

- Schmidt, Vivien (2008). "Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11, June: 303-326.
- Schmidt, Vivien A. (2010). "Taking ideas and discourse seriously: explaining change through discursive institutionalism as the fourth 'new institutionalism,'" *European Political Science Review* 2(1): 1-25.
- Shaffner, Brian F. and Patrick J. Sellers (2010). *Winning with Words: The Origins & Impact of Political Framing*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Spekman, Hans in Oldenbeuving, Joanne (2011). *Pauw en Witteman* [Television broadcast], Hilversum, The Netherlands: VARA, 4 November.
- Steinmo, Sven (2008). "What is Historical Institutionalism?" in Della Porta, Donatella, and Michael Keating. *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Streeck, Wolfgang and Kathleen Thelen (2005). *Beyond Continuity: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Thomassen, Jacques J.A. & Rudy B. Andeweg (2007). "Fractiediscipline: Vooroordelen en misverstanden," *Jaarboek Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen 2006*. Groningen, The Netherlands: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, DNPP.
- Van Gorp, Johannes A.A.M. (2012). "Discussing Immigrants, Identity, and Europe: Implications for the Dutch Party System." *Open Citizenship* 3(1): 8-35.
- Van Holsteyn, Joop J.M. van, and Galen A. Irwin (2003). "Never a dull moment: Pim Fortuyn and the Dutch parliamentary election of 2002," *West European Politics* 26(2): 41-68.
- Van Kersbergen, Kees and André Krouwel (2008). "A double-edged sword! The Dutch centre-right and the 'foreigners issue,'" *Journal of European Public Policy* 15(3): 398-414.
- Volkens, Andrea (2007). "Strengths and weaknesses of approaches to measuring policy positions of parties," *Electoral Studies* 26(1): 108-120.
- Vossen, Koen (2013). *Rondom Wilders: Portret van de PVV*. Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Boom
- Webb, Paul (2002). "Party Systems, Electoral Cleavages and Government Stability." In Heywood, Paul, Erik Jones and Martin Rhodes. *Developments in West European Politics 2*. New York, NY: Palgrave.

POPULIST DISCOURSE AND THE REMAKING OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN VENEZUELA*

Discurso populista y reconfiguración de la oposición política en Venezuela

Sahar Abi-Hassan**

Abstract: In recent years, two main political poles have consolidated in Venezuela, those in favor of the late President Hugo Chávez or *Chavistas* and those in opposition. Despite their divergent propositions and deep social polarization, the two camps share similarities, and in a way each camp has reinforced the existence of the other through its discursive practices. This paper investigates the role of the opposition in consolidating a populist discourse in Venezuela. Through a qualitative content analysis of online news articles, the paper shows that the ideas and discourse of the anti-Chávez movement between 2000 and 2012 consolidated the populist discourse of the Chavista government.

Keywords: Opposition, Chavismo, populist discourse, polarization, political identities

Resumen: Recientemente se han consolidado en Venezuela dos polos políticos, los chavistas que apoyan al gobierno del fallecido Hugo Chávez y la oposición. A pesar de la amplia divergencia en el contenido de sus proyectos políticos y la profunda polarización social que eso ha generado, los dos campos comparten similitudes, y de cierta manera se validan mutuamente a través de sus prácticas discursivas. En este trabajo se investiga el papel de la oposición en la consolidación de un discurso populista en Venezuela. A través de un análisis de contenido cualitativo de artículos de noticias en línea, este trabajo muestra que las ideas y el discurso de la oposición entre el 2000 y 2012 juega un papel importante en la consolidación del discurso populista del gobierno de Hugo Chávez.

Palabras Claves: Oposición, Chavismo, discurso populista, polarización, e identidades políticas.

Introduction

Since the turn of the millennium, Venezuela has seen the emergence and consolidation of two political camps: *Chavismo*, and the opposition (*la oposición*). The first is an umbrella term for any group, party or individual supporting the late Hugo Chávez, and the latter for all those against him. While a political opposition in Venezuela is now consolidated under the Platform of Democratic Unity (MUD), this was not always the case. The opposition in Venezuela—as a political movement—has its origins in the old establishment, including political parties, and business, labor and

** Doctoral Student in Political Science, Boston University, saharabi@bu.edu

civic organizations.¹ This incongruous and fragmented set of actors began to coalesce in the early 2000s around their dislike for the policies implemented by President Hugo Chávez. Hence, the process by which the opposition took shape is closely intertwined with the government of Hugo Chávez.

Chávez's landslide victory in 1998 allowed him ample space to set in motion and expand a "revolutionary" project beginning with the 1999 constitutional reform. Thereafter, even within the constraints of growing opposition, Chávez's mandate was ratified in the 2000 presidential election and the 2004 revocatory referendum, clearing the way for his political project (CNE 2000; CNE 2004). Capitalizing on the crisis of representative institutions and his soaring popularity, Chávez redrafted the political space to make it more inclusionary, specifically, to promote the participation and inclusion of the most neglected and disenfranchised sectors of the population (Roberts 2012). Creating a political space open to everyone, and constructing an alternative form of participatory democracy was accompanied by the displacement of the *Punto Fijo* system.²

Chávez's brand of populism crystalized from the beginning of his first presidential term. While the share of low-income supporters varied throughout Chávez's presidency (Lupu 2010), his political project served to consolidate the political and social interests of disenfranchised groups. By now it has been widely established in the literature how a populist logic emerged, and consolidated in Venezuela in the last 15 years. A discourse that framed society into the "us" versus "them", an anti-status-quo mode of governance keen on replacing all political institutions associated with the old establishment, the presentation of his person as the central figure of a new inclusive nation-project, and a strong emphasis on turning the country into a participatory democracy (Brading 2013; De la Torre 2013; Ellner 2010; Hawkins 2010; Roberts 2012). However, the role of the opposition in this process remains understudied. Hence, to what extent did the opposition contribute to the consolidation of a populist logic in Venezuela?

The first signs of opposition in Venezuela originated with the old establishment reacting to its displacement by the late President. For instance, the constitutional reform, proposed by the Chávez government, and approved through a referendum, generated a strong pushback from the old establishment, as it was perceived to greatly expand executive power. Due to the variety of actors involved, the responses of the opposition were not always coordinated and continuously shifted depending on which faction predominated at the time. However, while the opposition has been composed of different groups at different times, and has used different approaches and means, it has consistently maintained a single purpose: to

¹ The opposition in Venezuela emerges from the cooperation of political parties such as Democratic Action (AD), the Social Christian party (COPEI), Causa R, and Primero Justicia, in addition to important organizations such as the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce (FEDECAMARAS), and the Confederation of Workers of Venezuela (CTV). Later on the configuration of the opposition would shift and change adding and removing actors as it continued to antagonize Chávez and his policies.

