WHO VOTES FOR *CHAVISMO*?
Class Voting in Hugo Chávez's Venezuela

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Abstract: The conventional wisdom about contemporary Venezuelan politics is that class voting has become commonplace, with the poor doggedly supporting Hugo Chávez while the rich oppose him. This class voting is considered both a new feature of Venezuelan politics and a puzzle given the multiclass bases of prior populist leaders in Latin America. I clarify the concept of class voting by distinguishing between monotonic and nonmonotonic associations between class and vote choice. Using survey data, I find that only in Chávez's first election in 1998 was class voting monotonic. Since then, class voting in Venezuela has been nonmonotonic, with the very wealthiest Venezuelans disproportionately voting against Chávez. At the same time, Chávez's support appears to have increased most among the middle sectors of the income distribution, not the poorest. Finally, I find that whatever effect Chávez may have had on overall turnout, his efforts have not disproportionately mobilized poor voters.

In recent years, Latin American voters across much of the region have elected left-leaning governments.[1] Two prominent examples are Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who won the Brazilian presidency in 2002 after decades of activism as a union member and as leader of the Worker's Party, and Hugo Chávez, the pardoned leader of a 1992 coup attempt, who handily won the 1998 Venezuelan elections on an antiestablishment and pro-poor platform. But scholars such as Castañeda (2006) have distinguished different types of governments within this leftist resurgence (but see Cleary 2006). On the one hand, they see a populist left—exemplified by Chávez—characterized by the mobilization of poor voters and a return to the statist economic policies of the region's populist past. On the other hand, they find a new social-democratic left elected on a more middle-class and ideo-

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1. Two recent collections examining this trend include those of Alcántara Sáez and García Díez (2008) and Levitsky and Roberts (2009), both of which include chapters on Venezuela.

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logically centrist base. Here they often cite Lula, who won by moderating his activist image and proceeded to govern more pragmatically than expected (Hunter 2007).

According to some observers, this leftward trend was due in large part to the region's dramatic levels of poverty and inequality. Castañeda (2006, 29), for instance, asserts, "The combination of inequality and democracy tends to cause a movement to the left everywhere. . . . The impoverished masses vote for the type of policies that, they hope, will make them less poor." But surprisingly little scholarly attention has been paid to the class bases that support Latin America's leftist leaders. Particularly in the case of the populist left, it is often claimed that leaders like Chávez succeed at the polls by mobilizing and winning the votes of the poor (e.g., Canache 2004; Cannon 2008). Indeed, Seligson (2007, 91) finds that, across the region, "populist sentiment is significantly higher among the poorer and less educated."

The popular press also regularly cites the conventional wisdom that the poor elected Chávez; just months after his return to power, following a failed 2002 coup, *The Economist* (2002) noted that "the president's support is concentrated among the poor." Indeed, marches of Chávez supporters and opponents do appear to be divided along class lines (Ellner 2003). And Chávez's own telegenic brand of nationalism and antioligarchic rhetoric foster this perception (Davila 2000; Hawkins 2003; Zúquete 2008). On the basis of these kinds of observations, Castañeda (2006) explains the regional rise of the left by the fact that a large share of the population in most Latin American countries is poor and has once again been charmed by populism.

Scholars such as Roberts (2003a, 67) contend that "statistical analyses of survey data have confirmed that Chávez drew support disproportionately among the poor." And this conclusion informs other interpretations of *chavismo.* Roberts's (2003a, 2003b) assessment of the dramatic collapse of the Venezuelan party system in 1998 depends in part on the claim that an unorganized, largely informal, poor vote elected Chávez. He thus determines that "Chávez's mobilization of lower-class support overwhelmed the capacity of elite sectors and the political establishment to craft a less threatening alternative" (Roberts 2003b, 66). Sylvia and Danopoulos (2003, 67) similarly conclude that Chávez's appeal among the poor "proved unstoppable." Others take Chávez's support among the poor as evidence of the resurgence of Latin American populism and as a threat to democracy (Canache 2004; Davila 2000; Pereira Almao 1998).

These conclusions are surprising, however, when one considers three equally conventional observations about Venezuelan—and more broadly, Latin American—politics. First, government support from the poor and working classes has appeared far from uniform during Chávez's tenure in office. Iranzo and Richter (2005) and Ellner (2008), for instance, document Chávez's many conflicts with the labor movement, which had close pa-

tronage ties to the old two-party political system (Coppedge 1994). More recently, press reports have noted growing opposition to Chávez in crime-ridden urban slums like Petare in Caracas (Ocando 2009). Second, it stands to reason that at least some of Chávez's statist economic policies—such as public pension provision and utility regulation—benefited a larger swath of the Venezuelan population, not just the poor. Finally, scholars have long noted that prior Latin American populist leaders constructed cross-class electoral coalitions by combining targeted pro-poor policies with broader developmental and welfare programs (Conniff 1982; Roberts 1996; see also Lupu and Stokes 2009).[2]

Why, then, might class voting have nevertheless emerged in Chávez's Venezuela? To date, scholars have answered this question in two ways. Some note that Venezuela's poor suffered disproportionately from the neoliberal reforms and economic austerity measures of the 1990s, and therefore were particularly attracted to Chávez's independence from the political establishment (Márquez 2003; Roberts 2003b). Others suggest that Venezuela's poor voters have simply been charmed by Chávez's high-minded rhetoric, optimism, and charisma (Weyland 2003; Zúquete 2008).

This article offers a simple but new explanation for the disjuncture between Chávez's assumed dependence on poor voters and the foregoing observations that suggest otherwise. I argue that, contrary to conventional wisdom, Chávez in fact draws electoral support from across Venezuela's socioeconomic classes. I find that only in his first election in 1998 was his voter base disproportionately poor. The conventionally noted class vote, when it exists at all, is the result of a disproportionally anti-Chávez vote among the very wealthiest Venezuelans. Although Chávez's support base has consistently grown over the course of his tenure in office, it seems to have increased most among the middle classes, not the poor. And whatever effect Chávez may have had on overall voter turnout, it appears that his efforts have not led to a disproportionate mobilization of poor voters. Survey data from the three scheduled elections Chávez contested, in 1998, 2000, and 2006, and from the recall referendum of 2004 support these arguments.

