

Who Mobilizes? Participatory Democracy in Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution

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ABSTRACT

This article assesses popular mobilization under the Chávez government's participatory initiatives in Venezuela using data from the AmericasBarometer survey of 2007. This is the first study of the so-called Bolivarian initiatives using nationally representative, individual-level data. The results provide a mixed assessment. Most of the government's programs invite participation from less active segments of society, such as women, the poor, and the less educated, and participation in some programs is quite high. However, much of this participation clusters within a narrow group of activists, and a disproportionate number of participants are Chávez supporters. This partisan bias probably reflects self-screening by Venezuelans who accept Chávez's radical populist discourse and leftist ideology, rather than vote buying or other forms of open conditionality. Thus, the Venezuelan case suggests some optimism for proponents of participatory democracy, but also the need to be more attuned to its practical political limits.

During the past decade, leftist governments with participatory democratic agendas have come to power in many Latin American countries, implementing institutional reforms at the local and, increasingly, the national level. This trend has generated a scholarly literature assessing the nature of participation in these initiatives; that is, whether they embody effective attempts at participatory forms of democracy that mobilize and empower inactive segments of society (Goldfrank 2007; Wampler 2007a).

This article advances this discussion by studying popular mobilization under the government of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, referred to here as the Bolivarian Revolution or *Chavismo*. Under Chávez's energetic efforts, and aided by an enormous surge in oil revenues, Venezuela's government has implemented an incredible variety of programs designed to create what it calls a "participatory and protagonistic democracy" (República Bolivariana de Venezuela 2001). While *Chavismo* clearly has attributes that make it *sui generis*, such as the charismatic persona of Chávez, its struggle to implement participatory democracy is the most ambitious nationwide effort to date, and it helps make the movement an important reference point for scholars and activists.

This article uses a relatively new source of data, the AmericasBarometer 2006–7, a nationwide survey of 1,500 respondents conducted in August and September 2007 and sponsored by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University. This is the first survey in the series to be conducted in Venezuela, and it includes several sets of questions on popular participation in the erstwhile Bolivarian Circles; newer Bolivarian initiatives, such as the Communal Councils; and the government's broad set of social development programs, known as the missions. It also includes a host of standard questions that allow scholars to gauge the socioeconomic, demographic, and partisan profiles of respondents. Thus, the survey offers a unique opportunity to gauge participatory democracy at the individual level using nationally representative data.

The results of the AmericasBarometer provide a mixed assessment of the Bolivarian initiatives' ability to incorporate and mobilize citizens. Most of the programs invite participation from less active segments of society, particularly women, the poor, and the less educated; participation in the Communal Councils and a few other programs is quite high. These are remarkable accomplishments that compare well with other efforts in the region. However, much of this participation clusters within a narrow group of activists, and a disproportionate number of participants are Chávez supporters, suggesting that these programs have a partisan bias.¹ While less than ideal, these results do not indicate the use of vote buying or other kinds of open conditionalities, as some critics have suggested (Corrales and Penfold 2007). Instead, they suggest that Venezuelans tend to self-select into government programs for ideological reasons, particularly an affinity for the radical populist discourse and leftism of Chávez and his key allies. It is also likely that some of these programs generate real benefits that increase support from voters. Thus, the Venezuelan case suggests some optimism for proponents of participatory democracy, but also the need to be more attuned to its practical, political limits.

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

While there are multiple perspectives on the appropriate type and level of participation in democracy (see Pateman 1970; Barber 1984; Santos 2005), in this article, the term *participatory democracy* refers to the use of mass participation in political decisionmaking to complement or (in the most radical versions) replace the traditional institutions of elections and lobbying associated with representative democracy. As the Progressive era in the United States reminds us, participatory democracy is not a new concept. However, the emphasis on participatory democracy has become an important component of leftist platforms over the past few

decades, especially in Latin America (Roberts 1998; Avritzer 2002; Held 2006, chap. 7).² This emphasis constitutes an important shift from traditional, Leninist approaches that treated democratic institutions as dangerous distractions from revolutionary goals; it celebrates democracy, and especially participatory democracy, as ends in and of themselves.

The participatory democratic emphasis of the New Left has acquired added relevance with the recent wave of leftist governments in Latin America. Starting especially with their election victories in local areas, where they subsequently attempted many of these radical reforms (Chávez and Goldfrank 2004), leftist parties and movements have implemented a variety of participatory reforms across the region. The use of participatory budgeting in Brazil has received most of the attention, but the agenda includes other reforms, such as the integration of new civil society organizations into traditional forms of corporatist policymaking and the implementation of direct primaries and more radical forms of consensual decisionmaking in political parties. Many of these reforms are now being endorsed by parties of the center and right, as well as multilateral aid agencies, such as the World Bank, which see them in more pragmatic terms as a means for providing better governance (see Shah 2007).

A growing number of scholarly works attempt to gauge the success of these reforms. Some studies focus on the policy outcomes of these initiatives, particularly their consequences for economic welfare and the quality of democratic governance. The results so far are mixed, showing that participatory reforms are implemented with much greater consistency and success at the local level than they are at the national level (Goldfrank 2008). In the emblematic case of participatory budgeting in Brazil, reforms have been found to have a host of positive consequences for the poor, including a reduction in clientelism (Santos 1998; Abers 2000; Serageldin et al. 2003; Navarro 2004; Wampler and Avritzer 2004; for a review of this literature, see Goldfrank 2007).

However, most scholars who assess these initiatives tend to focus on the level and quality of political participation. The concern is to identify whether significant numbers of previously excluded citizens are being mobilized and whether the programs that mobilize them represent real instances of participatory democracy with meaningful budgets, autonomy, and popular involvement. The quantity and quality of participation are important for practical reasons, in that the incorporation of traditionally disenfranchised sectors, such as the poor, is presumably the key to making government policy more representative and just, and especially to eliminating the legacies of clientelism that typically characterize politics in the developing world. Yet participation is also important for its own sake, as a means of empowering citizens and giving them control over their own lives.

An important weakness of current studies of participatory democratic initiatives is the lack of representative national samples of individual-level data. Often this is an artifact of the policy initiatives themselves, which were conducted only in select municipalities and states. On this smaller scale, most analyses are case studies that focus on movement participants or aggregate aspects of the participatory initiative (budget, results, decisionmaking procedures, etc.), not the larger population, although small surveys of participants are sometimes available (see Wampler 2007a, b; Goldfrank 2008). Hence, we have some idea of how many participate and what their participation means, but we are not always certain about who these people are or how they compare with the rest of the population.

The study of participatory budgeting in Brazil exemplifies this lack of representative, individual-level data. Most of these analyses use aggregate municipal-level data. They find that participation tends to be concentrated among Brazilians who already have experience as activists (Nylen 2002); that it seems to increase when programs receive effective decisionmaking power and are structured to allow better citizen deliberation (Wampler and Avritzer 2004); and that it tends to be higher in small municipalities that have higher levels of education and greater support for the Workers' Party (PT) (Schneider and Goldfrank 2003).

All of these are valuable insights providing benchmarks for comparison. However, they leave open the question of whether the attributes they highlight also distinguish individual participants. We do not know whether participants are also PT supporters and better educated, or whether support for the PT and higher levels of education across the community ensure the creation of programs that subsequently incorporate poor residents from other partisan backgrounds. A few studies attempt to address this lack of data by using surveys of site-level participants (see especially Nylen 2002; Wampler 2007b), but these, in turn, raise questions about how well their results represent the entire community. Ultimately, scholars need to complement these analyses with surveys that sample from the entire population.³

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY UNDER CHAVISMO

Chavismo in Venezuela is an extreme version of the push for participatory democracy by the left in Latin America. Before Chávez's rise to power in 1998, previous governments had already experimented successfully with a series of basic initiatives to decentralize government, which included the direct election of local officials, a dramatic transfer of central government revenues to states and municipalities, and the tentative implementation of internal party primaries for presidential candidates (Mascareño 2000; De la Cruz 2004). New forms of civil society,

unaligned with the traditional parties, proliferated (García 1992; Ellner 1993; Buxton 2001).

Chavismo had mixed consequences for these reforms. Chávez and many of his closest allies almost immediately sought to recentralize government functions around his charismatic persona, ostensibly with the purpose of carrying out their democratic revolution. Hence, local government allocations were increasingly controlled and manipulated by the president (Martín 2000; De la Cruz 2004), and secondary associations unaligned with the government found themselves cut off from government commissions and financial support (Salamanca 2004). More recently, Chávez has talked about replacing traditional local governments with a new form of community association, the Communal Councils, which would be tied to the national government. And since the election of opposition mayors and governors in 2009, Chávez has worked to create supraregional governors who would be directly appointed by the president.