² This was a formal pact or political project, following the fall of Marcos Perez Jimenez's dictatorship, between Venezuela's three main parties, Acción Democrática, COPEI and Unión Republicana Democrática to accept the result of the 1958 elections and to safeguard the democratic regime being inaugurated with it.

remove Chávez and his loyalists from political power (Brading 2013: 67-75; Cannon 2004; Coordinadora Democrática De Venezuela 2002, Art.1-6).

In pursuit of this single goal, the opposition in Venezuela has coordinated and communicated its message(s) and action(s) by consistently emphasizing its antagonism towards Chávez. While there were moments of dialogue, its outcomes were short lived. Hence, this paper suggests that the opposition in Venezuela has reinforced the same framework of populist ideas and discourse used by the Chávez regime. It shows that through its emphasis on antagonism, and the assertion that it represents "the people", the discursive strategies of the opposition in Venezuela perpetuated, and eventually became constrained by a populist logic. Rather than just advancing its own goals, this has continuously reinforced a populist logic, and thus legitimized the position of power, or at least the perception of dominance of the government.

To test this hypothesis, this paper follows the approach of discursive institutionalism (DI). Emerging from the old institutionalisms (rational, historical, and sociological), DI primarily makes an emphasis on the role of ideas and discourse in shaping institutions. According to its proponent, Vivien A. Schmidt (2008; 2010), discursive institutionalism provides us with the tools to research the "substantive content of ideas", as well as "discourse or the interactive process of conveying ideas" (Schmidt 2008: 303).³ As such, it lends insights into the role of ideas and discourse in politics while providing a more dynamic approach to institutional change than the older three new institutionalisms. In DI, ideas are the substantive content of discourse where they exist at three levels - policies, programs, and philosophies - and can be categorized in two types, cognitive and normative. Discourse is the interactive process of conveying ideas, which comes in two forms: the coordinative discourse among policy actors and the communicative discourse between the political actors and the public. The forms differ in two formal institutional contexts; simple polities have a stronger communicative discourse and compound polities have a stronger coordinative discourse. The institution of discursive institutionalism, moreover, are not external-rule following structures but rather are simultaneously structures and constructs internal to agents whose "background ideational abilities" within a given "meaning context" explain how institutions are created and exist, and whose "foreground discursive abilities", following a specific "logic of communication", explain how institutions change or persist. Within this framework, interests are understood as "subjective ideas, which, though real, are neither objective nor material and norms are dynamic, intersubjective constructs rather than static structures" (Schmidt, 2008:303). This greatly enhances our research capabilities by explaining how and why some ideas succeed while others fail within a specific contextual institutional setting. However, more specifically, by looking into frames and content analysis of ideas, and the communicative discourse of political leaders, DI is instrumental to understanding how ideas and discourse are shaped by the institutional context, while institutions are also shaped by discourse and ideas.

In order to understand the extent to which populist ideas have become embedded into the political space in Venezuela, first we need to have a clear understanding of the concept of populism. For this, the first section of the paper builds on the recent literature to generate a clear definition of populism, and how a populist discourse diffuses within a specific institutional context. The second provides an overview of the comparative literature on the emergence and consolidation of populism in Venezuela. The third section outlines the research design and methods, with special focus on the approach of discursive institutionalism. The fourth section provides the historic-institutional context in which a political opposition emerged in Venezuela and its evolution until the 2012 presidential elections. This is used to frame the analysis of ideas and discourse of the opposition in support of the main hypothesis. As a way of concluding, the paper discusses the potential for future research into how ideas and discourse might play a role in the perpetuation of a populist logic in a post-Chávez era.

1. Defining Populism

For decades now, populism has been one of the most debated concepts in political science. It has been applied to both left-wing leaders such as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, and right-wing parties such as the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) in Europe. It can be a politics of opposition or government, it is found in Europe as much as in Latin America, and can be an advocate for the underclass as much as it promotes the exclusion of minorities (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013). For instance, an exclusionary right-wing populism has emerged in Europe in the last two decades characterized by xenophobic appeals and nationalistic claims (Art 2011; Betz 1994; Carter 2005; Koopmans and Muis 2009; Mudde 2007). While in Latin America, populism has been mainly characterized by an inclusionary version that promotes social security, and the integration of ethnic identities (Dornbusch and Edwards 1991; Madrid 2005; Weyland, Madrid, and Hunter 2010).

Definitional divergence in the study of populism has historically encompassed a wide range of incongruous and even opposite attributes that span the economic, political, social and discursive domains used to describe a wide variety of political movements, parties, ideologies, and leaders. According to Canovan (1982), the basis for the vagueness in the definition of populism is the intent of scholars to either cast a wide-ranging normative definition, or one empirically based. The first approach attempts to bring all possible cases under one “theoretical roof.” The second is more “phenomenological”, collecting cases and following a descriptive mode to build a theory of populism (Canovan 1982: 545). The main challenge with these approaches has been a “tradeoff between comprehensiveness and clarity” (Canovan 1982: 548). The first is very diffuse to provide substantive information, and the latter is too narrow to be applicable to all cases.

More recently, scholars have converged on a definition of populism that is mainly based on political attributes, either institutional or ideational (Abts and

Rummens 2007; Arditì 2004; Barr 2009; Brett 2013; De la Torre 2013; Hawkins 2010; Laclau 2005a; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012; Panizza 2005; Weyland 2001). Within the institutional branch, Weyland (2001) makes an important contribution by unhinging the concept from its socioeconomic policies. Rather than establishing an a priori relation between the political and socioeconomic, Weyland (1999) leaves the latter open to empirical investigation. According to Weyland (2001: 11) populism can be best defined as a “political strategy where a leader appeals to a heterogeneous mass of followers, reaching out to them in a direct quasi-personal manner that bypasses established intermediary organizations, especially political parties.” In this sense, the populist label is about how the leader “shapes patterns of political rule and not the distribution of socioeconomic benefits or losses”, for which it “espouses an anti-elite rhetoric and challenges the status-quo” (Weyland 2001: 11).

Nevertheless, this definition remains somehow problematic as it relegates populism to mainly a position of power, or in the least as a phenomenon that can always transcend to power. What about populism that fails to win office, and remains in the opposition, as is the case in some Western European countries? Moreover, the charismatic and strategic dimensions in Weyland’s (2001) definition are not necessarily unique to populism (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012; 2013). Other mass movements have charismatic leaders, and low levels of organization, but they are not necessarily populist.

Within the ideational approach, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2012: 8) define populism as a “thin-centered ideology, that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.” This definition provides two important thresholds against which to measure populism. First, as a “thin-centered ideology”, the content of each movement is relative to the socio-political context in which populism takes place (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2011). And second, populism has one clear manifestation that remains constant regardless of socioeconomic structures or the power position it operates from: the moral distinction between the “the pure people” and the “corrupt elite” (Mudde 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013: 151).