THE CONCEPT AND ANALYSIS OF CLASS VOTING

The analyses presented here attempt to improve on previous efforts to take up the question of class voting in Venezuela by addressing both conceptual ambiguities and methodological shortcomings. Conceptually, scholars use the term *class voting* to refer to any relationship between so-

2. One might also observe that Chávez's economic policies during the first years of his administration followed largely orthodox lines (McCoy 2004). Moreover, there is considerable debate among economists about whether his policies have, in fact, improved living conditions for the poor (Rodríguez 2008; Weisbrot 2008).

cioeconomic class and vote choice, generally expecting the poor to vote for the ideological left and the rich for the right (Alford 1962).[3] Few, however, explore the variety of forms this relationship can take, generally assuming (and testing for) one while disregarding all others. To clarify the concept, and to better specify my own analysis, I therefore suggest two distinctions that should be made in any examination of class voting.

The first distinction is between what I call *monotonic* and *nonmonotonic* class voting (I use the general term *monotonic* for simplicity, but I refer here to strict rather than weak monotonicity). By monotonic class voting, I mean that the probability of a particular vote choice is monotonically increasing (or decreasing) with class. In the case of Venezuela, monotonic class voting would suggest that the poor are most likely to vote for Chávez, the middle class less likely to do so, and the rich least likely to do so. In other words, a graph of the relationship between class and vote choice would be a downward-sloping linear function.

This conception of class voting is perhaps the most common (see, e.g., Lipset 1981; Przeworski 1985)—and it is certainly implicit in most studies of class voting in Venezuela—but it is not the only possible conception of class voting. The relationship between class and vote choice may in fact be nonmonotonic. That is, there may be a peak or trough in the graph. In this scenario, some class (or group of classes) votes differently than all the others, but the rest of the classes are indistinguishable from one another. Returning to our case, this might take the form of nonmonotonic poor support for Chávez. Under this scenario, we could expect the poor to be more likely than all other classes to vote for Chávez, while the middle class is no more or less likely to vote for him than are the rich. Alternatively, nonmonotonic class voting might take the form of rich opposition to Chávez, such that the rich are less likely than all other classes to vote for Chávez while the middle class and the poor are equally likely to cast their ballots for him. Thus, a study of class voting should examine both monotonic and nonmonotonic relationships between class and vote choice.

Moreover, particularly in the context of low turnout, one must also distinguish between class-based differences in vote choice among voters and class-based differences within the broader population. Although most analyses of class voting focus exclusively on voters, doing so limits their inferences to those citizens who turn out on Election Day. Although this may be perfectly acceptable for some research agendas, one must be careful not to extrapolate inferences from the subset of voters to the larger population.[4]

3. Much of the research on class voting has focused on advanced industrial democracies. For surveys of this scholarship, see Clark (2003) and Evans (2000).

4. One could certainly imagine cases in which those citizens who choose to abstain are chronic nonvoters. Still, no analysis focused on class differences between groups of voters

The Venezuelan case is again instructive. Since the beginning of the 1990s, at least a quarter—and at times nearly half—of voting-eligible Venezuelans have failed to go to the polls. It may be that, among those who turn out, poor individuals are more likely than wealthy ones to cast their ballots for Chávez. But if it is also the case that the poor are just as likely to abstain altogether from voting as they are to vote for Chávez, then inferences about class voting must be qualified. We could conclude that, among voters, the poor are more likely to support Chávez. But we could not conclude that the average, voting-eligible, poor Venezuelan is more likely than her wealthy counterpart to support him. Thus, we would not be able to claim, as Canache (2004, 47) does, that "the urban poor were central players in the developments that brought Hugo Chávez to power."

In addressing these conceptual distinctions, my analyses therefore test for both monotonic and nonmonotonic class voting in Venezuela. I also examine whether Chávez voters behave differently than those who choose to avoid the polls altogether by abstaining. In addition, I address several methodological issues that previous analyses have raised.

The scholarly conventional wisdom of a class vote for Chávez is largely based on two types of analyses.[5] The first relies on sets of correlations that show that Chávez won greater proportions of poor voters than he did wealthy ones. In her study, Canache (2004, 47) finds that, in 1998, "the urban poor provided Hugo Chávez with his earliest base of support." Handelman (2000) also finds that Chávez drew support disproportionately from the young, the poor, and the politically unsophisticated (see also Cannon 2008; Heath 2009a, b; Hellinger 2003). Similarly, Hellinger (2005) finds that, in the 2004 recall referendum, those in the lower classes were far more likely to vote against the recall (72 percent of these respondents said that they intended to vote no on the recall) than were those in the upper class (28 percent of these respondents said that they intended to vote no).

The problem with drawing meaningful inferences from these analyses is that they do not consider the role of antecedent variables. Simple

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could infer a description of political differences between classes in the broader (voting-eligible) population. In the case of Venezuela, moreover, where turnout was near 90 percent until the 1990s, it would be difficult to label many abstainers "chronic."

5. At least some journalistic versions of this conventional wisdom base their inferences on impressions of the types of individuals who participate in pro- and anti-Chávez demonstrations. As I show herein, this may simply result from projecting the opinions of a small group of the wealthiest Venezuelans—who do appear disproportionately opposed to Chávez and may also participate in anti-Chávez demonstrations—onto a broader grouping of middle- and upper-class voters. It may well be that class polarization exists with regard to these forms of political participation in Venezuela, and one could certainly examine political support for Chávez outside the ballot box; in this article, however, I limit my discussion and analysis to voting behavior.

correlations fail to account for factors that may contribute to vote choice and that are causally prior to household income, such as age or gender. If men are more likely than women both to have higher household incomes and to vote against Chávez, then the relationship between class and vote choice may be spurious.

Other scholars have employed multiple regressions rather than simple ones and have arrived at somewhat conflicting results. Using the 1998 preelection survey (the same one I use in my analysis) and controlling for individual economic evaluations and policy positions, Weyland (2003, 836) concludes that Chávez's voter base was "multiclass, as his backers hailed from all walks of life." In contrast, Molina (2002) and Molina and Pérez Baralt (2004), controlling for factors like party identification and government evaluations, find a significant, negative relationship between class and voting for Chávez in the 2000 election.[6]

Because they include in their specifications items such as economic evaluations and issue positions, these findings suffer from the opposite problem afflicting simple correlations. Class may, in part, shape some of these variables: this would be the case, for instance, if the poor were more likely to oppose privatization for fear of higher prices. If this is the case, then the analysis fails to test whether Chávez voters are disproportionately poor, because some of the effect of class will work indirectly through these intervening variables. To test the independent effect of class on vote choice, our analyses should include only those variables that are causally prior to class (Bartle 1998; Shanks and Miller 1990).[7] In my analyses, I therefore control only for antecedent factors like gender and age that, unlike issue positions and evaluations, are decidedly not caused by class.