Nevertheless, the government's participatory rhetoric, its wholesale project of constitutional change, and its willingness to divert oil revenues to finance participatory initiatives are clearly without equal. The new constitution of 1999 makes participatory democracy a fundamental principle of governance and citizenship, setting a high standard for the government to meet in terms of level and quality of participation. Article 62 declares that "All citizens have the right to participate freely in public matters" and that "the participation of the people in the creation, execution, and control of public affairs is the required means to achieve the protagonism [*protagonismo*] that guarantees their complete development, both as individuals and as a collective."⁴ Article 70 provides a long list of government activities considered potentially participatory, including traditional ones, such as "elections to public office; the referendum; the consultation of public opinion; the recall of public officials; the legislative, constitutional, and constituent initiatives; the town hall meeting; and the citizen assembly," but also less traditional arenas, such as "government offices open to the public; self-management; comanagement; all forms of cooperatives, including those of financial nature; credit unions; [and] community businesses." Constitutional reforms attempted in 2007 would have further expanded this list.

In an effort to achieve these ambitious goals, the government has created a rapid succession of quasi-partisan organizations and social programs that incorporate a heavy emphasis on local participation and decisionmaking. Many of these Bolivarian initiatives have their origins in previous, non-Chavista efforts at grassroots mobilization in Venezuela or existing government programs; however, all of them have received enormous impetus from the Chávez government and nowadays bear the stamp of the Bolivarian Revolution. The ones on which this study focuses are listed in table 1.⁵

Table 1. Key Participatory Initiatives of the Chávez Government

	Year of Legal Recognition/ Creation	Purpose	Number of Participants (peak estimate by 2008)
Bolivarian Circles	2001	Community improvement and defense of the Bolivarian revolution	2.2 million members
Health Committees	2003	Servicing of Barrio Adentro clinics	6,500 committees
Cooperatives	NA ^a	Economic development through alternative forms of business enterprise	200,000 cooperatives
Urban Land Committees	2003	Identity and legal entitlement of shantytowns	2–2.5 million members
Communal Councils	2005	Consolidation and administration of community development projects and municipal governance	8 million participants

^aAs legally recognized entities, the cooperatives predate the Chávez government by many years.

Sources: García-Guadilla 2007a, b; Hawkins and Hansen 2006; López Maya 2008; MINCI 2007; SUNACOOP 2008.

Among the first to appear were the Bolivarian Circles, a vast network of voluntary associations that constituted the largest organized component of Chávez's movement during his first years in power—comprising, at their peak, according to the government, approximately 2.2 million Venezuelans. Called into action in 2001, each circle was to consist of up to 11 members sworn to defend the constitution, be faithful to the ideals of Simón Bolívar, and serve the interests of their community. They played a key role in mobilizing the popular response to the attempted coup against Chávez in April 2002 and supplied campaign activists during the presidential recall referendum of 2004, but subsequently fell into decline (Hawkins and Hansen 2006).

At the height of the circles' activity, the government also began organizing Health Committees (*Comités de Salud*), voluntary neighborhood committees created to help administer health clinics under the Barrio Adentro mission; they have essentially accompanied Barrio Adentro since its inception in 2003. Assuming that each clinic has one com-

mittee, we can safely estimate more than 6,500 Health Committees, although the exact number of individuals participating is unknown.⁶

Another important form of organization created by the government is the producer cooperatives. As of mid-2008, more than two hundred thousand of these (again, the exact number of participants is unknown) have been financed by government grants as part of its effort at “endogenous development,” which encourages economic diversification and national self-sufficiency. The cooperatives depend on joint ownership and management but are still profitmaking enterprises (SUNACOOP 2008). Also around 2003, the government began formally recognizing and encouraging the creation of Urban Land Committees (*Comités de Tierra Urbana*, or CTUs), shantytown associations that draft a community charter in order to receive legal recognition and title to their lands. According to government estimates, more than 6,000 CTUs had been created as of 2007, incorporating roughly 2 million to 2.5 million adult Venezuelans (García-Guadilla 2007a).⁷

In 2005 the government began creating a vast network of Communal Councils (*Consejos Comunales*). These are a new type of neighborhood association, tasked with combining and administering many of the above entities. Each council is voluntarily constituted by up to four hundred families in a given community, which meet in a Citizens Assembly (*Asamblea de Ciudadanos*); the council proper is an executive committee selected by the assembly. The councils are not purely territorial, in that overlapping councils can exist in the same community. They represent the culmination of the government’s participatory democratic ambitions and constitute what it calls the “sixth branch of government,” that of the “people or community.” Until the government’s package of constitutional reforms was defeated in a December 2007 national referendum, the councils were seen as potential replacements for traditional representative local government. Not only have they received powers to coordinate many of the government’s other, more specialized community programs, but they are eligible for sizable community improvement grants formerly channeled to municipal and state governments, more than US\$2.5 billion total in 2007.⁸ According to government estimates, more than 33,000 councils had been organized by late 2007, with more than 8 million Venezuelans participating (MPS 2007; for more information on the Communal Councils, see García-Guadilla 2007b; López Maya 2008).

As forms of participatory democracy, many of these programs are problematic. Most are dependent on government funding, and must conform to regulations and oversight by the Chávez government, which can be intrusive and highly attuned to electoral objectives. Chávez’s charismatic authority is an omnipresent source of identity and motivation among participants, and many of these organizations mimic (or

wholeheartedly endorse) the party line of the government. The Communal Councils in particular have come under heavy criticism for their hasty implementation, their impractical design (they usurp government functions better handled at the municipal level), and their supervisory role over previously independent participatory initiatives in the community, which seems to lead to government cooptation (García-Guadilla 2007b; López Maya 2008; Lovera 2008). Yet these programs represent instances of local citizen debate and input requiring significant time and resources of participants; individual contributions are not directly compensated with any kind of salary (although financial benefits to the community can be significant). Members are frequently allowed to develop their own goals and everyday operating procedures and to choose the leadership of their organizations. And the programs are ostensibly targeted at populations that have traditionally been the most excluded from Venezuelan political life, such as the poor, the uneducated, shantytown dwellers, women, and those employed in the informal sector.

During the year before the presidential recall election of August 2004, the government also began establishing a series of special poverty relief programs called missions (*misiones*). The participatory element is much weaker in these programs, although there is important variance along these lines, as the analysis will show. The missions are the centerpiece of the government's unfolding program of socioeconomic development; they received several billion dollars in government oil revenue between 2003 and 2005, as much as 3.5 percent of GDP, according to some estimates (Corrales and Penfold 2007). The full list of missions is quite extensive (Hawkins 2010; Hawkins et al. forthcoming); this study covers only the five oldest and best financed: Mercal, Barrio Adentro, and the three educational missions, known as Robinson II, Ribas, and Sucre. These are summarized in table 2.

Mercal is a series of subsidized supermarkets offering staple items at heavily discounted prices, sometimes as much as 40 percent; it consists of fixed locations (numbering in the hundreds) and street markets (numbering in the thousands), although the survey data examined here do not distinguish among the types of stores. Barrio Adentro is a program of free health care, the backbone of which is several thousand small, primary care clinics. These originally were staffed by Cuban doctors, and today also include a more limited number of sophisticated clinics and hospitals. The educational missions provide remedial elementary (Robinson II) and secondary education (Ribas), as well as regular university education through a mixture of larger traditional campuses and community college-like "municipal" programs (Sucre).⁹ According to government data (Campos 2006), by the end of 2005, Mission Robinson II had nearly 1.5 million students, Mission Ribas had more than 600,000 students, and Mission Sucre had about 250,000.

Table 2. Key Social Missions of the Chávez Government

	Date of Presidential Decree	Purpose	Number of Participants (date of estimate)
Barrio Adentro	April 2003	Health care	12.5 million adults (2007)
Sucre	July 2003	Decentralized university education	250,000 students (2005)
Robinson II	October 2003	Remedial primary education	1.5 million students (2005)
Ribas	November 2003	Remedial secondary education	600,000 students (2005)
Mercal	January 2004	Subsidized food	8.7 million adults (2007)

Note: Estimates for Barrio Adentro and Mercal are not the number of visits but the number of unique users.

Sources: Campos 2006; Hawkins 2010; Hawkins et al. forthcoming; author's calculations from 2007 AmericasBarometer survey.

Unlike the Bolivarian initiatives, the missions are fully financed and formally responsible to cabinet-level agencies of the national government, and in some of them, associational life is minimal. In Barrio Adentro and Mercal particularly, aid workers are salaried employees, and aid recipients are not required to make any significant effort to receive benefits or maintain the mission site. Therefore, it is important to draw a line between these programs and other, more clearly participatory initiatives.

