categorized as a democracy, it does not fit as snugly into that classification as Chávez himself would have claimed. Furthermore, as a populist democracy with socialist policies and governing practices that tend towards the autocratic, Chávez's brand of government carries some menacing prospects for the future of democracy in Venezuela.

Is This Democracy?

Chávez won his first presidential electoral victory in December of 1998 amidst a two-decade sociopolitical crisis. An overwhelming majority of the electorate felt Chávez and his

Bolivarian Revolution reflected their aspirations to develop a participatory democracy, overturn neoliberal policies, and eliminate corrupt elites from power. At the close of his nearly fourteen year rule, however, it became increasingly clear that Chávez had pivoted towards what he termed "twenty-first century socialism," marked by increasingly authoritarian tendencies (López Maya 2013). The sliver of time between Chávez's death and the election of a new president allowed citizens, international media, and scholars alike to reflect on the deceased president's time in office and ask an increasingly complex and politically-charged question: Is this democracy?

Its Greek name—a combination of *demos* ("the people") and *kratos* ("power")—means "the people hold power" and indicates its orientation towards a government in which the people hold sway in determining the way in which they are governed. Since its Athenian origins, democracy has been distinguished from other forms of government by the "direct or indirect participation of all citizens in the process of making laws they obey through their equal contribution to the establishment of the majority view" (Saffon 2013). In other words, democracy implies equal liberty. However, simply asserting that a government is "for the people" is not sufficient to characterize it as a democracy (Spiker 2008). In his work *On Democracy*, which proposes a classic definition of democracy, Robert Dahl readily admits that "'democracy' has meant different things to different people at different times and places" and refers to democracy as a continuously developing concept which "can be independently invented and reinvented whenever the appropriate conditions exist" (Dahl 1998). Yet, he identifies as the essence of democracy the requirement that all members of any association—in this case, the government of a country—"are to be considered as *politically equal"* (Dahl 1998). In Dahl's purview, democracy must meet five standards, providing opportunity for: effective participation, where all

members have equal and effective opportunities for making their views known; voting equality, where votes are counted as equal, and each member has an equal and effective opportunity to vote; enlightened understanding, where each member has equal and ample opportunities to learn about the relevant policies and their likely outcomes; control of the agenda, where members have the opportunity to decide what issues are on the agenda and if the policies of the countries should be amended; and inclusion of adults, where all adult permanent residents maintain the above-mentioned rights (Dahl 1998).

Definitions of democracy can therefore be said to imply certain expectations about political, social, and economic outcomes (Crow 2010), and any reliable conception of democracy must address these:

> Any ideal or conception of democracy is composed of both an account of important values, such as self-rule, accountability, political equality, and liberty, and a prescription about governance and institutions such as elections, deliberation, or direct participation. The institutional recommendations of any conception should yield consequences that advance its central values. (Fung 2007)

Conceptions of democracy, then, rely heavily on the maintenance of political liberty for all, the ability of citizens to manifest their wishes through some form of participation, and the responsiveness of the governing to the governed. In this vein, Public Policy scholar Archon Fung outlines three characteristics that a government must possess at minimum in order to be considered a democracy. First, it must advance values that reflect collective decision-making and action-taking and connect these values to the interests of the individuals who compose a collective citizenry. Second, the government must enable some form of institution to advance its central values, such as competitive elections, referenda, town meetings, civic associations, and

universal political liberties. Finally, the government allows these institutions and the way in which it governs to be influenced by the wishes of the citizenry, which are most commonly conveyed empirically, in the form of polls or election results (Fung 2007).

On the face of it, Chávez's government would appear to meet these minimums: A central tenet of the Bolivarian Revolution is participation in direct democracy by *el pueblo;* Chávez implemented numerous institutional measures—referenda, elections, municipal governing boards—to reflect this tenet; and, according to the strongly pro-*chavista* results at the ballot box of over sixteen elections, he continued to enjoy popular support for his ideology and agenda. Upon closer examination, however, the lines become blurred, and Chávez's record becomes mixed. Points of particularly fervent contestation are the degree to which elections are free, fair, and competitive, and whether the liberty to voice one's interests is equal amongst all citizens.

In a democratic government, the aims of the administration must take into account the desires of the citizens it governs, and its methods and actions should reflect this (Spiker 2008). As the results of sixteen different elections, as well as various state- and independently-run polls, clearly demonstrate popular support for Chávez, one can reasonably infer that this continued support indicates that a majority of the population felt he and his government represented and responded to their needs. Indeed, several of his efforts, such as the various *Misiones* created to provide low-income persons with access to higher education, food, and health care, demonstrate a direct correspondence between government action and the wishes of affected citizens. Additionally, these citizen welfare efforts serve as entitlements to social protection and basic security, another requirement for democratic governance. However, the establishment of welfare

systems is not in itself sufficient to constitute democratic government (Spiker 2008) and is not typically included in more classical definitions of democracy. Furthermore, the degree to which any opinion other than pro-*chavista* could have been heard was severely limited: Throughout his rule, Chávez increasingly dominated the media market by shutting down numerous private television and radio stations and starving the remaining by severing sources of funding. During his frequent radio and television broadcasts, called *cadenas*—appropriately called "chains," as their intention was to tie down the listener or viewer for hours—Chávez would frequently belittle any person or group expressing dissidence and would squash any semblance of criticism. State-owned media outlets would do the same. Thus, Chávez and the *chavista* agenda owned the media market, while seriously hampering the ability of the opposition do to the same. The degree to which any opinion other than pro-*chavista* could have been seriously voiced is therefore unclear. Moreover, in democracies whose leaders rely heavily on the support of the majority vis-à-vis elections to build and maintain legitimacy, uninhibited free speech and press can bring rise to factions, which may then break apart the majority. Therefore, in democracies of a majoritarian slant, uninhibited free speech can be detrimental to the leader's cause. However, insofar as "government by majority may be unjust, it may be unfair to a minority"—in this case, anti-*chavistas*—"but it's nonetheless democratic" (Dworkin 2011).

Though democracy requires that the leader respond to the desires of its people as expressed through both institutional and individual means, it does not require a utopian-level of perfection from its leaders: "Democracy does not promise decision that are more correct than those achieved by a group of experts" (Saffon 2013). The cohort of government officials under Bolivarian rule has been widely characterized as deeply corrupt, profoundly inept, or both.

Indeed, many ministers in Chávez's executive cabinet had no special training in the tasks they were asked to accomplish, and while a few government officials were openly accused of corruption by the President, many were simply dismissed without any mention of their grounds for dismissal. Government positions, especially the executive cabinet, were like a revolving door: Just as one got comfortable and versed in his or her position or duties, he or she would be pushed along to another position or out of government work altogether, frequently with little more explanation than a phone call and an *adios.* This practice only perpetuated incompetence, as the majority of government officials barely had enough time in each position to learn how to use the coffeemaker, let alone govern. Yet, given that competence is not an inherent trait of democracy, this trait alone does not disqualify Chávez's Venezuela from the category of democracy.

Perhaps the most obvious requirement for democratic governance is the rule of law, as "one cannot meaningfully talk about the rule of law without the legal apparatus to make it possible; it follows that there must be laws, methods of enforcement, and methods of adjudication" (Spiker 2008). Obeisance to and respect for the law has deteriorated significantly under the Chávez regime, most prominently in terms of illegal gang activity. As Chávez backed out of numerous transnational efforts to curb drug trafficking in the name of resisting U.S. imperialism, the amount of drugs moving through the country increased exponentially. Those guilty of gang-related violence are infrequently apprehended by police, and those that are find themselves in jails that are overcrowded and physically crumbling. Despite Chávez's refrains calling for a thorough reform of the criminal justice system—inspired, he insisted, by the terrible conditions he himself experienced while imprisoned for his failed coup attempt in 1992—no

such reform was realized; in fact, the living conditions of Venezuela's jails became the subject of international attention as human rights groups decried violent duels, observed by guards, in which inmates fought each other to the death. Meanwhile, the judicial branch continuously lost autonomy throughout the Chávez administration as the president continued to concentrate his executive power (López Maya 2013). Furthermore, judges who ruled in favor of anti-*chavista* individuals or groups were promptly removed from the bench and imprisoned (Carroll 2013). Yet, while it is true that the legal apparatus associated with effective rule of law is weak, we cannot equate weak, ineffective, and corrupt with non-existent. Though the "laws, methods of enforcement, and methods of adjudication" may have deteriorated and their breadth crippled by the *chavista* government, they still exist and maintain a certain degree of autonomy; Chávez, after all, did not himself sit on the bench as a justice or patrol the prisons as a guard.

Democracies are ultimately organized to provide protection for its citizens in the face of any number of threats (Spiker 2008), be they threats to physical well being or to political freedom. Rule of law is only one of the fundamental tenets of democracy; it is lawfulness dovetailed with political liberty that constitute the two pillars of democracy (Saffon 2013). As we have seen, both political liberty and rule of law appear to have deteriorated under Chávez, with the latter perhaps being a bit more empirically clear than the former. Yet, a government can be of low quality and still be regarded as a democracy. Thus, while the government of Venezuela under Chávez can still be categorized as a democracy, it does not fit as snugly into that classification as Chávez himself claimed.

Democratic Theories

The conception of democracy most prominent amongst Western civilizations is that of procedural democracy; thus, when those of us who identify as a member of one of these countries thinks of democracy, it is a proceduralist vision that we most frequently conceive of. With its emphasis on elections and electoral processes, procedural democracy is also referred to as electoral democracy. Procedural democracy "insists that equal political liberty is the most important good for which democracy should strive" (Saffon 2013), "posits that democracy is primarily a mechanism by which to choose decision makers" (Crow 2010), and is "inherently liberal and egalitarian" (Saffon 2013). To this end, Maria Saffon *et. al.* details five essential features that characterize a procedural democracy: Uncertainty; openness and contestation; participation and emendation; responsiveness; and non-triviality.

"Uncertainty" refers specifically to electoral outcomes: In a proceduralist system, neither political competitor can be entirely confident of what the outcome will be. They may, through polling and other empirical data, be aware of the probability of a certain outcome, but this outcome is never guaranteed. In order for there to be openness and contestation, there must exist at least two political competitors who are equitable enough in strength that neither one can forcibly impose their will upon the other. Participation and emendation, the heart of procedural democracy, implies that citizens willingly and freely participate in the electoral system, and that governance is revised according to their wishes as expressed at the ballot box. Similarly, responsiveness refers to the characterization of the electoral procedure as "sensitive to the aims of participants, in the sense that their preferences and opinions are the main input of

decisions" (Saffon 2013). Finally, "if, despite the formal operation of democracy, the most relevant decisions of society are taken outside of it, democracy becomes trivial;" thus, non-triviality is an important feature of procedural democracy (Saffon 2013).

The case of Chávez's Venezuela does not appear to measure up to all the requirements of procedural democracy. With the possible exception of the 2007 Constitutional Referendum, elections under the President were never really uncertain, though the procedures themselves were largely just. In the 2012 presidential election, for example, "those electoral institutions that were responsible for guaranteeing the fairness and equity of the campaign failed to do so. Nonetheless, the process of tabulating votes was meticulous and transparent; voting was secret, and all actors accepted the results of an election" (López Maya 2013). Openness and contestation certainly did not exist in any meaningful way, as Chávez employed many previously discussed methods to thwart and beat back any semblance of dissent. While electoral participation largely soared under Chávez—in 2012, 80.52% of eligible voters participated—government responsiveness to citizen desires is unclear given the aforementioned repression of anti-*chavista* dialogue. Finally, the Chávez government seems in several crucial ways to be the poster child for triviality. Emblematic of this are Chávez's actions on his *cadenas,* such as an episode of "Hello, Mr. President!" in which, live on camera, he impulsively expropriated several private buildings surrounding Bolívar Plaza in the name of honoring the deceased *Libertador*. The trivialization of democracy can denigrate it to a "facade for clientelism or technocracy, and the representative system a theater for an audience that has no control, only visual attendance" (Saffon 2013).

Yet, the visual attendance still counts for something, and it is this aspect upon which Chávez capitalized. In following with its president's impulsive decision making, the *chavista* government appeared to value substance over procedure. Thus, the Chávez regime fits more securely into the category of substantive democracy, which places at its center social citizenship, the insistence that all citizens share equally in the benefits of society, as expressed through direct forms of participation. Most importantly in regards to characterizing the Chávez administration, substantive democracy "favors regulatory and the redistributive government intervention in the economy" (Crow 2010). A substantive view of democracy "equates democracy with economic improvement that advances social justice," and thus democracy is conceived of "as economic growth tied to a more equitable distribution of its benefits, resulting in an 'upward convergence'" (Crow 2010). Given Chávez's focus on social welfare programs and the pro-working class rhetoric characteristic of the Bolivarian Revolution, the conception of democracy as equal access to economic development is clearly central to the *chavista* government.

Furthermore, Chávez took steps to increase instances of direct democracy, both through his rhetoric and through the creation of various institutional models. In addressing the public,

> Chávez's colloquial language, full of anecdotes and family references, democratized politics and humanized it, bringing it closer to the common people. The constant repetition of this discourse, as well as the almost daily presence of the president in the media, also led his followers to feel as if they are part of the decisions that affect their lives, and in this way they are once again beginning to feel included. (López Maya 2013)

Additionally, in the wake of the 2004 recall referendum, Chávez explicitly oriented the state to "establish direct links between the leader and his people" (López Maya 2013). Thus, in 2005, the Nuevo Orden Comunicacional was written into governmental policy, and Community Councils

were established by law the following year. Most importantly, the Constituent Assembly, created by the 1999 Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, "institutionalized mechanisms for direct democracy both in the political arena—with referendums, citizen assemblies, recall elections, and so on—and in the administration of public services, fulfilling the aspirations of the poor and the middle class" (López Maya 2013). The "visual attendance" of citizens in the "show of democracy" was thus increased; yet, while many working-class citizens found themselves rocketed into positions of political importance in their local communities, facades of progress made by Community Councils was unsustainable[1] (Carroll 2013). Meanwhile, anti-*chavista* citizens did not see a similar boost to means of direct participation. As participation in a democracy involves plurality of opinions—opinions that are many times irreconcilable—the imposition of substantive views to democratic decision-making is done at the risk of lessening political freedom (Saffon 2013); thus, substantive democracy is less tolerant of dissent.

For liberal democracy, on the other hand, tolerance of dissent is a central tenant. Based upon postcolonial independence, nineteenth century liberalism, or liberal democracy, "conceives of democracy as a collection of rights and liberties associated with citizenship—freedom of belief, expression, and association, equality before the law, property rights, pluralism, and others" (Crow 2010). Liberal democracy requires a government that maintains constraints on the political power of all branches. Apart from checks and balances of governmental power in order

[1] Writing about the initiatives to create community councils, Carroll notes that "on paper it was promising." The aim was that "popular will and energy would complement and eventually replace traditional local government to realize a direct democracy" (Carroll 2013). However, the councils failed to gain substantive traction and any appearances of progress made by them were unsustainable, as the local community members who volunteered to lead the councils —most frequently working class individuals whose full-time job took priority over community organizing—were only given a superficial sense of power, while local elected officials remained disengaged. As Carroll relates in an anecdote about an older *chavista* man's efforts to bring change to his *barrio* through the community councils, when invited to speak at a community event, elected officials came late, left early, and presented the man with a basketball as a gift—a gesture that is as puzzling and strange in Venezuelan culture as it is to the Western reader.

to protect individual liberty, liberal democracy upholds pluralism and the rule of law (Spiker 2008). Pluralism and individual liberty include not only minority parties, but minority persons. Indeed, "a country that oppresses its minorities is generally considered not to be democratic on that account, even if it had the form of a democratic government in other respects" (Spiker 2008).

While political pluralism existed under Chávez, as previously discussed, it was not truly tolerated. Chávez's own party consists of a coalition of smaller parties with individual interests, but all were expected to consistently vote and act as a bloc, or face political annihilation. With regards to treatment of minorities, the conventionally conceived of minorities—the indigenous and the poor—enjoyed under Chávez more freedom and social mobility than ever before. In a less conventional sense, however, other minority groups—the economic elite and anti-*chavistas*—found themselves thwarted: Free expression, while not punishable by death, did not exist in a liberal sense. Thus, the brand of democracy under Chávez was not quite procedural or liberal, but rather generally substantive in nature with regards to its emphasis on increasing direct democratic participation and rights.

Yet, to settle solely on substantive democracy as characterizing Chávez's brand of government neglects an important, and indeed central, aspect of his regime: the preeminence of executive power. Guillermo O'Donel points to a "new species" of democracy, delegative democracy, as a means to categorize some of the not-quite classically liberal democracies developing during the "third wave" of democratization from the mid-1970s through the early 2000s. According to O'Donel, delegative democracies exist on the premise that the winner of a

presidential election is entitled to govern in whatever manner he or she sees fit, "constrained only by the hard facts of existing power relations and by a constitutionally limited term of office[2]" (O'Donel 1994). Since the leader is supposed to be the paternal figure entrusted with the care of a unified nation, his or her political base must be a movement or a revolution, diminishing the existence of parties and painting factions as detrimental to the national cause. As such, "other institutions—courts and legislatures, for instance—are nuisances that come attached to the domestic and international advantages of being a democratically elected president" (O'Donel 1994)—and thus can be adjusted, amended, or eliminated as necessary. "Accountability to such institutions appears as a mere impediment to the full authority that the president has been delegated to exercise" (O'Donel 1994).

Recognizing that these traits ring of the authoritarian, O'Donel distinguishes delegative democracy from authoritarianism by underscoring the freedom that parties, congress, and the press generally have to voice their criticisms in delegative systems. However, he does not comment on the degree to which these groups are expected to maintain free speech, implying that so long as dissent is not outright banned, leaders of delegative democracies can limit this right and still remain under the umbrella of "democratic." O'Donel further emphasizes delegative democracy's status as a distinct breed, distinguishing it from its "close cousin," representative democracy, by stating that the latter entails accountability. Chávez, whose word was de facto law, who depended upon serial elections for legitimacy, and who blamed fumbles by his administration on attacks by elitist and imperialist opponents, seems to fall squarely into classification as the leader of a delegative democracy.

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[2] A constraint eventually eliminated by Chávez in the case of Venezuela

Beyond Democracy

While the *chavista* government is best characterized by the theories of substantive and delegative democracy, these parameters alone do not provide a holistic categorization of Chávez's brand of government. Chávez himself referred to his regime as "twenty-first-century socialism," and as such there does not exist much debate at to whether the *chavista* government fits into this category. Indeed, in 2006 Chávez reorganized his coalition party under the name PSUV, the Venezuelan Socialist Party. Under the Bolivarian Revolution, major industries are owned by the state, land is seized from private owners for redistribution to the poor, and public buildings are expropriated for government use. Furthermore, increasing the reach of the state enabled Chávez to utilize public resources for personal political gain, suggesting "the emergence of a model of democracy quite distinct from liberal democracy" (Álvarez 2013). The President and his party employed every means of public resources available to the state—transportation, buildings, mass media, even public funds—to campaign, visibly and frequently, largely ignoring constitutional prohibitions on the use of public resources in such a manner (Álvarez 2013). During the 2012 presidential campaign, electoral laws and regulations allotted the two candidates three minutes of television time per day, and both candidates took advantage of this time (López Maya 2013). However, Chávez also utilized his chokehold on state media and his mandatory *cadena* broadcasts to accumulate much more television and radio air time than his opponent. While the effect of such a concentration of power and resources behind one candidate is difficult to measure precisely at the ballot box, "these kinds of initiatives in the midst of a campaign made for a noticeable imbalance between Chávez and other candidates" (López Maya 2013).

It is precisely this bend towards individual concentration of power that has earned Chávez the title of "autocrat" amongst critics and scholars alike. Autocratization occurs when access to a power becomes less competitive due to the denial of political rights to an opposition group, usually through boycott or ban (López Maya 2013). In an autocratic government, "the objectives of the government are the objectives of the rulers" (Spiker 2008), and key governmental institutions are under control of the leader in order to serve this end. In absolute autocracies, there exist no methods for the supreme leader's actions to be subject to external controls. While an out-and-out classification of autocracy goes too far in the case of the Bolivarian Republic, there existed tendencies in Chávez's governance that were certainly autocratic in nature. With growing intensity throughout his regime, "power was concentrated in the presidency, Chávez legislated by decree, and the other government branches continued to lose their autonomy" (López Maya 2013). Perhaps the clearest example of Chávez's autocratic governing tendencies is his numerous efforts to abolish presidential term limits. In 2007, the Chávez administration introduced a constitutional referendum to abolish all term limits for the presidency. Since the referendum did not seek to amend term limits for any other elected officials, even party hard-liners were disinclined to rally in support of it, and the measure did not pass[3]. In February of 2009, however, a revised version of the constitutional referendum—this time abolishing term limits for all elected officials—successfully passed. This occurred despite the reality that many of the laws associated with the constitutional referendum violated other provisions set forth in the 1999 Constitution (López Maya 2013).

[3]This was, interestingly enough, the only election in which Chávez was not victorious.

Chávez further exercised extreme executive authority by controlling key governmental institutions, to include the justice system and electoral council. After the 2010 elections, the Chávez government denied three newly elected members of the opposition party the right to take the oath of office vis-à-vis the government-controlled judiciary, which violated the parliamentary privilege of immunity from persecution in the process (Álvarez 2013). Chávez seems to have played at free and fair elections, while taking nearly every measure short of physical violence to keep his opponents from the fringes of political power…even those democratically elected. Yet, while many of Chávez's actions and behaviors are clearly autocratic in nature—concentration of power, political coercion, etc.—his government was not autocratic in an absolute sense. While other branches were never far from his grasp, they still continued to exist; the same is true of opposition groups. While dissenters and opponents were frequently punished, it was in the form of public humiliation or political alienation, not physical threats or violence. Though he may have exhibited authoritarian tendencies, Chávez did not govern over an authoritarian regime. The bloodless punishment of dissenters and non-violent means of concentration power means that the *chavista* government cannot be fully characterized as an autocracy, even if it is not entirely democratic, either.

For those who question whether there can exist a truly democratic form of government that simultaneously fosters substantive, direct citizen participation and justifies the concentration of executive power and silencing of dissent, populism answers with a resounding "yes." Populism seeks to promote social inclusion of "the people"—"the mass of ordinary, non-office-holding citizens taken in their collective capacity—who are mobilized by and firmly loyal to a strong executive leader (Saffon 2013). Venezuelan political scholar Margarita López Maya *et. al.*

considers populism as "a form of *direct* democracy that privileges the connection between the leader and his base and rejects more mediated forms of democracy" (López Maya 2013). Though it is essentially democratic in nature, the use of institutions of representation are second to political mobilization behind a charismatic leader (López Maya 2013). Populism has two emergent characteristics: "polarization (the few versus the many) and the siding with the democratic flank (the many)" (Saffon 2013). López Maya similarly characterizes populism as the people (the poor and powerless) versus the oligarchy (the power bloc) (López Maya 2013).

Whereas purer forms of democracy place dissent at the center of social relations and expect politics and procedures to respect and reflect this, populism "*denies and harasses disagreement instead of overcoming it*" in an effort to unify people "beyond procedures and against political representation" (Saffon 2013, emphasis added). Populism further rejects procedural and liberal democracy by defying pluralism: By eliminating the primary cause of conflict in democratic politics, populism eliminates proceduralism's basis of justification (Saffon 2013). Further, inflammatory anti-parliamentary and anti-multiparty politics rhetoric is justified in the name of serving the interests of "the people" (Saffon 2013). But that does not mean that opposition parties do not have their place in a populist system; rather, quite the opposite is the case. Indeed, populists view polarization as a pivotal moment in unifying citizens. Through elections, one faction is mobilized against the other "for the sake of an overwhelming victory, which then transforms the winner into the catalyst of all factions" (Saffon 2013). In populism, then, elections serve primarily to unify the electorate behind and to garner legitimacy for their political faction.

Historically speaking, populism's growth has almost always depended upon the active propaganda of a charismatic leader who claims to represent the interests of his people to such a degree that intermediary, representative institutions are not necessary.

> The populist claim that *the people's will can be cogently expressed without the mediation of representative institutions* requires an individual who has the last word about the meaning of that will, and who therefore enacts it. Thus, even if a populist party exists, in the last stance, *its authority depends on the existence of a visible leader who can credibly claim to identify with the will of the people, and who therefore becomes the symbolic link between the party and the people.* This shows that populism entails a very different notion of representation from that of procedural democracy, since *it assumes a perfect identification between the people and the leader who claim to represent it.* (Saffon 2013, emphasis added)

In populist Venezuela, people gain power by utilizing heavily nationalist rhetoric laden with themes of social justice and equality, to include a strong emphasis on mistrust of imperialist powers and private corporations (López Maya 2013). In addition to employing this type of discourse, Chávez further created and "irresistible aura for the majority of the poor and recently impoverished" by emphasizing his humble family origins and his indigenous roots and physical appearance (López Maya 2013). Chávez made himself an unwavering presence in the lives of his followers, a daily reminder of the promises of the Bolivarian Revolution. "They saw him constantly, felt as if they were in contact with him, and felt as if they were participating in his administration. His overwhelming presence in audiovisual media and on the radio waves, not to mention newspapers, billboards, and graffiti, was one way of exercising top-down direct democracy" (López Maya 2013). From the very beginning of his first administration, Chávez placed himself at the center of his communications strategy, emphasizing on a daily basis his

personal connection to the people for whom he was fighting for greater access to direct democracy—so long as they continued to legitimize him through the electoral process.