Similarly, in the discourse theory tradition, Laclau (2005a) argues that the identification of a regime as populist follows “a particular logic of articulation” [...] of social demands and “their peculiar relation with the established order” (Laclau 2005a: ix). Hence, populism operates as a logic or mode of identification that constitutes “the people” in a relation of opposition to the dominant structures or the status quo (Laclau 2005b; Panizza 2008). However, these two groups are not necessarily homogenous. In fact, they are usually the product of a process of aggregation of a set of heterogeneous demands. So, if this social divide is the sine-qua-non of populism, how can it be differentiated from other political regimes, and how does populism move from opposition to a position of power?

Addressing this gap in the literature, Laclau (2005b, 39) argues that “the construction of an enemy” or opposition to the status-quo is not enough to stabilize these disparate and heterogeneous demands. The articulation of a populist logic

requires the identification of an anchor or agents (empty signifier) that embodies the homogenization of these disparate demands; a concept or name that without losing its own specificity, stands as a universal representation for all other demands to which it is seen as equivalent (Laclau 2005a; 2005b; Panizza 2005). By weakening and overriding the country's political institutions, a special relation of representation is established between the leader and his followers; therefore, people identify directly with the leader. This is what differentiates populism as a "mode of identification" from other political logics (Panizza 2005).

Building upon these conceptualizations, in this paper populism is defined as a political logic of identification where an agent embodies heterogeneous disparate social demands and constitutes them into a homogenous "people", in an antagonistic relation to 'the other', within a context specific ideological framework. This definition follows closely the empirically based ideational approach of Hawkins (2010), and Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2012), and the more normative definition of Laclau (2005a; 2005b) and Panizza (2005).

Defining populism through the ideational approach has important implications for the way in which a study of populist politics should be carried on. This directs our attention to the content of ideas and discourse of populist leaders, and the institutional context in which these operate (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013; Mudde 2007; Rooduijn, de Lange, and Van Der Brug 2012). Hence, the next logical step would be to establish what ideas and discourse make the Chávez regime a populist one, and how this has affected the political landscape in Venezuela.

2. Populism in Venezuela

The recent emergence of populist leaders in Latin America and Europe has proven that populism is not a thing of the past, but a recurrent phenomenon compatible with multiple economic models, social bases, and political ideologies (Panizza 2008; Weyland 1999). So far, Chávez's regime stands as one of the most influential cases. So what makes Chávez and his government populist? According to Panizza and Miorelli (2009: 42), "the appeal of populism in the region (Latin America) has to be understood with reference to past and present political dislocations. Unmet social needs and heightened economic insecurities, for instance, provide raw material for the articulation of political grievances."

Socioeconomic factors have been cited as the primary explanation for the rise of populist leaders in Latin America (Brading 2013; De la Torre 2013; Hawkins 2010; Laclau 2005b; Panizza and Miorelli 2009). It is argued that decades of exclusionary policies led to the accumulation of disenfranchised groups looking for a change in their political system. Indeed, Chávez himself was shaped within these sectors of the population, and his political project would be oriented towards changing what was considered a pervasive status quo.

Following a period of political and economic stability between 1958 and the late 1970s, Venezuela's economy began to rapidly deteriorate, converging into

the first strike to the country's political institutions. Socioeconomic dislocations triggered mass popular protests in Caracas on February 27, 1989 in what became known as *El Caracazo*. As a sequel to this crisis and in opposition to President Carlos A. Pérez's neoliberal reforms, on February 4, 1992, Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez and his MBR-200 movement carried out a failed coup *d'état*. Despite being undemocratic and unsuccessful, this act of insurgency "signified radical change to a discredited and repressive institutional system" (Brading 2013: 2). By then, the prevailing institutional arrangement began to crumble as opposition towards the *Punto Fijo* system consolidated; Venezuelans were ready for a radical change.

After his release from prison in 1994, Chávez began working towards the presidential election of 1998, where he won with the highest vote to date, 56.2% (CNE 1998). Aided by high popular support, Chávez was set to lead the country towards a more inclusionary and participatory political system. However, materializing his promises as a candidate required the dismantling of institutional structures that had prevailed for the last 40 years. Key institutions such as the legislative, state and local governments, trade unions, business organizations, and the oil industry were still primarily under the leadership of the *Punto Fijo* loyalists. Chávez would turn to the people in order to overcome this challenge.

Following the positive outcome of the consultative national electoral referendum in April 1999, the National Constituent Assembly was established with the purpose of drafting the new constitution (CNE 1999b). By the end of the year the new Bolivarian Constitution establishing the Fifth Republic was approved with overwhelming support; 72% of the popular vote; although turnout was only 44% (CNE 1999a). The approval of the new Constitution set in motion institutional and programmatic changes, as put by Chávez himself, intended to free the "people" from the exclusion and exploitation suffered at the hands of the previous governments (Valero 2007: 54).

Starting with the constitutional reform of 1999, Chávez initiated a process to dismantle the country's institutions, which were considered exclusionary, elitist and against the interests of the Venezuelan people. As eloquently put by Roberts (2012: 147), "participation, then, was both an end and a means for *Chavismo*... it helped Chávez refound the constitutional order, sideline the political establishment, and deliver social and economic benefits to a broad range of political supporters." As such, through the aggregation of unmet social needs, those disenfranchised by the older regime were constituted as the "people", and the old order (*Punto Fijo system*) was constructed as the 'other', dividing the social camp into an "us" versus "them" (Brading 2013).

Within a Manichean ideology, Chávez's political project was presented as a "worldview or discourse about the nature of politics, one revolving around the struggle between «good», and «evil»; where good encompasses the «will of the people», and evil the «elite attempting to subvert the common interest of the people»" (Hawkins 2010: 5). Mapping onto this discourse, Chávez's government implemented innovative social programs or "*misiones*" (Venezuela's social programs in areas of food, health, education, and housing), which provided many with a

sense of inclusion and empowerment by extending access to resources to segments of the population that were previously neglected. Nevertheless, despite the positive outcomes generated by these massive redistribution efforts (Ellner 2010), the political discussion about policies or programmatic plans inevitably spilled over into a moral struggle.

Moreover, following the participatory model enshrined in the 1999 constitution, Chávez encouraged the formation of grass roots movements for the promotion of revolutionary processes and the organization of excluded sectors of the population, such as the Bolivarian Circles, the Urban Land Committees, and communal councils (De la Torre 2013). While some considered the formation of these groups a step towards greater citizenship and social responsibility (Machado, 2008 cited in De la Torre 2013: 32), others have argued that since they are created and regulated by the leader himself, they only serve to consolidate the president's populist discourse. As such, they are the organizational manifestation of populist politics (Hawkins 2010).

While Chávez's political project set in motion a new inclusionary and participatory system, some scholars contend that the fact that this is centered in his person has taken the country closer towards authoritarianism. Corrales and Penfold (2011), and Brewer-Carías (2010) –a former official in the pre-Chávez era– argue that the same bold political and economic reforms that support Chávez's inclusionary project have also facilitated the consolidation of crony and clientelist practices, as well as the centralization of government functions, providing the president with substantial advantage over his political challengers (Brewer-Carías 2010; Corrales and Penfold 2011).