The missions, however, provide a useful reference point for gauging the reach of other government programs. Government leaders and activists often see the missions as having a participatory component that links them to civil society. The programs are bound up in the revolutionary ethos of the government, one that informs most workers, who are frequently referred to as volunteers by cabinet-level officials and aid workers (Hawkins 2010; Hawkins et al. forthcoming). They bring together and energize potential activists while providing resources for political mobilization, such as education, a larger disposable income, and free time. Most of the missions incorporate some form of participatory governance, such as the Health Committees that accompany each Barrio Adentro clinic. This sense of idealism and autonomy is especially high in the educational missions, which rely heavily on part-time workers, such as teachers from regular public schools and universities (none of whom receive a stipend for their work in the missions), and which require a much greater commitment of time and effort by participants.

These latter programs require students to draw up community development projects that give members of their communities a political voice, and they conscientiously introduce elements of participatory democracy into the classroom experience. Because of this, the educational missions can be included in the discussion of the Bolivarian participatory initiatives here.

All of these efforts have begun to attract significant scholarly attention. Increasing numbers of studies examine the performance of the Bolivarian participatory initiatives and the more popular missions (Ellner and Hellinger 2003; Corrales and Penfold 2007; Rodríguez 2007; Hsieh et al. 2007; Penfold-Becerra 2007; Ortega and Rodríguez 2008; Smilde and Hellinger forthcoming). However, much of what characterizes the broader literature on participatory democracy also describes the studies of Chavismo. None of these studies quantitatively assesses absolute levels of participation and what sorts of cohorts are being mobilized. This is because they lack even the kind of survey data that are needed to assess questions of individual-level attributes across program sites, let alone across the country. A partial exception is López Maya's 2008 study of participatory democratic initiatives and self-help associations in the shantytowns of Caracas. In close studies of three particular sites, she finds that numbers of participants as a percentage of their community are very limited, and many of those who do participate are activists with a long trajectory of community involvement.

HOW MUCH PARTICIPATION

To determine how effective the Bolivarian initiatives are at mobilizing Venezuelans, we first need to know overall levels of participation. The AmericasBarometer survey in Venezuela gauges popular participation in several types of associations and government programs with a nationally representative sample of 1,500 respondents. The survey includes two modules of questions of particular interest. Specific wording and format of all questions, as well as a more detailed description of the sample, are available by consulting the official report of the survey (Hawkins et al. 2008), although the question labels are provided here for easier reference.

The first module (questions CP6 through CP17) measures the frequency of participation in secondary associations and participatory government programs. For each organization, respondents are asked whether they participate weekly, monthly, yearly, or never. The first half of this module lists traditional forms of civil society and is the same in all versions of the AmericasBarometer in other countries. It includes religious organizations, parent-teacher organizations, community associations (specifically, "a committee or association for neighborhood

improvement”), professional/producer/peasant associations (hereafter, simply “producer associations”), labor unions, and political parties or movements. In the second half of this module, respondents are asked about their involvement in some of the most prominent Bolivarian participatory initiatives: the Health Committees, the cooperatives, the Urban Land Committees, and the Communal Councils.

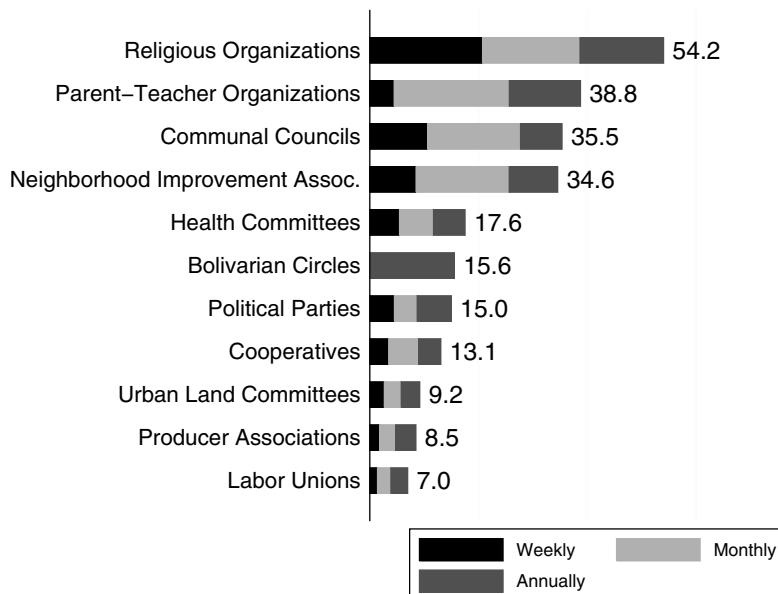
A second module of questions (questions MIS1 through MIS13) asks respondents about their involvement in the missions. If respondents did not use the services of a particular mission, the survey follows up with an open-ended question (with a fixed list of responses coded by the interviewer) regarding why they chose not to participate. It is notable that in the case of the educational missions, where classes typically meet several times a week, the survey asks only whether the respondent took classes, not how often.

Further, the survey asks participants a short set of questions (VENCP30 and VENCP31) regarding whether or not they ever belonged to a Bolivarian Circle. Because the remaining circles supposedly ceased to exist in 2007 following the creation of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (*Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela*, or PSUV), Chávez’s new government political party, the survey uses a two-part question that allows analysts to distinguish among those who never participated, those who participated but no longer do so, and those who still consider themselves participants in a circle.

The results are generally positive. Figures 1 and 2 show levels and frequency of participation in these different groups of participatory associations (both traditional and Bolivarian) and the missions. The figure for the circles indicates the total of all who report having ever participated, whether or not their circle is currently active. In the first figure, the activities with the greatest levels of participation are a few of the more traditional components of civil society: churches, parent-teacher organizations, and neighborhood associations, in that order, which attract annual participation of at least one-third and sometimes one-half of Venezuelans. However, they also include one distinctly Bolivarian initiative: the Communal Councils. Participation in the Communal Councils (35.5 percent) is exceptionally high, insofar as it reflects a relatively recent government initiative. If this figure truly represents the total adult (over 18) population, then at least 6 million Venezuelans have participated in a Communal Council at some time over the past year. And if we extend this to the over-15 population (the Communal Councils, unlike the survey, are open to all Venezuelans over age 15), then we have something quite close to the government’s estimate of 8 million.¹⁰

This level of participation is almost three times that of the older Bolivarian Circles (using either the survey-based estimates for the circles or the government’s original estimates) and is much higher than that of

Figure 1. Frequency of Participation in Traditional Civil Society and Bolivarian Initiatives (as percent of population)



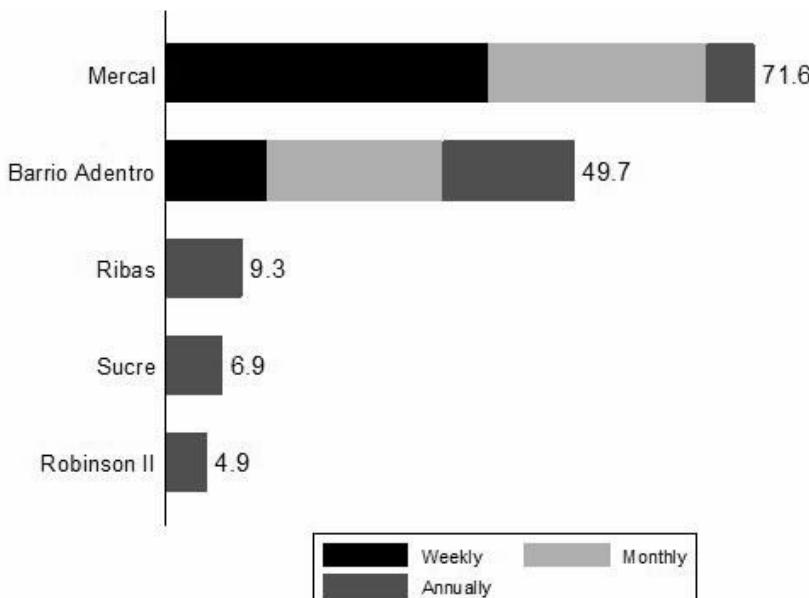
Source: AmericasBarometer 2007; author's calculation using Stata SE 10.1

the participatory budgeting initiatives in Brazil, which is typically 2 to 8 percent of the population in municipalities with the program and reaches as high as 10 percent only in the most successful areas (Wampler 2007a; Schneider and Goldfrank 2003).