Implications of the *Chavista* Brand of Government

Chávez's brand of government can be fairly comprehensively classified as a substantive, delegative, populist democracy with socialist polices and governing practices that tend towards autocratic. Over the course of more than fourteen years of *chavista* rule, populism has served to deteriorate the liberal democratic institutional design still largely present in the 1999 Constitution[4], and threatens to deal a final blow the semblances of democracy that remain:

> It is true that, as a movement of contestation against an established leadership, populism can play a democratizing role because it may mobilize excluded groups who do not feel represented by existent political parties and institutions. However, populism can also have quite negative effects on democracy if—as it often does—it translates into a proposal for replacing representative institutions with more direct or plebiscitarian forms of participation….Even though at first sight this may seem to empower the people and give it a more active political role, it actually gives the people the role of a passive and reactive audience, rather than of a political agent. *Therefore, populist mobilization does not deliver what it promises.* (Saffon 2013, emphasis added)

Substantive and populist governments threaten democratic freedoms, particularly that of free expression and the freedom to disagree. Populists regard opposition and dissent as "only

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[4] Upon coming into office, Chávez touted a new constitution as his first priority in order to eliminate the opposition's majority in Congress. After winning both a referendum in April of 1999 to approve a constituent assembly and the confirmation vote that July, a constituent assembly produced a document that "proposed *additional human rights guarantees, state benefits, protection for the environment and indigenous communities*, and a more powerful presidency. The term was extended from five to six years with the right to immediate reelection. The executive would also gain control over promotions within the armed forces and be rid of the bothersome Senate with the merging of Congress's two houses into one National Assembly. The draft constitution *fluttered with progressive, enlightened language* while offering a hammer to the palace" (Carroll 2013, emphasis added). This also included new elections for 2000, which allowed Chávez another opportunity to win legitimacy through the ballot box—which he did, to the tune of 60%. At this point, term limits still existed and the Constitution at least paid lip service to liberal democracy, but continued to consolidate executive power. Chávez claimed this new constitution would last for a "thousand years," but later urged support for changes in order to fast-track the Revolution.

transitory or apparent phenomena in the face of an ever-growing popular unity" (Saffon 2013). Yet dissent continues to exist to at least some degree under even popularly-united populist regimes, proving populists wrong and leading to the justification of "the restriction or suppression of dissent as the enemy of popular will" (Saffon 2013). By admitting that dissent and pluralism exist, populists effectually demonstrate that the unity of the people is weaker and less consensual than they contend (Saffon 2013). The oppression of dissent and the fostering of extreme polarization is a two-fold result of the populist regime and a serious impediment to democratic governance.

Populism can be a force for positive democratic progress in that it "is capable of breaking an exclusionary and entrenched power structure that is blocking democratic progress in a society" (López Maya 2013). However, this result can only be obtained if the charismatic leader of the populist movement resists temptation to cling to the power he has obtained. Continued concentration of power by an executive leader risks "destroying the entire institutional fabric that permits a political order of dialogue and consensus building" (López Maya 2013). In the case of Venezuela under Chávez, this has been the unfortunate result of the populist movement: "Once the conflict was resolved in favor of Bolivarianism, Chávez used his strength to modify the undertaking that had first given him legitimacy. The petro-state has facilitated the destruction of institutional checks and balances and the advancement of a mission that is no longer one of democratic deepening but rather of authoritarian tendencies" (López Maya 2013). Chávez's 2012 electoral victory, despite his apparent departure from liberal democratic progress and his failing health, further legitimized his brand of populist, socialist, delegative, and borderline authoritarian

—yet still democratic—government. The elections held by the Chávez government were perhaps in many ways unfree, but they were by no means meaningless.

Chapter Two: Measuring Support for Chávez and Democracy

Introduction

In my study on the regime of former Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, I seek to understand what motivated support for Chávez during his regime and the demographic of his predominant supporters. The answers to these questions are, in part, reflected in the evaluation of outcomes provided by measuring the levels of confidence in various key public institutions in Venezuela, examining country support for Chávez over time, and exploring general attitudes of Venezuelans towards democracy as potential indicators of what they believe constitutes democracy. Furthermore, I will examine changes in of indicators of material well-being amongst Venezuelan citizens, observe correlations between these measures and election cycles and policy changes, and evaluate what this may imply about the characteristics of Chávez's electoral base.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Chávez sought support primarily from the popular, working classes, and his socialist economic policies and political rhetoric were thus tailored to serve the economic interests of this group. The Bolivarian Revolution sought to "change the structure of property relations by nationalizing foreign companies and confiscating domestic private properties" and put the revenue of these now state-owned businesses to fund social projects such as his *Misiones* (Álvarez 2013). Programs such as these are largely credited for his perpetuating popularity, and voters continued throughout his time in office to turn out en masse to reelect him via (mostly) free and fair elections—even as his authoritarian governing tendencies became more and more pronounced. By the time of his death, Chávez had become the

recipient of vehement criticism from not just the Venezuelan elite, against whom he had long declared war, but also from prominent international and domestic human and civil rights groups, from foreign diplomatic leaders, and even from factions within his own party, amongst many others. The question in the forefront of the minds of many international observers was, therefore, why Venezuelans continued to support him in such overwhelming numbers when the Bolivarian government's respect for individual political and civil rights seemed to be dwindling.

In an attempt to provide an answer to this question, I will begin by providing a brief description of the methodology used, and follow by performing a qualitative analysis on a selection of data sets pertaining directly to Venezuelan support for democracy, confidence in state institutions, and material well-being. I will then examine the applicable socio-psychological theory of post-materialism in order to further explain why Chávez continued to enjoy strong support, even in light of mounting concerns regarding his seemingly undemocratic behaviors. Although the issue of analyzing the connections between support for democracy and economic status has been observed through a quantitative lens[5], I believe that a qualitative analysis is more adept for the purpose of evaluating motivations of *chavistas*, given that "establishing a connection between democracy, social protection, and the position of the poor becomes a matter of interpretation rather than any decisive proof" (Spiker 2008). As I believe the viewing the data through a post-materialist, survival vs. self-expression values lens shows, citizen survival—the Chávez government's addressing their needs as impoverished persons—is dependent upon their continued self-expression—demonstrating support for Chávez at the ballot box.

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[5] For example, see Spiker 2008

Methods

In order to conduct a qualitative analysis, I am depending upon surveys conducted by the Latinobarómetro Corporation's Latinobarómetro (Latinobarómetro) and Vanderbilt University's Proyecto de Opinión Pública de America Latina (LAPOP). These surveys, which have been conducted on an annual basis since the mid-1990s, poll a large and varied sample of citizens in Central and South American countries in their native languages on a multitude of issues, to include level of confidence in various public and private institutions, attitudes towards democracy, and objective and subjective measure of material well-being. In order to augment the LAPOP and Latinobarómetro surveys, I will examine relevant polls conducted by Gallup regarding themes such as approval numbers for Chávez, Venezuelan affinity for Chávez's policies, and perceptions of corruption in the Chávez government. My research pivots on three specific topics examined in parts of the surveys: the levels of confidence in various key public governmental institutions in the country, specifically the presidency, the national assembly, and the police; Venezuelan support for Chávez over time; and general attitudes towards democracy as the best form of governance. In addition, I will look at measures of material assets owned by Venezuelans and their self-reported economic status over time and draw conclusions about what this may indicate about the demographic of Chávez's base of support.

LAPOP databases contain Venezuela-specific data for the years 1995, 2007, 2008, and 2010. I chose to examine the questions relevant to my research from 1995[6], 2007[7], and 2010[8]. I

[6] Shortly before Chávez took the presidency, setting the political stage for his eventual election

[7] The high water mark of his popularity, during the 2007 presidential election

[8] Chávez struggling to regain popularity in eventual preparation for the 2012 presidential election

chose not to include the 2008 data set, except for the question regarding confidence in the President, which was not included on the 2007 survey. Additionally, the 1995 survey did not include any questions about confidence in specific national institutions. Latinobarómetero offers data that goes into much greater depth, so much so that I had to curb my enthusiasm to dig into the almost ten years of data and focus my efforts on examining data sets from 1998[9], 2006[10], and 2011[11].

Empirical Evidence and Qualitative Analysis

Specific information on the survey questions and data to which I refer, as well as correlating tables and charts, can be found in Appendices A and B.

Confidence in Key Governmental Institutions

President

Over the course of Chávez's regime, the percentage of those indicating they were "very" or "somewhat" confident in the presidency fluctuated, but was consistently over 50%, which is markedly higher than the 36% in 1998, the year before Chávez first took office and the year in which he was first elected.

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[9] Year of Chávez's first presidential victory; therefore, it is critical to note that the numbers do not reflect citizen's feelings towards him or his Bolivarian government, but rather indicate the political climate that prompted his election.

[10] A low point in Chávez's popularity, following failure of a constitutional referendum to eliminate presidential term limits

[11] Public awareness of Chávez's life-threatening illness and the ramp-up to the 2012 presidential election

Interestingly, in the 2006 Latinobarómetro survey, the percentage of those who answered that they "didn't know" or "didn't answer" increased notably, from less than one percent in the 1998 survey to between two and six percentage points. This may signify that, under the popularity of Chávez, the percentage of those who were neither for nor against the president—the *ni-nis*—had grown in number, or that perhaps there was a greater number of respondents unwilling to speak against the immensely popular president than in 1998, when the sitting president was unpopular amongst the general public, with comparatively low 36% indicating "much" or "some" confidence in the president in 1998 Latinobarómetro. Interestingly, though questions concerning confidence in other governmental institutions continue to appear in the Latinobarómetro 2011 survey, there is no inquiry into confidence in the president.

National Assembly

Similar to levels of confidence in the presidency, the percentage of those indicating they were "very" or "somewhat" confident in the National Assembly fluctuated, but was consistently above 50% for majority of Chávez's time in office. However, there was notably a sharp drop in 2011 to 43%. Yet, this was still much higher than the 1998 confidence measure of a mere 20% in 1998.

Police

The percentage of those indicating they were "very" or "somewhat" confident in the police was markedly lower than confidence in the presidency and the National Assembly, reaching a high mark of 48% in 2006 and dropping dramatically to 26% by 2011. This latter measure is close to the 24% confidence during the pre-Chávez government in 1998. These

measures correlate closely with respondents' feelings of personal safety, perhaps reflecting a general sentiment that the police force was with contributing to or neglecting the crime and lawlessness issue, or both.

Support for Chávez and Evaluation of Presidential Performance

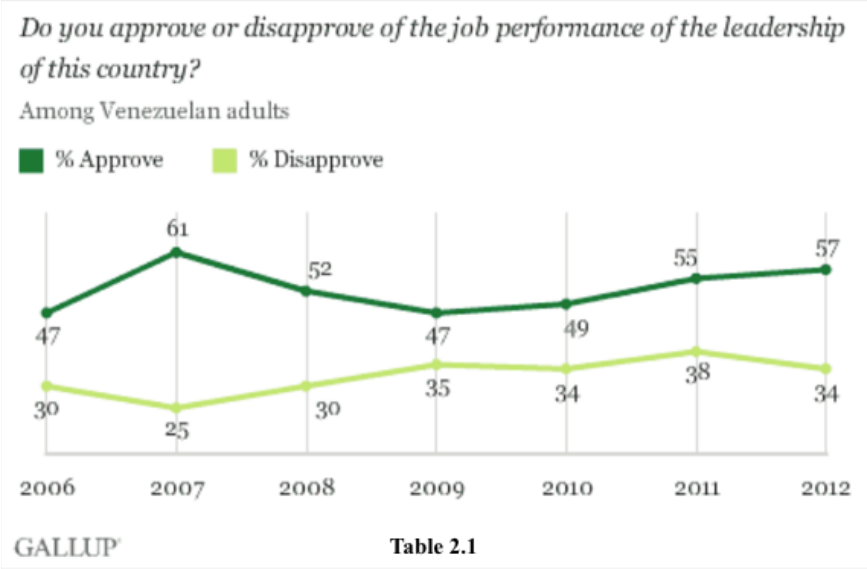


Table 2.1

Overall

Chávez enjoyed his highest popularity in 1998, 2007, and 2012—which were, likely not coincidentally, presidential election years—and experienced his lowest popularity in 2006 and 2009. Yet, what I refer to as his "low points" are, speaking in comparison to similar metrics in other developed and developing countries, not very low: At 47%, even his times of lowest popularity are still head and shoulders above the lowest points of support of many other prominent world leaders. Country support for Chávez correlates strongly with economic nationalization efforts, launching of social support and welfare programs, as well as major elections. While Chávez's approval ratings before his death were relatively high at 57%,

Venezuelans saw their country deteriorating in several ways, particularly in terms of corruption and safety (Dugan 2013).

Corruption

Despite the nationalization of more than 1,000 businesses during Chávez's presidency, Venezuelans continued to view their country's businesses as largely corrupt: In 2012, 73% of respondents felt that corruption was widespread in business, which represented a large increase from 56% in 2007 (Dugan 2013). Similarly, in 2012, 63% of respondents reported that they believed corruption in government was abundant. However, these statistics do not seem to have had a detrimental effect on Chávez's approval ratings, suggesting that supporters may not hold Chávez entirely accountable for eliminating corruption, despite the obvious fact that doing so was a central tenet of his Bolivarian platform[12]. This additionally suggests that in Venezuela there exists a certain culturally-accepted level of corruption, which "is not unusual for Latin American and Caribbean countries, most of which have large majorities stating their country's government is corrupt" (Dugan 2013).

Safety

As recently as 2014, Venezuela was by a significant margin the Latin American country with the most residents who reported feeling very unsafe (LAPOP 2014). This trend has remained remarkably high throughout the Chávez regime (Dugan 2013), suggesting a failure on

[12] Lack of executive accountability further underscores the Chávez government's classification as a delegative democracy, in which horizontal accountability—or accountability amongst the executive and other governmental institutions—is non-existent.

the part of his government and the state police network to uphold rule of law and effectively manage the criminal justice system.

Poverty

In 2009, a low point in Chávez's popularity, "30% of Venezuelans said economic conditions in their city or area [were] improving, down from 47% in 2008 and 63% in 2007" (Crabtree 2009). At this point in time, the country was in between presidential elections; by 2010, Chávez implemented several new social programs—*Misiones* such as *Misión Mi Casa Bien Equipada*, detailed in the latter part of this section—and increased government spending. By 2012, six in ten Venezuelans reported that they were satisfied with the government's efforts to meet the needs of the poor. This is unsurprising, given the cohort that constitutes *chavistas* and that it is the central most issue of the Bolivarian Revolution. Approval of governmental performance on this measure has tracked closely with Chávez's approval rating over time. Intriguingly, both measures spiked in 2007 and 2012, both years in which Chávez ran for reelection and "perhaps not coincidentally, dramatically increased public spending, including a 67% increase in government spending ahead of the 2012 election" (Dugan 2013). These vignettes provide further evidence of Chávez's focus on elections as a means of continued re-legitimization for his regime, as primarily discussed in the previous chapter.

Attitudes Towards Democracy

According to the results of the 1998 Latinobarómetro survey, 25% of Venezuelans said an authoritarian government might be better than a democratic one[13], and 25% also indicated they

[13] See Data Set 2.23

were “not at all satisfied” with democracy in Venezuela[14]. Another 39% indicated they were “not very satisfied” with the country’s democracy, meaning more than half the Venezuelan population was not satisfied with the state of democracy in Venezuelan prior to the 1998 presidential election in which Chávez was the eventual victor and at least a quarter were open to the idea of a leader governing which a much heavier hand.

Indicators of political and civil liberties provide a fuzzy and somewhat conflicting picture of citizens’ political life under Chávez. Prior to the 2012 presidential election, a healthy 59% of Venezuelans indicated that they believed in the honesty of the country’s elections and 66% stated that the media had a lot of freedom—an increase from 58% the year before (Dugan 2013) Yet, 44% stated that life is very hard for those that oppose the government, a number which has continued to increase (Crabtree 2009). In essence, it seems that political and civil liberties are alive, well, and not threatened—but only for those who are pro-Chávez.

To this end, it is noteworthy that, according to the LAPOP results, the percentage of Venezuelans who evaluated their country as “very democratic” dropped dramatically from 42% in 2007[15] to 26% in 2010[16], falling by almost half within only a span of three years. In a similar vein, results of the Latinobarómetro 2011 survey indicated lessening support of potential authoritarian government[17], but also a large increase in those who were “not very satisfied” with

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[14] See Data Set 2.24

[15] See Data Set 2.9

[16] See Data Set 2.13

[17] See Data Set 2.40

democracy[18]. This may suggest an increasing desire amongst Venezuelans to find a "third way" between authoritarianism and democracy, or a feeling that the government was not living up to their expectations of democracy. After all, 77% still agreed with the statement that "democracy is preferable to any other form of government[19]." Support for democracy has shown to be strong throughout the Chávez regime, and, barring a few noted exceptions, tended towards the direction of growth. Yet, combining the high levels of electoral participation and faith in elections with a high level of acknowledgement that life is difficult for dissenters, it appears that those who support and are satisfied with democracy are likely *chavistas* who conceive of democracy as delegative[20].

Indicators of Material Well-Being

The LAPOP data shows a large jump from 2007 to 2010 in the percentage of people who indicated they owned things such as a washing machine, a microwave, and a computer, with the latter representing the largest increase, from 31% in 2007[21] to 46% in 2010[22]. This correlates closely with Chávez's launching of his *Misión Mi Casa Bien Equipada*, in which he partnered with the Chinese electronics company Haier and the National Bank of the Bolivarian Republic to bring consumers high-end electronic goods at 0% interest rates and lower-than-retail sticker prices.

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[18] See Data Set 2.41

[19] See Data Set 2.40

[20] As detailed in the previous chapter, in a delegative democracy, elections are of central importance, free-speech is legally allowed (although in some ways suppressed), and the executive is all-powerful.

[21] See Data Set 2.4

[22] See Data Set 2.11

In the 2006 Latinobarómetro survey, metrics such as "second house" and "washing machine"—typical indicators of "elite wealth" in Latin American countries—went down, while others, such as "owning own home"—the increase of which is typically seen as an indicator of middle-class growth—stayed stagnant[23]. The 2011 Latinobarómetro survey indicates a significant decrease in persons reporting their economic status as "very good" or "good," with a joint 27% self-reporting[24], compared to a joint 41% reporting this in 2006[25]. Also in 2011, the "second home" metric was dropped from the survey questionnaire[26]. These numbers lend some credence to the oft-touted anti-*chavista* criticism that Chávez liked poor people so much that he continued to create new ones (Carroll 2013).

Theory

Both the empirical data discussed here and the anecdotal evidence presented in the previous chapter suggest that the dire needs of those living in poverty motivated much of the popular support for Chávez, thus perpetuating the impetus for the Chávez administration to continue fighting for the advancement of said interests. Chávez, playing up his own humble beginnings, continuously championed the interests of the impoverished while railing against the elite and capitalist economic models—two entities that the poor and working classes have historically pointed to as a cause for stilted social and economic mobility. The data seem to reflect this through increased measures of support for Chávez surrounding the launching of his

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[23] See Data Set 2.28

[24] See Data Set 2.36

[25] See Data Set 2.27

[26] See Data Set 2.37

Misiones programs, high levels of satisfaction with Chávez's performance on the issue of poverty, and a general upward trend in measures of material well-being. To this end, the theory of post-materialism is key in understanding why citizens may be more willing to turn a blind eye to undemocratic practices in exchange for economic stability in a country characterized by the boom and bust cycle of an oil-based economy.

The post-materialistic idea maintains that one "can't eat democracy," and thus democratic tendencies are less valued unless basic necessities are certain. The post-materialist theory holds that, since WWII, there has been a shift from the "materialistic"—economic growth and stability —towards the "post-materialistic"—valuation of ideas, liberty, intellectual discovery, etcetera. Arne Mastekaasa's study entitled "Post-Materialist Values and Subjective Satisfaction" explores the question of whether differences in political priorities are reflected in the ways in which people evaluate different aspects of their living conditions in relation to the theory of post-materialism. Mastekaasa concludes that there are indeed differences between materialist and post-materialist individuals in the importance of various domains. According to the author,

> Under conditions of material deprivation or insecurity, people are expected to give priority to the satisfaction of needs for physiological sustenance and physical and economic security. If the satisfaction of these basic needs is secured, "higher order" needs —like those of social esteem, intellectual challenge and personal development tend—to become the dominant sources of motivation for the individual. (Mastekaasa 1983)

According to the post-materialist theory, then, one's financial and physical security must be assured before one feels as if one has the luxury to be concerned about multifaceted, highly complex conceptions of democracy. In the case of Chávez's Venezuela, however, the data

suggest that this theory may not constitute a 1:1 match. Venezuelan citizens' material well-being, while lower than many developed nations, is still higher than many of its neighboring developing nations—and yet, almost three-quarters of Venezuelans identify their economic situation as "mediocre," "bad," or "very bad[27]." Poverty, in this case, doesn't necessarily mean that Venezuelans *aren't* concerned about democracy in their country, but rather that their concerns pivot more on how well their leader addresses their immediate needs and their ability to ensure their leader continued to meet these needs (i.e., elections), and were perhaps less concerned with what means said leader may have utilized to meet those ends.

Building on post-materialism, Ronald Inglehart's study entitled "How Solid Is Mass Support for Democracy?" seeks to measure support for democracy in the context of the young democracies of the third wave of democratization. With discussion of what he dubs "Survival vs. Self-expression values," Inglehart concludes that "the extent to which a society emphasizes a syndrome of tolerance, trust, political activism, and post-materialist values are a much stronger predictor of stable democracy [than leaders' lip service to democracy alone]" (Inglehart 2003). Similar to the findings from the post-materialist approach, viewing the case of Venezuela through the survival vs. self-expression values lens, it seems that citizen's survival is dependent upon their self-expression vis-à-vis participation in means of direct democracy such as voting and public demonstration. In other words, citizen survival—the Chávez government's addressing their needs as impoverished persons—is dependent upon their continued self-expression—demonstrating support for Chávez at the ballot box. Thus, Inglehart's postulation that increased

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[27] See Data Set 2.36

economic development leads to higher levels of self-expression values, which in turn lead to higher levels of support for democracy, seems to hold.

Conclusions

In many regards, the data presented suggests that Venezuelan citizens are conflicted about the history, legacy, and future of Chávez's brand of government. General support for democracy amongst Venezuelan citizens had consistently been strong during Chávez's presidency, and the seemingly normal fluctuation in measures such as his overall approval rating mirror those of the leaders of other countries—albeit quite high. As discussed at length in the previous chapter, Chávez did much to increase means of direct democracy, strengthen electoral participation to record highs, and ratify a new constitution full of enlightened civil liberties language. However, lip service to democracy is not necessarily an accurate indication of how deeply democracy has taken root in the country (Inglehart 2003). Nor does general popular support for democracy mean that it has at this point become engrained in the civic culture: "Overt support for democracy seems a necessary but not sufficient condition for democratic institutions to emerge….For democratic institutions to survive in the long term, they need a mass culture of tolerance, trust, participatory orientations, and emphasis on self-expression, and reasonably high levels of subjective well-being" (Inglehart 2003).

David Crow proposes a theory that may help to unpack the apparent paradox created by high levels of satisfaction with democracy in a country whose leader increasingly weakened democracy in the liberal sense. In his examination of political systems and participation in Mexico, Crow suggests that an individual citizen's satisfaction with democracy depends in large

part on his or her conception of it: "Citizens who view democracy as political rights ('liberal' democrats) or elections ('electoral' democrats) are more satisfied than substantive democrats"—or those who place economic and legal equality at the forefront of their conception of democracy—while electoral democrats are still more satisfied than liberal democrats (Crow 2010). In other words, "how Mexicans define democracy exercises an important, independent effect on how satisfied they are with it" (Crow 2010). As such, when citizens feel there exists a "gap" between what they expect from democracy based on their conception of it and what they are actually getting, they may come to the conclusion that democracy is simply not working in their country, and may even go so far as to conclude that democracy may not be the best form of government for their country, turning instead to autocracy. However, this is not to say that a dip in satisfaction with democracy means that the citizens want to eliminate it:

> Typically, democratic regimes' legitimacy affords them a "reservoir of good will" that enables governments to withstand "performance deficits." The reservoir, in theory, keeps citizens from generalizing their dissatisfaction with governments to democracy as an ideal. Democracies are insulated [for example] from frustration with economic downturns by their legitimacy of origin and ability to modify economic policy without changing regimes. (Crow 2010)

Fluctuating support for democracy and movements towards authoritarianism, then, may have less to do with feeble popular support for democracy, and more to do with the degree to which the individual places a premium on government performance on and response to issues such as, for example, economic downturns. Crow further finds that heightened satisfaction with democracy seems to follow electoral cycles (Crow 2010). This is quite unsurprising, as legitimate elections are really the ultimate demonstration and exercise of democratic freedom; and, in the case of

delegative, populist democracies such as Chávez's, these elections also serve to re-legitimize his rule and ruling practices. Furthermore, since Venezuelans appear to believe that democracy means direct and electoral participation, they can thus say "life is hard for those who oppose the government" and simultaneously earnestly support democracy and genuinely believe democracy is working in Venezuela. In other words, they don't necessarily connect democracy with values such as political pluralism, a value typically associated with liberal conceptions of democracy.