Although the literature about the achievements and shortcomings of the Chávez regime is mixed, there is no doubt that for the last 15 years the political space in Venezuela has been dominated by a populist logic. Chávez's brand of populism is evident through a discourse that frames society into the "us" versus "them", an anti-status-quo mode of governance that has consistently worked to override all political institutions associated with the old establishment, the presentation of his person as the central figure of a new inclusive nation-project, and a strong emphasis on ruling through participatory democracy (Brading 2013; De la Torre 2013; Hawkins 2010; Roberts 2012). So, if a populist logic has been dominant in Venezuelan politics, did the opposition operate within this same logic? And to what extent did it contribute to the consolidation of a populist logic?

3. Research Design and Methods

The main hypothesis of this paper is that populist discourse has come to define the terms of the political conversation and contestation in Venezuela for the last 15 years. Subsequently, this suggests that the opposition also operates within, and has reinforced a populist logic. To test this hypothesis, it focuses on the ideas and discourse of the opposition in the period between 2000 and 2012. This period was

selected as it aligns with the first signs of opposition to the government of Hugo Chávez and the 2012 presidential election.

Populism and Interactive Discourse

Although populist politics is measured through the discursive strategies of the opposition, exploring how it reinforced a populist logic in Venezuela requires that ideas and discourses be embedded within a specific institutional context. For this, the paper follows a discursive institutionalist approach which focuses on how the "substantive content of ideas", and "the interactive processes that shape ideas"[...] transform and are transformed by political institutions (Schmidt 2008: 305).

As argued by several scholars, populism cannot be exclusively associated with a particular economic policy, socioeconomic structure, or political system, and it does not subscribe to any specific ideology, although it can attach to one (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012; 2013: 151; Weyland 2001). As such, populist politics is primarily contingent upon the context in which it operates (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2011). This makes discursive institutionalism extremely relevant for the study of populism for two reasons.

On one hand, as argued by Schmidt (2008) the use of discursive institutionalism is justified by the following. First, it compels us to "take discourse seriously." Second, it "set ideas and discourse in institutional context." Third, it "places ideas into their meaning context, while discourse follows a logic of communication despite difference in what may be communicated, how and where." And last, it allows for a more dynamic approach towards institutional change and continuity (Schmidt 2008: 304).

On the other hand, discursive institutionalism departs from the old institutionalisms: rational institutionalism where institutions are considered to be in stable equilibrium with rationalist preferences; historical institutionalism where institutions follow a self-reinforcing historically path-dependent trajectory; and sociological institutionalism, where institutions are defined primarily by cultural norm. In this sense, discursive institutionalism takes into consideration historical, sociological, and rational aspects of political institutions without losing sight of the importance of ideas and the interactive processes that shape them, hence its ability to focus on both change and continuity.

The novelty of discursive institutionalism is that once we recognize that political actors are internal to institutions, tracing their discursive processes gives us a better understanding of why some ideas fail while others succeed. As reasoned by Schmidt (2010: 4), "the institutionalism in DI suggests that this approach is not only about the communication of ideas or 'text' but also about the institutional context in which, and through which ideas are communicated via discourse." As such, institutions serve as both "constraining structures", and "enabling constructs of meaning" where an agent's "background ideational abilities" and "foreground communicative abilities" determine the change (or continuity) of the political system.

To do this, Schmidt (2008: 305-6) suggests it is important to look into ideas both in terms of their levels of generality: policies, programs, and philosophies; and type of content: cognitive, given by “what is and what to do”, and normative, or “what is good or bad about what is in light of what one ought to do.” These different levels of generality and types of content are manifested into two types of discourse. The first, coordinative, which occurs at the level of policymakers and political actors when debating within “epistemic communities.” The second is the communicative discourse between political actors and the general public (Schmidt 2008).

Another important contribution of discursive institutionalism is that it allows for the use of a wide variety of theoretical or methodologically specific approaches, either focused on the analysis of ideas or the dynamics of epistemic communities, and the communication of ideas by the leader or political elite to the public. For this paper, we will restrict the use of discursive institutionalism to two of its specific approaches: content analysis of ideas, and the communicative discourse of political leaders.

Categories of Analysis

To measure populist ideas and discourse of the opposition I conducted a qualitative content analysis of 240 online news articles from a variety of national and international sources. The process of selecting the sample of news articles was based on a search with keywords that are usually associated with the opposition in Venezuela: opposition, anti-Chávez movement, *Coordinadora Democrática*, *Mesa de Unidad Democrática*, *Primero Justicia*, *AD*, and *COPEI*. This was carried-on in Spanish and English to allow for a broader sample.

Measuring discourse that reinforced a populist logic in Venezuela consisted of claims that fell under either one or more of the following categories: i) reinforcing the “us” versus “them”, ii) fighting the status-quo with emotional appeals, and iii) creating a direct connection between the leader and the “people.” The first category maps onto the definition of populism formulated in the theoretical section of the paper, where individuals are compelled to think about their political allegiance in dualistic terms.

The second category contains all ideas and discourses that frame the opposition’s disagreement with Chávez’s political project in emotional terms. This category is intended to capture instances where the opposition formulated its political platform mainly on its desire to remove Chávez from power or their assessment of the erosion of democracy in Venezuela, and not based on actual programmatic policies.

And the third category captures instances where the opposition places greater emphasis on the leader as the solution to what they consider an ongoing crisis of governability in Venezuela. While the leader-“people” relationship is something characteristic of Chávez’s populist style, this category is intended to measure the extent to which the opposition remained trapped in a populist logic as it united behind single candidates.

All the news articles were individually read and analyzed. Any phrases that were considered to fall within one or more of these categories were coded as such using the numbers assigned to each category. Thereafter this was compiled into frequencies for each category, and graphed under a normalized scale to address the variation in the number of articles found for each period.

The dependent variable in this case is the extent to which the opposition reinforced a populist logic through the articulation of ideas and discourse, within the current political and socioeconomic context. Through a qualitative content analysis of opposition discourses, this study focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with special attention to the contextual meaning of the text (Schmidt 2008). As such the analysis is organized around important events that provide the politico-institutional context in which the two main political poles develop, consolidate and interact.³

4. Political Opposition and the Consolidation of a Populist Discourse in Venezuela

In most studies about populism in Venezuela the opposition is presented as the “other”, only relevant as a complement to the narrative about why Chávez or *Chavismo* is populist. But, to what extent has the opposition played a role in consolidating a populist logic in Venezuela?