A second set of organizations shown in figure 1 reveals relatively lower levels of participation. These are political parties, professional associations, and labor unions, in that order, as well as the Health Committees, cooperatives, and Urban Land Committees. Again, extrapolating these numbers, they suggest that roughly 1.2 million (in the case of labor unions) to 3.1 million adult Venezuelans (in the case of the Health Committees) participate at least annually in these associations. As with the Communal Councils, the results for the Bolivarian initiatives show levels of participation that are only slightly lower than the government's estimates.

These levels are more typical of traditional civil society and participatory initiatives elsewhere in Latin America. Figure 3 displays analogous results for a few of these secondary associations for all countries in the AmericasBarometer 2006–7. Levels of participation in these associations (political parties, producer associations, labor unions, and

Figure 2. Frequency of Participation in the Missions
(as percent of population)

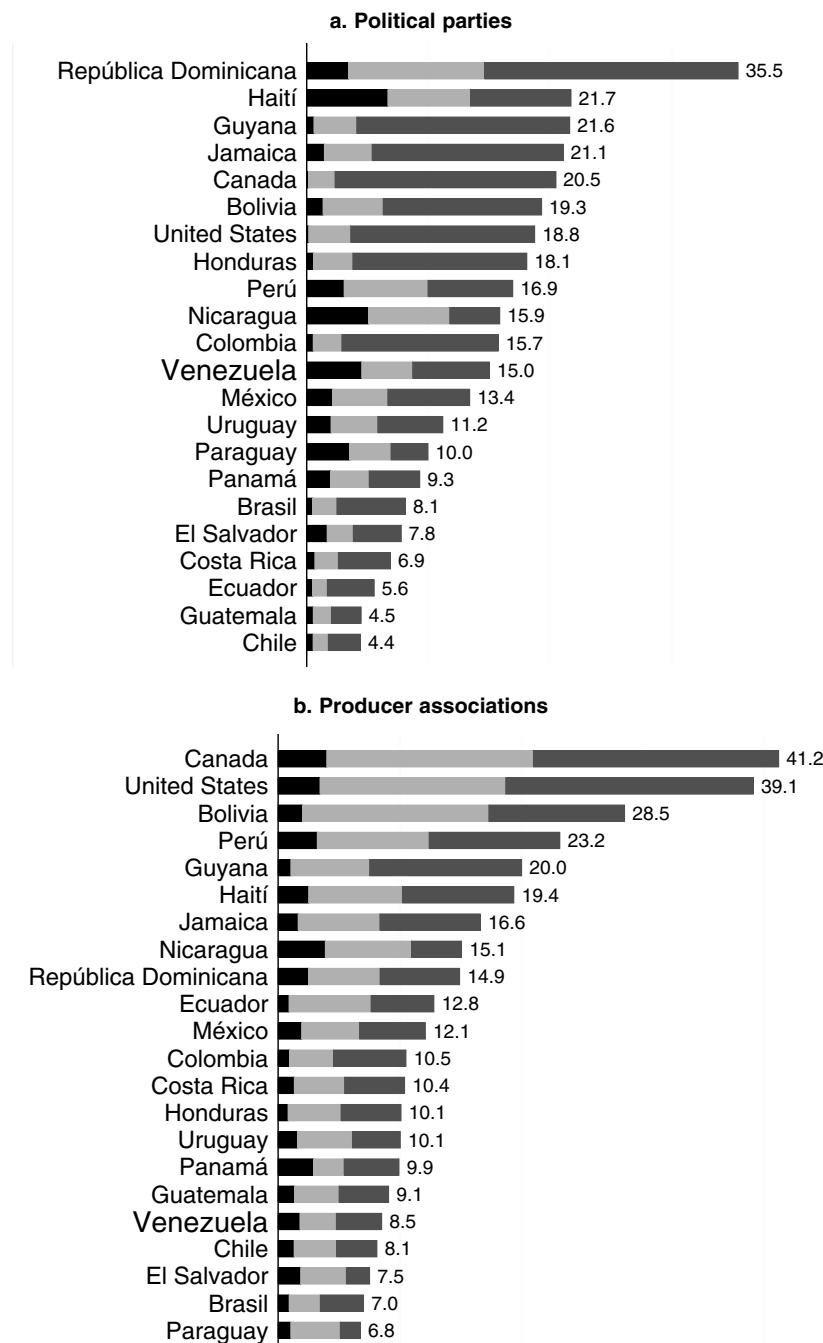


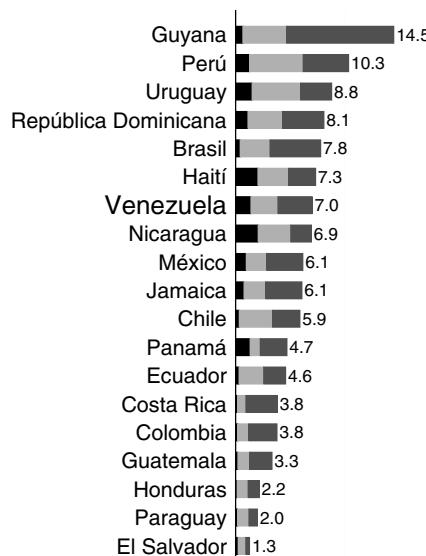
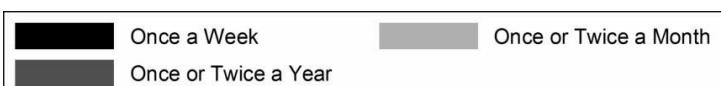
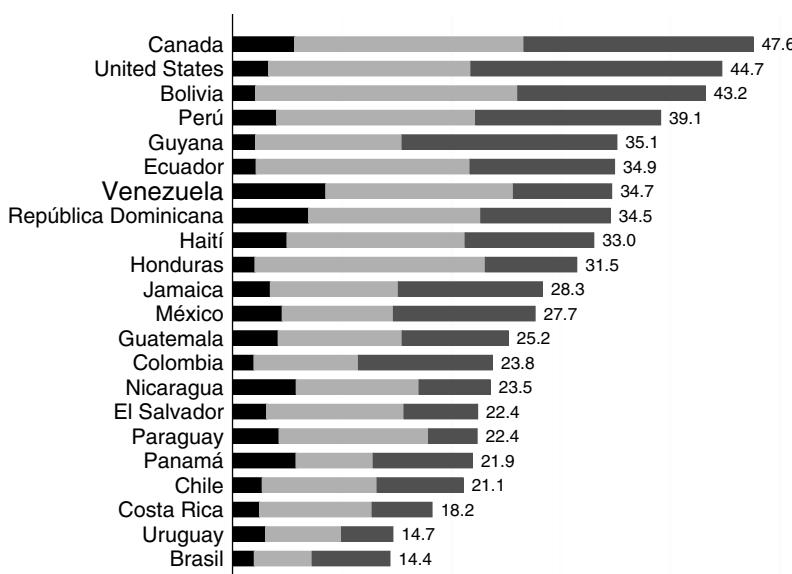
Source: AmericasBarometer 2007; author's calculation using Stata SE 10.1

neighborhood improvement associations) are usually lower in Latin America than they are in the United States and Canada, but Venezuela is roughly in the middle of the pack in every instance. In the case of the government's participatory initiatives, we lack this same opportunity for precise regional comparison, but even the least popular of the Bolivarian initiatives—the Urban Land Committees, with 9.2 percent of respondents representing perhaps 1.6 million adult Venezuelans—enjoys levels of participation as high as those for participatory budgeting in Brazil, in percentage terms.¹¹ The most popular of these initiatives—the Health Committees—nearly doubles that level.

Looking at the missions (figure 2), we see a similar bifurcation. The relatively nonparticipatory missions, Mercal and Barrio Adentro, have extremely high levels of use, while the numbers of participants in the educational missions are closer to what we find for the lower half of traditional civil society and the Bolivarian initiatives. In fact, the number for Mercal is much higher than that of any other program: an extraordinary 71 percent of respondents indicate that they used its services at least once in the past year. The lower levels of participation in the educational missions result partly from their narrow appeal: while

Figure 3. Frequency of Participation in Traditional Secondary Associations, by Country (as percent of population)



c. Labor unions**d. Neighborhood improvement associations**

Source: AmericasBarometer 2007; author's calculation using Stata SE 10.1

food and health care are more basic, consistent needs for most of the population, remedial or higher education is required by only a small subset, particularly because most educational needs are already met by regular public and private education.¹² Access to secondary and tertiary education is moderately good for the region (gross enrollment in 2000 was 59 percent and 28 percent, respectively), and for primary education it is nearly universal (gross enrollment 102 percent; data from World Bank 2008).