The second type of analysis used to corroborate the conventional wisdom of Chávez's poor voter base is ecological. Combining electoral results with demographic data at the district level, scholars have observed that Chávez receives a greater share of the vote in poorer districts than in wealthier ones (López Maya 2003). On this basis, these authors infer that "majorities in the middle and high sectors tend to vote for any option opposed to Chávez, while the more popular sectors vote for him" (López Maya and Lander 2007, 17, my translation). But the difficulties of drawing meaningful inferences from simple ecological analyses are well known. Problems of aggregation and ecological fallacy mean that we need more

6. The authors note, however, that the effect of class on voting for Chávez does not appear to be particularly large.

7. As Shanks and Miller (1990, 151) point out, "In order for a variable which operates at some distance from the vote to be important in a forward looking analysis, it need not have any independent influence at the point where actual vote decisions are made if all of its consequences involve intervening variables that are more proximate to the vote."

sophisticated techniques before we can ascertain our confidence in these inferences (for an overview of these issues, see King 1997).

Thus, by addressing precisely these issues, the analyses here attempt to improve—both conceptually and methodologically—on previous efforts to take up the question of class voting in Venezuela. By including antecedent control variables, I test whether class has an independent effect on vote choice in Venezuela. By including only those variables that are causally prior to class, I avoid drawing misleading inferences.

CHÁVEZ AND CLASS VOTING

To test for class voting in Chávez's Venezuela, I examine the effect of household income on vote choice in five surveys conducted around the time of the elections in 1993, 1998, 2000, and 2006, as well as the recall referendum of 2004.[8] One could certainly imagine alternative indicators—or dimensions—of class, but I choose to use household income for three reasons. First, household income is commonly used as an indicator of class both broadly in studies of voting behavior (see Manza, Hout, and Brooks 1995) and more specifically in the previous studies of Venezuela cited here.[9] Second, alternative measures such as occupation are inconsistent across the surveys, and as Portes and Hoffman (2003, table 4) show, occupational and income categories are correlated.[10] Finally, the conventional wisdom of a class vote in Venezuela specifically refers to income differences rather than, say, market status or relations to the means of production. That is, scholars suggest that it is the poor—rather than, say, unskilled workers—who disproportionately support Chávez.[11]

8. Note that the surveys relating to the 2004 recall referendum and the 2006 election were in fact conducted in 2003 and 2007, respectively (see Appendix). However, to avoid confusion, I refer to them by the year of the election they reference.

9. Exceptions are those of Heath (2009a, b), who develops an occupational categorization akin to that used by scholars studying the advanced industrial democracies.

10. Many scholars and pollsters in Venezuela use a composite measure known as "social strata" in their analyses (e.g., Cannon 2008). This measure usually combines indicators like age, type of housing, consumption of certain goods, and sometimes language ability with the precise composition of the index varying across surveys and polling firms. The opacity of this index makes it difficult to interpret substantively, and the inclusion in the index of items that may not be causally prior to class makes its use problematic.

11. A further alternative would be to construct an index of wealth based on household assets rather than relying on reported income. Filmer and Pritchett (2001) suggest doing this using principal component analysis, a method that Booth and Seligson (2009, 115–116) employ for the 2004 round of Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) surveys. Only my 2006 LAPOP survey contains the information on household assets necessary to construct this measure, and my results for that survey are substantively the same when I use this wealth index in place of income.

To maximize comparability across survey years (and to account for changes in inflation and cost of living), household income is measured as a categorical variable with four values representing (a best approximation of) quartiles of the distribution of household income from each survey sample.[12] The Appendix provides further details of the methodology used in conducting these surveys and the variables employed in my analysis.[13]

A difficulty that these data raise—as with any survey—is the veracity of responses. In the Venezuelan context, a potential source of bias in the data is that respondents might claim to have voted for Chávez when in fact they did not. Particularly following the publication of the names of individuals who signed the petition for a recall referendum in 2004 (see Hsieh, Ortega, Miguel, and Rodríguez 2008), it seems reasonable that survey respondents might be reluctant to answer truthfully questions about vote choice. A survey experiment conducted in 2006 by Datanálisis, a Venezuelan polling firm, however, suggests that such fears of systematic bias may be overstated. The firm randomly divided a national sample, using a typical face-to-face questionnaire with a control group of respondents. Members of the treatment group were asked to write down their intended vote choice on an unmarked page and then enter it into a box containing other responses, thereby ensuring anonymity. The distribution of votes was not significantly different across the two groups, which implies that the typical face-to-face questionnaire method remains unbiased (interview, Octávio Sanz, Datanálisis, June 16, 2008).[14]

I begin with an examination of class voting in the 1993 election, the one prior to Chávez's first election.[15] Until 1993, the Venezuelan party system was considered one of the region's most highly institutionalized (Main-

12. The choice of four categories is driven entirely by the data. Each survey asked respondents to place themselves into several ranges of income. Four was the largest number of roughly even categories (in terms of the proportion of respondents) into which I could combine each survey's respondents.

13. Because the 1993 and 2004 surveys do not include a variable for whether respondents live in urban or rural areas, I do not include this (presumably antecedent) variable in my analysis. Including this variable for the other surveys does not affect my substantive results.

14. One could also imagine that respondents might misrepresent their household incomes. For such measurement error to affect my results, however, it would have to be the case that (1) all but the wealthiest voters misrepresent their incomes randomly, with some overstating and some understating; (2) poor Chávez supporters are more likely to overstate their incomes than poor opposition supporters; or (3) middle-class opposition supporters understate their incomes more than middle-class Chávez supporters. I see little reason to believe that any of these scenarios is at work.