The political opposition started out as disparate set of factions united by their antagonism towards the government of Hugo Chávez and its policies. Joined by a common purpose, but separated by the means in which they pursued it, the political opposition can be divided into two primary factions: radicals, and moderates.⁴ The variety of factions operating within these two factions can be classified as political elites from the old establishment, new political leaders, labor and business leaders, the student movement, and *Chavismo* detractors. Through ideas and discourse, this section traces the context within which a political opposition emerged and consolidated, and how it contributed to the consolidation of populist politics in Venezuela. For this, the analysis is divided into three phases circumscribed by important events.

Phase I: Opposition in its early stages, 2000-2004

The populist project emerges in Venezuela by crystallizing the divisions that had been forming in previous administrations. Fighting established institutions and breaking with the status quo was instrumental for the constitution of a *Chavista* identity.

³ The enactment of 49 enabling laws by presidential decree in 2001, the failed coup of 2002, the general strike of 2003, the presidential referendum of 2004, the boycott of the legislative elections in 2005, the presidential election of 2006, the failed constitutional amendment of 2007, the successful constitutional amendment of 2009, the unification of all opposition factions under the MUD party in 2010, and the presidential election of 2012.

⁴ Although, the idea of an opposition ranges from hardcore opponents to those who remain undecided (*ni-nis*), the paper’s focus is limited to those factions that have actively participated in opposing Chávez’s government.

However, the analysis shows that in the first few years of the Chávez government, the anti-Chávez movement greatly contributed to the crystallization of these divisions. Starting with inoffensive protests, and condemnation of Chávez's policies, followed by the failed coup of 2002, and the general strike of 2002-2003, the opposition created a crisis environment where people were compelled to think about their political allegiance.

The first serious point of contention between the new government and the old establishment came after Chávez's party took control of the National Assembly (AN), allowing him to obtain a special constitutional power to rule by decree on matters of economic and social policy.⁵ The most vociferous opposition actors at the time were the Venezuelan Confederation of Workers (CTV), and the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce (FEDECAMARAS), which immediately condemned this as government overreach. Under a "unified protest strategy", the two organizations, along with the traditional political parties began encouraging protests and strikes across the country.

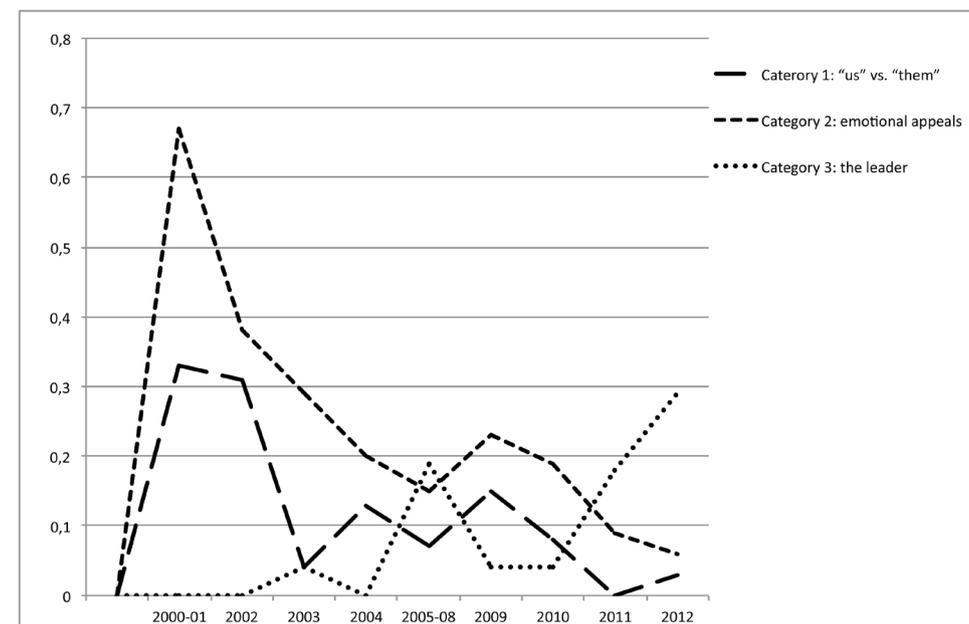
In a climate of growing discontent, the opposition called for a national strike in April of 2002, which culminated in clashes with Chávez supporters. While the circumstances remain unclear, the protests ended with several people dead, and many more wounded, leading to Chávez's short-lived resignation on April 11, followed by his return to office two days later. While both sides attempted some form of conciliation after the failed coup,⁶ the opposition followed the set course by calling for a strike at the national oil company (PDVSA) (EFE 2002). This was intended to weaken Chávez's base and force him to resign; instead it served to strengthen his political project: first, by handing him full control of the oil company and its massive amounts of revenues and, second, by further consolidating the government's antagonistic discourse (Brading, 2013: 74-5). This left the opposition with no other recourse but to wait for the presidential mid-term to request a referendum, which after a failed first attempt, and several subsequent delays, it lost to a 58% vote for the *NO* option (Wall Street Journal 2004). Despite verification by OAS, and the Carter Center, the opposition rejected these results, and continued to call for protests, and even civil disobedience during the 2004 regional elections (Noticias Financieras 2004; Notimex 2004).

Beside the detrimental consequences of these events –failed coup, strikes, protests, and referendum– for the economy, and the stability of the country, they created an environment that required people to take a position. As shown in Figure 1, between the enactment of the enabling laws in 2000 and the 2004 regional elections, the opposition's discourse mainly fell under categories 1 and 2. For instance, during the national strike in December 2002, the opposition's discursive strategies

⁵ Making use of this parliamentary authorization, in 2000 Chávez introduced a package containing 49 laws that covered six critical areas: economy, transport, service, infrastructure, science and technology, crime, and reorganization of his cabinet.

⁶ Mediated by the Carter Center and the Organization of American States (OAS), the Forum for Negotiation and Agreement was established in 2002 to attempt an agreement between the government of Venezuela and its supporters, and the *Coordinadora Democrática* and civil society. The parties agreed in May 2003 to call for a revocatory referendum.

politicized individual decisions on whether to go to work or to keep businesses open (Córdova 2000). In addition, although the massive rallies were intended to protest against Chávez's policies, they also served to reinforce social divisions. Through the communicative discourse of the opposition, Venezuelans, knowingly or not, were compelled to think about the place they occupied in the political arena, reinforcing the "us" versus "them" divide.



Consistent with category 1, the dichotomous nature of the opposition's discourse did not allow for a third alternative. Perhaps, this was the only possible strategy in a divided and non-cohesive political movement. During this phase, the opposition had a weak communicative discourse when it came to any specific policies or programmatic agenda for the future. As such, its communicative strategy was suspended in a philosophical level of generality, where the only discourse possible was that the measures being implemented by the current government were not consistent with their worldview of what a democratic system should look like (Coordinadora Democrática De Venezuela 2002).

