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A multi-dimensional analysis of support for democracy: Venezuela and Chile in comparative perspective

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1) Introduction

Popular support for democratic rule is a healthy characteristic of a democracy (Lipset 1959; Miller 1974; Easton 1975; Linz 1978; Norris 1999; Bratton & Mattes 2001; Dalton 2004; Torcal 2007). For a democracy to become consolidated, its citizens must endorse democratic values (Diamond 1990; Linz & Stepan 1996). Arguments in this line go as far as stating that “a democratic political system cannot survive for long without the support of a majority of its citizens” (Miller 1974, p.951). This has led public opinion researchers to give great importance to understanding the conditions under which people develop and maintain positive attitudes towards democratic systems.

But support for democracy has proved to be a difficult concept to study. Discussions regarding which indicators are better suited for assessing it empirically date back to the 1970’s, when authors debated on whether the increasing levels of discontent shown in surveys in the United States reflected attitudes towards the current incumbents or towards the democratic system in general (Citrin 1974; Miller 1974). More than thirty years later the debate is still open: indicators which have been used to measure democratic support are still criticized severely and recurrently. There is no agreement among scholars on how exactly the concept of support for democracy should be interpreted or empirically assessed. In general terms, the literature on political support has been “ambiguous, confusing and noncumulative” (Kaase 1988, p.117).

Thus far, most theoretical debates aiming to understand popular support for democracy have assumed that what was at stake involved distinguishing clear-cut citizen preferences for democratic

rule from preferences for authoritarian regimes (Linz 1978; Rose & Mishler 1996). This has been especially the case for studies focusing on countries of the so called third-wave of democratization, such as the post-communist, South-Eastern Asian and Latin American nations. Through the use of direct survey indicators, scholars have concentrated their efforts on knowing whether citizens of these nations preferred their new regimes (democracies) from their predecessors (dictatorships). From citizens' answers to these questions, percentages have been calculated, comparisons across nations have been performed, and diagnoses have been emitted (Diamond 1990; Lagos 2003; Lagos 2008).

But the last decade has seen an important shift in the scope of the analyses of democratic support. Support for democracy is not seen anymore as a unidimensional concept, which is only able to differentiate between people who prefer democratic regimes from those who prefer authoritarian ones. There is evidence that regime preferences cannot be so neatly distinguished between 'democratic' and 'authoritarian' and that "mixed democratic profiles" are present among citizens (Schedler & Sarsfield 2007). Democratic support is seen today as a multi-faceted concept, which embraces distinct dimensions and adopts distinct meanings, and which needs to be studied in more complex frameworks. Theoretical debates today do not concentrate on citizens' support for 'democracy' in the abstract, but on the nature and meaning of that support (Schedler & Sarsfield 2007; Booth & Seligson 2009; Carlin & Singer 2011). It is not sufficient anymore to differentiate which citizens prefer democracy over dictatorships; what is important to understand today is the attitudes citizens show towards specific democratic core principles.

Two arguments drive our paper. First, that support for the concept of "democracy" in the abstract does not necessarily mean supporting all of democracy's core principles and values. There is evidence that citizens have different understandings and expectations of what democracy is and what it should deliver (Bratton & Mattes 2001; Vargas Cullell 2006; Schedler & Sarsfield 2007; Booth & Seligson 2009). In this sense, it is clear that not all citizens who express support for democracy through the traditional 'support for democracy' questions are referring to the same concept, making these questions unable to discriminate between citizens support for different models of democracy. Thus, it is necessary to study support for democracy from a multidimensional perspective, looking at citizen support for the different democratic core principles in disaggregate manner.

Second, that support for democracy in one context may mean something different than in another context. The meaning and nature of support of democracy will be affected by the specific political

processes and debates that take place within a country, which give shape to citizens' attitudes towards their current system. This debate is obviously conditioned by the recent political past of each society: in the specific case of support for democracy, citizens' previous experiences with democracy and authoritarian regimes will play an important role in determining what comparisons they make when expressing their attitudes towards democratic rule (Whitefield & Evans 1999). For example, the democratic debate –and the meaning and nature of democratic support- will be different in a country where there has been an authoritarian regime in the recent past from a country where the population has no memory of what living under a dictatorship feels like.