15. In the following analyses, survey results are weighted by state/region population and education. Data on the representativeness of the sample relative to population statistics on these and other demographics is provided on the author's Web site. The 2006 survey appears particularly to overrepresent the Chávez vote, which also explains the overly high predicted probability of voting for Chávez in figure 2. However, as long as these measure-

Table 1 Effect of Class on Vote Choice, 1993

	Caldera	Velásquez	Álvarez	Abstain
Income	−0.0553	−0.0222	−0.0185	−0.0566
	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.098)
Age	−0.0311	−0.0594	−0.0919	0.0198
	(0.070)	(0.084)	(0.070)	(0.066)
Gender	−0.219	−0.303	0.122	0.138
	(0.17)	(0.19)	(0.17)	(0.15)
Education	0.0194	0.252**	0.0547	−0.156
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Constant	0.412*	−0.364	0.421*	0.972***
	(0.24)	(0.28)	(0.24)	(0.22)
Observations		983		
Wald χ^2		39.04***		

Notes: Multinomial probit estimates (reference group is Fermín voters) with robust standard errors in parentheses

*$p < 0.1$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$

waring and Scully 1995). But this changed when Venezuelans elected Rafael Caldera under the heading of a new party. After years of economic crisis and corruption scandals, as well as the impeachment of Carlos Andrés Pérez, Venezuelans were becoming disenchanted with the traditional parties (Molina and Pérez Baralt 1994; Morgan 2007; Rey 1998).

In some ways, however, the 1993 election was consistent with the prior two-party system. An examination of survey data collected just prior to that election reveals no clear division of the vote along class lines. The results of a multinomial probit model are reported in table 1 and show that household income did not significantly affect voter decisions (see also Molina and Pérez Baralt 1994).[16] This is consistent with evidence from prior Venezuelan elections as well (Baloyra and Martz 1979; Coppedge 1994; Levine 1973; Molina and Pérez Baralt 1998). In other words, there was little class voting in Venezuela prior to the breakdown of the Punto Fijo two-party system, and the 1993 election, for all its novelty, was not exceptional in this regard. This suggests that if Chávez's candidacy did

ment errors are not correlated with class—and I have no reason to believe that they are—they should not bias my results.

16. The analyses are multinomial probit estimates with the dependent variable taking on categorical values for each candidate in the election as well as abstention. The reference group is Fermín voters. Note that a variety of alternative specifications—combining Caldera and Álvarez Paz voters, isolating Caldera voters and combining all others, or replacing the categorical income variable with a dummy variable for only the wealthiest (more on this in a later section)—failed to produce significant class effects.

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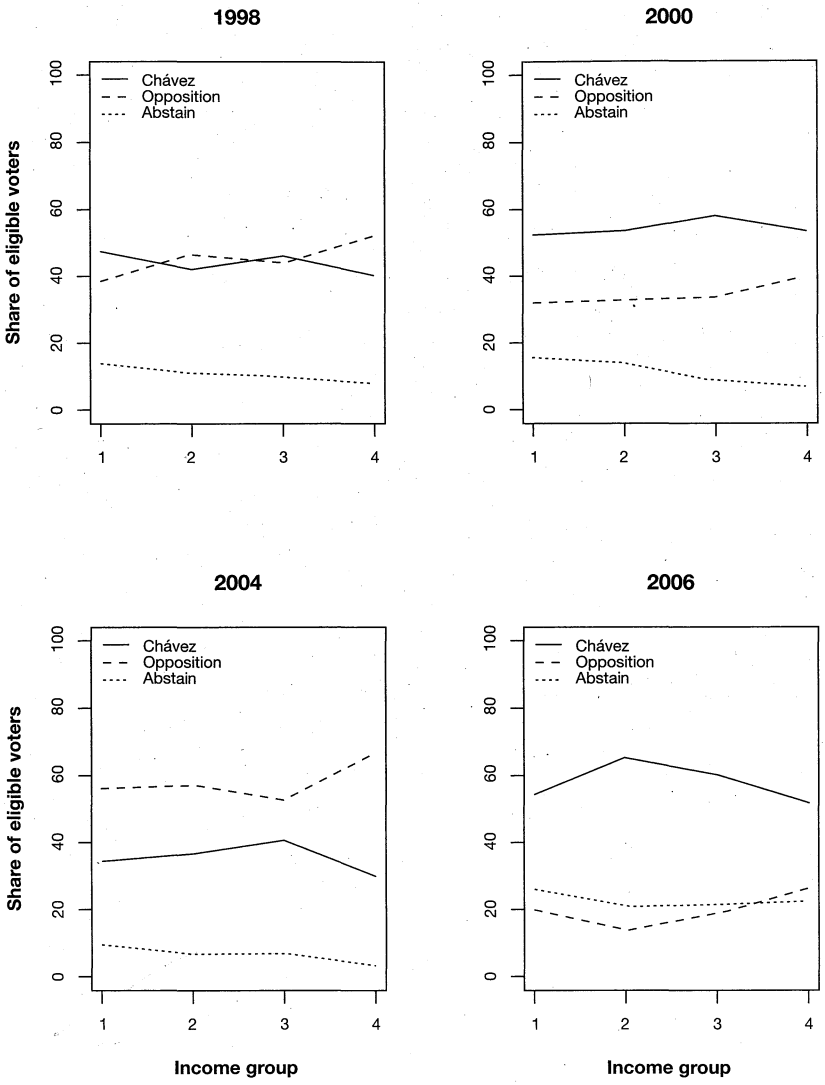

Figure 1 Vote Distribution by Income Group

generate a class vote, as is often claimed, it would indeed be a new phenomenon in Venezuelan politics.

Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of respondents in each income category who voted for Chávez, voted for the opposition candidates, or abstained in each of the four elections. These proportions suggest monotonic class voting only in the case of the watershed election of 1998. Only in that

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year does it seem that poor voters were more likely to vote for Chávez than rich voters, and rich voters conversely were more likely to vote for the opposition than were the poor. Class voting appears nonmonotonic in the cases of the other three elections. In particular, the figures suggest that the rich were more likely to vote for the opposition, although these differences do not always appear particularly stark.

The regression estimates reported in table 2 bear out some of these class effects.[17] In 1998, even after including controls for gender, age, education, and state, income continues to have a significant monotonic effect on voting for Chávez.[18] In other words, the 1998 election does seem to have represented a break with Venezuela's democratic past, witnessing the emergence of some form of class voting.

But as already mentioned, what this analysis omits is the high rate of abstention in the 1998 election: 36 percent of eligible voters failed to turn out. If the Venezuelan electorate were indeed polarized along class lines, then we would expect poor voters to choose voting for Chávez both over voting for the opposition and over not voting at all. Put differently, if poor voters are just as likely to stay home on Election Day as they are to cast a ballot for Chávez, we would need to limit our claims about class polarization to those citizens who vote rather than the entire voting-eligible population.

Adding abstainers to the analysis of the 1998 election, I find that income does not have a significant effect on a Venezuelan voters' choice between voting for Chávez and either staying home or casting a ballot for the opposition. Thus, while there was a class-based disparity among voters, there was no class-based distinction between those who voted for Chávez and all those who did not.