Under category 2, phrases like "Mr. Chávez is trying to create a Cuban-style authoritarian regime" (this was a recurrent theme in the articles surveyed, eg. Moffett and Lifsher (2002)), and "Chávez must be substituted by capable leaders if we are to reach an understanding" (Córdova 2000), show how the opposition mainly relied on emotional appeals, in its attempt to recruit supporters. From its beginnings in 2000 until the outcome of the revocatory referendum in 2004 the anti-Chávez movement consistently communicated that the only viable solution was for Chávez

and his loyalists to be removed from power (Brading 2013, 67–75; Cannon 2004; Coordinadora Democrática De Venezuela 2002). The difference was in the means advocated; the moderates advocated for a constitutional exit, and the radicals called for removal through any means necessary.

From this it becomes evident that the opposition's communicative discourse was mainly framed in normative terms. The effect of this is that a public debate about the country's political institutions was necessarily pushed into the moral terrain. The political discussion was not about what was best for the country considering the current political or economic conditions. It was about what the opposition or the government considered it best based on their respective position within the current institutional framework.

Phase II: An Opposition in Limbo, 2005-2008

While not abandoning their emphasis on removing Chávez, in the aftermath of the revocatory referendum, the opposition's communicative discourse turns to disqualifying the electoral system, and hence attempts to delegitimize the government, especially in the eyes of the international community. The logic was that as the position of Chávez was consistently reassured through the rule of the majority, if the opposition could show that the system was fraudulent the government would lose its legitimacy. Citing lack of freedom, and fairness in the electoral process, opposition parties withdrew from the legislative elections of 2005 (LANS 2005). In this period, the opposition's discursive strategies continued to operate within categories 1 and 2, although in a much more toned down manner. Soon after, the opposition realized the ill conceived nature of their attempt to boycott the elections, as it only served to provide Chávez's coalition with a two-thirds majority (supermajority) in the AN.

By mid-2006 the opposition reverted back to a constitutional solution, this time in preparation for the presidential election at the end of the year. However, despite the opposition's best organizational efforts –through *Sumate*⁷– to select a unity candidate, Chávez won again with 63% of the popular vote. Consistent with category 3, agreeing to back a unity candidate (Manuel Rosales) was considered the best available strategy to run against a president that reinforced a personalistic style, and maintained a high level of popularity. However, it also reinforced the notion that the course set by Chávez could only be reverted by changing the president. In any other political scenario this would have been inconsequential. In a country where a populist logic pervades every aspect of society, the representation of the opposition in a single figure further reinforced the idea that politics is just about the leader. This shows the extent to which the opposition was already trapped in a populist logic.

Following the 2006 presidential election, the opposition lost much of its

⁷ *Sumate* is a non-profit civic organization created in 2002, which works to facilitate citizen's participation, mainly in electoral processes. *Sumate* played a major role in collecting signatures for the referendum in 2004, and continued to organize, and participate electoral processes for the opposition until the present (Sumate, n.d.).

momentum, which opened the space for new movements to emerge. The formation of a student movement, sparked by the announcement of the government to discontinue the license of one of the country's leading television networks (*Radio Caracas Television*, RCTV) momentarily filled the void. This would be the first time that a group not associated with a political party, or the old establishment becomes the face of the anti-Chávez movement. This also represented a shift from the anti-Chávez discourse to one in support of freedom of expression, at least for some time.

Not long after, the student movement combined efforts with traditional opposition actors to campaign against the 2007 constitutional amendment, and the 2008 regional elections. On one hand, the increasing salience of the student movement provided the opposition with an alternative way to show its discontent with the government's policies (Brading 2013: 81-2). On the other hand, its association with the old political elites meant a return to the same anti-Chávez rhetoric.

In this phase, the opposition's communicative strategies continued to reinforce the “us” versus “them”, and the validity of emotional appeals. However, greater cohesion allowed it to stand behind single candidates, and to formulate a more programmatic platform. While to an extent this is a mild shift away from a populist logic, the emphasis placed on being represented by a single leader keeps it operating within populist politics.

Phase III: Towards a Programmatic-based Approach, 2009-2012

The opposition's participation and acknowledgment of the results of the 2009 constitutional amendments represented the beginning of a new anti-Chávez movement willing to play by Chávez's rules, and to legitimize the country's electoral system. By then, the ideological affiliation of political institutions such as the legislative, the judicial, and the electoral board was more defined than at the beginning of the Chávez regime. Although clearly tilted in favor of the government, it did create a more predictable institutional framework.

By mid-2009, the opposition had already organized around the MUD as the main representative of its political and electoral platform in the upcoming 2010 legislative elections (La Verdad 2009).⁸ Within this new institutional framework, a more organized anti-Chávez movement entered what the 2012/2013 presidential candidate Henrique Capriles Radonski called “a new era of hope, without fights with Chávez's government,[...] working towards the objective of providing people a better living standard” (El País 2008).

Leading up to the legislative elections of 2010, the opposition was in a better position due to the declining state of the economy, and internal struggles within Chávez's coalition. But more importantly, it had learned from past mistakes, and reoriented its efforts towards crafting a programmatic platform that the people could understand and vote for, beyond just emphasizing an anti-Chávez rhetoric.

⁸ The MUD was instrumental in selecting single candidates for the upcoming legislative elections, as well as the organization of primary elections in preparation for the 2012 presidential elections.

While its purpose had not changed –it still wanted to remove Chávez from power–, its communicative discourse became more conciliatory and inclusive. Evidence of this can be found in the words of former Caracas mayor Leopoldo Lopez: “Chávez, king of the poor versus the rich opposition is an old story to me. Law and order, infrastructure and development, and respect for human rights, these are the main plank of the new opposition” (Morales 2009). Or as put by Julio Borges, leader of *Primero Justicia* party: “portraying the fight for Venezuela as a personalized battle to stop Chávez instead of offering a vision for a better country has been our biggest mistake” (Asia News Monitor 2010).

Within this newfound political consensus, in 2011 the opposition began formulating its plans for the selection of unity candidate for the 2012 presidential election. As shown in Figure 1, all the extremist unconstitutional methods, the personality-based conflicts within the parties, and the aggressive anti-Chávez rhetoric contained within categories 1 and 2 seemed to have become a thing of the past. The new platform promoted by the MUD was intent on reconnecting with voters, and presenting an alternative solution to the country’s most pressing problems such as crime, inflation and a diminishing quality of life. Leading up to the elections of 2012, the opposition focused on promoting its new vision for the country through its unity presidential candidate (Mesa de Unidad Democrática 2012).

A new programmatic-based approach allowed the opposition to target not only Chávez the leader, but also the institutions he had helped create and the government he commanded, a government and a set of institutions the opposition also played a role in shaping. However, the leading strategy of the opposition was still its focus on the single leader. Through its emphasis on creating a representational space that could be occupied by a single name, and its claim to embody “the people” (Laclau 2005a; Panizza 2008) the opposition continued to reinforce the validity of a populist logic as a viable political project.