Chávez and his Bolivarian Revolution may have increased democracy in palatable and perceptible ways, but they also dramatically changed the majority conception of democracy to one focused primarily on electoral rights and direct participation—as opposed to equal application of civil liberties, including those of anti-*chavistas*—with increasingly more and more Venezuelans approving of socialist economic policies over what they perceive as "capitalist" ones. Perception was incredibly important to the political satisfaction of the popular class, whose participation revolved "around an individual, not necessarily around an ideology" (Guadalupe 2007). With so much faith placed in the rhetoric and mysticism of that individual—*El Comandante* Hugo Chávez—it mattered little if the public's confidence in the National Assembly, the police, or even democracy itself faltered. So long as the M*isiones* continued to increase the poor's material well-being and the Bolivarian myth[28] was held central, this majority would continue to support Chávez.

[28] Explored at length in the following chapter

Capítulo Tres: Simón Bolívar, Hugo Chávez y la resimbolización de un prócer

Introducción

Una comparación entre Hugo Chávez y Simón Bolívar es inescapable: Bolívar es, después de todo, el símbolo de que la Revolución bolivariano de Chávez deriva su nombre. La comparación se hace evidente igualmente en los estudios académicos, en la retórica de Chávez misma y en los artefactos culturales. Todas estas fuentes hacen hincapié en la Revolución bolivariana como alegoría nostálgica de la independencia—la misma independencia para la que el legado de Bolívar es lo más bien conocido. Como dice la académica Ana Torres en su libro *La herencia de la tribu: Del mito de la independencia a la Revolución bolivariana,* hay una creencia en la cultura venezolana "en la eterna e incomparable validez del pensamiento y visón de Bolívar como guía para el futuro americano. No es sorprendente, entonces, que pueda ser utilizado para legitimar propuestas políticas en cualquier tiempo y lugar" (Torres 2009).

La manera en que Chávez utilizaba el símbolo cultural y ideológico de Bolívar constituye una brecha entre la teoría—lo que representa el Bolívar prócer—y la historia práctica—cómo era el ser humano hombre. A través de analizar las normas culturales venezolanas y cómo son representadas en algunos largometrajes halagadores de Bolívar y Chávez, voy a demostrar cómo Chávez *podía* utilizar exitosamente el prócer como herramienta política a través del lente de la teoría cultural sobre la representación. Asimismo, con una análisis de otras obras cinemática

menos favorables hacia el Libertador y el ex-presidente, en combinación con una discusión sobre los hechos de Chávez para capitalizar en el imagen de Bolívar, se puede ver que la relación entre Bolívar y Chávez constituye la resimbolización del primero por el segundo.

El romance entre Venezuela y Bolívar

Simón Bolívar tiene lugar en la historia latinoamericana como el Libertador de la región de "Gran Colombia", el área del noroeste de América del Sur. Aunque Bolívar era líder del movimiento militar que eventualmente ganó la independencia de la Corona española, él murió sin la actualización de su visón de una región sudamericana unificada, sin partidos políticos, con democracia para todo el pueblo. Pero, su legado es uno de un prócer en esta misma región; digamos, él es un héroe nacional que representa la democracia representativa para el pueblo, la independencia y liberación de países hegemónicos, el anti-imperialismo y la integración geopolítica del continente americana del sur. Hoy, la importancia de Bolívar en Venezuela es abiertamente perceptible: Cada pueblo venezolano tiene una estatua de Bolívar en el centro, la plata se llama "bolívar" y la figura de Bolívar tiene un lugar en los altares paganos (Alvaray 2013), enfrente de que los niños son enseñados a hacer una genuflexión (Carroll 2013).

Como doctrina, el bolivariansimo empezó a forjarse en el siglo XIX después de la culminación de las varias guerreras civiles de independencia latinoamericanas (Perera 2012). Pareció de formar como herramienta del Estado y sus élites para unificar el pueblo y legitimar—o, más probable en la mente de ellos, "explicar"—su derecho a reinar sobre los países nuevamente independientes. El culto de tradición oral venezolana que desarrolló refiere a Bolívar como semidivino, paterno y mesiánico (Torres 2009). El rasgo único de la versión

bolivariana es “la simplicidad de su imagen y su naturaleza unidimensional….El Bolívar de la ortodoxia venezolana es un objeto semirreligioso, no una persona” (Torres 2009). Como continúa Torres, “Bolívar no cabe en los moldes de la humanidad….Él es único, incomparable, magnífico, de fuerza sobrenatural, por encima de los hombres y de la historia, como los astros por encima de toda las nubes del espacio. *Bolívar ocupa un reina aparte entre los hombres y Dios*” (Torres 2009, énfasis mío). Esta “mitificación santurrona” nació por la atribución de virtudes y poderes que no caben con los hechos históricos ni con el personaje real (Perera 2012). La pregunta, entonces, es por qué surgió esta mitificación de nivel tan alarmante en la cultura venezolana. ¿Cuáles aspectos de la cultura venezolana contribuyen?

Mientras todas las culturas tienen sus próceres y un cierto nivel de respeto para la historia, lo que es diferente en la cultura venezolana es la preeminencia de una creencia fuerte en lo mágico-religioso y la influencia que tiene el mágico y la religión en la vida real diaria. Venezuela es “un país donde lo mágico-religioso aflora” (Perera 2012). “Muchos venezolanos son supersticiosos y combinan una mezcla casi-clandestina de catolicismo con un revoltijo de astrología, misticismo y santería, un tipo de voodoo importado por los esclavos de oeste África[29]” (Carrol 2013). La santería es una religión con orígenes de la cultura africana yoruba, del país actualmente llamada Nigeria. “Un auténtico sincretismo de elementos europeos y africanos”, la santería es una combinación de creencias católicas y creencias de yoruba (Perera 2012). Notablemente, hay facciones derivadas de santería organizadas alrededor de los espíritus de héroes nacionales (Fernandes 2010). También muy prevalente es la iglesia católica, que ha

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[29] Originally, “Many Venezuelans are superstitious and blend Catholicism with a semi-clandestine jumble of astrology, mysticism, and Santeria, a type of voodoo imported by slaves from western Africa.”

existido en el país desde los conquistadores. Es bastante común encontrar referencias a Bolívar como “un mesías” o “un segundo Jesús Cristo”.

En Venezuela, continúa existir un nivel tremendo de atención pública sobre la manera en que los eventos históricos son narrados y transmitidos en la esfera pública (Valladares-Ruiz 2013). Entre venezolanos, la historia está de moda y mantiene un lugar prominente en la vida pública (Alvaray 2013). Como “consecuencia lógica de un pasado épico lleno de luchas para la independencia de poderes extranjeros y internos[30]”, la Venezuela contemporánea mantiene una “cultura única que relaciona intensamente el pasado de la nación con el presente y un futuro predestinado[31]” (Alvaray 2013). La historia se manifiesta primariamente en la tradición oral, que supera la escrita (Perera 2012). Entonces, ha sido bastante fácil manipular o cambiar la interpretación o percepción cultural de los eventos históricos con la memoria de la historia en forma oral. Históricamente hablando, los gobiernos venezolanos se han aprovechado de esta fluidez y flexibilidad de la cultura bolivariana para apoyar a sus regímenes. En otras palabra, “el pasado histórico ha sido convertido en capital cultural para los que quieren legitimar su poder[32]” (Alvaray 2013).

Más enfatizada es la historia “patriótica”, que subraya la libertad, igualdad y democracia como los valores claves de Bolívar (Torres 2009). Bolívar “ocupa un lugar central en la

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[30] Originally, “…logical consequence of an epic past filled with struggles for independence from foreign and internal powers…”

[31] Originally, “…a novel culture that intensely relates the past of the nation to the present and to a preordained future.”

[32] Originally, “The historical past has become cultural capital for those who want to legitimate their power.”

conciencia nacional" como "símbolo de la patria misma" (Torres 2009). Sigue algunos "requisitos" para ser bolivariano:

1. Amar a la patria es amar el Libertador.
2. Bolívar hizo a Venezuela; quien hace patria revive a Bolívar.
3. La patria es un quehacer permanente; ese quehacer consiste en hacer real y vigente el pensamiento de Bolívar.
4. La libertad fue el sueño de Bolívar. Ella es [el] imperativo [de los bolivarianos]. Bolívar y Venezuela, Bolívar y la patria, son, pues, intercambiables. (Torres 2009)

Estos requisitos "constituyen un laberinto en el que puede encerrarse *cualquier proyecto*" que intenta a actualizar los valores supuestamente de Bolívar (Torres 2009, énfasis mío).

Una combinación única del fervor católica, la cultura de lo mágico-religioso influido por África y la prominencia de la lucha para la independencia democrática del Imperio español y para la igualdad crea una clima alrededor de Bolívar que le eleva al nivel semidivino, sagrado y consumado. Lo que es única de la cultura venezolana no es que tiene un prócer que se elevan como persona significativa en la historia de su país; esto es algo normal que ocurre en el proceso de desarrollar a un país. Lo que es más llamativo, "lo que no es tan normal, es que un país moderno, doscientos años después de que sus héroes culturales hicieran su paso por la historia, con sus emolumentos, pero como simples ciudadanos, recuerdan como altos oficiales y militares prestigiosos" (Perera 2012). Torres propone que esta idealización de Bolívar tiene dos efectos: "En primer lugar, Simón Bolívar se transforma en un ideal que no sólo debe moldear la vida de la nación sino la de cada venezolano. En segundo lugar, se acentúa una ética voluntarista, con los

consiguientes elementos totalitarios, que tiene la utopía como proyecto, y el fracaso como resultado" (Torres 2009).

Emblemático de este fenómeno es la película *El Libertador* (2013), una historia dramatizada sobre la vida de Bolívar dirigido por Alberto Arevelo. Producida por la institución estatal venezolana la Villa del Cine[33], *El Libertador* refleja intentos a idealizar y re-interpretar a la historia. Desde el comienzo de la película, el tono está claro: El texto parpadeando sobre la pantalla relata que Bolívar luchaba en más de cien batallas en contra del Imperio español; que él andaba más que 70.000 milas en caballo; que sus campañas militares cubrían doble el territorio de las de Alejandro Magno; que su ejército nunca conquistaba, sino liberaba (Arvelo 2013). A lo largo de la historia de Bolívar desde su infancia hasta su muerte, el protagonista está mostrado fuertemente como hombre importante, educado, suave, amante apasionado—un hombre muy machista. Hay muchas escenas en el argumento de la película que son incorrectas históricamente. Por ejemplo, la escena final muestra Bolívar a punto de zarpar al sur del país para revigorizar la campaña para realizar su sueño, pero murió por tuberculosis en camino[34]. En realidad, sin embargo, Bolívar murió después de que él resignó la presidencia y intentó a vivir en exilio en Europa. Algo que distingue *El Libertador* de otros largometrajes sobre Bolívar es que recuerda a la audiencia por medio de una serie de escenas que hacen explícitas y otros que hacen implícitas que Bolívar no era hombre pobre, sino su riqueza era confiscada por el gobierno de Imperio

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33 Elaboraré en la historia y las metas de la Villa del Cine más adelante.

34 Algo notable es la implicación que la película hace sobre Bolívar como mártir. De hecho, el final de la película insinúa que Bolívar fue matado: Aunque otro general—en este tiempo un enemigo de Bolívar—no dice mucho más que "Bon voyage", el temperamento y lenguaje corporal de las personajes y el tono de la escena sugiere un acto criminal. Inmediatamente después de esta escena, la película termina con texto en la pantalla que lee "La causa de muere *official* era tuberculosis" (Arvelo 2013).

español como castigo de ser rebelde para la independencia. Esto toca la fibre sensible del pueblo venezolano, quien sentía, además del sentimiento anti-imperialista predominante en la cultura, que el gobierno antes de Chávez robó los beneficios del petróleo, un recurso nativo natural de Venezuela que todos los ciudadanos puedan tener en común.

Otra obra que es prototípica de la Villa del Cine es la película *Bolívar: El hombre de las dificultades* (2013) dirigido por Luis Alberto Lamata. Enfocada en la esclavitud y las relaciones entre las raíces, Bolívar está mostrado como libertador de todos las raíces, como proponente de la igualdad auténtica—mientras, notablemente, los estadounidenses y los ingleses no han realizada la "igualdad verdadera". Reminiscente del rol clave que tiene la unión de raíces minoritarias en la Revolución bolivariana actualmente, el protagonista de Bolívar dice del pueblo de Gran Colombia que "no somos europeos ni indios….Somos una mezcla especial" (Alberto Lamata 2013). Además, la película está llena de imágenes valientes de Bolívar, como el duelo de fusiles, donde Bolívar niega a dispararla al enemigo y declara que prefería morir por la libertad, y las luchas de espadas entre Bolívar y algunos imperialistas en la calle, que simbolizan la lucha entre la monarquía y los rebeldes (Alberto Lamata 2013). Para fortalecer el sentimiento anti-imperialista, los oficiales del Imperio británico son retirados como bufones, con acento de gringo terrible y rechazos de ayudar a Bolívar en su proyecto de independencia[35].

Dos documentales de directores de países occidentales afirman esta imagen romantizada e idealizada de Bolívar por la vinculación del régimen chavista con el legado del Libertador. *South of the Border* (2009), dirigido por Oliver Stone, se ubica claramente a la izquierda del

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[35] Constituye un ejemplo de la historia mal representada: Bolívar tenía apoyo financiero y militar de la Gran Británica y quisiera tenerla como aliado después de que ganó la independencia.

espectro político, y es fuertemente anti-estadounidense y pro-Chávez. A través de varias entrevistas con el Presidente, el documental muestra a Chávez como benefactor y defensor del pueblo—un hombre de igualdad justa y verdadera—mientras los líderes y los medios occidentales son superficiales, mentirosos y egoístas. En su intento de "refutar la demonización de Chávez y ortos líderes latinoamericanos de la izquierda[36]" (Orozco 2010), Stone no pide ninguna pregunta crítica sobre el crimen, la escasez de electricidad, etc., mientras eleva el rol de las misiones y las fincas y negocios nacionalizados por el Estado. El documental subraya estos esfuerzos socialistas chavistas como una manera, entre otras, de que Chávez defendía la dignidad del país y del pueblo, haciendo hincapié que este sentimiento es presuntamente compartido con Bolívar. Notablemente, el documental tuvo menos éxito en Venezuela que en otros países, incluyendo los Estados Unidos. Según un profesor de ciencias políticas del Universidad Central de Venezuela en Caracas, Ricardo Sucre, el documental falló en parte por una tendencia de la cultura para rechazar a halago excesivo: "A la persona común no le gustan las que chupar las medias[37]" (Orozco 2010). Además, Sucre insiste que a la mayoría de venezolanos no le gusta el retrato superficial de su país: La historia del documental no refleja los matices de la realidad (Orozco 2010).

El documental *The Revolution Will Not be Televised: Chávez, Inside the Coup* (2003), dirigido por Kim Bartley y Donnacha Ó Briain, también es anti-estadounidense y pro-Chávez. A través de seguir los eventos del golpe de estado en contra de Chávez que tuvo lugar en 2002, se representa Chávez como un salvador para el pueblo quien queda en poder, a pesar de varios

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[36] Originally, "…refute the demonization of Chávez and Latin America's other leftist leaders."

[37] Originally, "The everyday Joe doesn't like that kissing up."

atentos por los imperialistas y elites para destronarlo. Crea conexiones implícitas entre el exilio y regreso de Bolívar y Chávez, en que los dos eran exilados por su lucha para la independencia, y volvían por la demanda popular, más fuerte que antes del golpe fracasado. El documental retrata Chávez como héroe romántico y el golpe como folclor, "culpa y inocencia enredada en las vides, los detalles cubiertos por musgo[38]" (Carrol 2013).

El mito distorsionado

El personaje romantizado de Bolívar no necesariamente sigue la realidad. "Los cultos y la construcción de mitos", dice Torres, "dicen más acerca de la historia venezolana y sus líderes intelectuales y políticos que del propio objeto de veneración" (Torres 2009). Es decir, "El legítimo culto de su nombre…Se usó y abusó de Bolívar haciéndole descender hasta nivel de nuestras querellas, facciones y vanidades locales" (Torres 2009). La película *Bolívar soy yo* (2002), dirigido por Jorge Alí Triana, revela la profundidad de esta brecha entre el Bolívar idealizado por la cultura venezolana y el ser humano que vivía en la vida real. Esta sátira política colombiana sigue un actor, Santiago Miranda, que tiene el papel de Simón Bolívar en una serie televisa de historia dramatizada. La película comienza durante de la grabación de la escena de muerte de Bolívar: Bolívar, retratado por Miranda, está de pie enfrente de un pelotón de fusilamiento, rechaza la venda que le ofrece, y da un discurso apasionado sobre las últimas voluntades. Pero, en la mitad de la grabación, Miranda grita "¡Corte!" porque no le gusta la representación de Bolívar que ellos están creado. Como dice Miranda, "Es una farsa" matar Bolívar—quién murió de tuberculosis—de esta manera. Los directores, tratando de tranquilizar a

[38] Originally, "…guilt and innocence tangled in vines, detailes covered by moss."

Miranda, protestan que una muerte por fusilamiento es muy más impresionante y heroica de lo que pasa en la realidad (Alí Triana 2002). Con esta afirmación, ellos implican que esto tipo de muerte es más apropiado para el símbolo de Bolívar que la manera en que murió Bolívar el hombre.

Más adelante en la película, cuando Miranda está hablando con el vigilante de la casa bolivariana sobre su disconexión mental entre la realidad y el mito, el vigilante confirma que la ambigüedad predomina en la sociedad, diciendo que él no quiere saber el "aspecto humano" de Bolívar, sino el hombre que quemaba la tierra con pasión para libertad (Alí Triana 2002). Además, dice que cada persona tiene su imagen personal y única de Bolívar, en la manera que quiere pensar en él (Alí Triana 2002). Inevitable es "la proyección de un Bolívar descontextualizado, con todas sus propiedades míticas, lo transforma en adalid de campos tan varios como irreconciliables" (Perera 2012). Este sentimiento está reflejado en la escena donde Miranda se emborracha y visita al estatua de Bolívar. Mirando y gritando a la cara de Bolívar, Mirada exclama "¡Ahora yo sé que es un símbolo…se cagar por las palomas!" (Alí Triana 2002). Aquí, implica que el concepto romantizado de Bolívar constituye un símbolo—que recibe "el excremento" de las personas que lo usan—y nada más.

Después de esta escena, Miranda está fuertemente involucrado en convertirse en Bolívar para realizar los sueños legítimos del Libertador. Esto esfuerzo por Miranda constituye un problema grave para el gobierno colombiano cuando Miranda secuestra al presidente colombiano. Cuando el vicepresidente pregunta a un experto militar por qué ellos no puedan simplemente matar a Miranda, el segundo explica a ella que la muerta del símbolo de Bolívar—

lo que Miranda y el pueblo colombiano creen que es—podría ser más peligroso para la política del gobierno que la situación de tener un actor loco (Alí Triana 2002). Durante de una actuación para una reunión de líderes latinoamericanas, Miranda (actuando como Bolívar) deja el guión y, en un discurso inesperado, regaña a los políticos, diciendo "¡Ustedes hacen teatro, no política!" (Alí Triana 2002). Continua el diatriba, diciendo que su nombre ha sido utilizado por cosas peores, como "golpes de estado, escuelas mediocres, hospitales que no sirven. Hay constituciones que se aplican, y para legitimar la barbarie de la lucha mala" (Alí Triana 2002).

Dos documentales—*¿Puedo hablar?* (2007) por Christopher Moore y *¿¡Revolución!?* (2006) por Charles Gervais—vinculan las dudas que tiene Miranda y los ciudadanos venezolanos sobre la utilización del mito de Bolívar por los gobiernos latinoamericanos y el gobierno venezolano de Chávez, respectivamente. Las dos obras no están ubicadas en cualquier fin extremo del espectro político y son más estudiosos que propaganda. Los documentales incluyen entrevistas con personas de todos grupos sociales. Ambos los elites y los del barrio que están entrevistados en el documental presentan argumentación lógica, pero los del segundo categoría son "motivados visiblemente por una pasión nacionalista[39]" (Al-Solaylee 2007). En *¿Puedo hablar?,* una mujer del barrio Petare relata, "Chávez es como un mesías, un mesías que estaban esperando. Como se dicen de Bolívar, un segundo Jesús Cristo" (Moore 2007). Adelante, en una grabación de una canción anti-chavista, un hombre canta: "Que venga, que venga/Don Simón Bolívar/Que libere nosotros/de esta pesadilla" (Moore 2007). El hombre sigue a afirmar que "Bolívar no era comunista" y que el regimen chavista intenta a cambiar Bolívar (Moore 2007). En *¿¡Revolución!?,* siguiendo "diez etapas para una revolución pacífica", Gervais nota como la

[39] Originally, "…visibly motivated by nationalist fervor."

gente siente sobre si la Revolución bolivariana ha o no ha tenido éxito. Mientras los anti-chavistas insisten que Chávez nunca realizó el etapa final—la prescindibilidad del líder original—los seguidores de Chávez insisten que Chávez todavía está en el proceso de realizar el sueño de Bolívar mismo (Gervais 2006).

La resimbolización de un prócer

La Villa del Cine

Chávez construyó la Villa del Cine por decreto legislativo en el 13 de junio de 2006 y estableció el cargo como "una institución encargada de financiar, producir y distribuir series de televisión, documentales y películas de ficción" (Valladares-Ruiz 2013). Él habló de "un giro en las políticas estatales en materia cultural" y "una democratización del cine" como metas de la Villa del Cine (Valladares-Ruiz 2013) y la reconstrucción de eventos históricos como política desvergonzado (Alvaray 2013). La investigadora Patricia Valladares-Ruiz identifica dos tendencias claves de las producciones cinematecas de la Villa del Cine: La primer es una "gira en torno a la (re)construcción y reciclaje de la memoria histórica" y la segunda es para "introducir conflictos contemporánea marcados por la lucha de clases y la búsqueda de la superación personal y/o colectiva" (Valladares-Ruiz 2013). La gran mayoría de las obras de la Villa del Cine no son exitosas en las salas del cine comerciales, a pesar de (o quizás por causa de) la "clara propensión al adoctrinamiento político y al didactismo" (Valladares-Ruiz 2013).

Con la introducción de *El Libertador* en el año 2013, sin embargo, esta falta de amplia popularidad comercial está en via de cambiar. Esta película, con actores famosos y producida por una colaboración de estudios internacionales, ha ganado mucha atención mundialmente. Esta

popularidad viene con razón para ser preocupado: En los años recientes hay una preocupación creciente sobre el fenómeno de autocensura, "que estaría íntimamente ligado a la extra polarización del panorama político (divido entre el sector oficialista y el opositor) y su posible efecto en la búsqueda de financiación" (Valladares-Ruiz 2013). Como dice un director, "[Los oficiales del gobierno venezolano] quieren películas que muestren la Revolución [bolivariana] como la solución de todos los problemas nacionales o quieren películas que relaten las historias de líderes de la independencia, siempre con una versión que favorece los valores de la Revolución bolivariana. Creo que no hay ninguna oportunidad para hacer películas que no se caben con la Revolución[40]" (Valladares-Ruiz 2013). De hecho, el director sigue y mantiene que "la Villa del Cine ha premiado proyectos que se inscriben directamente en algunos de los ejes de interés ideológico del gobierno bolivariano" incluyendo un crecimiento reciente en "producciones de temática antiimperialista y anticapitalista" (Valladares-Ruiz 2013), de que *El Libertador* es un ejemplo emblemático.

Con estos largometrajes—que son ampliamente considerados por la oposición "propaganda chavista"—el gobierno de Chávez intentaba justificar el origen de la Revolución desde su versión "limpia" del pasado histórico:

> Bien sabe que la retórica de la Revolución bolivariana ha reciclado afanosamente las figuras de próceres del siglo XIX para legitimar un discurso de resistencia y de vocación antiimperialista. Por lo tanto, no parecía casual que varios de los largometrajes de la Villa del Cine se hayan centrado en la vida de estos personajes y en la reconstrucción de estos eventos. (Valladares-Ruiz 2013).