Taking into account these two considerations, this paper will provide a multi-dimensional analysis of citizen support for democracy in two countries where political elites have constructed the democratic support debate in different terms: Chile and Venezuela. In the first section of the paper, we will delineate the theoretical framework on which the subsequent analyses are based upon, including the explanation of why Chile and Venezuela are chosen as the appropriate cases for study. Section two will explain the methodology, data resources and measurement techniques adopted. Section three will offer an initial analysis of democratic support in both countries, from a multidimensional perspective. Section four will establish a typology of different kinds of 'democrats' and look at the differences between countries regarding this typology. Section five will probe into the sources of democratic support in both countries through the estimation of logistic regression models, and finally, section six will offer some concluding remarks and suggest possibilities for further research on the topic.

2) Theoretical framework

a.- Support for democracy and its measurement

Most research dealing with citizens' attitudes toward political systems, in general, has taken David Easton's differentiation between types of political support as a departing point. More than thirty years ago, Easton put forward the idea that political support should be considered a multidimensional concept, both in theory and when assessing it through empirical measurement (Easton 1975). Easton originally coined a dual conceptualization of political support that could account both for evaluations of the authorities' performance (specific support) and more basic and fundamental aspects of the political system (diffuse support). In Easton's own words, "support was not all of a piece" (1975, p.437) and its constituent classes could vary independently from each other.

On the one hand, Easton defines specific support as the type related to the “satisfactions that members of a system feel they obtain from the perceived outputs and performance of the political authorities” (1975, p.437). It may include both evaluations according to the extent to which citizen demands have been met and evaluations tapping perceived general performance of authorities. It is, by definition, conditional on perceived benefits and satisfactions.

On the other hand Easton defines diffuse support as the “evaluations of what an object is or represents -to the general meaning it has for a person- not of what it does” (1975, p.444). This type of support has been related to the “affective” orientations citizens have towards political systems (Almond & Verba 1963; Norris 1999; Dalton 2004). Diffuse support is more durable and shows fewer fluctuations than specific support, and is normally independent of outputs and performance in the short run. It is described as a “reservoir of favorable attitudes” (Easton 1975, p.444) that allows members of a system accept or tolerate policy outputs to which they are opposed while maintaining esteem for the democratic principles.

While the basic distinction of political support into specific and diffuse has gained acceptance among academics, no agreement has been achieved in terms of the proper way to measure it through empirical research. Different understandings of Easton’s ideas have led to a variety of schemes, approaches and indicators which have tried to assess the nature and structure of support for political systems.

Most research that has focused on support for democracy has assumed it was an unidimensional concept that captured citizens’ attitudes towards the ideal of democracy, or Easton’s diffuse political support (Linz 1978; Fuchs et al. 1995; Linz & Stepan 1996; Rose & Mishler 1996; Bratton 2002; Lagos 2003; Sarsfield & Echegaray 2006; Mattes & Bratton 2007; Lagos 2008). Two standard questions have been used in public opinion surveys in the last decades to monitor this concept. The first one builds from Juan Linz’s theorizing on democratic breakdown (Linz 1978; Linz & Stepan 1996), and asks respondents:

“With which of the following statements do you mostly agree? (a) “Democracy is preferable to any other form of government”, (b) “Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government could be preferable to a democratic one” or (c) “To people like me, it is the same to have a democratic or non-democratic regime”.

The second question, derived from Churchill's famous dictum about democracy was developed by Rose & Mishler (1996), and asks citizens to agree or disagree with the statement:

“Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government”¹.

But recent literature has cast doubts on the validity of these common indicators used to estimate societal levels of support for democracy (Inglehart 2003; Schedler & Sarsfield 2007; Carlin & Singer 2011). The possibility that citizens answer the questions from multiple perspectives suggests that support for democracy is a polysemic concept, and that it should be studied -and measured- as such. This implies the need of several indicators which cover citizens' attitudes towards distinct dimensions of democracy. We argue that by combining the study of direct indicators that ask about support for the ideal of democracy and indirect indicators that ask about attitudes towards specific democratic values, institutions and processes, it is possible to get a better understanding of the different forms of supporting democracy that can coexist in a society.