In time the opposition transformed into a formal political base that transcended its anti-Chávez origins; it rejected populist politics through moderation, and a more conciliatory discursive strategy. Yet, the meaning context in which it operated remained populist. Its emphasis on unity, and the selection of a single candidate is evidence that it remained trapped within a populist logic. As such, while the opposition’s ideas and discourses helped reinforce a populist logic in its early stages, later on, its programmatic approach is constrained by a set of institutions that operate within populist politics.

5. Conclusions

Through this preliminary analysis of the ideas and discourse of the anti-Chávez movement in Venezuela, this paper shows that the opposition was instrumental for the consolidation of a populist logic in Venezuela in the earlier stages of the Chávez regime. A populist logic emerged with Chávez’s antagonistic discourse that framed all things associated with the old regime as the “other.” However, the

opposition reinforced this antagonistic relation not only through its communicative discourse, but also through coordinated actions. Through protests, strikes, a coup and a revocatory referendum the opposition created a crisis environment, which compelled people to decide on their political allegiance.

Moreover, through the formulation of a rather emotional appeal, the opposition communicated that the problems of the country could be reduced to Chávez’s presidency. Most likely this is because the only thing that the opposition could agree on was its desire to see Chávez removed from the presidency. While in another political context this would be inconsequential, in this case it reduced the discussion to a moral dichotomy of “Chávez equals bad”, “opposition equals good.” At this point, the potential for a discussion about the appropriateness of current policies or why the opposition’s programs could have been more adequate to solve the country’s problems was lost in an individual-centered conversation devoid of any real contribution or possibility of change.

And last, the new cohesive opposition was instrumental in making important political gains. However, its unification behind a single candidate, in this case, makes it about the leader and not the institutions. Once more, telling the people that their faith is tied to a single individual (the leader) reinforces the populist logic. It is important to note that this does not make the opposition populist per se, because the movement has yet to find representation in a single agent. Yet, its emphasis on the significance of project unity and support behind one candidate reinforces the validity of a populist logic as a sustainable political project.

Notwithstanding the preliminary nature of this inquiry into the role of the “other” (in this case *the opposition*) –as an active agent– in consolidating a populist logic, it served as a conversation starter on a topic that has not received much attention in the literature. This study has provided an analysis of the role of the opposition in consolidating a populist logic in Venezuela. However, it has been limited to the period where Chávez occupied the presidency, and by the number and sources of text analyzed. Therefore, the results obtained do not provide a complete picture of the role of the opposition in further consolidating a populist logic, or the extent to which a populist logic continues to shape or constrain the opposition in Venezuela in a post-Chávez era.

Following Chávez’s death, on one hand, his successor Nicolás Maduro has maintained the same course set by his predecessor. On the other hand, the opposition has been able to remain a partially united front. This prompts many questions for future research such as: has it undergone any more significant changes in terms of ideas and its logic of communication? And to what extent it continues or not to perpetuate a populist discourse in a post-Chávez era? Also, now that a populist logic has been consolidated, is it possible for the opposition to revert it through a more programmatically oriented approach? Will it be able to operate outside a populist logic? Looking into a greater number of printed and audiovisual materials would certainly provide a more complete picture of the discursive interactions between the opposition and the *Chavistas*. This has broader implications, not only as an inquiry into the role of the “other”, but also for understanding change and continuity within a populist logic.

References

- Abts, Koen, and Stefan Rummens (2007). "Populism versus Democracy." *Political Studies* 55: 405-24.
- Arditi, Benjamin (2004). "Populism as a Spectre of Democracy: A Response to Canovan." *Political Studies* 52: 135-43.
- Art, David (2011). *Inside the Radical Right. The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Asia News Monitor (2010). "Venezuela: Venezuelan Opposition Parties Aim to Break Cycle of Failure," September 8.
- Barr, Robert R (2009). "Populists, Outsiders, and Anti-Establishment Politics" 15 (1): 290-48.
- Betz, Hanz-Georg (1994). *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Brading, Ryan (2013). *Populism in Venezuela*. New York: Routledge.
- Brett, William (2013). "What's an Elite to Do? The Threat of Populism from Left, Right and Centre." *The Political Quarterly* 84 (3): 410-13.
- Brewer-Carías, Allan R. (2010). *Dismanteling Democracy in Venezuela*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Cannon, Barry (2004). "Venezuela, April 2002: Coup or Popular Rebellion? The Myth of a United Venezuela." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 23 (3): 285-302.
- Canovan, Margaret (1982). "Two Strategies for the Study of Populism." *Political Studies* XXX (4): 544-52.
- Carter, Elisabeth (2005). *The Extreme Right in Western Europe: Success or Failure?*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- CNE (1998). "Elecciones Presidenciales, 6 de Diciembre de 1998." Caracas, Venezuela: Consejo Nacional Electoral:
http://www.cne.gov.ve/web/documentos/estadisticas/e98_01.pdf.
- CNE (1999a). "Referendum Consultative, 15 de Diciembre de 1999." Caracas, Venezuela: Consejo Nacional Electoral:
http://www.cne.gov.ve/divulgacionPresidencial/resultado_nacional.php.
- CNE (1999b). "Referendum Consultativo, 25 de Abril de 1999." Caracas, Venezuela: Consejo Nacional Electoral:
http://www.cne.gov.ve/web/documentos/estadisticas/e98_01.pdf.
- CNE (2000). "Elecciones 30 de Julio Del 2000." Caracas, Venezuela: Consejo Nacional Electoral: <http://www.cne.gob.ve/web/documentos/estadisticas/e015.pdf>.
- CNE (2004). "Referendum Revocatorio, Agosto 15 Del 2004." Caracas, Venezuela: Consejo Nacional Electoral:
http://www.cne.gov.ve/web/documentos/estadisticas/e98_01.pdf.
- Coordinadora Democratica De Venezuela (2002). "Pacto Democrático Por La Unidad Y Reconstrucción Nacional."
- Córdova, Luis (2000). "VENEZUELA: Oposición a Chávez Comienza a Salir Del Letargo." *Inter Press Service*, February 22.
- Corrales, Javier, and Michael Penfold (2011). *Dragon in the Tropics: Hugo Chavez and the Political Economy of Revolution in Venezuela*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- De la Torre, Carlos (2013). "In the Name of the People: Democratization, Popular Organizations, and Populism in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador." *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 95: 27-48.
- Dornbusch, Rudiger, and Sebastian Edwards (1991). "The Macroeconomics of Populism." In *Macroeconomics of Populism in Latin America*, First. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- EFE (2002). "El Gobierno Y La Oposición a Chávez Se Sientan Hoy En La 'Mesa de Diálogo' de La OEA." *El Mundo*, November 8.
- Ellner, Steve (2010). "Hugo Chávez's First Decade in Office : Breakthroughs and Shortcomings." *Latin American Perspectives* 37 (1): 77.