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[40] Originally, "[Venezuelan government officials] either want movies that portray the [Bolivarian] revolution as the solution of [sic] all the problems of the nation or they want movies that tell the stories of independence leaders, always with a version that favors values of the Bolivarian Revolution. I don't think there's a chance to make movies that are not in tune with the revolution."

En otras palabras, las películas que produce la Villa del Cine sirven para legitimar los cambios sociales que propone la Revolución. Además, el apoyo financiero y político del estado para estos esfuerzos cinematecos muestra un deseo por Chávez de controlar la imagen y la interpretación de los héroes de la Revolución bolivariana. Representa "un intento de moldear, a través de la repetición y exceso, una forma específica de la conciencia histórica nacional[41]" (Alvaray 2013).

Cómo Chávez utilizaba la imagen del prócer

Aunque varios gobiernos venezolanos anteriores han empleado la figura de Simón Bolívar para legitimar actos políticos en el nombre del Libertador, en el caso de Chávez, "esta renovada iniciativa emancipadora perseguía borrar acontecimientos políticos que pudieran cuestionar su papel protagónico" (Valladares-Ruiz 2013). Mientras otros líderes han utilizado la imagen del prócer como herramienta de legitimar su régimen, Chávez invocó el Liberator a manera de fortalecer las conexiones entre Bolívar y él mismo—al punto de elevarlo a santo político[42]. Y Chávez permitía que esta conexión amplificara su misma mitificación: Chávez está referido por el pueblo como "el hijo legítimo" y "el heredero político" de Bolívar (Carrol 2013).

La relación de Chávez con la figura del Libertador comenzó, según una expresión de él mismo, desde la infancia. "En vez de Superman", dijo el Presidente en una entrevista, "mi héroe era Bolívar" (Marcano 2005). La conexión que tenía Chávez con Bolívar es representativa de la

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[41] Originally, "…an attempt to mold, through repetition and excess, a particular form of the national historical consciousness."

[42] Aunque, es notable que Chávez no estaba de acuerdo con la elevación de Bolívar hasta nivel de mesías, cristo o santo (Stone 2009).

cultura venezolana por toda su extensión. Él "crece escuchando la música celestial del canto bolivariano, que se encuentra con frases del héroe en cada equina de su cuidad, que atestigua sus cientos de plazas, que se forma en la religión republicana" (Torres 2009). En una entrevista en *South of the Border*, con ojos empañados, Chávez se convirtió en cuentista e historiador: "Hace doscientos años comienza la Revolución. Bolívar liberta estos pueblos"—gestando a Colombia, Venezuela y Perú—"del Imperio español y comenzó el sueño de la República. Libre, soberana. Pero antes llegó la [gente] norteamericana, el Imperio británica….El continente [de Sudamerica] quiere ser nosotros mismos" (Stone 2009). Estas anécdotas muestran el nivel de que, en su relación a Bolívar, Chávez "es un hombre entre dos mundos: entre el moderno (histórico) y el tradicional (mítico) que niega la historia" (Perera 2012). Es decir, por ejemplo, su comentario sobre el Imperio británico y lo que implica sobre el efecto negativo de esta institución en la libertad y soberanía de Venezuela, cabe con el mito tradicional y popular del antiimperialismo, pero no cabe con la realidad[43].

Sin embargo, esta concepción popular de Bolívar es precisamente la que Chávez había deseado capitalizar. La conexión que hizo Chávez entre él mismo y Bolívar ha existido desde el surgimiento de la imagen pública de Chávez. Semejante a Bolívar en los primeros esfuerzos militares bajo de General Francisco de Miranda para la independencia, Chávez también desobedecía a los generales superiores cuando era oficial militar joven y guió un golpe de estado el 4 de febrero de 1992. Según una entrada en un diario, él ha llegado a la conclusión que tuviera que "dar el paso entre la ilusión y la realidad con el fin de cerrar la brecha entre la utopía

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[43] De hecho, Bolívar pidió y recibió ayuda por la Gran Bretaña, y quería una alianza con ellos después de la liberación exitosa. Además, Bolívar intentó a pasar el resto de vida en exilio en Europa, pero murió de tuberculosis antes del viaje.

prometido y lo conquistable" y luchar para actualizar el sueño de Bolívar (Torres 2009). En su primer llamado a la nación venezolano—después de que su golpe fracasó—dijo que tuvo un "mensaje bolivariano" para el pueblo y que él asumió "la responsabilidad de este movimiento militar bolivariano" (Torres 2009). Un mes después, en una entrevista con el periódico actualmente anti-chavista El Nacional, Chávez confirmó su compromiso a la causa de Bolívar, y dijo que "el verdadero autor de esta liberación, líder auténtico de esta rebelión es el General Simón Bolívar. Él con su verbo incendiario nos ha alumbrado la ruta". La insinuación era claro: Bolívar y Chávez dieron el golpe de estado juntos (Marcano 2005). Desde sus primeras declaraciones, entonces, "Chávez invocó con furor al Padre de la Patria como justificador y legitimador de todas sus acciones" (Marcano 2005). Como Bolívar creó su ejército por la unificación de los pobres, los indígenas y los esclavos, Chávez también creaba su base de apoyo entre personas de estrato minoritaria, las personas que no tienen nada sino esperanza y nada para perder. Durante del campaña presidencial de 1992, basaba su plataforma en "pedir un regreso para las ideas de Simón Bolívar" (Moore 2007). Invocando el nombre de Bolívar para "civilizar" lo político para todos (Perera 2012), Chávez también fortaleció el símbolo por la incorporación en el nombre de su Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario (MBR) ambos la palabra "Bolivariano" pero además el numero "200", que representaba los 200 años desde el parto del Libertador (López Maya 2013). Ganó con el 67% del voto popular.

Más que la popularidad cultural como prócer, hay una teoría sociológica que ofrece soporte para que Chávez podría utilizar Bolívar exitosamente: la teoría de representación por Stuart Hall. Según Hall, "la representación conecta significación y lenguaje con la

cultura[44]" (Hall 1997). La idea de una cultura, dice Hall, es que todas "ser de aproximadamente el mismo universo conceptual y lingüístico" para que "todas de esta cultura puede entender un símbolo de una manera similar[45]" (Hall 1997). En el caso de la historia, existe un "intercambio sutil de interpretaciones tejiendo un discurso más robusto alrededor de la historia" por "la reorganización constante de datos[46]" inherente en un recuento histórico (Alvaray 2013). En el caso del filme, "la construcción visual de las imágenes puedan ser tan convincente que remplacen de manera inesperada las memorias del pasado[47]" (Alvaray 2013). Las representaciones, entonces, "no reflejan la exactitud, sino más construyen una interpretación de un evento histórico[48]" (Alvaray 203).

Chávez reconocía el rasgo del concepto simbólico de Bolívar como "más grande que la vida" cuando, en una entrevista con la escritora Aleida Guevara, dijo:

> En el orden ideológico puede consolidar más, todo aquello que durante años veníamos estudiando, esencialmente, la ideología bolivariana, porque Bolívar no es solo un hombre, es mucho más, es un concepto, es más que una idea, es un conjunto de ideas, donde se une la política con la sociedad, con la justicia, tanto en el ámbito nacional como en el ámbito regional suramericano, en el Caribe y también en el ámbito mundial. (Guevara 11)

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[44] Originally, "Representation connects meaning and language to culture."

[45] Originally, "To belong to roughly the same conceptual and linguistic universe" so that "everyone in the culture can understand a symbol in the same way."

[46] Originally, "…subtle interplay of interpretations weaving a larger discourse around history" by "the constant reorganization of facts…"

[47] Originally, "The images' visual construction may be so compelling that they may replace in unpredictable ways the memories of the past."

[48] Originally, "Representations do not reflect the correctness of, but rather construct, an interpretation of a historical event."

Además, Chávez estaba listo para demostrar las conexiones entre si mismo y Bolívar en las características anti-hegemonías y semidivinas. Chávez notaba que Bolívar era antiimperialista como él, y citó a Bolívar cuando dijo: "Los Estados Unidos parecen destinados por la Providencia para plagar la América de miseria a nombre de la libertad" (Guevara 11). También, él implica que el pueblo había estado esperando un "nuevo Bolívar" en él, citando el poema de Pablo Neruda: "Bolívar despierta cada 100 años, cuando despierta el pueblo" (Guevara 10).

Resimbolización

El conflicto fundamental en películas como *Bolívar soy yo* es que la concepción que tiene el protagonista sobre Bolívar no está de acuerdo con la concepción de la cultura popular. Según la teoría de Hall, esta discrepancia no es sorprendente: Aunque tenemos conceptos culturales similares, no entendemos un símbolo de manera exactamente igual (Hall 1997). Se utiliza "una estrategia construccionista[49]" en que personas "construyen significación a través de sistemas representativas". Entonces, "no debemos confundir el mundo material, donde cosas y personas existen, y las prácticas simbólicas y procesos a través de que representación, significación y lenguaje se operan[50]" (Hall 1997). Hay una escena en *Bolívar soy yo* en la que Santiago está hablando con el vigilante de seguridad nocturno del Museo Simón Bolívar—el palacio antiguo del Libertador. Durante de la conversación, el segundo insiste en que él no quiere ver el "aspecto humano" de Bolívar, sino más bien lo que "enardecía la tierra con la pasión de la libertad", él lo que le gustaría que sus niños conocieran (Alí Triana 2002). Así, la concepción de Bolívar que

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[49] Originally, "A constructionist strategy" in which people "construct meaning through representative systems."

[50] Originally, "We must not confuse the material world, where things and people exists, and the symbolic practices and processes through which representation, meaning, and language operate."

tenía Chávez era más la popular que la de Miranda, la realidad. Entonces, Chávez efectivamente constituye algún tipo de resimbolización de Bolívar para servir su propia agenda política. Por resimbolización, entendemos el "proceso o procedimiento de modificación, revisión o afirmación de un símbolo" (Biagini 2008).

En la práctica,"la resimbolización no alude a una obliteración de la transmisión original del símbolo, ni tan solo una mera resignificación, sino más exactamente la repotencialización incrementada de sus efectos" (Biagini 2008). De esta manera, cada grupo puede aplicar sus propios valores a la concepción de Bolívar para satisfechar su propia agenda política y/o social, mientras se mantienen el entendimiento universal del símbolo cultural. En una escena en *Bolívar soy yo*, el líder de un grupo guerrillero dice, lleno de orgullo, que ellos han realizado parte de los sueños de Bolívar: controlan parte del territorio nacional y destruyen la infraestructura. Santiago, alarmado, respuesta enfáticamente que "¡Eso no tiene nada que ver con mis sueños!" (Alí Triana 2002). De manera similar, en *South of the Border*, Chávez—en su mente supuestamente invocando el ideológica de Bolívar—comenta que su revolución, la revolución bolivariana, sería "pacífica—pero armada" (Stone 2009). Chávez insistía que Bolívar era claramente socialista según sus pensamientos sobre la igualdad entre raíces y clases sociales, pero según Torres, interpretaciones bien definidas y categorizadas como esta constituyen "el uso arbitrario, selectivo y anacrónico del discurso de Bolívar sin considerar las circunstancias y especificad históricas en las cuales le correspondió vivir" (Torres 2009).

Bajo del Centro Nacional de Historia, creado por Chávez en 2007, él ha contribuido al establecimiento de nuevos iconos nacionales, nuevas fechas heroicas y de hecho nuevos héroes

—todos ilustrados de una manera prejudicial a los propósitos de la Revolución bolivariana (Alvaray 2013). La Villa del Cine ha tenido un rol clave en la resimbolización del prócer, produciendo películas y documentales que intentan apoyar la creación de un cianotipo histórico nueva (Alvaray 2013). "Chávez construía un discurso político en que símbolos e imágenes—creadas por referencias históricas, militares, religiosas y culturales reinterpretadas—tienen un rol de importancia supremo. Cada evento político manipulado por Chávez o su partido utiliza símbolos nacionales en un intento de desarrollar y fortalecer la posición de él[51]" (López Maya 2013).

Consecuencias

Con la resurrección del prócer Simón Bolívar desde el comienzo de su vida política, Chávez era "destinado a tener encanto popular considerable[52]" (Valladares-Ruiz 2013). Chávez continuamente atendía los requisitos emocionales de una nación desmoralizada (Fernandes 2010), entendido por sus seguidores como un Bolívar actual, con su cara y nombre de todos lados: carteles publicitarios, murales, camisetas (Carroll 2013). Este nivel de la idealización de la campaña libertadora y mito de una casi reencarnación es sin precedente. La resimbolización de Bolívar por Chávez tiene consecuencias graves: "El peso de la canonización oficial sobrepasa la verdadera significación histórica, y convierte al héroe en una caricatura maleable por el entusiasmo nacional del momento, para servir como soporte patriótico a las sucesivas versiones de una agenda política inmediata" (Torres 2009). "La gente esta viendo Chávez como…como un

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[51] Originally, "Chávez constructed a political discourse in which symbols and images—created from reinterpreted historical, military, religious, and cultural references—play a role of utmost importance. Every political event staged by Chávez or his party employs national symbols in an attempt to develop and strengthen his position."

[52] Originally, "…destined to have considerable popular appeal."

dios—sin saber, sin analizarlo, sin pensar. Están pasado que la gente [son] *chavista* por Chávez" (Moore 2007). La utilización de Bolívar por Chávez también tiene consecuencias graves para la gobernación democrática: "Es importante para *la conservación del mito* que los asesinos y traidores no *formen parte pueblo venezolano*" (Torres 2009, énfasis mío). En otras palabras, los disidentes tienen que ser silenciados para la supervivencia de la Revolución bolivariana.

En el Congreso de Angostura de 1819, Bolívar estupendamente escribió: "Nada es tan peligroso como dejar permanecer largo tiempo a un mismo ciudadano en el Poder. El pueblo se acostumbra a obedecerle y él a mandarlo, de donde se originan la usurpación y la tiranía." Aunque según este escrito bolivariano Chávez podría ser considerado en la mitad de la tiranía, sin embargo, Chávez reconstruía el símbolo de Bolívar para apoyar a su largo régimen por la resimbolización de Bolívar y sus ideas y metas. Estas acciones constituyen una manifestación de Bolívar en el contexto venezolano contemporáneo para apoyar la agenda de un partido político que supuestamente tiene como meta realizar los sueños del Libertador.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the examination of procedural, substantive, liberal, and delegative theories of democracy and the characteristics of autocratic, socialist, and populist governments, I classified Chávez's brand of democracy as a substantive, delegative, populist democracy with socialist polices and governing practices that tend towards autocratic. Yet, while the *chavista* government can be categorized as a democracy, it does not fit as snugly into that classification as Chávez himself would have claimed. Furthermore, Chávez's brand of government carries some menacing prospects for the future of democracy in Venezuela. The very real democratic progress that can be made by populist democracies can only be maintained if the charismatic leader of the movement resists temptation to cling to the power he has obtained. Continued concentration of power by an executive leader risks "destroying the entire institutional fabric that permits a political order of dialogue and consensus building" (López Maya 2013). Chávez's 2012 electoral victory, despite his apparent departure from liberal democratic progress and his failing health, further legitimized his brand of populist, socialist, delegative, and borderline authoritarian—yet still democratic—government. Thus, the elections held by the Chávez government were perhaps in many ways unfree, but they were by no means meaningless.

By performing a qualitative analysis on a selection of data sets pertaining directly to Venezuelan support for democracy, confidence in state institutions, and material well-being and combining this with the theory of post-materialism, I was able to shed some light on the question of why Chávez continued to enjoy strong support, even in the context of mounting concerns regarding his seemingly undemocratic behaviors. Viewing the case of Venezuela through the

post-materialist and related survival vs. self-expression values lens, it seems that citizens' survival is dependent upon their self-expression vis-à-vis participation in means of direct democracy such as voting and public demonstration. In other words, citizen survival—the Chávez government's addressing their needs as impoverished persons—is dependent upon their continued self-expression—demonstrating support for Chávez at the ballot box. Furthermore, coupling the increasing satisfaction with democracy under the Chávez presidency with wide recognition of his heavy-handed governing practices, it appears as if Venezuelan's conceptions and expectations of democracy may have shifted over time. Utilizing Crow's postulation that citizen satisfaction with democracy depends largely upon their conception of it, I concluded that, since Venezuelans appear to believe that democracy means direct and electoral participation, they can say "life is hard for those who oppose the government" and simultaneously earnestly support democracy and genuinely believe democracy is working in Venezuela. In other words, they don't necessarily connect democracy with values such as political pluralism, a value typically associated with liberal conceptions of democracy.

In my exploration of the cultural phenomenon associated with the Bolivarian Revolution, I illustrated how the manner in which Chávez utilized the cultural and ideological symbol that is Bolívar effectually constituted a gap between the theory—what the national hero Bolívar represents—and practical history—Bolívar, the human being. By analyzing Venezuelan cultural norms and how they are represented in films and documentaries that are flattering portraits of Bolívar and Chávez, I demonstrated how Chávez *could* successfully utilize the hero as a political tool through the lens of the cultural theory of representation. Similarly, through an analysis of cinematic works that are less favorable towards the *Libertador* and the ex-president, in

combination with a discussion of Chávez's actions to capitalize on Bolívar's image, it was made clear that the relationship between Bolívar and Chávez constitutes the resymbolization of the former by the latter. Through institutions such as his Villa del Cine, Chávez created government sponsored propaganda, building upon the existing romanticized conception of Bolívar and reshaping his image to fit the parameters and aims of the Bolivarian Revolution. This utilization of Bolívar poses some grave consequences for democratic governance in Venezuela. Not only does the mythification of Chávez by the Venezuelan people as "the true son of Simón Bolívar" constitute the fanatic support of the ex-president, but also demands that dissidents be silenced, as "it is important for *the conservation of the [Bolivarian] myth* that assassins and traitors *do not form a part of the Venezuelan public*[53]" (Torres 2009, emphasis added). Chávez took very seriously his connection to Bolívar, apparently willing to implement any means to realize the Bolivarian dream. In a personal diary entry dated October of 1977, Chávez appealed directly to Bolívar: "Come. Return. Here. It is possible….This war is going to take years…I have to do it. Even if it costs me my life. It doesn't matter. This is what I was born to do" (Carroll 2013).

As Rory Carroll so pointedly articulates in his work *Comandante: Hugo Chávez's Venezuela,* "if this was democracy, and in many ways it was, Venezuela posed an uncomfortable question: When is democracy not enough?" (Carroll 2013). In the context of my senior comprehensive project, this singular questions points to several avenues for future research. Any one of the aspects I examined—political, statistical, or cultural—could become the center of a more prolonged and profound research project. There are three subjects in particular that I would be interested to further explore. First, I believe my Chapter One: The Nature of Venezuelan

[53] Originally, "Es importante para la conservación del mito que los asesinos y traidores no formen parte pueblo venezolano."

Democracy Under Chávez would be significantly complimented by a discussion on the quality of democracy. If, as I have concluded, the government of Venezuela under Chávez did indeed constitute democracy, what was the quality of this democracy, particularly given detriments its delegative and populist aspects may have had? Second, I would be interested to see two new types of opinion surveys conducted. The first—mapping shifts in conceptions of democracy—would be able to confirm or deny my "hunch" that conceptions of democracy under Chávez have shifted more towards delegative. The second—measuring the intersection of citizen material well-being and support for Chávez—would augment extensive anecdotal evidence that establishes the poor as the predominant demographic supporting the former president. Third, investigation into the breach between the real Bolívar and Chávez's utilization of the hero's national image would be deepened by comparing the manner in which Chávez utilized Bolívar's quotations into his public speeches with an examination of those same quotes in their original context in the primary source document.

While these proposed investigations would positively augment my research, I believe the work I have presented here is sufficient to characterize the nature of Venezuelan Democracy under Chávez and assert what motivated the people of Venezuela to so continuously and strongly support him during his presidency. Furthermore, my work has enabled me to answer an additional question, which I had not anticipated when embarking upon this research. The question, while simple on its face, was, as I found, incredibly complex: Why was Chávez able to keep winning? The issues of conceptions of democracy, survival needs of those in poverty, and cultural sanctification of the Bolivarian mission are all crucial pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that is Chávez's Venezuela. But the primary factor is that Chávez, while not a great manager or expert

in any particular academic or economic field, was a political mastermind, sustaining a permanent campaign over the course of his nearly fourteen year rule.

Between 1999 and 2012, Chávez called for sixteen elections that decidedly "had little to do with the usual meaning of elections in traditional representative democracies" (López Maya 2013). In the case of the numerous referenda votes presided over by the former president, "the operating logic was always that of voting for or against Chávez. In this way, the leader was continuously re-legitimized" (López Maya 2013). In other words, these frequent referenda votes constituted indirect popularity tests, providing opportunities for Chávez to demonstrate his immense popular support and re-legitimize his governing practices to domestic and international observers alike. These frequent elections also served to continually diminish political plurality, a seemingly intentional tactic utilized by Chávez, whose rhetoric "continuously fanned the flames of polarization that have given him repeated victories at the ballot box" (López Maya 2013). As such, "opposition leaders have come to understand that elections play a dual role in Venezuela: they legitimize the government's authoritarianism…and create incentives for the ruling coalition to coordinate their efforts to maximize their chances of wining legislative seats and executive office" (Álvarez 2013).

In the name of continuous re-legitimization and demonstrations of public support, Chávez prioritized politics over sustainable policies, keeping arcane industries surviving on economic life support, expanding the declining *Misiones* programs before presidential elections, and turning a blind eye to exorbitant crime and prison overpopulation, all in the name of keeping up his ratings and amassing votes. Nearing the 2012 election, for example, Chávez ramped up public support by once again underscoring his connection to Bolívar, declaring the launch of a

$140 million mausoleum project dedicated to the *Libertador;* raising pay for state workers; fixing prices on fifteen thousand goods to tamp down inflation; and creating new *Misiones*, such as *Mi Casa Bien Equipada*, in which he distributed dishwashers, stoves, even flat-screen televisions (Carroll 2013). With eyes trained forward to the next election, he sought only to take actions that would have immediate impact, gather support, and most importantly, garner votes. All other actions slid to the bottom of the list, and the farther outside Caracas one was, the less attention that district got. Things such as welfare subsidies of cities that had "too few voters to threaten the government" were the first on the chopping block when it came time to make "tough economic choices" (Carroll 2013). As again pointedly articulated by Carroll,

> Chávez built no gulags or torture chambers and was doubtless sincere in wanting an enlightened penal system. The officials he appointed were largely well-meaning. Yet barbarity resulted. *The banal truth was he cared, but not enough. His focus was always the next election, and there were no votes in rehabilitating jails, so it slipped down the agenda.* (Carroll 2013, emphasis added)

There existed a cyclical relationship between Chávez's popularity and the elections he called: the latter continued to provide him popularity and legitimacy, so he continued to bring them into existence. Thus, the mechanism that made his government democratic is the same one that allowed him to continuously increase the frequency and intensity of his authoritarian governing tendencies: elections.

Though I am tentative to make predictions as to the future under Venezuela given the tumultuous change of leadership following Chávez's death, I posit that we will likely see a continued deepening of the *chavista* brand of government as a substantive, delegative, populist democracy with socialist policies and governing practices that tend towards the autocratic. Some

contend that it is this nature that constitutes the primary obstacle to continued democratic governance in Venezuela:

> President Chávez shaped politics as a revolutionary process, placing public policies, accountability, efficiency, and general governance in a secondary position. As a result, the main objectives of the government were to accumulate power, consolidate the institutional protection for the revolution, and maintain Chávez's position. In the opposition field, national policies were subordinated to an anti-Chávez strategy. The opposition's primary goal was to defeat Chávez. (Álvarez 2013)

The question that leaps to the forefront, then, is how the *chavista* government and the Bolivarian Revolution will fare without its charismatic political mastermind, Hugo Chávez.