Regarding the remaining Bolivarian association, the Bolivarian Circles, the survey finds moderate levels of participation. Results indicate that (again, extrapolating to the larger population) roughly 2 million adult Venezuelans participated in a circle sometime in recent years. This is again close to the government's estimates of 2.2 million members at the peak of the circles' activity in 2004. What is perhaps more interesting, and not shown in figures 1 and 2, is that half of these former participants—8.6 percent of Venezuelans—claim to be “currently participating” despite the formal incorporation of the circles into the PSUV. This may reflect the wording of this question, which fails to systematically ask all respondents if their circles are still active, or it may suggest some unwillingness by hard core activists to let go of their organizations. Either way, it shows that some of the circles have a surprising level of institutionalization.

In sum, participation in most of the Chávez government's participatory initiatives is moderately high, comparable to traditional voluntary associations in Venezuela and Latin America, and at least as high as levels of involvement in participatory budgeting in Brazil. For the Communal Councils, levels of participation are quite high and comparable to those of the most popular (but least participatory) missions, Barrio Adentro and Mercal, as well as the most popular forms of traditional civil society. Most of these aggregate figures are only slightly below the government's estimates. While levels of participation obviously fall short of the government's stated objectives of a fully participatory democracy that incorporates all citizens, they are fairly impressive in cross-national perspective.

WHO PARTICIPATES AND WHY

While these figures tell something about overall levels of participation in the Bolivarian Revolution, they cannot show who is being mobilized and whether this participation represents previously excluded segments of Venezuelan society. As a first step toward identifying who participates, this study calculates whether there is any overlap among respondents. Do participants in some programs also tend to participate in others, or is there relatively little crossover between memberships and

Table 3. Factor Analysis of Frequency of Participation

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Uniqueness
Religious organization	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.08	0.82	0.32
Parent-teacher organization	0.24	0.05	0.16	0.02	0.56	0.59
Neighborhood association	0.76	0.09	0.14	0.07	0.13	0.37
Producer association	0.18	0.68	-0.11	-0.06	0.04	0.49
Labor union	0.09	0.65	0.05	-0.02	0.01	0.57
Political party	0.32	0.50	0.22	0.21	0.00	0.55
Communal Council	0.79	0.12	0.20	0.04	0.05	0.31
Health Committee	0.72	0.15	0.10	0.04	0.02	0.45
Cooperative	0.34	0.50	0.04	0.05	0.00	0.63
Urban Land Committee	0.67	0.08	-0.01	0.17	-0.05	0.51
Bolivarian Circle	0.05	0.44	0.45	0.27	0.06	0.52
Barrio Adentro Mission	0.20	0.07	0.74	0.09	0.05	0.39
Mercal Mission	0.13	-0.05	0.81	0.02	0.02	0.33
Robinson II Mission	-0.04	0.20	0.04	0.69	0.21	0.44
Ribas Mission	0.28	-0.17	0.05	0.70	0.06	0.40
Sucre Mission	0.05	0.05	0.19	0.55	-0.32	0.56
Eigenvalue	2.64	1.71	1.60	1.43	1.17	
Proportion explained	0.17	0.11	0.10	0.09	0.07	

Notes: Principal component factor analysis with an orthogonal varimax rotation. Strong loadings (>.50) are highlighted. 70 parameters, 5 retained factors, $n = 1,375$. LR test: $\chi^2(120) = 3692.9$, $p < 0.0000$.

Source: AmericasBarometer 2007; author's calculation using Stata SE 10.1.

pools of aid recipients? This item is measured by running a factor analysis (principal components) using all of the above measures of frequency of participation. Any strong factors that emerge are indications that a group of associations or programs has an overlapping set of participants. High factor loadings for any association or program (>.50) are highlighted in table 3 for easy comparison.

The results in table 3 provide a somewhat more mixed assessment than the three figures. They indicate roughly five underlying dimensions of participation and thus a more limited group of participants. The first factor captures almost all of the Bolivarian participatory initiatives, including the Communal Councils, the Health Committees, the Urban Land Committees, and neighborhood associations. The inclusion of the neighborhood associations, which are not explicitly Bolivarian, may mean that respondents interpreted "committee or association for neigh-

borhood improvement" as a reference to the Communal Councils (the question about the councils appears later in the survey), or it may be evidence that participants in Venezuela's older neighborhood associations are a key component of these newer forms of Bolivarian participatory democracy; we cannot determine this merely by looking at this survey.

Still, the point is that the people who participate in one of the government's most participatory initiatives tend to participate in the other participatory initiatives. Those who joined the Bolivarian Circles are likely to be those currently involved in the Urban Land Committees and Health Committees and are more likely to be involved in the Communal Councils. These results persist even when we omit the Communal Councils (results not shown here). Given that all of these organizations except the Communal Councils or neighborhood associations have similar numbers of participants (between about 9 and 18 percent of respondents participate at least annually, as we saw earlier), this suggests the presence of a core group of activists giving vitality to the Chavista movement in Venezuela. At the same time, the fact that this group only partly overlaps with participants in traditional civil society (the next factor) shows that these programs are mobilizing new participants.

The second factor captures most of traditional civil society. It includes professional associations, labor unions, and political parties, none of which are exclusively Bolivarian and which often have long histories that predate Chavismo. While some of these associations have become highly partisan in recent years as part of the overall process of political polarization, opposition-led associations often confront newer, Chavista counterparts, resulting in an aggregate profile that appears deceptively neutral (see, e.g., the description of Venezuelan labor in Ellner 2005). It is interesting that the cooperatives are included in this dimension rather than the first one. As we will shortly see, this is possibly because the cooperatives incorporate a group of participants that is similar in many respects besides partisanship: they tend to be male, wealthier, and better educated. Overall, this second group of activists is probably somewhat smaller than the first (between 7 and 15 percent of Venezuelans).

The third and fourth factors correspond to the missions and neatly divide them along the lines discussed earlier. That is, users of Mercal are also likely to be users of Barrio Adentro (factor 3), while participants in any educational mission are likely to have participated in other educational missions (factor 4). Mercal and Barrio Adentro, of course, draw on a much larger portion of the population and thus include many individuals who may not use the educational missions or belong to any kind of civil society or participatory initiative. That both of these factors are distinct from the factor capturing traditional civil society suggests that

participation in these programs is driven by a distinct set of sociodemographic influences; this will be confirmed, especially for the case of the popular missions. Their lack of correlation with the Bolivarian initiatives hints at the different purposes of the missions: they are, in the end, designed primarily to alleviate poverty and only secondarily to mobilize citizens.

Factor 5 seems to be a second dimension emphasizing traditional civil society, but a segment with a very different pool of participants from that of the first one in factor 2. These are religious and parent-teacher organizations. As the analysis will show, these tend to draw from women and members of newer, non-Catholic religions that are noted for higher levels of religious activity. Overall participation here is quite high.

An anomaly worth pointing out is that the Bolivarian Circles do not fit neatly into any one of these five factors. Instead, they fit loosely into two of them: factor 2 (traditional civil society) and factor 3 (the popular missions). The overlap with factor 2 seems sensible: as Hawkins and Hansen (2006) argue, the circles were more like civil society than a part of the state, and they may have initially drawn from an older set of activists; at the same time, the circles drew from a broad spectrum of Chávez supporters, which perhaps made them akin to the most popular missions. Their failure to overlap more neatly with the first factor, Bolivarian participatory initiatives, is a puzzle that cannot be solved in this study.

To better identify the profiles of individual participants, this study ran a series of multivariate statistical models of participation for each of the Bolivarian initiatives, the missions, and two of the most representative forms of association in traditional civil society; namely, producer associations (which covers the first set of traditional secondary associations) and religious organizations (which captures the second set of traditional secondary associations). To simplify the statistical models and discussion of the results, all response categories were recoded for these programs and associations to “0 = never participate” and “1 = participate at least yearly.” Therefore, high numbers indicate higher levels of participation. Because the resulting scale of participation is dichotomous, this analysis used probit rather than Organized Least Squares. It also ran most of these models using the original four-point scale of responses (and hence, ordinal probit), but this yielded essentially identical results and made the interpretation more complicated, particularly because the same analysis could not be run for the educational missions, all of which have only two possible responses.

The explanatory variables are sex (0 = male, 1 = female; 49.9 percent of the sample is male), age (a continuous scale running from 18 to 89 years; the average age is 36.3 years), income (an interval-level meas-

ure of household income using ten categories; the average at the time of the survey was around Bs765,000), education (an interval-level measure of the respondent's level of formal education using 21 categories; the average was about the tenth grade), activism (a four-point ordinal scale measuring whether the respondent often tries to convince others of political positions, recoded such that 4 = "frequently," 1 = "never"; the average is closest to 2 = "rarely"), charisma (a four-point ordinal measure of whether "Chávez expresses a convincing vision of the future"), and Catholic (a dichotomous indicator of the respondent's declared religion, where 1 = Catholic, 0 = other or none; 80.3 percent of respondents say they are Catholic).