- El Pais (2008). "El Partido de Chávez Gana En La Mayoría de Estados, Pero Pierde Los Más Poblados Y Caracas," November 24.
- Gidron, Noam, and Bart Bonikowski (2013). "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda." In *Working Papers Series*. Vol. 13-0004. Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.
- Hawkins, Kirk A (2010). *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Koopmans, Ruud, and Jasper Muis (2009). "The Rise of Right-Wing Populist Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands: A Discursive Opportunity Approach." *European Journal of Political Research* 48: 642-64.
- Laclau, Ernesto (2005a). *On Populist Reason*. London and New York: Verso.
- Laclau, Ernesto (2005b). "Populism: What's in a Name." In *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, edited by Francisco Panizza. London and New York: Verso.
- LANS (2005). "Opposition Party in Venezuela Withdraws from Congressional Elections." *Noticias Financieras*, December 2.
- La Verdad (2009). "Oposición Escoge Dos Métodos: Primero El Consenso Y Segundo Las Primarias." *Informe* 21, October 19.
- Lupu, Noam (2010). "Who Votes for Chavismo? Class Voting in Hugo Chávez's Venezuela." *Latin American Research Review* 45 (1).
- Madrid, Raul (2005). "Indigenous Parties and Democracy in Latin America." *Latin American Politics and Society* 47 (4): 161-79.
- Mesa de Unidad Democratica (2012). "Lineamientos Para El Programa de Gobierno de Unidad Nacional (2013-2019)." <http://www.unidadvenezuela.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/lineamientos2012.pdf>.
- Moffett, Matt, and Matt Lifsher (2002). "Venezuela's New Radicals: Long Strike Is Forcing People From All Walks of Life to Take a Stand." *The Wall Street Journal*, December 27.
- Morales, Pablo (2009). "Venezuela's Opposition: Back Into the Frying Pan." *NACLA Report on the Americas*, June.
- Mudde, Cas (2004). "The Populist Zeitgeist." *Government and Opposition* 39 (4): 542-63.
- Mudde, Cas (2007). *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Mudde, Cas, and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser (2011). "Voice of the Peoples: Populism in Europe and Latin America Compared" Working Paper #378: 1-47.
- Mudde, Cas, and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser (2012). "Populism and (liberal) Democracy: A Framework for Analysis." In *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mudde, Cas, and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser (2013). "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America." *Government and Opposition* 48 (02): 147-74.
- Noticias Financieras (2004). "Week's Top Story-Opposition Rejects Results of Fecall Referendum," August 20.
- Notimex (2004). "Venezuela: Opposition Predicts Street Protests next Week." *BBC Monitoring Americas*, August 21.
- Panizza, Francisco (2005). "Introduction: Populism and the Mirror of Democracy." In *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*. London and New York: Verso.
- Panizza, Francisco (2008). "Fisuras entre Populismo y Democracia en América Latina." *Stockholm Review of Latin American Studies* N°3.
- Panizza, Francisco and Romina Miorelli (2009). "Populism and Democracy in Latin America." *Carnegie Council for Ethics and International Affairs*.
- Roberts, Kenneth (2012). "Populism and Democracy in Venezuela under Hugo Chavez." In Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser (Eds.) *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rooduijn, Matthijs, Sara L. de Lange, and Wouter Van Der Brug (2012). "A Populist Zeitgeist? Programmatic Contagion by Populist Parties in Western Europe." *Party Politics* 20 (4): 563-75.

- Schmidt, Vivien (2008). "Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse." *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 303–26.
- Schmidt, Vivien (2010). "Taking Ideas and Discourse Seriously: Explaining Change through Discursive Institutionalism as the Fourth 'new Institutionalism.'" *European Political Science Review* 2 (1): 1–25.
- Sumate (n.d) "Quiénes Somos?" <http://www.sumate.org/nosotros.html>.
- Valero, Jorge (2007). "Discurso del Representante Permanente ante la OEA sobre la Propuesta de Reforma Constitucional Presentada por el Presidente de la República de Venezuela, Hugo Chavez Frías." Organization of American States. http://www.oas.org/es/centro_noticias/discurso.asp?sCodigo=07-0111.
- Wall Street Journal (2004). "Venezuela's Chavez Vows to Fight Recall Effort," June 7.
- Weyland, Kurt (1999). "Populism in the Age of Neoliberalism." In Conniff, Michael (Ed.) *Populism in Latin America*. Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press.
- Weyland, Kurt (2001). "Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics." *Comparative Politics* 34 (1): 1–22.
- Weyland, Kurt, Raul L. Madrid, and Wendy Hunter (2010). *Leftist Governments in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

LEVERAGING TOOLS: INTEGRATING DISCOURSE AND IDEAS INTO THE ANALYSIS OF EU ENLARGEMENT OF THE WESTERN BALKANS

Aprovechando las herramientas: Integrar discurso e ideas en el análisis de la ampliación de los Balcanes Occidentales a la UE

Luke T. Hartman*

Abstract: Recent efforts to develop Discursive Institutionalism's (DI) analytical toolkit have produced useful, well-organized instruments that help researchers decode challenging empirical puzzles and synthesize vast amounts of empirical data into digestible kernels of explanatory insight. In this article, I demonstrate how two tools –Schmidt's DI tables and the Carstensen and Schmidt's ideational power triad– can help us better understand the dynamics of institutional change as it relates to the European Integration in the Western Balkans.

Keywords: Discursive Institutionalism, Power/Ideas, European Union, Western Balkans

Resumen: Los recientes esfuerzos por desarrollar un conjunto de herramientas de análisis desde el Institucionalismo Discursivo (ID) han producido instrumentos útiles y bien organizados que ayudan a los investigadores a descifrar enigmas empíricos desafiantes y a sintetizar grandes cantidades de evidencia en piezas con potencial explicativo. En este artículo demuestro cómo dos herramientas –las tablas ID de Schmidt y la tríada de poder ideacional de Carstensen y Schmidt– pueden ayudar a comprender mejor la dinámica del cambio institucional en lo que respecta a la integración europea de los Balcanes Occidentales.

Palabras claves: institucionalismo discursivo, poder/ideas, Unión Europea, Balcanes Occidentales

1. Introduction

Political scientists continuously strive to find ways to better comprehend and explain the complex phenomena that animate our political and social world. The emergence of Discursive Institutionalism (DI) as a theoretical framework has provided scholars with analytical methods to describe what often can be the most subtle or nuanced operators of political behavior –ideas and discourse. While our intuition may lead us toward fruitful conclusions about how ideas and discourse function as a category of explanation within a given political context, we do not have to rely on instinct alone to detect the causal force that ideas and discourse can bring to bear. Recent efforts to develop DI's analytical toolkit have produced useful, well-organized instruments that can help researchers decode challenging empirical puzzles.

* Ph.D., Boston University

Artículo recibido el 31 de mayo de 2015 y aceptado para su publicación el 12 de agosto de 2015.