"Like wounded beasts," touts Carroll, "revolutions in decline often lapse into violence, so it was merciful that Venezuela's settled for absurdity." True to this characterization, ministerial positions, for example, have continued to increase in size and triviality, with the Maduro government continuing to attempt to influence every aspect of Venezuelan life, to include the creation of the "Ministry of Supreme Social Happiness" in 2013. Chávez sustained his Bolivarian Revolution due largely to his own personal mythology and his abilities as a charismatic leader. It will likely die out under Maduro, who does not have the same mysticism, despite having the *Comandante*'s blessing. Reality of the country's crumbling infrastructure, lopsided economic policies, and increasingly authoritarian government begins to hit Venezuelans with force when the "true son of Simón Bolívar" has passed—once again, without the realization of Bolívar's dream—and is no longer at the forefront of the country or the Revolution. In the words of famous Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez, after meeting with Chávez, he felt he had been meeting with two different men: "One to whom the caprices of fate had given an

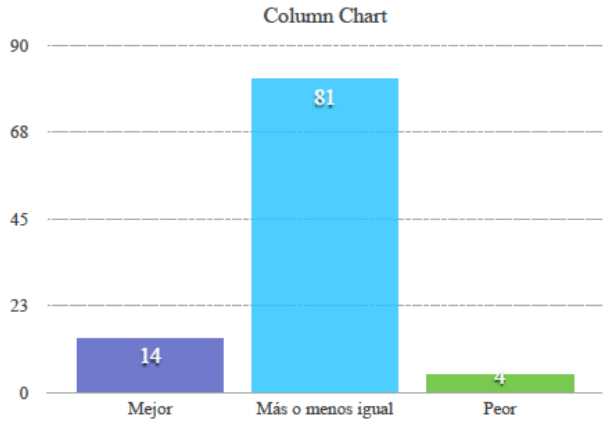
opportunity to save his country. The other, an illusionist, who could pass into the history books as just another despot" (Carroll 2013).

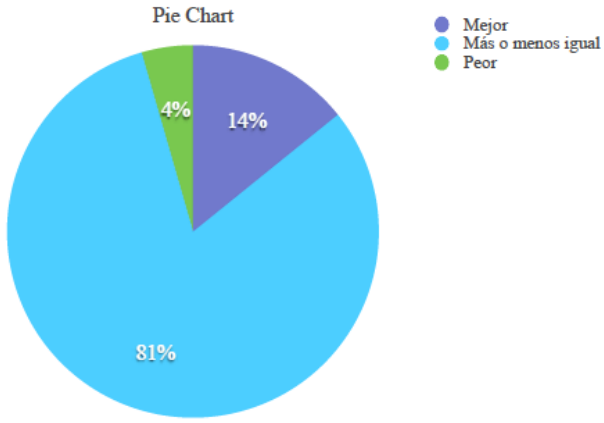
APPENDIX A: LAPOP DATA

Data Set 2.1

LAPOP 1995
Q. c4: Económica
Pensando en términos económicos, ¿cómo compara la situación de su familia con otras?

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Mejor	14
Más o menos igual	81
Peor	4



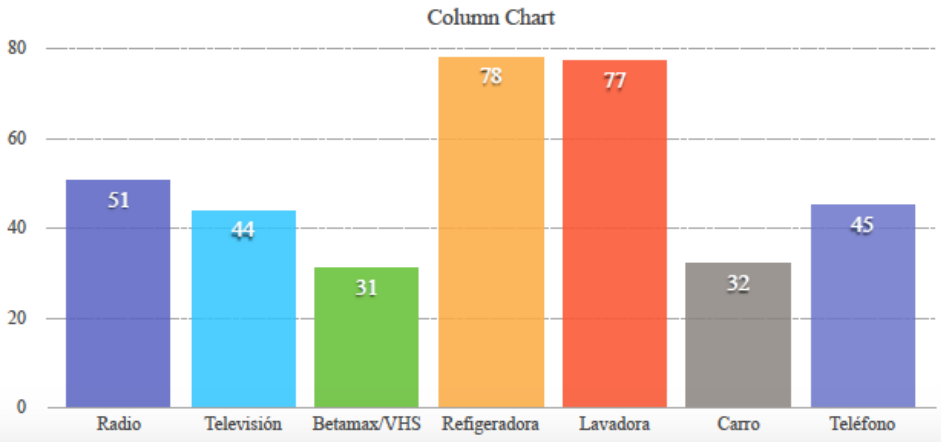


Data Set 2.2

LAPOP 1995
Qs. 61-67: Socio-Demográfica
En esta vivienda tienen…
¿Radio?
¿Televisión
¿Betamax/VHS?
¿Refrigeradora?
¿Lavadora?
¿Carro?
¿Teléfono?

Porcentaje de hogares que tienen "uno"

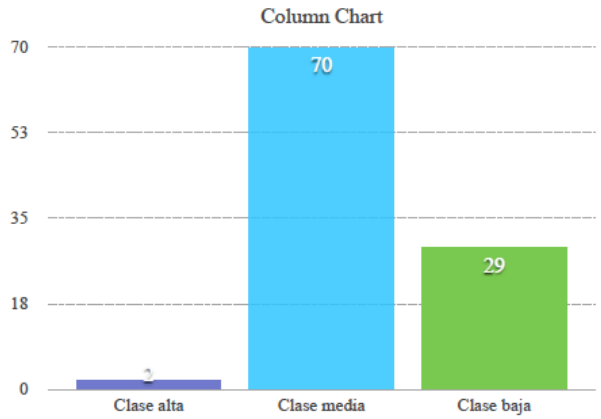
COMMODITY	PORCENTAJE
Radio	51
Televisión	44
Betamax/VHS	31
Refigeradora	78
Lavadora	77
Carro	32
Teléfono	45

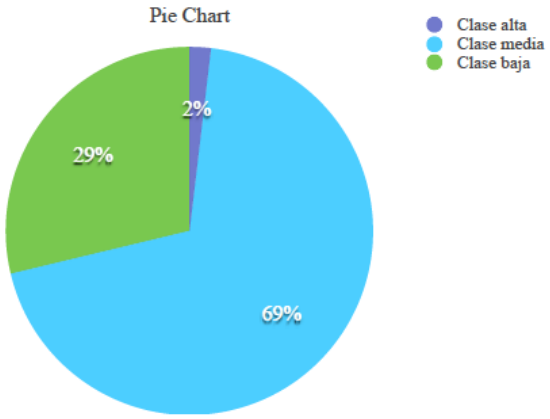


Data Set 2.3

LAPOP 1995
Q. d1: Tolerancia
Hoy en día en Venezuela se hable mucho de clases sociales. ¿A qué clase social identifica Usted?

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Clase alta	2
Clase media	70
Clase baja	29



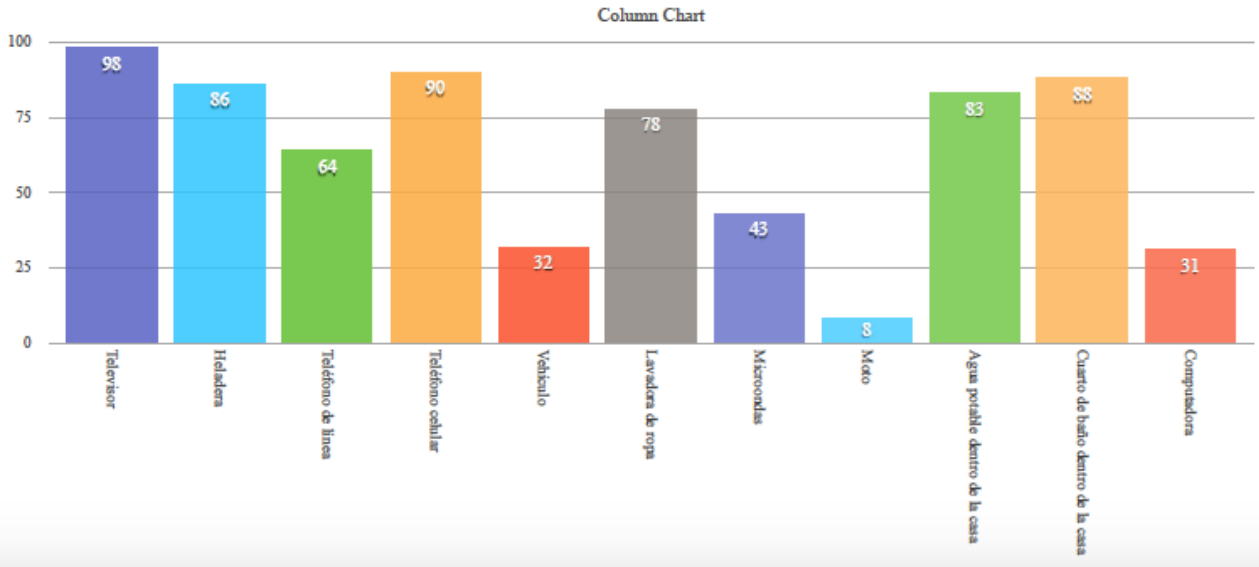


Data Set 2.4

LAPOP 2007
Qs. r1-8, 12, 14, 15: Socio-Demográfica
En su casa tienen…
¿Televisor?
¿Heladera?
¿Teléfono de línea?
¿Teléfono celular?
¿Vehículo?
¿Lavadora de ropa?
¿Microondas?
¿Moto?
¿Agua potable dentro de la casa?
¿Cuarto de baño dentro de la casa?
¿Computadora?

Porcentaje de hogares que respuesta "sí"

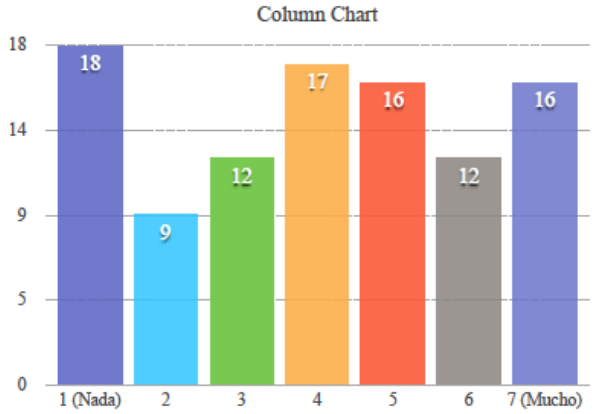
COMMODITY	PORCENTAJE
Televisor	98
Heladera	86
Teléfono de línea	64
Teléfono celular	90
Vehículo	32
Lavadora de ropa	78
Microondas	43
Moto	8
Agua potable dentro de la casa	83
Cuarto de baño dentro de la casa	88
Computadora	31

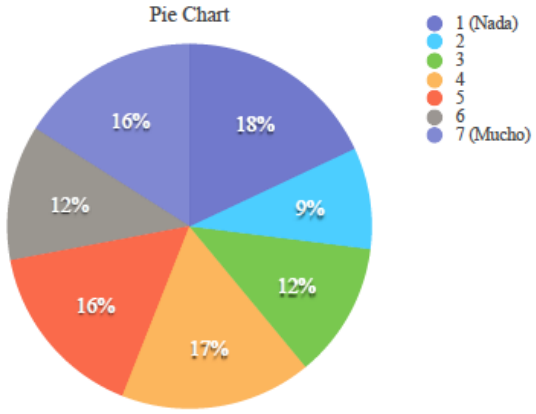


Data Set 2.5

LAPOP 2007
Q. b13: Apoyo por sistema político
¿Hasta qué punto tiene confianza usted en el Asamblea Nacional? (Entre 1-7)

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
1 (Nada)	18
2	9
3	12
4	17
5	16
6	12
7 (Mucho)	16

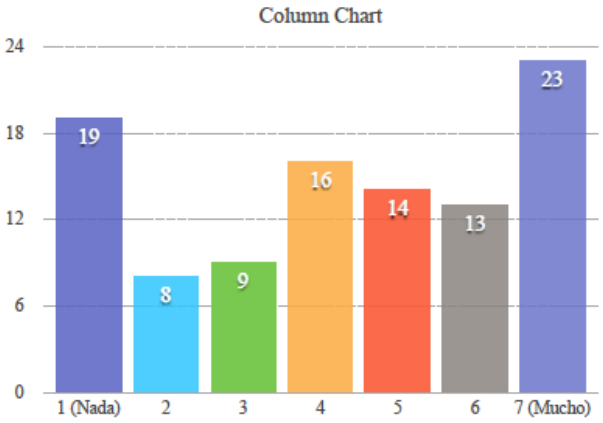


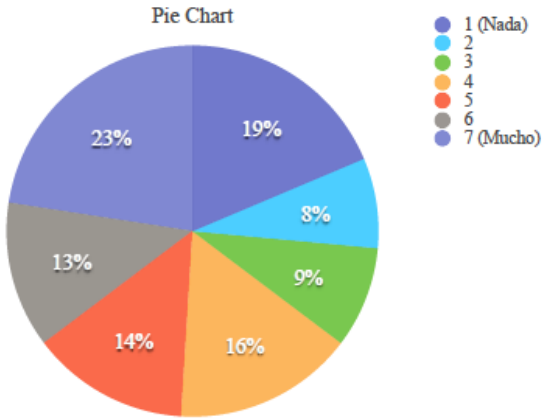


Data Set 2.6

LAPOP 2007
Q. b14: Apoyo por sistema político
¿Hasta qué punto tiene confianza usted en el Gobierno? (Entre 1-7)

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
1 (Nada)	19
2	8
3	9
4	16
5	14
6	13
7 (Mucho)	23

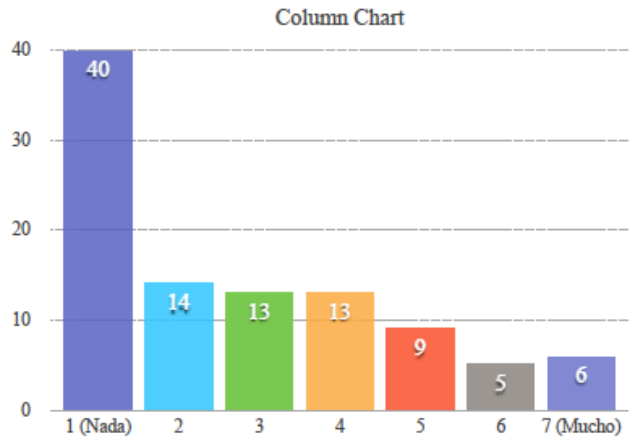


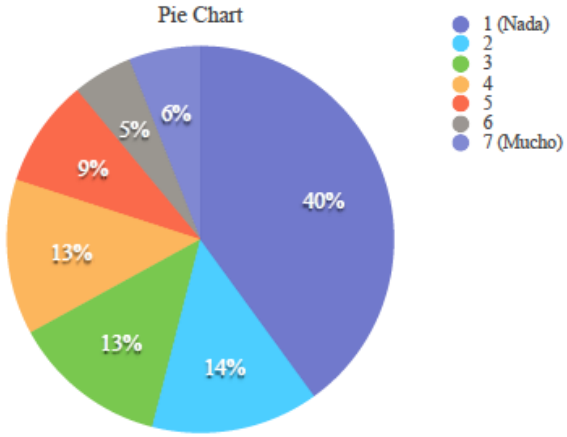


Data Set 2.7

LAPOP 2007
Q. b18: Apoyo por sistema político
¿Hasta qué punto tiene confianza usted en la Policía? (Entre 1-7)

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
1 (Nada)	40
2	14
3	13
4	13
5	9
6	5
7 (Mucho)	6

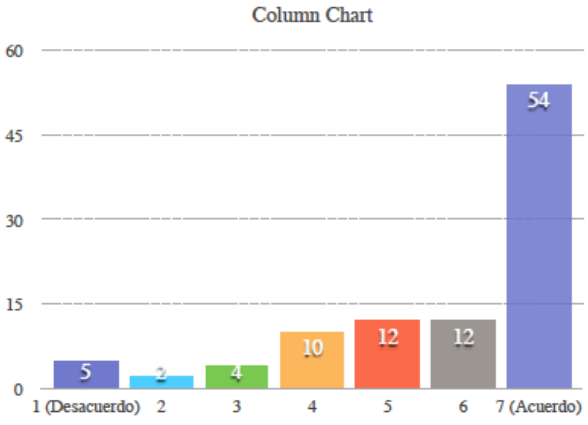


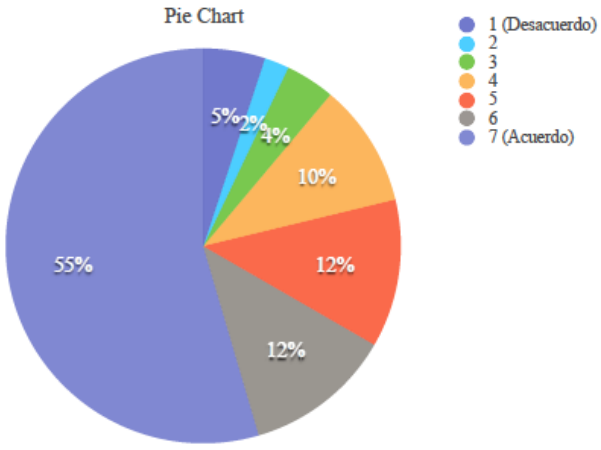


Data Set 2.8

LAPOP 2007
Q. ing4: Democrática
Puede que la democracia tenga problemas pero es mejor que cualquier forma de gobierno. (Entre 1-7)

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
1 (Desacuerdo)	5
2	2
3	4
4	10
5	12
6	12
7 (Acuerdo)	54

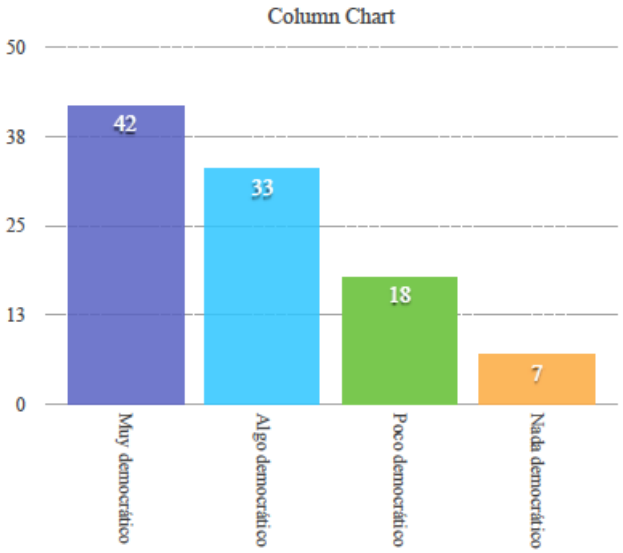


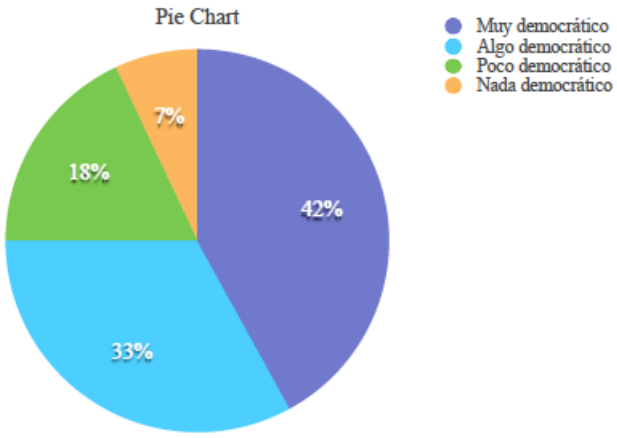


Data Set 2.9

LAPOP 2007
Q. pn5: Democrática
En su opinión, ¿es Venezuela un país muy democrático, algo democrático, poco democrático, o nada democrático?

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Muy democrático	42
Algo democrático	33
Poco democrático	18
Nada democrático	7

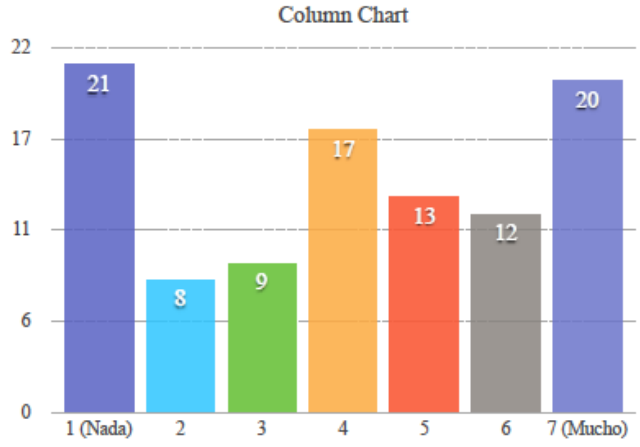


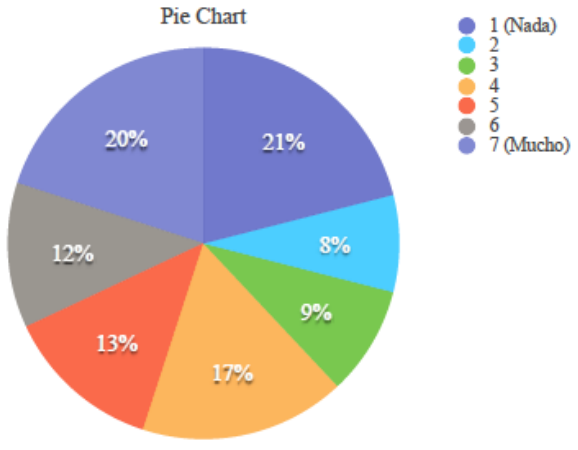


Data Set 2.10

LAPOP 2008
Q. b21a: Apoyo por sistema político
¿Hasta qué punto tiene confianza usted en el Presidente? (Entre 1-7)

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
1 (Nada)	21
2	8
3	9
4	17
5	13
6	12
7 (Mucho)	20



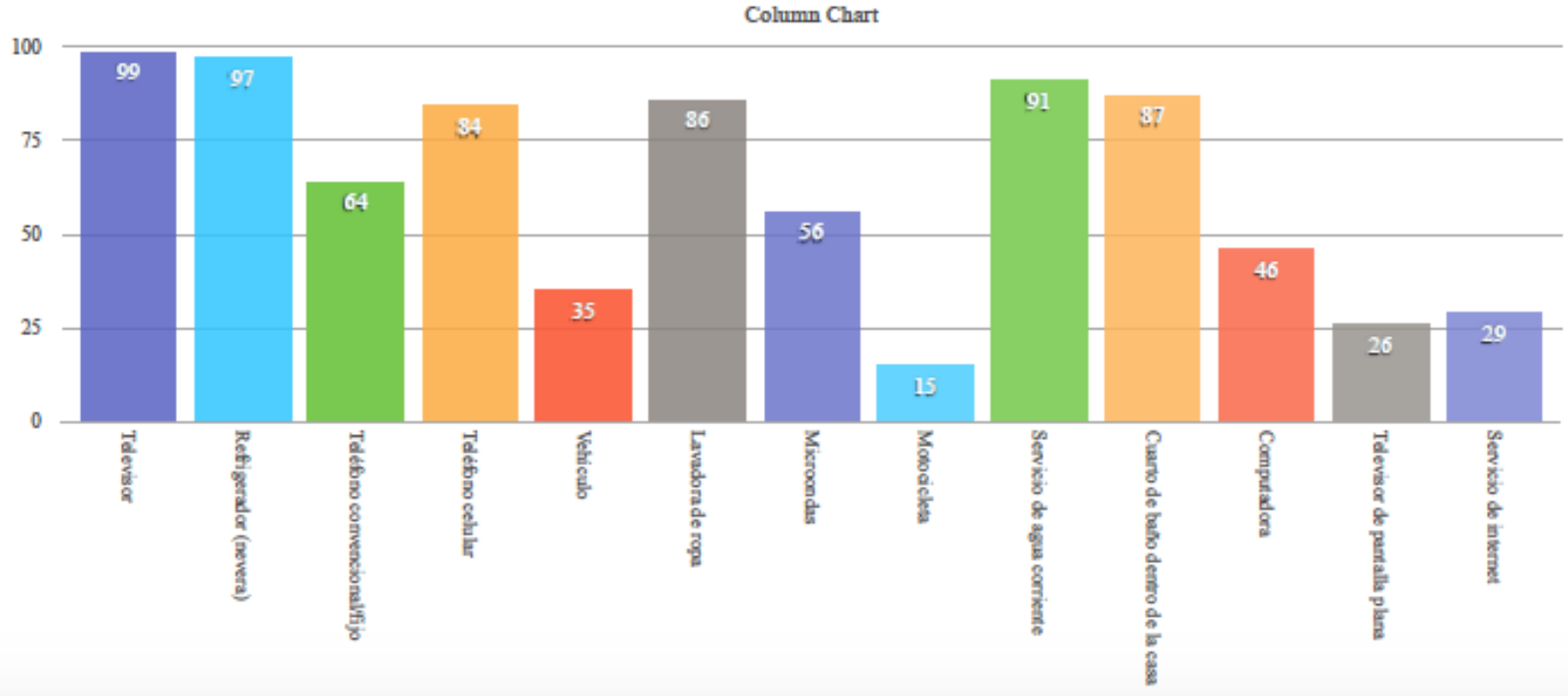


Data Set 2.11

LAPOP 2010
Qs. r1-8, 12, 14-16, 18: Socio-Demográfica
En su casa tienen…
¿Televisor?
¿Refrigerador (nevera)?
¿Teléfono convencional/fijo?
¿Teléfono celular?
¿Vehículo?
¿Lavadora de ropa?
¿Microondas?
¿Motocicleta?
¿Servicio de agua corriente?
¿Cuarto de baño dentro de la casa?
¿Computadora?
¿Televisor de pantalla plana?
¿Servicio de internet?