Because partisanship is such an important concern, this variable is analyzed more closely by breaking down charisma into a series of dummy variables for each response, where Charisma4 corresponds to the strongest level of faith in Chávez ("strongly agree," 35.4 percent of the sample), Charisma3 is the next-lowest level ("somewhat agree," 28.3 percent), and Charisma2 is the next-to-lowest level ("somewhat disagree," 10.2 percent). The lowest level of affect ("strongly disagree," 26.2 percent) is the reference category. For one of the models, that of the Ribas mission, the analysis also includes the squared value of education, education squared, to capture the nonlinear relationship between education and participation in this particular program.¹³

Readers may wonder why this measure of confidence or faith in Chávez, charisma, is used rather than a more standard partisan indicator, such as party identity or past vote choice. The first reason is that the numbers of useful responses to both party ID and vote choice are rather low in the survey, and even among positive respondents the results are extremely lopsided. For example, only 33 percent of respondents expressed sympathy with any party, and of those, more than 70 percent mentioned either Chávez's original party, Movimiento V República (MVR), or the newer PSUV. Likewise, while 77 percent indicate having voted in the presidential election of December 2006, nearly 76 percent of these respondents claim to have voted for Chávez. In the case of vote choice, these results partly reflect distortions found in all survey data, especially a survey taken almost a year after the election, but they leave rather low variance on both indicators. Charisma, by contrast, has a nearly perfect response rate and a slightly more normal distribution that still correlates highly with vote choice ($r = .66$, $p < .000$).

A second reason for preferring charisma is that it is drawn from a widely used index of charismatic attachment from the organizational behavior literature, one that has been shown to have a nice ability to capture powerful emotional attachment to political leaders (Merolla et al. 2007). In the current Venezuelan context, where so much political sympathy is driven by support for or opposition to Chávez, this seems

an apt substitute. In any case, using a more standard partisan indicator, such as vote choice, yields similar results.

The results of these models are found in table 4. Because of the large number of models, the table provides only the coefficients and an indicator of their statistical significance; coefficients are considered to be statically significant only when $p < .05$ or less. What first stands out is the importance of affect for Chávez for all forms of Bolivarian organizations, whether the participatory initiatives or the missions. Charisma4 in particular is a strong predictor, significant at the $p < .000$ level across all of these programs. The relationship is in the direction we might expect, with stronger levels of affect for Chávez associated with higher levels of participation.

In contrast, the two traditional civil society organizations (producer associations and religious organizations) have no statistically significant relationship to affect for Chávez; participants are equally for and against him. Instead, participation in these associations seems to be a product of standard sociodemographic factors. It should be noted that the results for these two specific associations are broadly representative of the results we would find if we considered other traditional associations from these two categories. The most important determinants are the sex of the respondent (males participate much more often in producer associations, females in churches), education (highly educated respondents participate more in churches), propensity to talk about politics (those with a higher propensity participate more in producer associations), and, to a lesser degree, age (older Venezuelans are somewhat more likely to participate in both groups of traditional associations). Income is not a strong predictor, although it should be noted that this tends to be highly correlated with education and is thus dampened in the model. Religious denomination would also be a good predictor of participation in churches, in that non-Catholics are much more likely to participate actively, but recoding this survey question as a dichotomous variable (annual participation in any church) means that we lose this correlation.

Most of these results are in line with the literature on civic participation in other countries, such as the United States (see Verba et al. 1995), which finds that participation usually increases with age, income, and education, particularly to the degree that these bolster citizens' political skills, and whenever citizens are particularly likely to feel a stake or interest in the association. Thus, for example, Venezuelan men participate more in traditional forms of association that are linked to occupation, while females participate more in associations linked to religion and childrearing.

What factors distinguish among the different Bolivarian programs? The participatory initiatives (and this includes the educational missions) are driven by a particular set of additional variables that set them apart

Table 4. Results of Probit Models of Participation

Variable	Traditional Associations		Secondary Associations				Bolivarian Participatory Initiatives			
	Producer Association	Religious Organization	Health Committee	Urban Land Committee	Cooperative	Communal Council	Bolivarian Circle			
							Female	Age	Income	Education
Female	-0.41***	0.25***	0.29**	0.01	-0.03	0.23**	0.11			
Age	0.01*	0.01**	0.01***	0.01	0.00	0.02***	0.01**			
Income	-0.03	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.06***			
Education	0.02	0.04***	0.01	-0.01	0.03*	0.00	0.02			
Education (squared)										
Activist	-0.15**	0.03	-0.13**	-0.07	-0.11*	-0.05	-0.26***			
Charisma4	-0.08	0.02	0.34**	0.59***	0.34**	0.56***	0.97***			
Charisma3	-0.12	0.04	0.17	0.33*	0.26*	0.31**	0.38**			
Charisma2	0.17	0.08	0.03	-0.33	-0.15	0.12	-0.15			
Catholic	0.08	-0.07	0.17	0.17	0.14	0.09	-0.02			
constant	-0.66	-0.87**	-1.67***	-1.60***	-1.25***	-1.53***	-0.88**			
N	1,187	1,189	1,186	1,191	1,187	1,184	1,175			
Chi ²	35.66	30.41	55.34	42.82	29.75	80.77	172.3			
Pseudo r squared	0.05	0.02	0.05	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.16			
Log likelihood	-342	-805	-554	-372	-485	-747	-464			

Table 4 (continued)

Variable	Missions				Mercal
	Robinson II	Ribas	Sucre	Barrio Adentro	
Female	0.26	0.45***	0.25*	0.14	0.16
Age	0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.01***	0.00
Income	-0.05*	-0.04	-0.05*	-0.03	-0.05*
Education	-0.03*	0.22***	0.08***	0.00	-0.01
Education (squared)		-0.01***			
Activist	-0.09	-0.15***	-0.07	-0.05	0.03
Charisma4	0.79***	0.58***	1.22***	1.03***	0.96***
Charisma3	0.49*	0.07	0.62**	0.66***	0.84***
Charisma2	0.23	0.40	0.38	0.37**	0.44**
Catholic	-0.19	-0.47***	-0.22	-0.01	-0.04
constant	-1.61***	-1.84***	-2.49***	-0.72**	0.11
N	1,187	1,187	1,173	1,175	1,188
Chi ²	47.72	93.9	95.96	150.3	124
Pseudo r squared	0.10	0.12	0.15	0.09	0.09
Log likelihood	-217	-342	-279	-738	-610

Note: Numbers are unstandardized coefficients *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.
 Source: AmericasBarometer 2007, author's calculation using Stata SE 10.1.

not only from the more popular missions but from traditional civil society. Specifically, participants in the Bolivarian initiatives are often more likely to be female, although, as with participants in traditional civil society, they are also older and somewhat more likely to talk about politics with their neighbors. Also, education and income matter less for participation, or if they matter they do so in a negative direction, where lower incomes and education are associated with higher participation, the one possible exception being the cooperatives. The educational missions in particular are strongly associated with predictable educational patterns, based on their target populations.¹⁴

This overall profile of participation is similar to that of the subset of traditional civil society represented by religious organizations. These results reaffirm the hope that Bolivarian associations are mobilizing new Venezuelans, particularly sectors of the population, such as women and the poor, that have traditionally been excluded from politics. In contrast, utilization of the more popular missions is primarily associated with affect for Chávez and two other sociodemographic factors peculiar to each mission: users of Mercal are more likely to be poor, and patients at Barrio Adentro are more likely to be elderly. These latter outcomes make sense, although, from an efficiency standpoint, it is disappointing to find that Barrio Adentro is not more carefully targeted at the poor.

Overall, the factor analysis and the multivariate regressions leave two broad findings regarding the scope and depth of Bolivarian popular mobilization. The good news is that Bolivarian participatory initiatives may actually be mobilizing previously unorganized Venezuelans. We cannot completely eliminate the possibility that newer Bolivarian programs are simply winning over activists from traditional civil society, but the presence of several distinct dimensions—traditional civil society and the Bolivarian initiatives and the missions—and the relatively moderate levels of continuing participation in traditional civil society suggests that participants in these groups of associations and programs are somewhat different sets of people. In particular, the regressions suggest that the Bolivarian initiatives and educational missions are better than some parts of traditional civil society at reaching out to women, the poor, and the less educated.