Later elections, however, do not reveal even this pattern of class voting: for the 2000, 2004, and 2006 elections, I find no evidence of a monotonic class vote. Nor does the inclusion of abstainers affect these findings. One should be somewhat reluctant to draw stark inferences from the 2004

17. Given the multiparty nature of the Venezuelan political system, the simple probit analyses reported in this article could, of course, be modeled as multinomial specifications. As in my analysis of the 1993 election, these would entail a dependent variable taking on categorical values for each candidate. They would also account for the fact that voter choices for each candidate may not be independent if we believe that the menu of choices presented to voters affects their decisions. All of my results are substantively equivalent when modeled using multinomial probit specifications. Given space constraints and for ease of interpretation, I report only the simple probit results.

18. Achen (2005) shows that not accounting for nonlinearities in regressions can produce biases, even if the relationship is strictly monotonic. Although I use the categorical measure of income in the regressions in table 2, I ran separate regressions using individual dummy variables for each income category as a check that bias-inducing nonlinearities were not present in the data (beyond those analyzed and discussed herein).

Table 2 Effect of Class on Vote for Chávez

	1998		2000		2004		2006	
	Voters	Voters and abstainers	Voters	Voters and abstainers	Voters	Voters and abstainers	Voters	Voters and abstainers
Income	−0.0906**	−0.0587	0.0286	0.0632	0.00323	0.00209	−0.0534	−0.0534
	(0.043)	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.040)	(0.065)	(0.064)	(0.067)	(0.067)
Age	0.0145	0.0444	0.0316	0.0608*	−0.0589	−0.066	0.0115	0.0115
	(0.030)	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.031)	(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.048)	(0.048)
Gender	−0.494***	−0.462***	−0.182**	−0.158*	−0.165	−0.221*	−0.00288	−0.00288
	(0.078)	(0.074)	(0.088)	(0.081)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.099)	(0.099)
Education	0.0625	0.0918**	−0.0747	−0.00769	−0.162**	−0.116*	−0.163***	−0.163***
	(0.045)	(0.044)	(0.054)	(0.051)	(0.072)	(0.069)	(0.063)	(0.063)
Constant	0.356**	0.0601	0.521***	0.0703	0.521**	0.388	1.279***	1.279***
	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.14)	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.26)	(0.26)
Observations	1,243	1,394	1,113	1,258	666	716	765	765
Pseudo-R^2	0.057	0.047	0.02	0.015	0.056	0.053	0.075	0.075

Notes: Probit estimates with robust standard errors are in parentheses (clustered standard errors for 2006 analysis). State dummies and survey weights are included in all models (region dummies for 2000 analysis).

*$p < 0.1$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$

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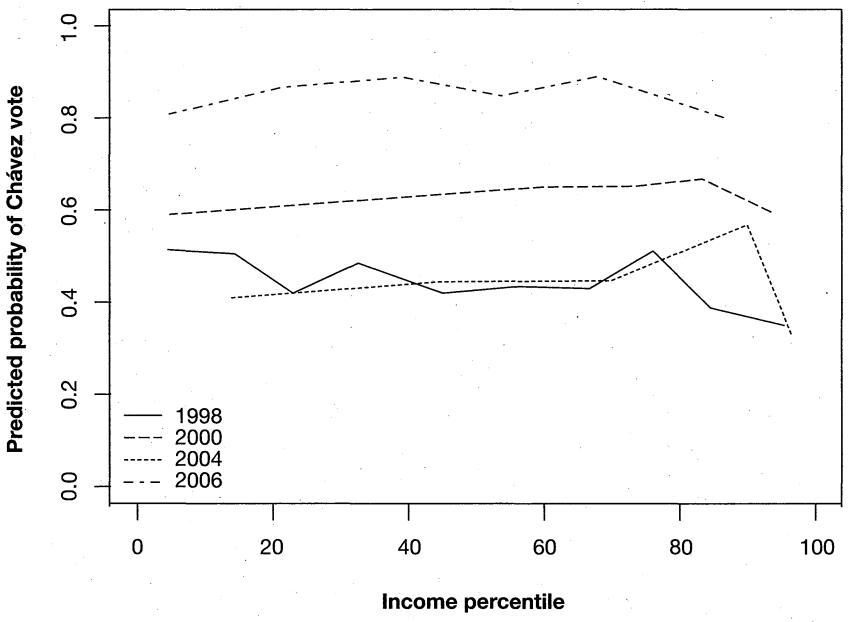

Figure 2 Predicted Probabilities of Vote for Chávez

Notes: Values represent the predicted probability that a female from Caracas with sample mean age and education level would vote for Chávez at each level of income. Calculations are based on probit regressions using dummy variables for as many income categories as are available for each survey (results not shown).

survey because the interviews were conducted almost a year before the recall referendum took place (see Appendix).[19] To the extent that Chávez may have targeted policies at the poor and thereby persuaded them to vote against the recall (see Penfold-Becerra 2007), we might expect a class effect to have emerged in the year between the survey and the election. The 2004 results can therefore be only suggestive. But given their consistency with the findings for the other election years, they should not be dismissed altogether.

These results are illustrated in figure 2, which shows the predicted probability of an individual from each income group (who turned out to vote) casting a ballot for Chávez in each of the elections examined here. In the interest of greater accuracy, and to impose the least structure on the data, the predicted probabilities are based on probit regressions using dummy variables for as many income categories as are available for each

19. To my knowledge, this is the only publicly available national survey that asked specifically about respondents' vote intentions in the recall referendum. I therefore choose to include it despite its considerable limitations.

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Table 3 Effect of Class on Vote for Chávez, continued

	1998	2000			2004	2006	
		(1)	(2)	(3)		(1)	(2)
Wealthiest	−0.228	−0.126	−0.144	−0.299**	−0.397	−0.305**	
	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.28)	(0.13)	
Poor-Wealthy							−0.372***
							−0.1
Age	0.0125	0.0333	0.0455	0.036	−0.0463	0.0101	0.00277
	(0.03)	(0.034)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.046)	(0.048)	(0.048)
Gender	−0.483***	−0.188**	−0.194**	−0.166**	−0.202*	−0.0245	−0.0116
	(0.078)	(0.088)	(0.083)	(0.081)	(0.12)	(0.099)	(0.1)
Education	0.0356	−0.0534	−0.0638	−0.0631	−0.103	−0.151**	−0.180***
	(0.042)	(0.053)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.066)	(0.06)	(0.058)
State/region weights	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education weights	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.248*	0.561***	0.564***	0.582***	0.363	1.312***	1.456***
	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.26)
Observations	1,243	1,113	1,113	1,113	738	765	765
Pseudo-R^2	0.056	0.02	0.024	0.022	0.054	0.081	0.088

Notes: Probit estimates with robust standard errors are in parentheses (clustered standard errors for 2006 analysis). State dummies are included in all models (region dummies for 2000 analysis).