Porcentaje de hogares que respuesta "sí"

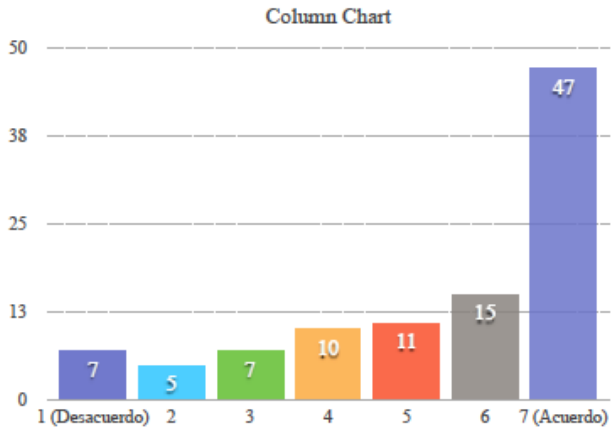
COMMODITY	PORCENTAJE
Televisor	99
Refrigerador (nevera)	97
Teléfono convencional/fijo	64
Teléfono celular	84
Vehículo	35
Lavadora de ropa	86
Microondas	56
Motocicleta	15
Servicio de agua corriente	91
Cuarto de baño dentro de la casa	87
Computadora	46
Televisor de pantalla plana	26
Servicio de internet	29

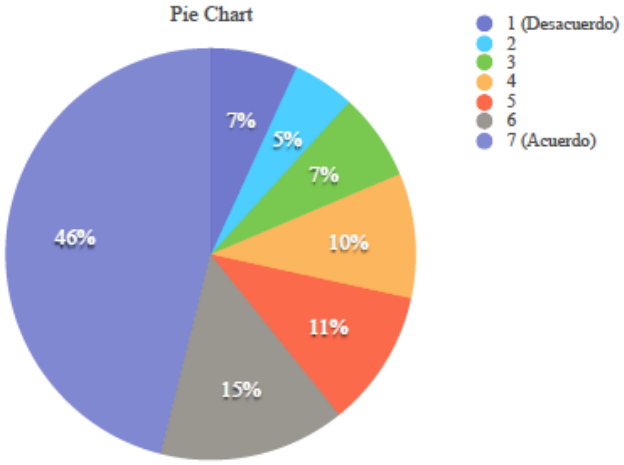


Data Set 2.12

LAPOP 2010
Q. ing4: Democrática
Puede que la democracia tenga problemas pero es mejor que cualquier forma de gobierno. (Entre 1-7)

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
1 (Desacuerdo)	7
2	5
3	7
4	10
5	11
6	15
7 (Acuerdo)	47

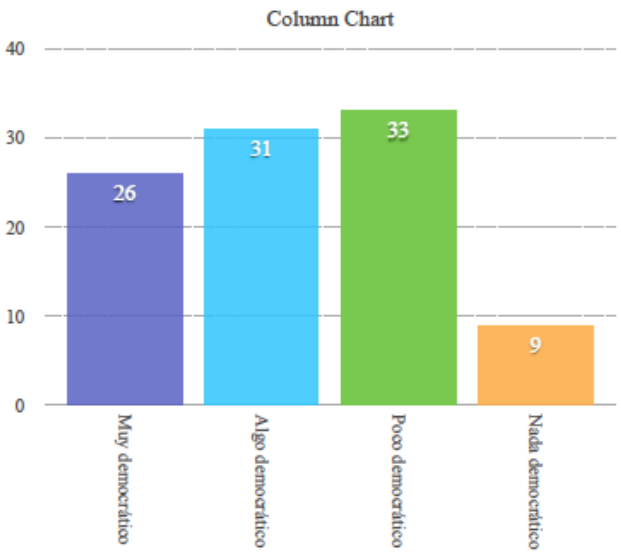


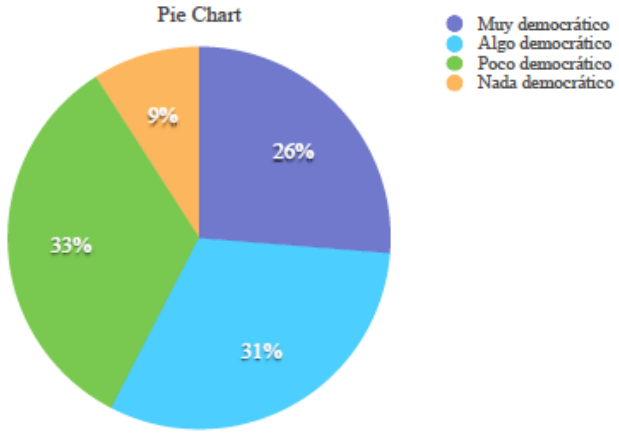


Data Set 2.13

LAPOP 2010
Q. pn5: Democrática
En su opinión, ¿es Venezuela un país muy democrático, algo democrático, poco democrático, o nada democrático?

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Muy democrático	26
Algo democrático	31
Poco democrático	33
Nada democrático	9

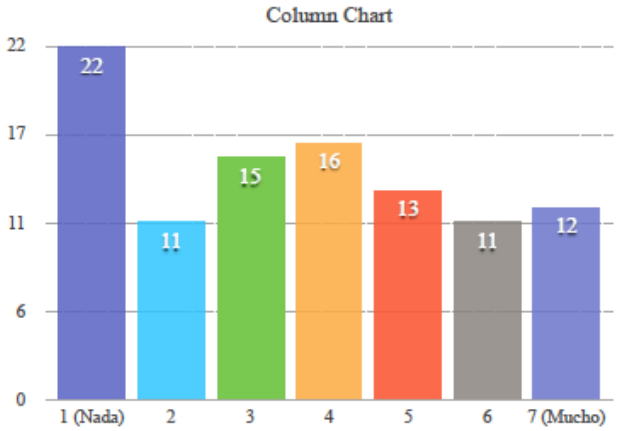


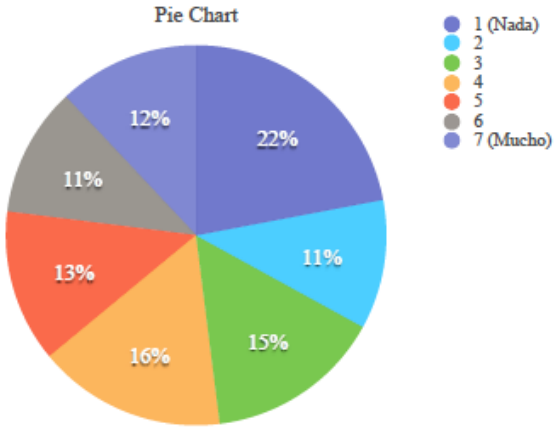


Data Set 2.14

LAPOP 2010
Q. b13: Apoyo por sistema político
¿Hasta qué punto tiene confianza usted en el Asamblea Nacional? (Entre 1-7)

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
1 (Nada)	22
2	11
3	15
4	16
5	13
6	11
7 (Mucho)	12

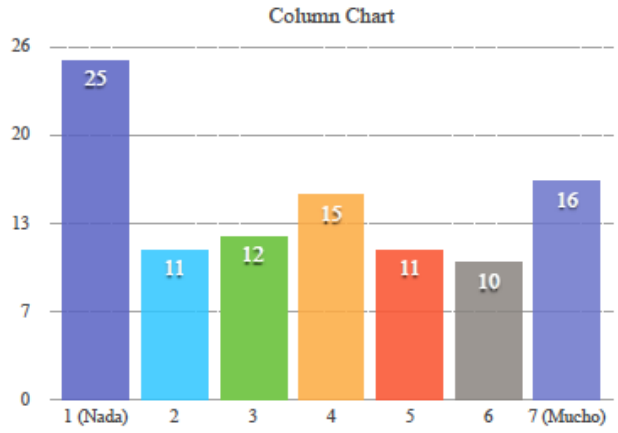


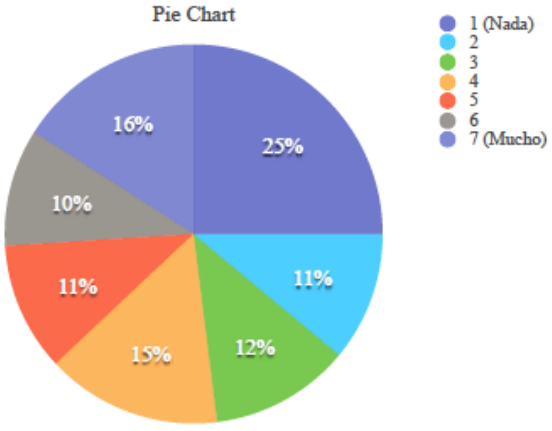


Data Set 2.15

LAPOP 2010
Q. b14: Apoyo por sistema político
Hasta qué punto tiene confianza usted en el Gobierno Nacional? (Entre 1-7)

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
1 (Nada)	25
2	11
3	12
4	15
5	11
6	10
7 (Mucho)	16

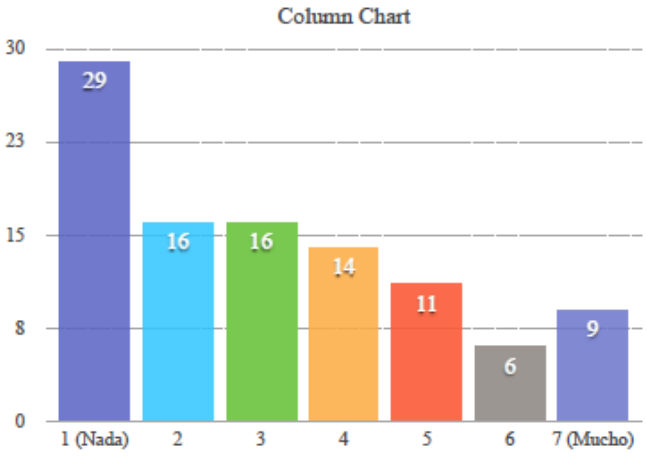


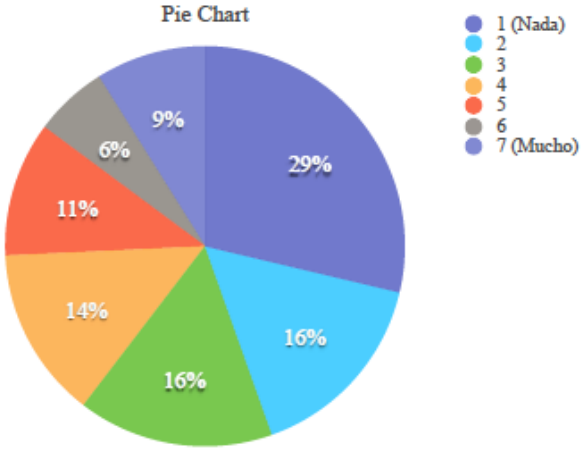


Data Set 2.16

LAPOP 2010
Q. b18: Apoyo por sistema político
¿Hasta qué punto tiene confianza usted en la Policía?
(Entre 1-7)

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
1 (Nada)	29
2	16
3	16
4	14
5	11
6	6
7 (Mucho)	9

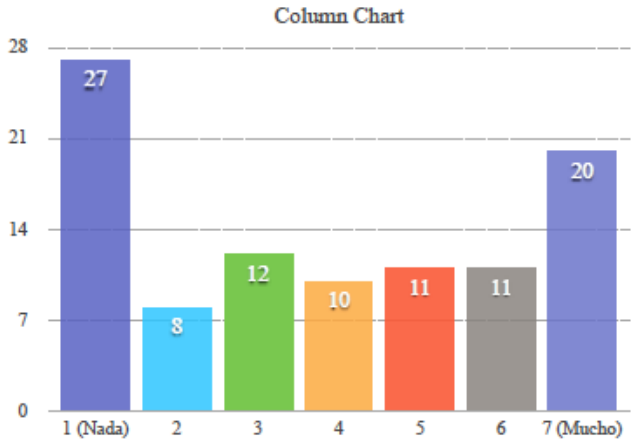


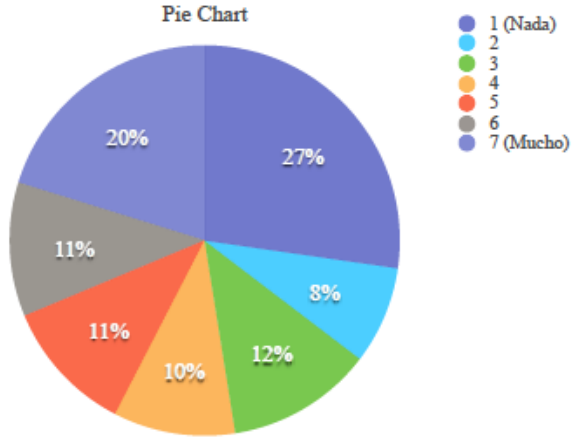


Data Set 2.17

LAPOP 2010
Q. b21a: Apoyo por sistema político
¿Hasta qué punto tiene confianza usted en el Presidente?
(Entre 1-7)

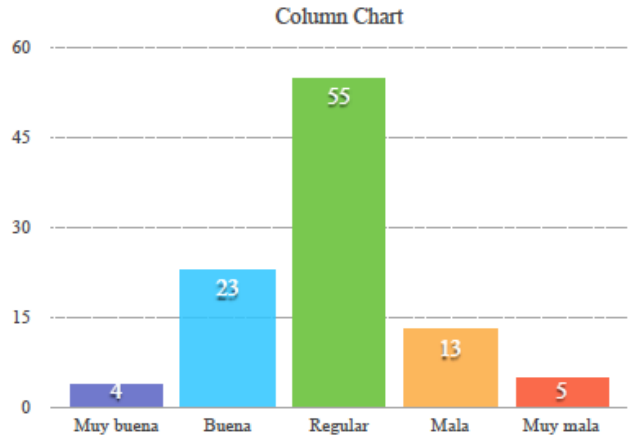
RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
1 (Nada)	27
2	8
3	12
4	10
5	11
6	11
7 (Mucho)	20





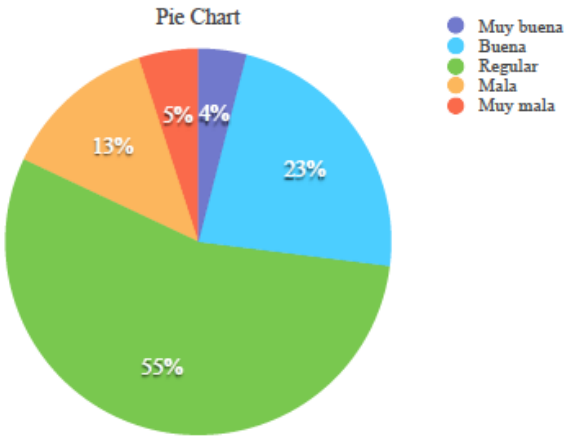
APPENDIX B: LATINOBARÓMETRO DATA

Latinobarómetro 1998
Q. sp4: Económica, Índice de sentimiento económico
Situación económica personal actual



Data Set 2.18

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Muy buena	4
Buena	23
Regular	55
Mala	13
Muy mala	5

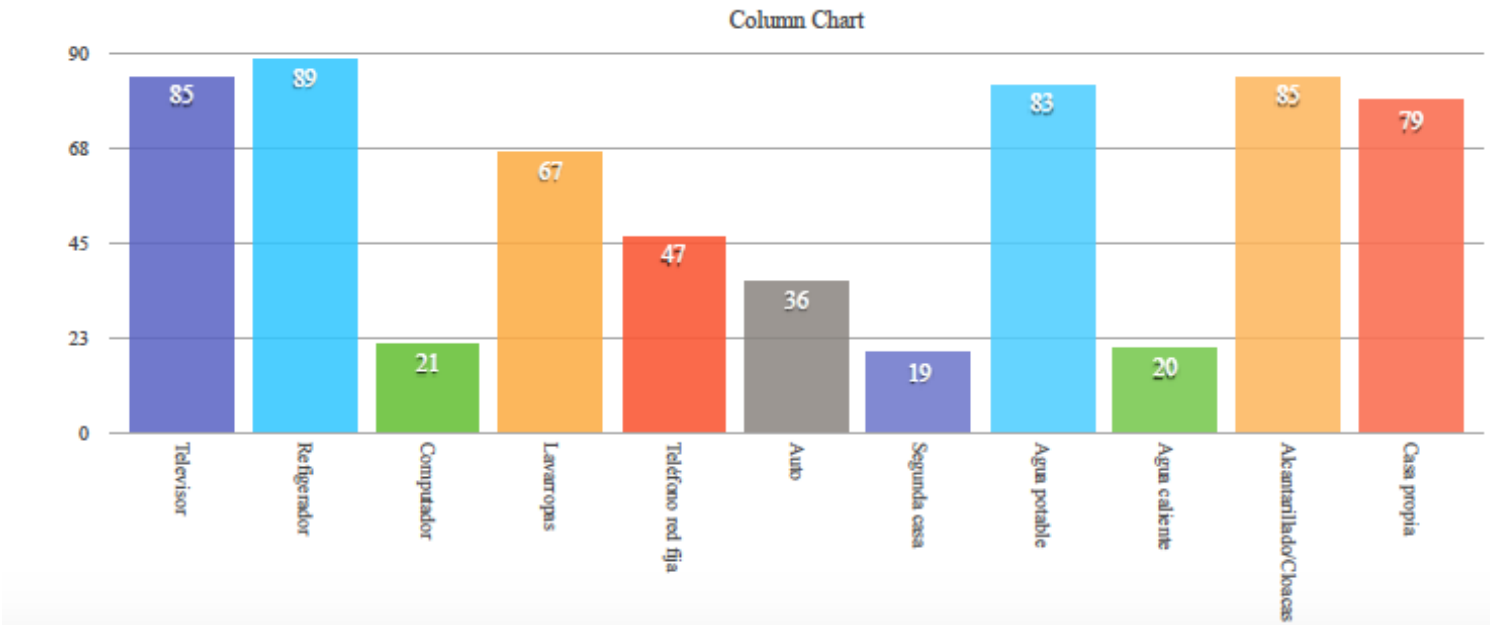


Data Set 2.19

Latinobarómetro 1998
Qs. s9a-h, s9k, s9l, s9m: Económica, Posesión de Bienes
En esta vivienda tienen…
¿Televisor?
¿Refrigerador?
¿Computador?
¿Lavarropas?
¿Teléfono red fija?
¿Auto?
¿Segunda casa?
¿Agua potable?
¿Agua caliente?
¿Alcantarillado/Cloacas?
¿Casa propia?

Porcentaje de hogares que tienen "uno"

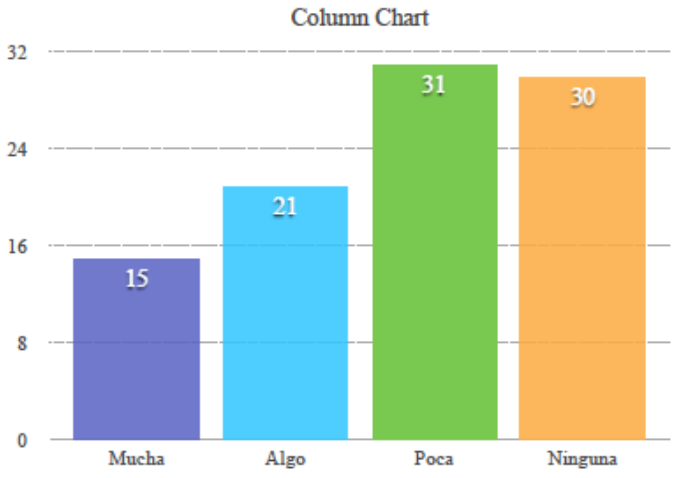
COMMODITY	PORCENTAJE
Televisor	85
Refigerador	89
Computador	21
Lavarropas	67
Teléfono red fija	47
Auto	36
Segunda casa	19
Agua potable	83
Agua caliente	20
Alcantarillado/Cloacas	85
Casa propia	79

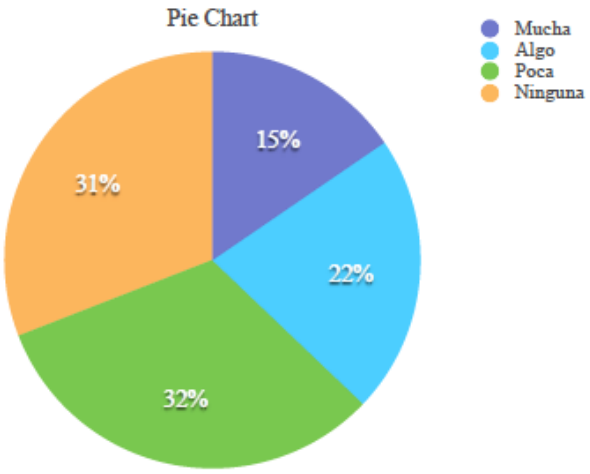


Data Set 2.20

Latinobarómetro1998
Q. sp38d: Democracia, Confianza en las personas
Confianza en el Presidente*
*NO refiere a Chávez

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Mucha	15
Algo	21
Poca	31
Ninguna	30

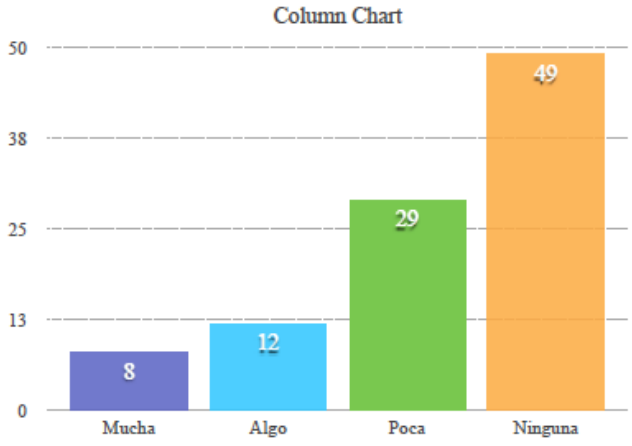


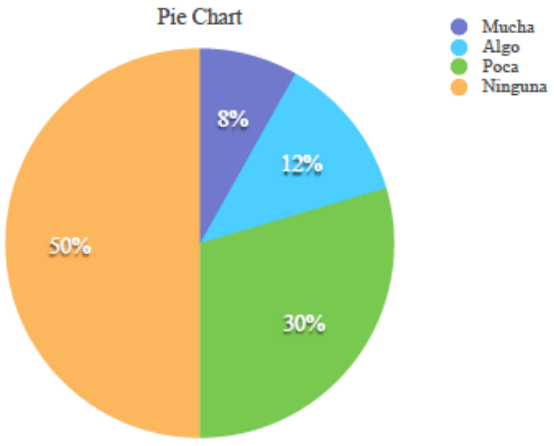


Data Set 2.21

Latinobarómetro 1998
Q. sp38f: Democracia, Confianza en las instituciones
Confianza en Congreso

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Mucha	8
Algo	12
Poca	29
Ninguna	49

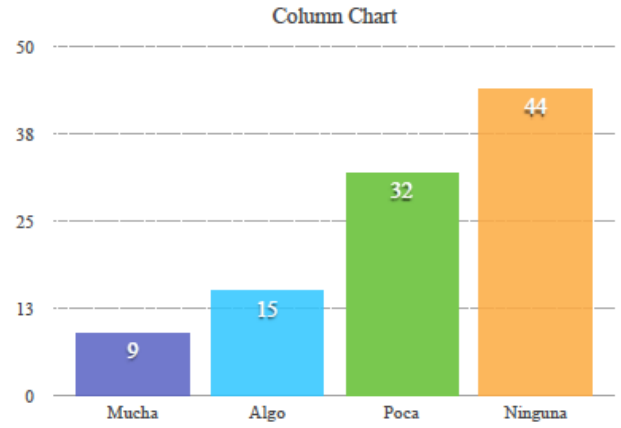


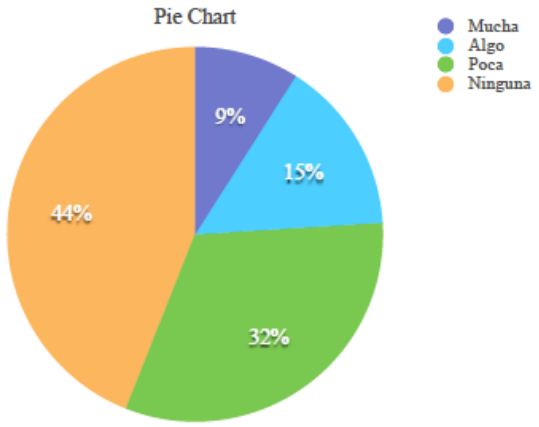


Data Set 2.22

Latinobarómetro 1998
Q. sp38e: Democracia, Confianza en las instituciones
Confianza en Policía

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Mucha	9
Algo	15
Poca	32
Ninguna	44