The bad news is that participation in the Bolivarian initiatives, like that in traditional civil society or participatory initiatives in other countries, is somewhat limited to a group of dedicated activists. The Communal Councils are a partial exception to this trend because of their raw numbers, but many of the individuals who participate in a given government participatory initiative are likely to be the same people participating in other government initiatives. This confirms the findings of López Maya (2008). In addition, it seems clear that participation in the programs of the Chávez government is strongly colored by partisanship.

Participants in both the missions and the participatory democracy initiatives are much more likely to be supporters of Chávez than are non-participants, an association that is largely absent in instances of traditional civil society.

EXPLAINING PARTISAN BIAS

This pattern of pro-Chávez activism across all the Bolivarian initiatives is not entirely surprising; it corroborates statistical analyses elsewhere showing that allocations of government programs across states and municipalities in Venezuela (specifically, some of the missions) are associated with partisan criteria (Penfold-Becerra 2007; Hawkins et al. forthcoming). According to these analyses, program sites are distributed disproportionately to swing districts, where they are most likely to have an impact on undecided voters, and occasionally to core districts, where they may be used to reward supporters. Some critics of Chavismo argue that these biases are symptoms of a larger problem of cronyism and clientelism (Corrales and Penfold 2007). According to this view, Chávez's movement is rebuilding the political machines of Venezuela's traditional parties, whose tendency to condition government services on partisan affiliation ultimately gave way to corruption and economic decline.

While true open conditionality clearly occurs in some areas of the Chávez government, this is probably not the best explanation for these findings.¹⁵ Rather, pro-Chávez bias is probably the product of a subtle process of self-screening driven by Chávez's populist discourse and leftist Bolivarian ideology. It may also reflect popular endorsement of generous social programs in a context of strong economic growth, which the country experienced abundantly during the four years prior to the survey.

The latter of these two arguments is a relatively straightforward application of retrospective economic voting theory (Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000). According to this view, the high coefficients for charisma seen in the regressions are the result, rather than the cause of participation: those who enjoy the benefits of these programs are afterward more inclined to view Chávez favorably. Unfortunately, it is impossible to test this argument with the data at hand because it requires an instrumental variable analysis; a wide array of indicators from the survey were tested, but none provided a useful instrument. The fact that Chavez's approval ratings rose dramatically after the inception of the missions and other participatory initiatives (from about 40 percent to 60 percent during 2003–4) suggests that retrospective evaluations are an important part of the story. At the same time, the strength of affect for Chávez is rather uneven across different programs and is not always strongest in

those providing the most material benefits, making it likely that other factors are also coming into play.

The argument about ideological self-screening is less familiar and requires a bit more explanation. Self-screening means a process of self-selection driven by largely ideological considerations. All program locales contain symbols and powerful reminders of the government's revolutionary program and incendiary discourse. A few programs, such as the more popular, noneducational missions, demand little commitment to the government's rhetoric; reminders of Chávez are a little easier to ignore for a few minutes of shopping or an occasional medical exam. But Chavista discourse is unavoidable in the Bolivarian participatory initiatives and the educational missions, where the goals, materials, and activities are all suffused with the language of neo-Marxism, antiglobalization, and Chávez's "socialism of the twenty-first century." Participants must sit in meetings or classrooms for hours at a time, sometimes for several days each week, and interact in a very personal way with the leaders, instructors, and other participants. For non-Chavistas, such partisan reminders can become unbearable.

While the retrospective economic voting argument cannot be tested here, ideological self-screening can be discussed and compared to claims about open conditionality. To begin with, assertions about open conditionality are simply not very credible, even in the case of the missions. The partisan correlates of mission allocations that show up in statistical analyses are hidden to the public and evident only after considering large quantities of data; they cannot be a conscious influence on individual choices to participate. After studying actual program sites, the author and his colleagues (Hawkins 2010; Hawkins et al. forthcoming) found that the missions do not seem to use any kind of overt partisan conditionality to determine eligibility. Both Mercal and Barrio Adentro have a clear open-door policy requiring only that users wait their turn in line. Likewise, the educational missions do not openly use partisan criteria in distributing classroom slots or scholarships, nor do participants suspect that there is any such screening.

The survey here seems to confirm these site-level findings. The survey includes a question asking nonparticipants in the missions their reasons for not using its services (MIS3, MIS6, MIS9, MIS12, MIS15). Nonparticipants almost never cite partisan concerns. In the cases of Mercal and Ribas, for example, fewer than 1 percent of nonparticipants say they were denied services for political reasons, and only 1 to 3 percent mention their disagreement with the government's politics. The evidence is not as strong for the participatory Bolivarian initiatives because the same follow-up questions were not asked, but the prominence and funding of the missions lead one to suspect that this pattern holds across other, more participatory instances of popular mobilization, all of which

offer fewer benefits to participants and demand greater sacrifices of time and resources. We should also bear in mind that one-quarter of the participants in most of the participatory initiatives actually have negative affect toward Chávez, a finding that seems to show that Chávez opponents can and sometimes do participate in these programs, albeit in disproportionately lower numbers.¹⁶

We can see other evidence of ideological self-screening when we look more closely at the results of the probit analyses. The coefficients for charisma are large across all the government programs and especially in the two most popular missions; Barrio Adentro and Mercal show a very strong association with affect for Chávez. Yet the magnitude of these coefficients is just as strong in Sucre mission and the Bolivarian Circles, both of which (especially the circles) offer more limited benefits and require greater sacrifices by participants. Partisan conditionality is probably not driving these latter results.

An additional piece of evidence comes as we consider not the absolute magnitudes in the change in probability of participating in these programs (which can be a little misleading in popular programs with higher baseline participation), but the percent increase in probability. To gauge this, the expected probabilities of participating in each of these participatory initiatives and the popular missions were calculated, given an imaginary but fairly representative respondent with the following characteristics: female, age 36, schooling to the 10th grade, 7th income decile (Bs 680,000–750,000 per month for the household), and Catholic—and using all four possible responses to charisma. The percent change in probability across the different responses to charisma was then calculated.

As table 5 shows, the largest percent change is found not in the Mercal and Barrio Adentro missions but in several of the participatory initiatives, especially the educational missions, the circles, and the Urban Land Committees. The probability of participating in these latter programs is, of course, low, but much of the participation they do have is explained by affect for Chávez. The change in probability from lowest to highest levels of affect (see the bottom row of the table) is usually well over 100 percent. This again seems to indicate strong self-selection into more ideologically suffused programs rather than open conditionality or clientelistic vote buying. There is no reason for a clientelistic government to impose higher partisan hurdles in programs providing the smallest material benefits. However, there is a reason for highly devoted followers of Chávez to select themselves into these programs, as they typically require the greatest level of long-term exposure and commitment to the government's discourse.

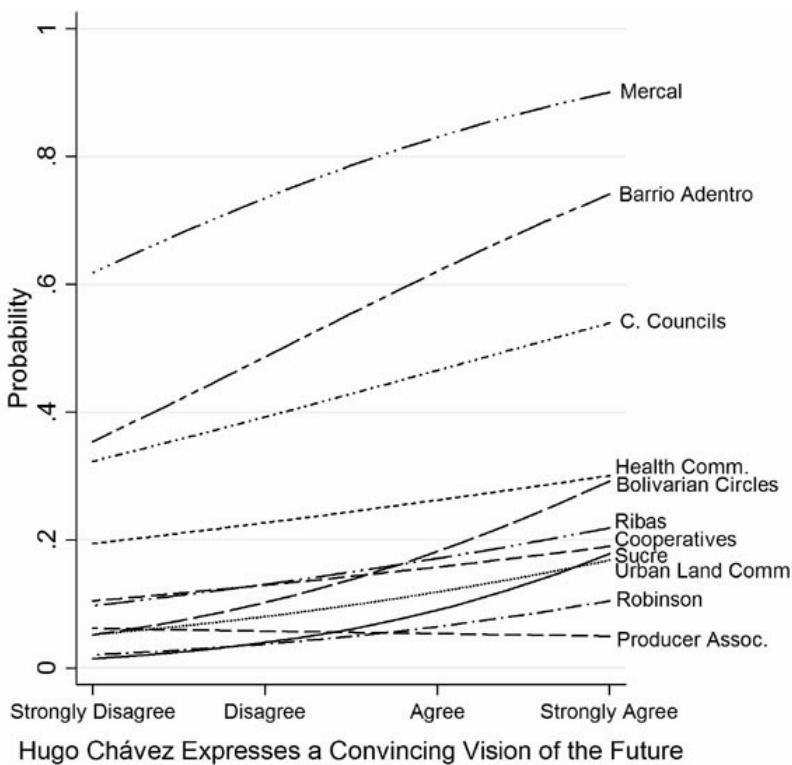
One final piece of evidence is found in the shape of these trends. Figure 4 depicts these expected probabilities graphically. The horizon-

Table 5. Expected Probability of Participating in Bolivarian Programs, by Affect for Chávez

Response to Survey Question ^a	Producer Assoc.	Community Council	Health Committee	Cooperative Committee	Barrio Adentro	Robinson II	Ribas	Sucré	Bolivarian Circle	
									Mercal	Mercal II
Strongly agree	0.06	0.53	0.30	0.19	0.17	0.73	0.87	0.10	0.24	0.16
Strongly disagree	0.07	0.32	0.19	0.11	0.06	0.33	0.57	0.02	0.10	0.01
Percent change	-13.8	68.2	54.4	69.1	179.9	117.7	52.5	422.0	141.1	1,114.1
										308.7

^aQuestion: "Chávez expresses a convincing vision of the future."