Efforts to analyze the multidimensional nature of democratic support through empirical observation are fairly recent. One of the first steps in this direction was proposed by Michael Bratton and colleagues, developers of the Afrobarometer surveys in the late 1990's. Bratton and Mattes differentiated the rationalities undergirding support for democracy in African citizens in either “intrinsic” or “instrumental” types of rationality (2001). For these authors, some citizens will support for democracy based on intrinsic reasons, or what they describe as “an appreciation of the political freedoms and equal rights that democracy embodies when valued as an end in itself” (2001, p.448), while others will support for democracy based on instrumental calculations, where democracy is a “means to other ends, most commonly the alleviation of poverty and the improvement of living standards” (2001, p.448). In their latest works, these authors develop an ‘index of commitment to democracy’ which includes a direct question tapping support for democracy plus other indicators asking for rejection of military, one-party and one-man rule (Bratton 2002; Mattes & Bratton 2007). They found that almost a third of the respondents said they preferred

¹ The complete quote attributed to Churchill is: “Many forms of Government have been tried and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time”: Sir Winston Churchill, from a speech in the House of Commons given on November 11th, 1947.

democracy, but failed to reject consistently all forms of authoritarianism. Contrasted with ‘committed democrats’ who reject all variants of authoritarianism, these ‘proto-democrats’ seem to have “nostalgic feelings for more forceful forms of rule” (Bratton 2002, p.9).

Following the necessity of understanding better citizen’s concept of democracy and its different meanings, Schedler and Sarsfield (2007) develop a classification of what they call ‘democrats with adjectives’, who support the ideal of democracy in the abstract while rejecting one or more core principles of liberal democracy. In their index of support for democracy they include both direct and indirect measures of support for democratic principles and institutions. They come up with six groups of citizens, based on differences of their ideological profiles towards democracy: liberal democrats, intolerant democrats, paternalistic democrats, homophobic democrats, exclusionary democrats and ambivalent non-democrats. They do not, however, go further into describing the implications the existence of such different groups has, and end suggesting that future research will have to explore both the origins and consequences different attitudinal profiles carry (2007, p.654).

Carlin and Singer (2011), in the line of Schedler and Sarsfield (2007), identify five profiles of support for the core values of Robert Dahl’s concept of polyarchy (Dahl 1971): polyarchs, hyper-presidentialists, pluralist autocrats, hedging autocrats and autocrats. They find that the majority of Latin American respondents are not ‘pure’ polyarchs or autocrats, but show mixed attitudes towards democracy. In an attempt to paint a clearer picture of the different groups of citizens they identify, they examine the socioeconomic, attitudinal and ideological correlates of the profiles. They find that support for polyarchy is highest among educated, politically engaged, wealthy, and citizens who dislike the president (2011).

b.- A multidimensional definition of support for democracy

While there are numerous ongoing debates among scholars on what an appropriate definition of democracy consists of, one thing there are few disagreements about is the multidimensional nature of the concept. Democracy is clearly a concept which embraces several distinct aspects. We argue that support for each one of these aspects may be independent from each other or from support for the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract. In this sense, it is possible that citizens support the ideal of ‘democracy’ while rejecting some of its core values, norms or institutions (Schedler & Sarsfield 2007). Thus, a departing multidimensional definition of democracy must be adopted to be able to assess citizens’ attitudes towards specific democratic core components.

Definitions of democracy have been offered by dozens throughout the last decades (Schmitter & Karl 1991; Collier & Levitsky 1997; Munck & Verkuilen 2002; Diamond & Morlino 2004). In fact, it has been repeatedly described as an “essentially contested” concept (Gallie 1956), in the sense that its definition is the focus of endless disputes that, “although not resolvable by argument of any kind, are nevertheless sustained by perfectly respectable arguments and evidence” (Gallie 1956, p.169). However, a procedural minimum definition, based on Robert Dahl’s concept of ‘polyarchy’ (1971) has gained acceptance as one of the regular standards for operationalizations of the concept. This definition, while not accepted by many analysts for its ‘thinness’, has become a well-known reference point in empirical studies of democratization and quality of democracy.

Dahl coined ‘polyarchy’ as a term for real world approximations of true democracy –which he thought was an unattainable ideal-type regime. According to Dahl, ‘polyarchy’ includes eight components, or “institutional requirements”: 1) the right to vote, 2) freedom of organization, 3) freedom of expression, 4) equal eligibility for public office, 5) the right to compete for votes, 6) availability of diverse sources of information about politics, 7) free and fair elections, and 8) the dependence of public policies on citizens’ preferences. These eight guarantees, Dahl argued, correspond to two separate underlying dimensions, contestation and inclusiveness, at both the conceptual and empirical levels. Contestation, in general terms, refers to the extent to which citizens have equal opportunities to express their views and form organizations. Inclusiveness, on the other hand, refers to variation in “the proportion of the population entitled to participate on a more or less equal plane in controlling and contesting the conduct of the government...” (1971, p.4). Dahl’s claims were that these two dimensions vary somewhat independently and that they are generally fundamental, in the sense that they are not artifacts of time or geography.