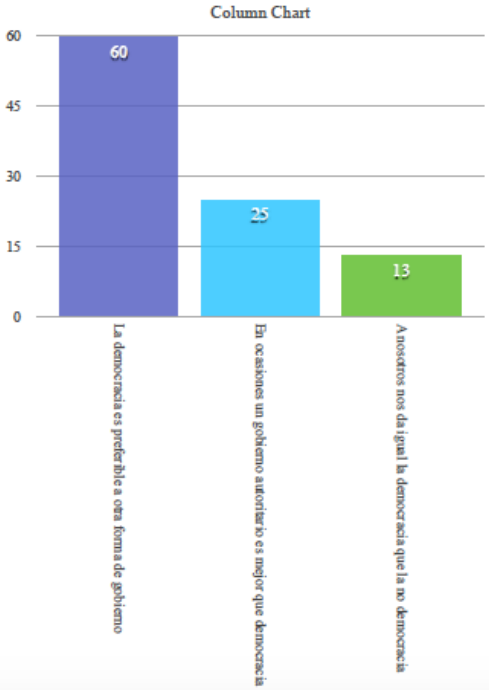


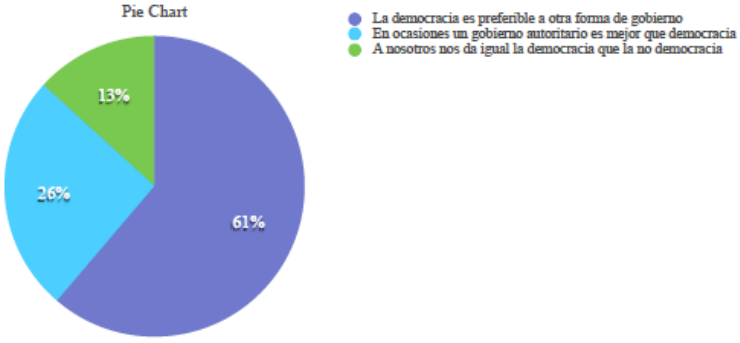


Data Set 2.23

Latinobarómetro 1998
Q. sp28: Democracia, Actitudes hacia la democracia en general
Apoyo a la democracia

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
La democracia es preferible a otra forma de gobierno	60
En ocasiones un gobierno autoritario es mejor que democracia	25
A nosotros nos da igual la democracia que la no democracia	13

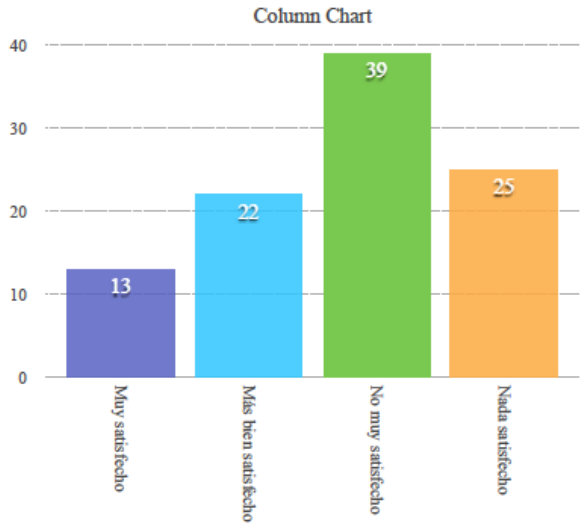


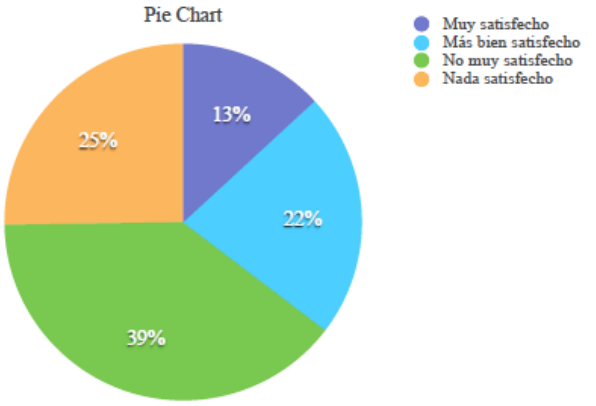


Data Set 2.24

Latinobarómetro 1998
Q. sp29: Democracia, Actitudes hacia la democracia en general
Satisfacción con la democracia

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Muy satisfecho	13
Más bien satisfecho	22
No muy satisfecho	39
Nada satisfecho	25

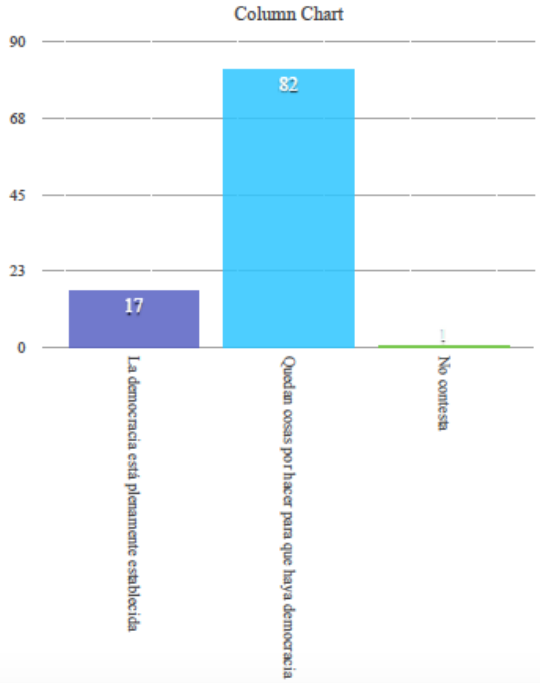


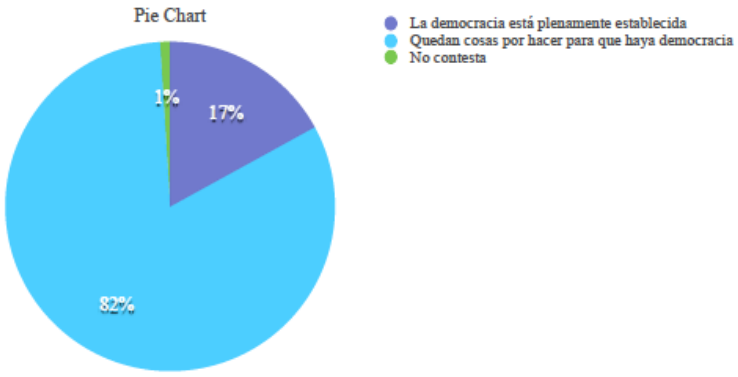


Data Set 2.25

Latinobarómetro 1998
Q. sp30: Democracia, Actitudes hacia la democracia en general
Quedan cosas por hacer para que haya democracia

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
La democracia está plenamente establecida	17
Quedan cosas por hacer para que haya democracia	82
No contesta	1

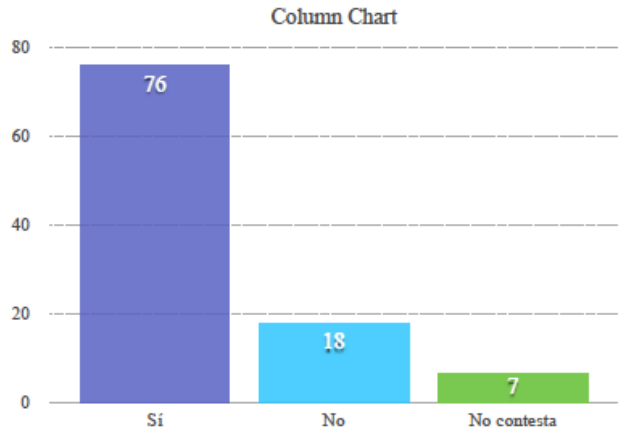


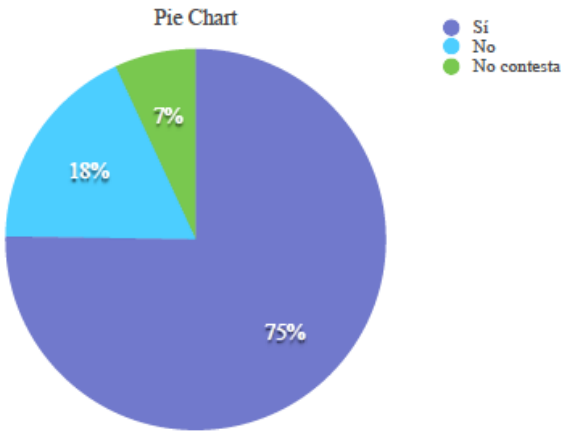


Data Set 2.26

Latinobarómetro 1998
Q. sp31: Democracia, Actitudes hacia la democracia en general
Defensa de la democracia

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Sí	76
No	18
No contesta	7

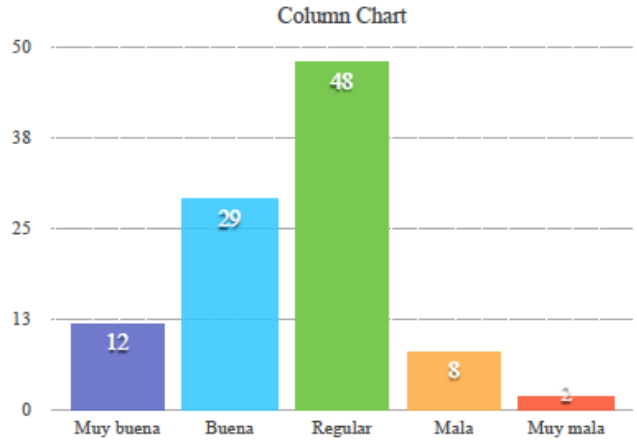


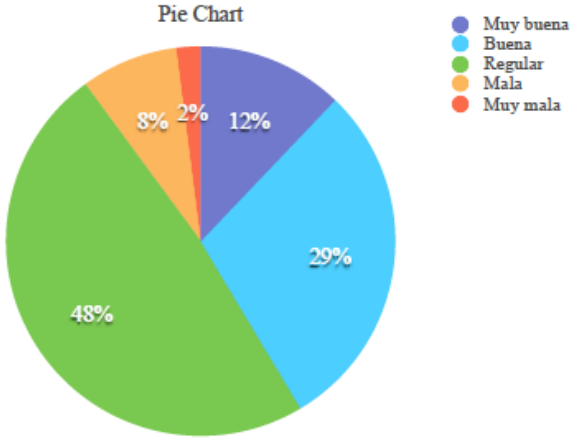


Data Set 2.27

Latinobarómetro 2006
Q. p5st: Económica, Índice de sentimiento económico
Situación económica personal actual

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Muy buena	12
Buena	29
Regular	48
Mala	8
Muy mala	2



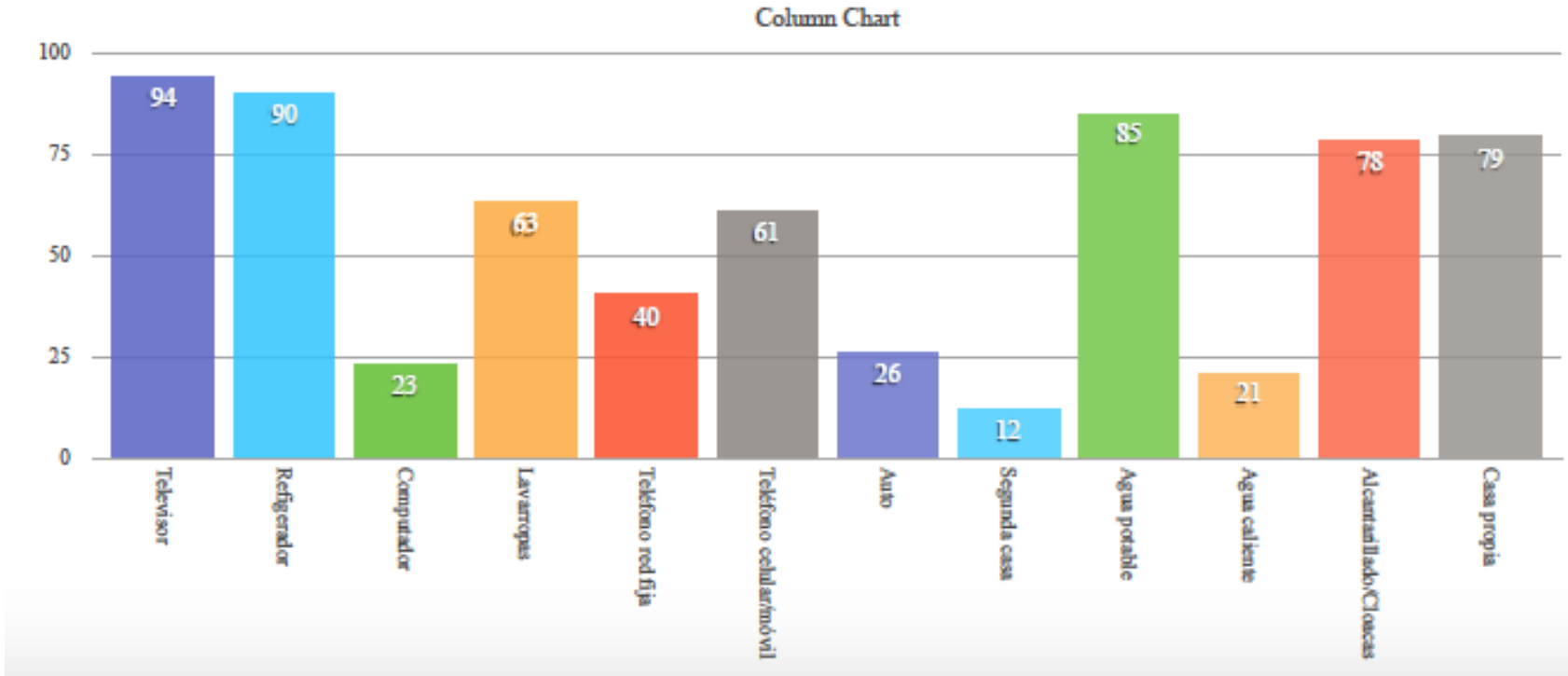


Data Set 2.28

Latinobarómetro 2006
Qs. s15a-l: Económica, Posesión de bienes
En esta vivienda tienen…
¿Televisor?
¿Refrigerador?
¿Computador?
¿Lavarropas?
¿Teléfono red fija?
¿Teléfono celular/móvil?
¿Auto?
¿Segunda casa?
¿Agua potable?
¿Agua caliente?
¿Alcantarillado/Cloacas?
¿Casa propia?

Porcentaje de hogares que tienen "uno"

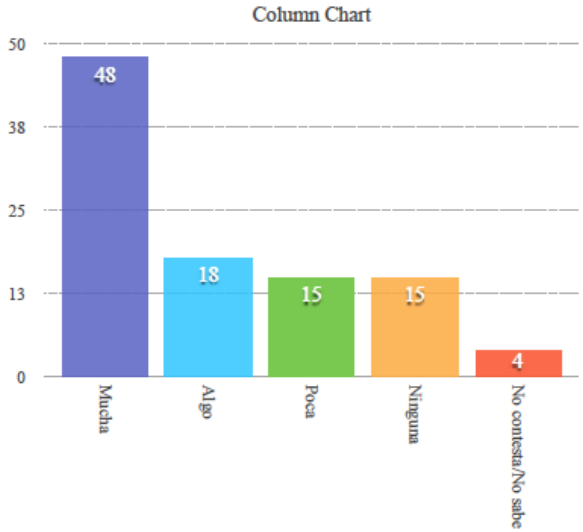
COMMODITY	PORCENTAJE
Televisor	94
Refigerador	90
Computador	23
Lavarropas	63
Teléfono red fija	40
Teléfono celular/móvil	61
Auto	26
Segunda casa	12
Agua potable	85
Agua caliente	21
Alcantarillado/Cloacas	78
Casa propia	79

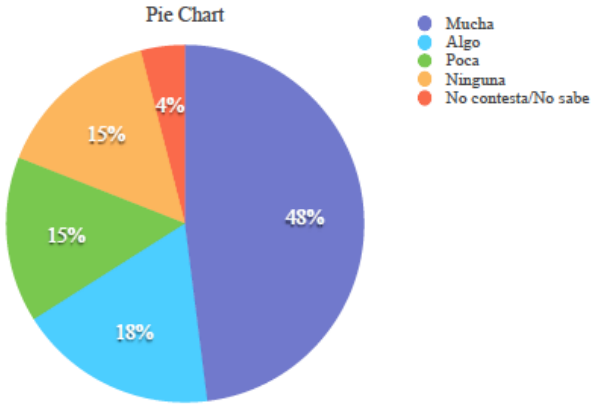


Data Set 2.29

Latinobarómetro 2006
Q. sp38d: Democracia, Confianza en las personas
Confianza en el Presidente

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Mucha	48
Algo	18
Poca	15
Ninguna	15
No contesta/No sabe	4

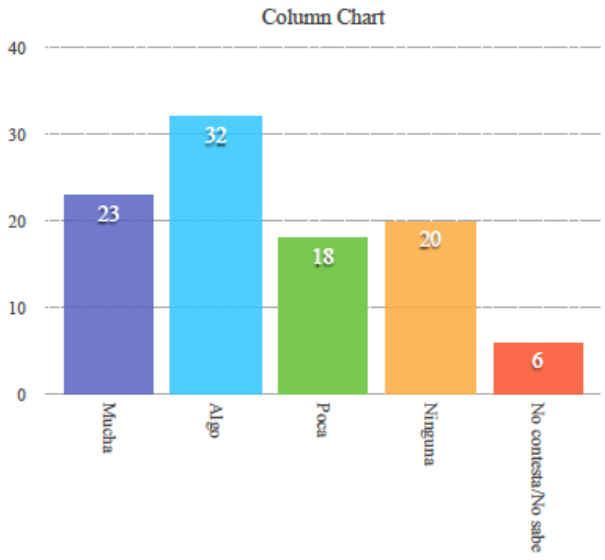


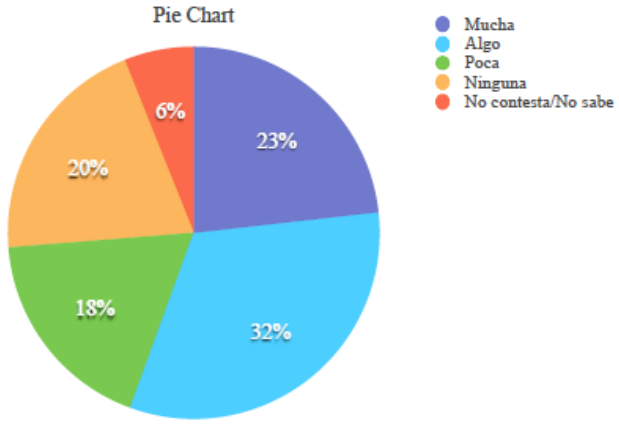


Data Set 2.30

Latinobarómetro 2006
Q. sp38f: Democracia, Confianza en las instituciones
Confianza en Congreso

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Mucha	23
Algo	32
Poca	18
Ninguna	20
No contesta/No sabe	6

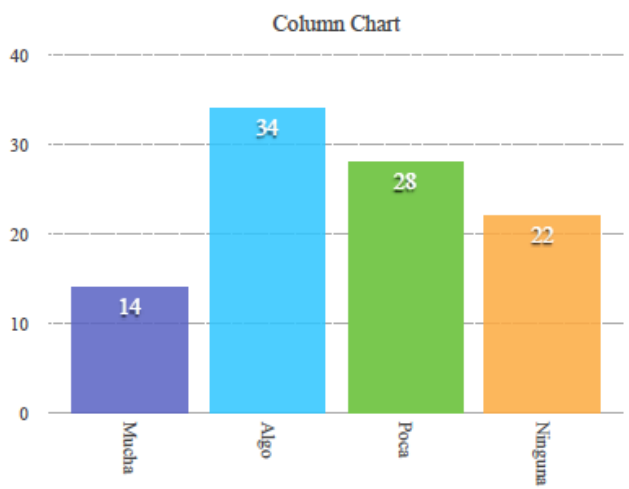


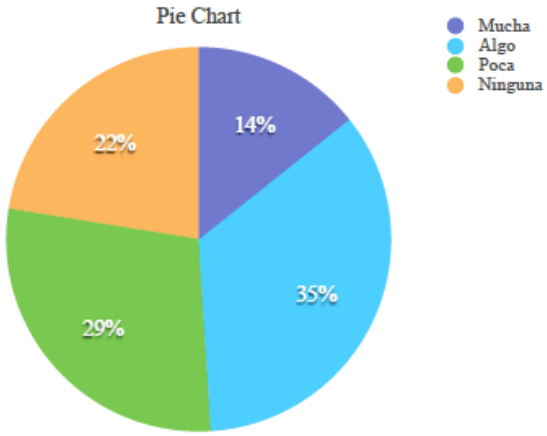


Data Set 2.31

Latinobarómetro 2006
Q. p24st.d: Democracia, Confianza en las instituciones
Confianza en Policía

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Mucha	14
Algo	34
Poca	28
Ninguna	22



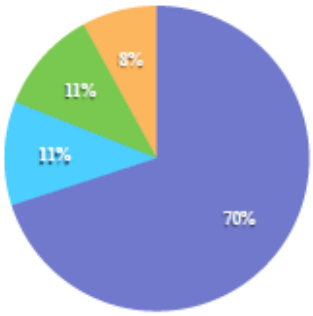


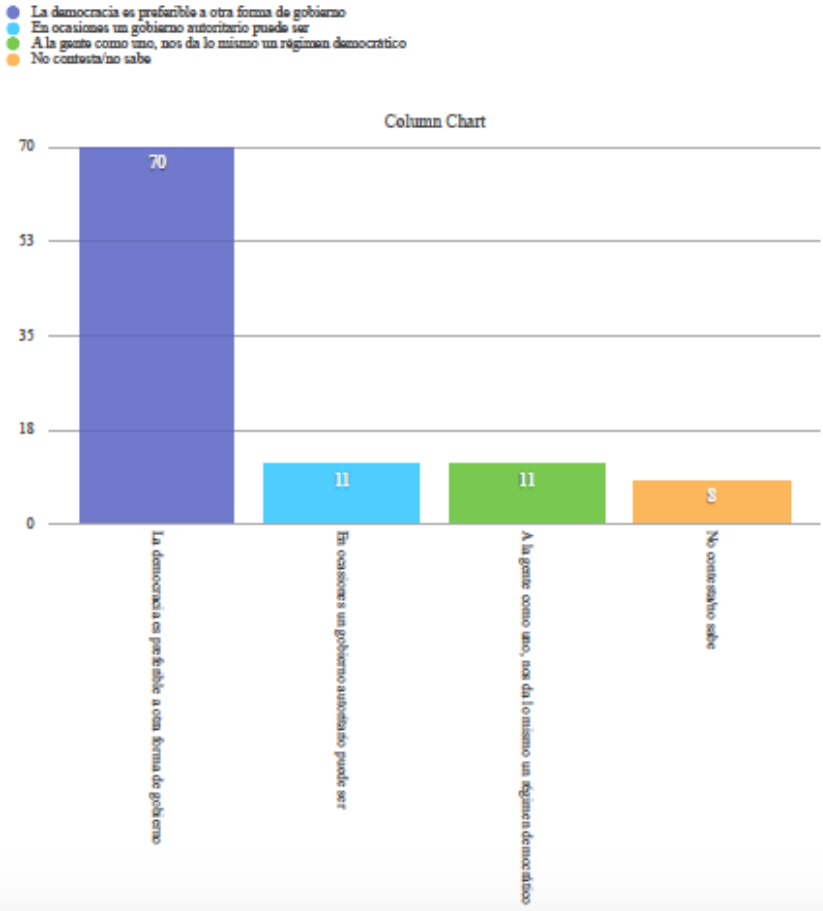
Data Set 2.32

Latinobarómetro 2006
Q. p17st: Democracia, Actitudes hacia la democracia en general
Apoyo a la democracia

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
La democracia es preferible a otra forma de gobierno	70
En ocasiones un gobierno autoritario puede ser	11
A la gente como uno, nos da lo mismo un régimen democrático	11
No contesta/no sabe	8