*$p < 0.1$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$

survey rather than the results reported in table 2. The latter results used the four-category income variable for the sake of comparability.[20]

If monotonic class voting appears absent after 1998, figure 2 nevertheless suggests sharp drops in the probability of voting for Chávez at the top of the income distribution in all four elections. This suggests that a focus on monotonic class voting would miss a potentially important feature of class voting in Venezuela.

Let us therefore turn to tests of nonmonotonic class voting. Table 3 reports the results of analyses that replace the categorical income variable with a dummy variable for only the very wealthiest 10–15 percent of re-

20. Note that some measurement error exists in the share of survey respondents who reported voting for—or intending to vote for—Chávez, and this naturally yields predicted probabilities that may differ from the actual share of the Chávez vote. However, this measurement error is problematic for my analysis only if it is more prominent among some income groups than among others, and I have little reason to expect this to be the case.

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spondents (labeled "Wealthiest").[21] For the 1998 election, the coefficient is negative and significant, which suggests that the very rich were highly unlikely to vote for Chávez.[22] Indeed, this result is consistent with figure 2.

For the 2000 election, the analyses are somewhat more complex. Recall that the raw association between class and vote choice illustrated in figure 1 suggested no significant relationship between income and voting. Regression results for the 2000 survey indeed bore this out in table 2. As already mentioned, however, previous authors found a significant (though substantively minor) negative relationship between income and voting for Chávez while controlling for other determinants of vote choice (Molina 2002; Molina and Pérez Baralt 2004). But my analysis suggests that even this weakly significant finding is an artifact of measurement and sampling. First, these authors use a dichotomous measure of income coded 1 for the top 12 percent of income earners and 0 for the rest of the sample.[23] Second, they do not weight their survey sample, which underrepresents voters with less than primary education and overrepresents those with secondary education, both by roughly 10 percent.

Thus, previous authors simply isolated the very wealthiest respondents, as in my *Wealthiest* variable. Replacing the categorical income variable with this dummy variable and removing the education survey weight, my results are consistent with those of previous authors (table 3, column 3).[24] Hence the effect on vote choice of being in the top 12 percent of income earners appears to show up exclusively among voters with only a high school diploma. Among voters with other levels of educational achievement, income appears to have no effect on voting for Chávez, even among the very rich.

To confirm this, I split the sample by education and reran the regressions for the 2000 election. The results are reported in table 4.[25] These analyses confirm that the reported class vote in 2000 is the result of overrepresentation of respondents with only a high school degree. This could be because high-income respondents who had completed only high school also disproportionately tended to be in the age group of eighteen to twenty-four

21. I do not report the models that include abstainers because the results are substantively equivalent.

22. This is, of course, equivalent to stating that everyone but the wealthiest were more likely to vote for Chávez, but note that this is not the same as arguing that the poor were particularly more likely to support him, as the conventional wisdom suggests.

23. The authors note that this is the only categorization of the variable that was significantly correlated with voting for Chávez and are therefore rightly careful not to infer that income is an important determinant of vote choice.

24. Note that this effect is specific to the removal of the education weight. Simply changing the income variable does not account for the difference (table 3, column 1), nor does removing the region weight (table 3, column 2).

25. Note that, perhaps unsurprisingly, there are no respondents with less than primary education who are in the top 12 percent of income earners.

Table 4 Effect of Class on Vote for Chávez, by Education, 2000

	No primary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Wealthiest		0.383	−0.864***	0.186
		(0.33)	(0.2)	(0.22)
Age	0.0852	−0.0000424	0.0296	0.0505
	(0.12)	(0.049)	(0.063)	(0.088)
Gender	−0.314	−0.338***	−0.0503	0.0185
	(0.34)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.19)
Constant	0.657	0.736***	0.491***	0.0748
	(0.65)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.26)
Observations	76	453	388	185
Pseudo-R^2	0.106	0.035	0.056	0.015

Notes: Probit estimates with robust standard errors are in parentheses. Region dummies are included in all models.

*$p < 0.1$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$

years old—that is, they were most likely college students. And the university student movement has grown increasingly opposed to the Chávez government (*The Economist* 2007).

For the 2004 recall referendum, there is no evidence of even this nonmonotonic class voting. In turn, the results for the 2006 election are similar to those for 2000: only the wealthiest seem to disproportionately vote against Chávez.[26]

Figure 1, however, appeared to show a different nonmonotonic class vote in 2006. There, both the rich and the poor appear less likely than the middle class to vote for Chávez.[27] To test this, I recoded the categorical income variable dichotomously, coded 1 for individuals in either the poor or the rich categories and 0 for those in the two middle-income categories (labeled "Poor-Wealthy"). The results reported in table 3 using this variable show a significant, negative relationship. It seems that class voting took place in 2006, but in a different manner from that which is conventionally assumed. Rather than a monotonic class vote in which Chávez attracts a disproportionate number of poor voters, or a nonmonotonic class vote in which only the wealthiest oppose him, in 2006 it seems that Chávez drew support disproportionately from the middle of the income distribution. This finding certainly merits further research.

26. The reported 2006 results use a survey conducted by LAPOP (see Appendix). The results are substantively equivalent to those from analyses using data from a survey conducted in November 2006 by the Institute for Political Studies and Public Law at the University of Zulia.

27. This relationship is also borne out by replacing the categorical income variable with dummy variables for each income category (not shown).

In summary, I find evidence of a monotonic class vote only in 1998 and only among voters. Only then were the poor more likely than other income groups to vote for Chávez. But this class difference does not extend to the entire voting-eligible population, which suggests that one must make cautious inferences about class polarization in Venezuela at this time. In later elections, class voting took on a nonmonotonic quality, where it existed at all. Specifically, the very wealthy were less likely to vote for Chávez than all the other income groups in 2000, and in 2006, the middle classes seemed most supportive of Chávez. Thus, class voting has indeed emerged in Venezuela with the rise of Chávez, but it is nonmonotonic, contrary to conventional expectations.