Figure 4. Expected Probabilities of Participating in Bolivarian Programs, by Affect for Chávez



Source: AmericasBarometer 2007; author's calculation using Stata SE 10.1

tal axis measures the different levels of affect for Chávez, while the vertical axis gauges the likelihood of using each of these programs, using the results of the regressions in table 4. If some kind of partisan conditionality were in operation, we would see a jump in each line beyond a certain threshold of affect for Chávez; what we see, however, is the opposite. The graph shows some modest nonlinearities, but the two most popular missions are flat or curve somewhat downward, suggesting a relatively low threshold of partisanship if there is one, while the educational missions and the participatory Bolivarian initiatives tend to curve upward, suggesting a higher threshold of partisanship. The effect is again highest in the Bolivarian Circles and the Sucre mission. Hence, if there is any partisan conditionality in effect, it is most severe in programs that offer the smallest material benefits and require the greatest ideological commitment.

CONCLUSIONS

Participatory democracy remains an important issue distinguishing the agenda of the New Left in Latin America. However, data to analyze the effects of participatory democratic initiatives on popular mobilization have been lacking, particularly in the salient case of Chavismo and the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. This analysis of results from the AmericasBarometer helps fill this gap.

What the case of Chavismo suggests for proponents of participatory democracy—and for the scholars who study it—is tempered enthusiasm and perhaps a little caution. Even in a country such as Venezuela, which is dedicating enormous resources to participatory initiatives, the gains in popular mobilization are real but moderate. Participation in the Communal Councils is very high, and most of the Bolivarian initiatives draw heavily from groups that are often absent from traditional civil society, especially women and the poor. These are encouraging results. Yet involvement in the most participatory Bolivarian initiatives seems to be highly concentrated among a group of activists. This finding necessarily qualifies an assessment of the Chávez government's efforts at greater citizen participation, and it suggests that broadly based participation will be difficult to achieve in other countries as well.

The Bolivarian experiment also highlights a second area of concern that receives relatively little attention in the broader literature on participatory democracy; namely, partisan bias. Involvement in all the Bolivarian initiatives is strongly associated with affect for Chávez. While some of this support may be due to an ordinary, retrospective judgment by voters receiving goods and services from the government, it probably also represents the self-selection of participants based on their ideological affinity for Chavez's populist discourse and leftist nationalism. This partisanship represents a potentially serious problem that undercuts the government's claims to operate participatory programs on behalf of the Venezuelan people as a whole and confirms depictions of Venezuela as a polarized polity (McCoy and Myers 2004).

It would be easy to dismiss this partisan bias as a problem unique to Chavismo in Venezuela, but it seems likely to occur in other Latin American countries also. The most radical forms of participatory democracy are promoted most heavily by one side of the partisan spectrum, and these policies are rarely politically neutral in terms of the benefits they provide for different civil society organizations (see Goldfrank and Schneider 2006). The activist zeal that infuses these movements with energy can alienate large swaths of the population that hold differing ideologies and discourses—including many of the citizens who are supposed to be beneficiaries of these policies. Analysts of participatory democracy should be more attuned to this potential for bias in program

implementation and should include standard measures of partisanship in their studies, at both the aggregate and individual levels.

NOTES

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1. *Partisan* is used here in the broad sense of allegiance to a cause, faction, or person, and not just to officially constituted political parties. Many supporters of Chávez remain mistrustful of parties *per se* and affiliate with the broader movement by other organized means.

2. Avritzer (2002) distinguishes between what he calls participatory and deliberative forms of democracy, but in the case of Chavismo as well as the Brazilian examples here, elements of both are often combined.

3. Again, in the case of Brazil, where participatory budgeting was implemented only in select localities, these surveys need not and probably should not include the entire country; the relevant population is the municipalities or states where participatory budgeting has been implemented. But even locally representative survey samples are rare. For a partial exception in Brazil, see Wampler 2007b.

4. All of these English translations are the author's own. The original Spanish text is widely available online.

5. Other organizations and programs include the Technical Water Roundtables (*Mesas Técnicas de Agua*), which work with government officials to receive and apportion water in communities without regular service; the Self-Managing Community Organizations (*Organizaciones Comunitarias Autónomas*), shantytown associations designed to integrate community development projects through a master plan; and the new community media outlets, which provide locally produced radio and television stations and newspapers. All of these incorporate strong elements of community deliberation and self-governance. For more information, see López Maya 2008; García-Guadilla 2007; on community media, see Fernandes forthcoming; Schiller forthcoming; Hawkins 2006.

6. The government originally reported more than 10,000 Barrio Adentro I clinics, but by November 2007 this figure had dropped to 6,527. See MINCI 2007.

7. The Urban Land Committees predate the rise of Chávez and have tended to demonstrate greater autonomy than some of the other initiatives; in this

regard, they are more a part of civil society than of the state. However, the government has given them official backing and, since 2005, has attempted to give them regular financing while bringing them under the aegis of the Communal Councils (García-Guadilla 2007a).

8. Specifically, the government reports as much as Bs5.2 trillion appropriated for the councils in 2007 (through November), with about 80 percent of the total actually distributed (MPS 2007). Some additional funding comes by way of local governments, a few of which are controlled by the opposition.

9. Perhaps the most famous educational mission is the literacy program, Robinson I. Because this mission is not a strong concern of the government since it declared Venezuela “illiteracy free” in 2005, the focus here is on the newer phase of this program. (On Robinson I see Wagner 2005; for a critical assessment of the actual success of its efforts, see Rodríguez 2007; Ortega and Rodríguez 2008).

10. According to the National Institute of Statistics in Venezuela (INE 2008), in 2007 the adult (18+) population was estimated at 17.5 million, while the 15+ population was 19.1 million. The latter yields an estimate of 6.8 million participants in the Communal Councils, although we cannot be certain that the survey data represent this younger cohort.

11. Bear in mind that these totals in Venezuela are for annual participation, which in many of these programs is a rather low threshold for meaningful involvement. Monthly and weekly participation are typically two-thirds of this total (figure 1).

12. That said, the educational missions actually show an increase from what the government estimated in 2005. The number of participants is higher for both Ribas (1.1 million, according to the survey, up from 0.6 million) and Sucre (0.8 million, up from 0.25 million), but lower for Robinson II (0.6 million, down from 1.5 million). This may be due to the graduation of students from lower programs, or it may represent the accumulation of nonperforming students in higher ones.

13. Participants in Ribas must have at least a grade school education but not a complete secondary education. For consistency, all other models were run with this same squared term, but none showed any effect greater than simply using the original, unsquared value.

14. Specifically, low levels of education are associated with participation in the Robinson II mission, moderate levels of education with the Ribas mission (the inclusion of a squared term accounts for this quadratic relationship), and high levels of education with the Sucre mission (hence the positive sign of this coefficient). Non-Catholics are also more likely to use these educational missions, particularly Ribas. This may reflect the fact that the best private schools in Venezuela are usually Catholic.

15. The most infamous case of open conditionality under the Chávez government is the *Lista Tascón*, a list of all Venezuelans who signed electoral petitions for or against the government during 2003–4. The initial version of the list was compiled by Luis Tascón, a Chavista politician, and remains widely distributed in electronic form as a searchable database that identifies individuals by name, national ID number, and other personal information. During the run-up to the 2004 recall election, the list was used by the government to obstruct voter

registration and punish government employees suspected of supporting the opposition, and to a lesser degree by opposition businesses to punish their own employees who were government supporters. For a history of the list and an analysis of its influence on the economy, see Hsieh et al. 2007.

16. This is true of all programs here except the Robinson II and Sucre missions and the Urban Land Committees.

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