Pie Chart



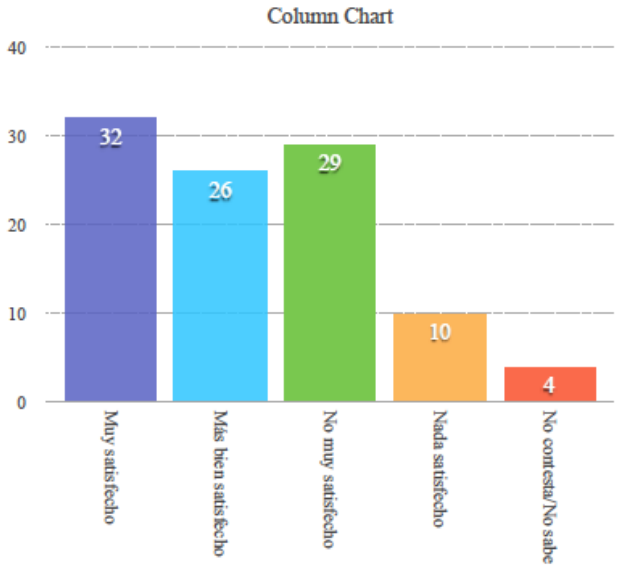


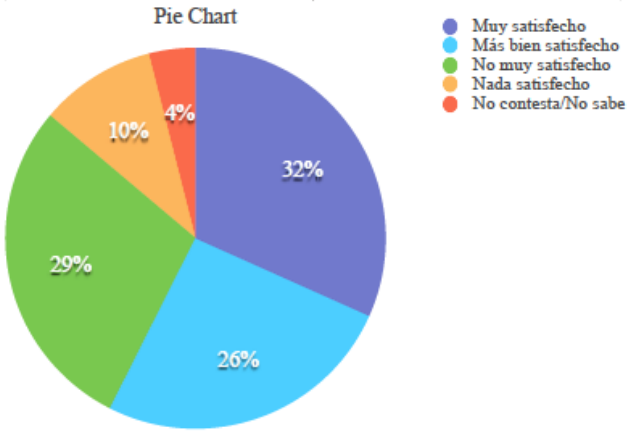
Column Chart

Data Set 2.33

Latinobarómetro 2006
Q. p21st: Democracia, Actitudes hacia la democracia en general
Satisfacción con la democracia

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Muy satisfecho	32
Más bien satisfecho	26
No muy satisfecho	29
Nada satisfecho	10
No contesta/No sabe	4

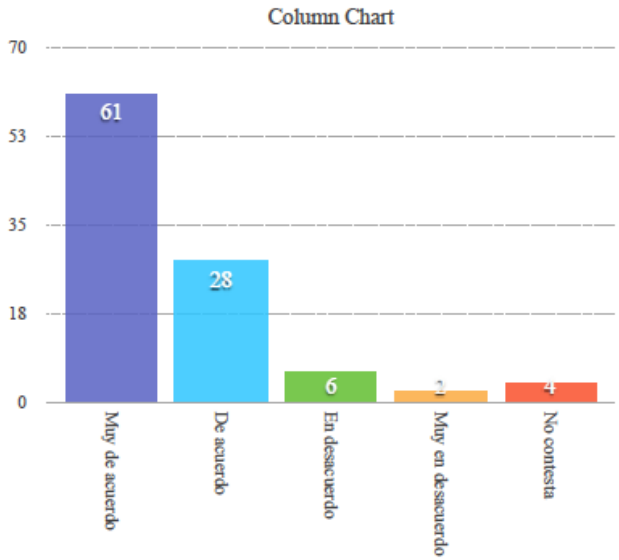


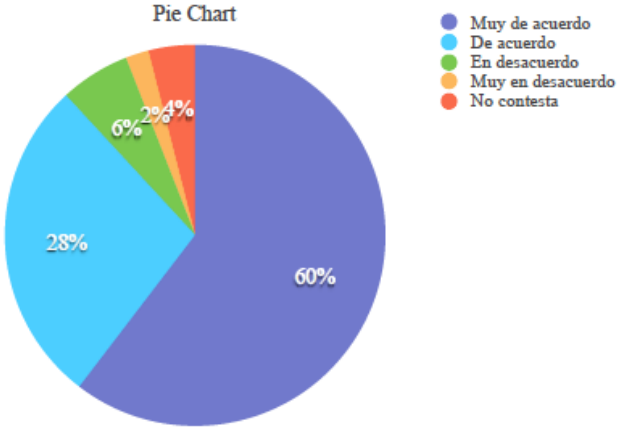


Data Set 2.34

Latinobarómetro 2006
Q. p22st.a: Democracia, Actitudes hacia la democracia en general
La frase de Churchill: Democracia puede tener problemas pero es el mejor sistema de gobierno

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Muy de acuerdo	61
De acuerdo	28
En desacuerdo	6
Muy en desacuerdo	2
No contesta	4

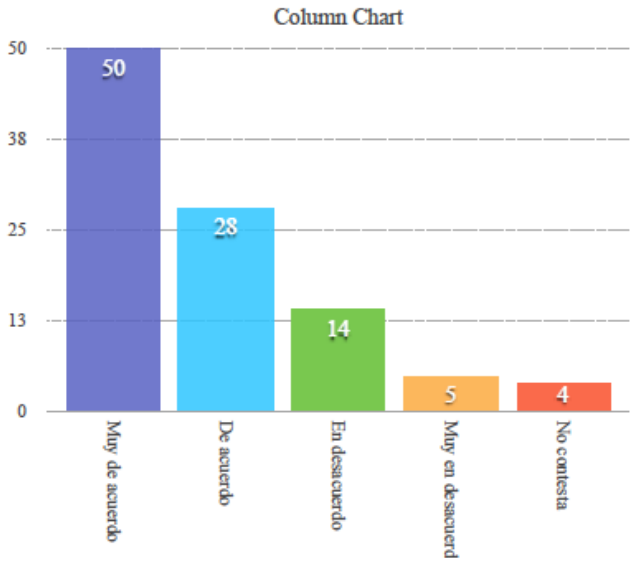


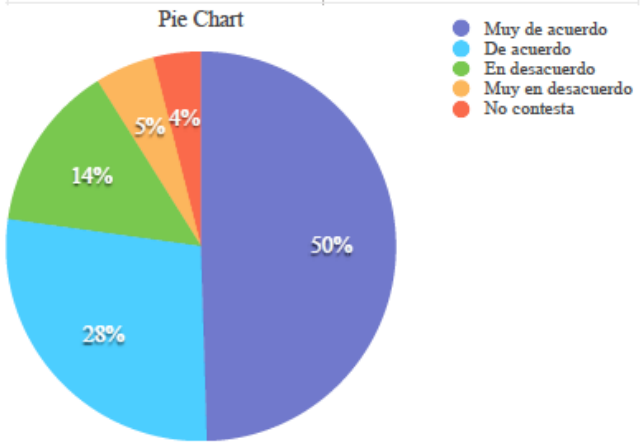


Data Set 2.35

Latinobarómetro 2006
Q. p19st: Democracia, Actitudes hacia la democracia en general
Confianza en la democracia como sistema de gobierno para que su país llegue a ser un país desarrollado

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Muy de acuerdo	50
De acuerdo	28
En desacuerdo	14
Muy en desacuerdo	5
No contesta	4

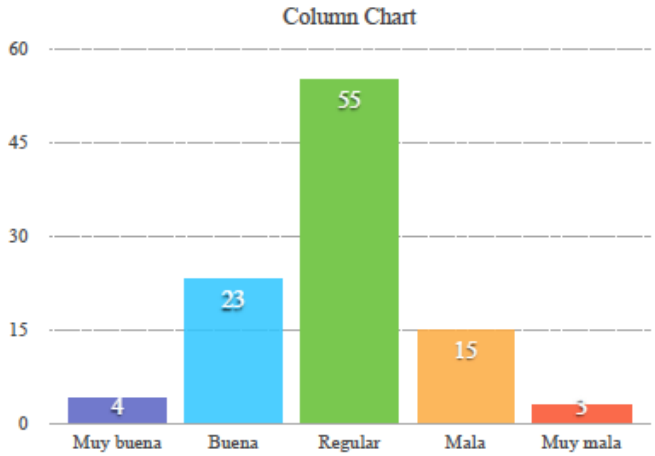


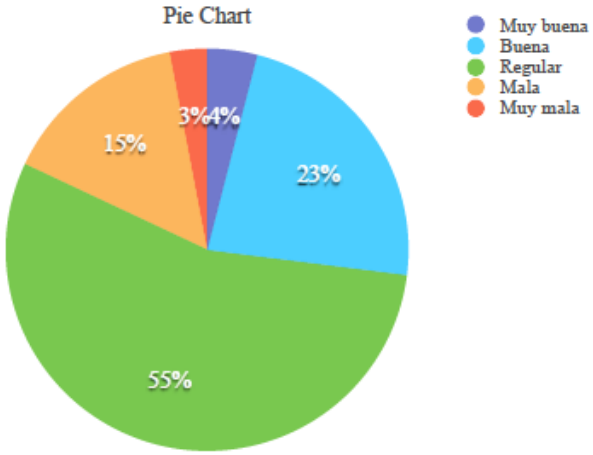


Data Set 2.36

Latinobarómetro 2011
Q. P6ST: Económica, Índice de sentimiento económico
Situación económica personal actual

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Muy buena	4
Buena	23
Regular	55
Mala	15
Muy mala	3





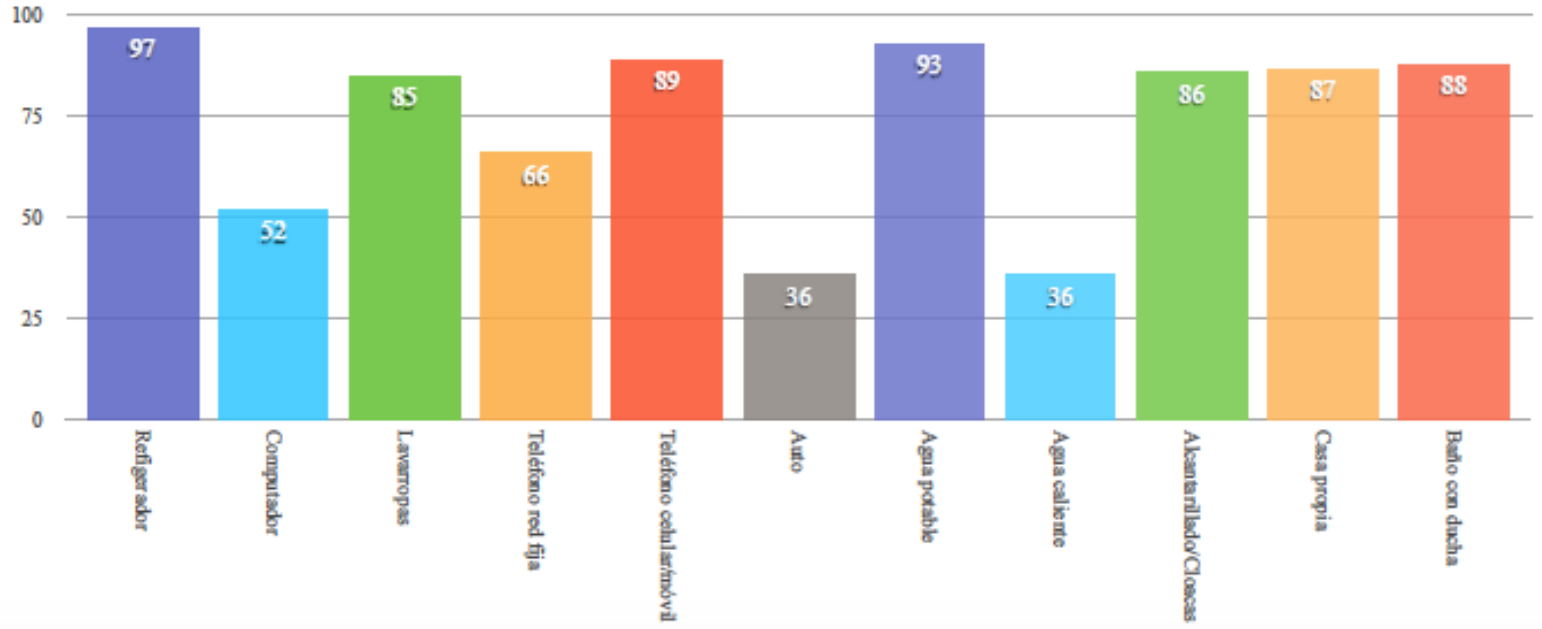
Data Set 2.37

Latinobarómetro 2011
Qs. S28B-L: Económica, Bienes de Consumo, Posesión de bienes
En esta vivienda tienen…
¿Refrigerador?
¿Computador?
¿Lavarropas?
¿Teléfono red fija?
¿Teléfono celular/móvil?
¿Auto?
¿Agua potable?
¿Agua caliente?
¿Alcantarillado/Cloacas?
¿Casa propia?
¿Baño con ducha?

Porcentaje de hogares que tienen "uno"

COMMODITY	PORCENTAJE
Refigerador	97
Computador	52
Lavarropas	85
Teléfono red fija	66
Teléfono celular/móvil	89
Auto	36
Agua potable	93
Agua caliente	36
Alcantarillado/Cloacas	86
Casa propia	87
Baño con ducha	88

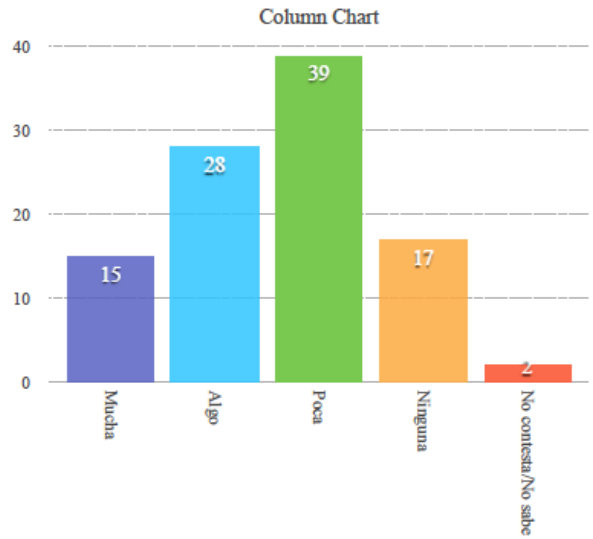
Column Chart

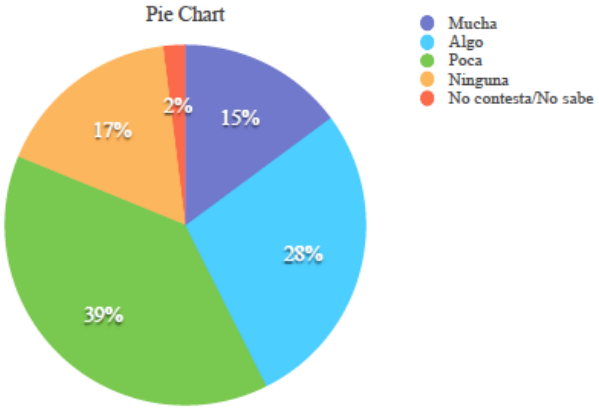


Data Set 2.38

Latinobarómetro 2011
Q. P22ST.A: Democracia, Confianza en las personas
Confianza en el Congreso

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Mucha	15
Algo	28
Poca	39
Ninguna	17
No contesta/No sabe	2

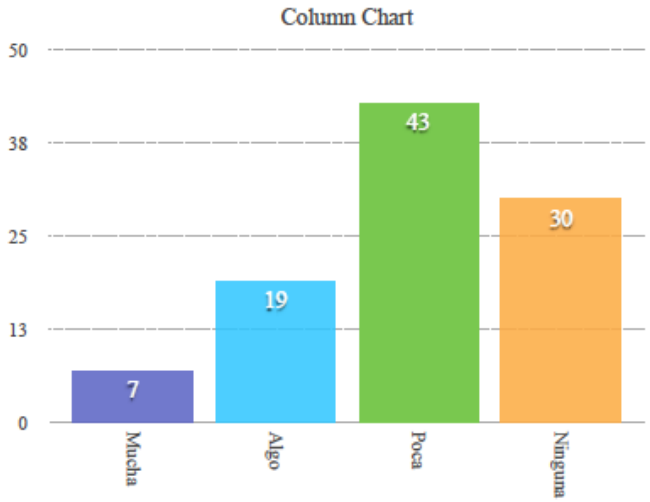


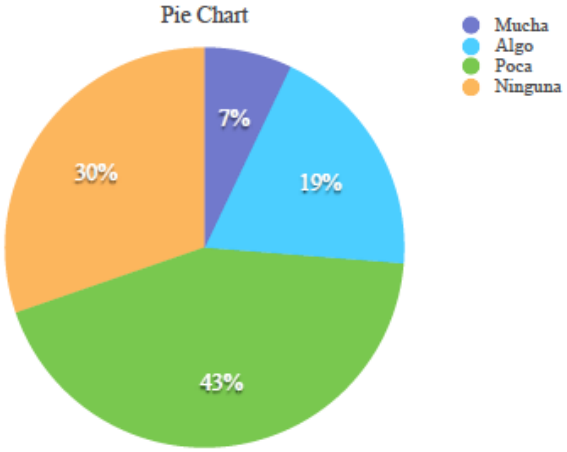


Data Set 2.39

Latinobarómetro 2011
Q. P22ST.C: Democracia, Confianza en las personas
Confianza en la Policía

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Mucha	7
Algo	19
Poca	43
Ninguna	30

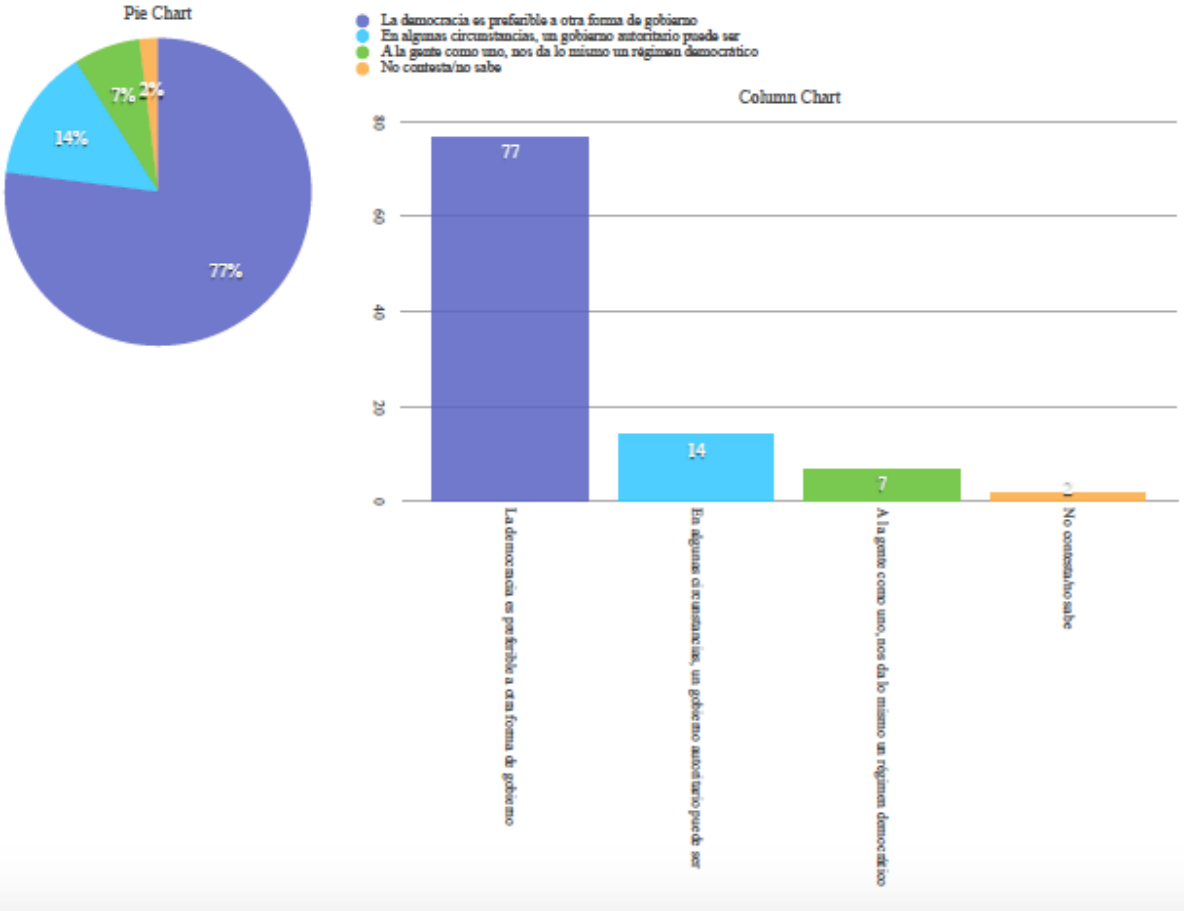




Data Set 2.40

Latinobarómetro 2011
Q. P13ST: Democracia, Actitudes hacia la democracia en general
Apoyo a la democracia

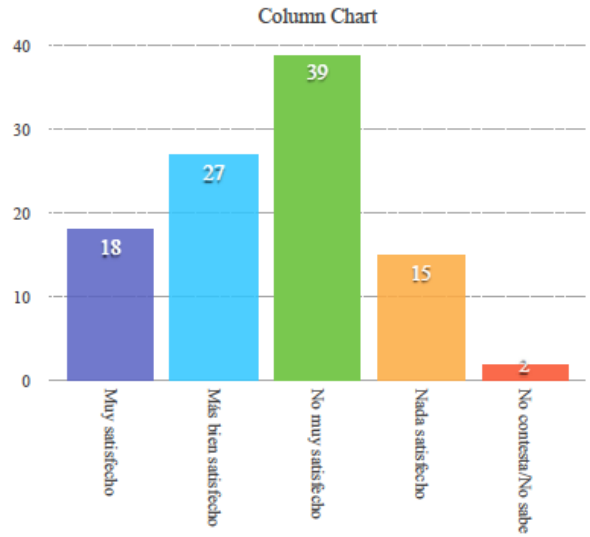
RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
La democracia es preferible a otra forma de gobierno	77
En algunas circunstancias, un gobierno autoritario puede ser	14
A la gente como uno, nos da lo mismo un régimen democrático	7
No contesta/no sabe	2

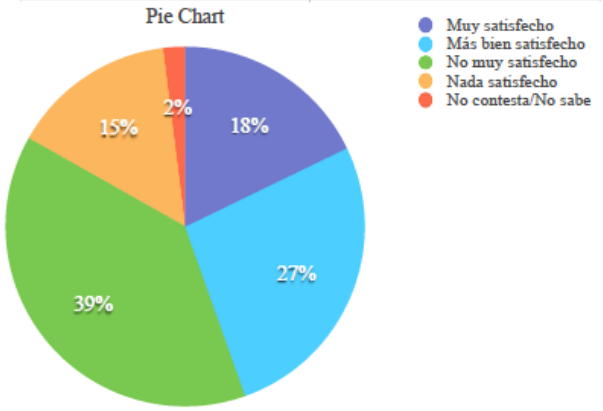


Data Set 2.41

Latinobarómetro 2011
Q. P14ST.A: Democracia, Actitudes hacia la democracia en general
Satisfacción con la democracia

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Muy satisfecho	18
Más bien satisfecho	27
No muy satisfecho	39
Nada satisfecho	15
No contesta/No sabe	2

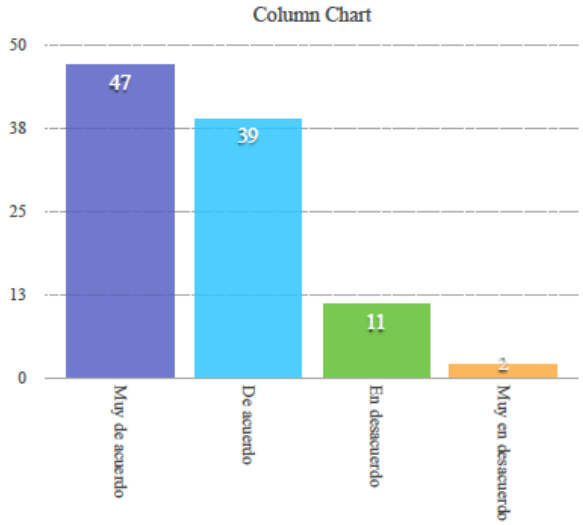


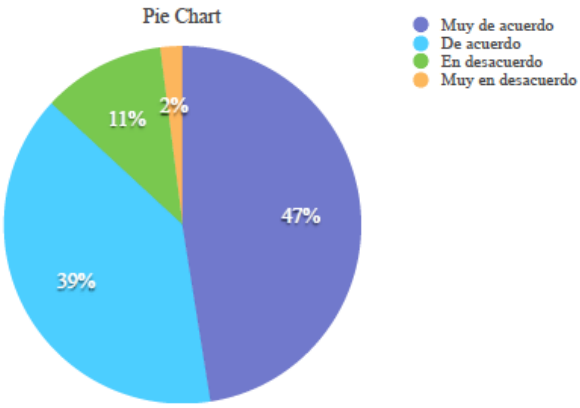


Data Set 2.42

Latinobarómetro 2011
Q. 16ST.A: Democracia, Actitudes hacia la democracia en general
La frase de Churchill: Democracia puede tener problemas pero es el mejor sistema de gobierno

RESPUESTA	PORCENTAJE
Muy de acuerdo	47
De acuerdo	39
En desacuerdo	11
Muy en desacuerdo	2





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"The reward of a thing well done is to have done it."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

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