CHÁVEZ AND TURNOUT

Scholars of political behavior in Venezuela have also pointed to class-based mobilization of voters in the Chávez era. Although theoretically different from our conceptions of class voting, scholars interested in the ways in which class informs electoral behavior should consider class effects on turnout. To the extent that abstention is a choice available to voters, a class effect on turnout is an important finding.

Indeed, a claim that scholars of Venezuela often make is that Chávez brought poor voters into the electoral process, increasing their ranks relative to those of other classes. Like previous populist leaders, the conventional wisdom goes, his targeted appeals and mobilization tactics disproportionately increased turnout among the poor. Thus, Canache (2004, 45) concludes: "The results for voter turnout corroborate the contention that political mobilization among the urban poor increased between 1993 and 1998." Roberts (2003a, 37) argues that, in cases of populism like Chávez in Venezuela, "traditional representative institutions may be eclipsed by the mobilization of new groups by emerging leaders or political movements."

Yet simple correlations tell us little about the causal effect that Chávez's campaigns exerted. In addition, given that turnout fluctuates among all voters between elections, one must also be careful not to interpret a rise in overall turnout in 1998 as wholly constituted by new poor voters. In other words, only by disaggregating turnout among income groups can we ascertain whether changes in turnout within one group are different from changes in turnout within another or differ from overall turnout. Figure 3 presents the reported abstention rates for each survey by income group.[28]

But we are not interested in comparing turnout rates per se across the four surveys for two reasons. First, the 1993, 1998, 2000, and 2004 surveys

28. Note that the surveys used in this analysis filter respondents for eligible voters, not merely registered voters.

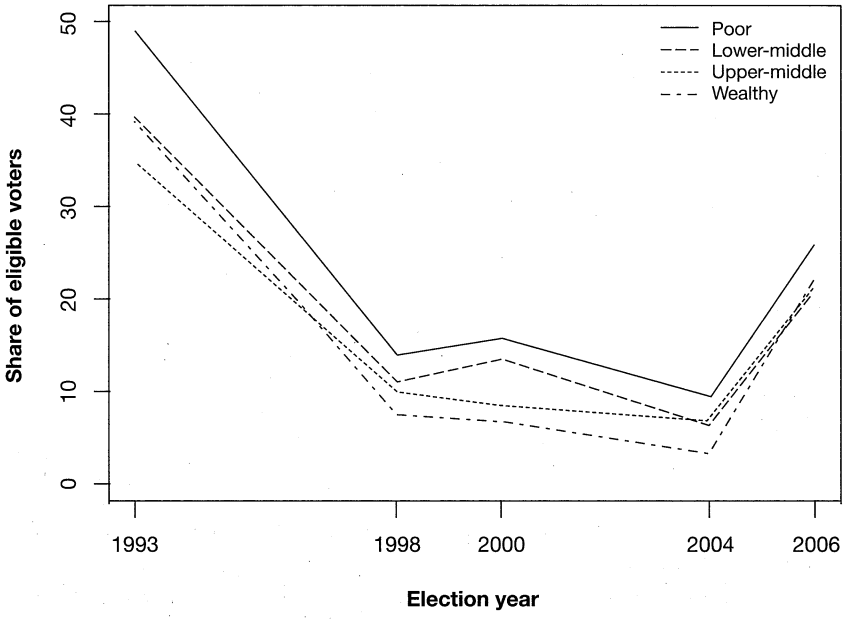

Figure 3 Abstention Rates, by Income Group

were conducted before the election, and might reasonably therefore overstate turnout. Second, the surveys also varied in their proximity to the election, with the 1998 and 2000 surveys conducted just weeks before Election Day, and the 1993, 2004, and 2006 surveys conducted within several months of the elections (see Appendix).

Still, there is little reason to expect these measurement errors to be systematically correlated with income. That is, we would expect the poor to be just as likely as the rich to overpredict going to the polls or to respond differently to a survey conducted two weeks before an election than to one conducted two months before it. If so, these measurement errors should not introduce any bias in my analysis. Moreover, we are not mainly interested in overall changes in turnout between elections. Nor are we interested in examining abstentions within a particular income group across elections. Rather, if the conventional wisdom is right, we should see the poor becoming more likely to vote than other income groups. Thus, we want to compare the distribution of abstentions across income groups within surveys.

Table 5 presents a simple test of the conventional wisdom. If Chávez is indeed successfully targeting the poor for mobilization, then the change in reported abstention rates from one survey to the next should be more attenuated for the poor than for other income groups. That is, if reported abstention among the rich decreased between 1993 and 1998 by 32 percent,

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Table 5 Significance of Differences in Turnout between Income Groups

	Change in abstention rate from previous election			
	Poor	Lower-middle	Upper-middle	Wealthy
1998	−0.35	−0.29	−0.25	−0.32
2000	0.02	0.02	−0.01	−0.01
2004	−0.06	−0.07	−0.02	−0.03
2006	0.16	0.15	0.15	0.19
t-Statistic for difference from poor		−0.578	−0.789	−1.067
***p*-Value**		0.604	0.488	0.364

we would expect reported abstention among the poor to have decreased by significantly more than 32 percent.

This does not appear to be the case. Across the four election intervals (1993–1998, 1998–2000, 2000–2004, 2004–2006), the change in reported abstention rates for the poor does not seem to be significantly distinguishable from the change in reported abstention rates for any other income group.[29] Obviously, one would prefer to examine finer-grained data that could identify individuals targeted for mobilization by the Chávez campaign, their level of income, and whether mobilization efforts increased their probability of voting. Still, given the available data, there is at least suggestive evidence that there was no particularly pronounced mobilization of the poor during these elections.

CONCLUSIONS

The conventional wisdom about leaders like Chávez is that their electoral successes depend on class voting, particularly the support of poor voters disenchanted with the old political establishment, corruption within traditional parties, and the neoliberal policies of the Washington Consensus. There are, however, intuitive reasons to doubt this interpretation, including Chávez's conflicts with organized labor, potential middle-class benefits from some of his economic policies and redistributive programs, and the scholarly contention that Latin American populist leaders generally rely on multiclass bases of support.

My results show that this intuitive skepticism is indeed warranted; Chávez's electoral base is not, in fact, disproportionately poor. That is, I find no evidence of a monotonic class vote outside the election of 1998.

29. Note that the abstention rate does appear to have decreased slightly more among the poor between 1993 and 1998. However, these data do not allow us to determine whether that difference is statistically significant.

Only in his first election did Chávez garner a disproportionate share of poor voters, but this was not repeated in later elections. Instead, my results suggest that class voting in Venezuela is nonmonotonic: the very wealthiest voters are consistently less likely to support Chávez. This means that a type of class voting did emerge in Venezuela in 1998, but not one of the monotonic variety that most authors describe.

In addition, I find no evidence that the poor have ever been more likely to vote for Chávez than to pursue either of their alternative options on Election Day—cast a ballot for the opposition or stay home. That is, even when monotonic class voting took place, as in 1998, it was limited to voters and did not extend to the broader population. Finally, my results show no support for the claim that Chávez disproportionately mobilized poor voters to turn out for him, as is often expected of a populist leader, although my evidence cannot be considered conclusive on this score.

Seen in this light, Chávez's multiclass base is similar to that of previous populist leaders in the region. He has maintained a nationalist, antioligarchic rhetoric perhaps aimed at the lower classes, along with propoor redistribution and, at least since the failed 2002 coup against him, a certain amount of clientelism (Penfold-Becerra 2007). At the same time, he has attracted middle-class voters, perhaps by pursuing some broader redistributive and statist developmental policies that benefited these sectors. Chávez's 2006 campaign promise to nationalize utilities, for example, likely attracted middle-class voters who stood to gain from lower utility bills.

My findings further suggest that some changes may have begun taking place in 2006. I find that both the poor and the rich were less likely than the middle sectors of the income distribution to vote for Chávez in that election. This result surely merits further inquiry. One possible explanation is that Chávez has found it difficult to target social benefits at Venezuela's very poor, which may have alienated those who expected a much more radical form of redistribution. Another explanation might stress the increasing levels of crime in the country's slums and the failure of the Chávez government to ensure citizens' security. Finally, opposition parties may have made inroads among the poor by building local party organizations. Indeed, scattered opposition parties took over several mayoralties and governorships in the 2008 regional elections. If these parties successfully targeted poorer voters, this may explain Chávez's growing reliance on middle-income sectors. It may also explain the increasing radicalization of his recent economic policies as an attempt to regain ground among poor voters. Indeed, since losing the 2007 referendum, Chávez has nationalized major companies in a variety of sectors. And given his success in the more recent referendum in 2009, these policies may well have paid off.

More broadly, however, my results suggest that accounts of the electoral success of the left in Latin America may have relied too heavily on the role of poverty and inequality. Venezuela is of course but one case in the regional turn to the left, but it is an influential case, and one that observers of the region continually cite. In Venezuela, it seems that a broad coalition of the poor, the middle classes, and even some wealthy sectors, have supported Chávez at the ballot box. Only the very rich have opposed him disproportionately. Thus, I find no evidence for the claim that a disproportionate poor vote demanding radical redistribution accounts for the electoral success of Chávez in Venezuela.

What, then, accounts for the rise of *chavismo,* and more broadly the regional pattern of leftist electoral victories? Some scholars have suggested that international factors like the collapse of the Soviet Union contributed to the political shift (Castañeda 2006). Others have argued that the interaction of neoliberal economic reforms with institutional factors like labor-based party systems is a better explanation (Cleary 2006). More recently, Stokes (2009) has shown that globalization and cuts in government spending provided an electoral boost for the left. Clearly, we need a better understanding of the factors that led to the regional electoral success of leftist parties and leaders across the region. Future research should therefore attempt to adjudicate among these explanations using a broader, comparative lens. But my evidence from Venezuela has shown that the role of factors like poverty should not be overstated.

APPENDIX

Survey Methodology

All the surveys are national in-person surveys conducted in respondents' homes before (1993, 1998, 2000, 2004) or after (2006) national elections. Surveys were stratified by state (1993, 1998, 2004, 2006) or region (2000) and locality using census data. Filters were used to ensure that the sample included only adult Venezuelans living in the household who are not on active military service.

The 1993 preelection survey was run by the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Políticos y Administrativos at the University of Zulia and conducted by the private polling firm DOXA. Interviews were conducted in May and June in anticipation of the elections on December 3. The 1998 survey was sponsored by the Red Universitaria de Cultura Política, a consortium of Venezuelan universities, and carried out by the private polling firm DATOS. The interviews took place between November 13 and 27, shortly before the presidential election on December 6. The 2000 survey was conducted by the private polling firm Consultores 21. Interviews

were conducted in July, just before the July 30 election.[30] The 2004 survey was part of a two-wave panel study sponsored by Simon Bolívar University and conducted by DATOS in August and September 2003, a year before the August 2004 referendum. The estimated margin of error was ±2.8. The 2006 survey was conducted by the Centro de Investigaciones en Ciencias Sociales and the polling firm Borge and Associates as part of the Latin American Public Opinion Project's Americas Barometer 2006–2007. Interviews were clustered in 186 sampling units (with eight interviews in urban areas and twelve interviews in rural ones) and conducted in August and September 2007, following the December 3 presidential election. The estimated margin of error was ±2.5.

The analyses in this article weight the survey samples by state or region (depending on the available survey categories) and level of education. The survey samples and population were compared using census and other data on these indicators, as well as urbanization, gender, and age. The samples were found to be largely representative on these other dimensions.

Variables

The dependent variable used throughout this article is vote choice, either intended or recalled depending on the timing of the survey. The independent variables are coded as follows:

Income. Measured as a categorical variable with four values representing (a best approximation of) quartiles of the distribution of household income from each sample.

Wealthiest. Dummy variable for the wealthiest respondents coded as follows: (1) respondents in the top 10–15 percentile (depending on the available survey categories) of household income in each sample, (0) all other respondents.

Poor-Wealthy. Dummy variable for a combination of poor and wealthy respondents coded as follows: (1) for the poor and the rich categories, (0) for the two middle-income categories.

Gender. (0) Male, (1) female.

Age. Measured as a categorical variable as follows: (0) 18–24, (1) 25–34, (2) 35–44, (3) 45–54, (4) 55 and older.

Education. Measured as a categorical variable as follows: (0) less than primary schooling completed, (1) primary schooling completed, (2) secondary schooling completed, (3) tertiary schooling completed.

30. The World Values Survey was also conducted in Venezuela in 2000. However, this survey asked respondents hypothetically which party they would vote for "if national elections were held tomorrow," and it did not refer to individual candidates.

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