Various studies of quality of democracy and democratization have adapted Dahl’s ideas to develop indicators of democracy. In fact, most of what the best known indicators of democracy have been measuring (Polity, Freedom House, ACLP/Cheibub & Gandhi, among others) consists of variation on Dahl’s two dimensions (Coppedge et al. 2008). The primary focus of most of these indicators has been on the dimension of contestation, only very few have reflected inclusiveness (Coppedge et al. 2008).

We are no exception and depart from Dahl’s conceptualization of ‘polyarchy’ to develop our operationalization and measurement instruments. In specific, we follow the variation developed by

Carlin and Singer (2011), who operationalize ‘polyarchy’ to examine citizen support for democratic ideals and institutions in the Americas. These authors propose (and later confirm through principal component analysis) a four-dimensional conception of democracy, which includes the two basic Dahlian dimensions of 1) contestation and 2) inclusiveness, and two complementary dimensions consisting of: 3) limits on the executive power, and 4) democratic institutions and processes. By adding these two dimensions, Carlin and Singer provide a ‘thicker’ definition of democracy, which includes institutional checks and balances, another core principle of democracy which has often been neglected from indicators of democracy.

Our analysis makes use of twelve indicators to gauge citizen support towards the four dimensions of democracy specified above. We argue that all twelve indicators represent core principles of democracy, and that while some of them might be tapping attitudes towards similar objects, they are all distinct and necessary for a full understanding of support for democracy. In this sense, only those citizens who show positive attitudes towards all twelve indicators may be considered to have full support for democracy. The twelve indicators, grouped in the different dimensions, are the following:

i) Contestation:

- 1) “To what extent do you agree or disagree of government censorship of TV programs?”
(agree / disagree 10 point scale)
- 2) “To what extent do you agree or disagree of government censorship of books in public school libraries?” (agree / disagree 10 point scale)
- 3) “To what extent do you agree or disagree of government censorship of critical media?”
(agree / disagree 10 point scale)

ii) Inclusiveness:

- 4) “There are people who always speak badly about the form of government in Venezuela, not just about the incumbent government, but about the form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the right to vote of these people?” (agree / disagree 10 point scale)
- 5) “To what extent do you agree or disagree with these people’s right to conduct peaceful protests to express their points of view?” (agree / disagree 10 point scale)
- 6) “To what extent do you agree or disagree with these people’s right to run for public office?”
(agree / disagree 10 point scale)

7) “To what extent do you agree or disagree with these people’s right to appear on TV to give speeches?” (agree / disagree 10 point scale)

iii) Limits on the executive:

8) “Please tell me with which phrase do you agree more:

a) For the country’s progress, it is necessary that our presidents limit the voice and vote of opposition parties, (or to the contrary),

b) Even if it delays the country’s progress, our presidents must not limit the voice and vote of opposition parties.”

9) “Please tell me with which phrase do you agree more:

a) The National Assembly (Congress) hinders the work of our presidents and should be ignored, (or to the contrary),

b) Even when it bothers the work of the president, our presidents should not pass over the National Assembly.”

10) “Please tell me with which phrase do you agree more:

a) Judges frequently hinder the work of our presidents and should be ignored, (or to the contrary),

b) Even when sometimes judges bother the work of our presidents, their decisions must always be obeyed.”

iv) Institutions and Processes:

11) “Do you think that there could sometime be any sufficient reason for the president to shut down the National Assembly, or do you think that there cannot be a sufficient reason for that to happen?” (yes/no)

12) “Do you think that there could sometime be any sufficient reason for the president to dissolve the Supreme Court of Justice, or do you think that there cannot be a sufficient reason for that to happen?” (yes/no)

c.- Case selection – Chile and Venezuela

We have argued that expressing support for the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract does not necessarily imply supporting all of democracy’s principles. And that because of this, democratic support should be studied in a multidimensional fashion, by looking at support for the different elements of democracy by separate. We also argue that supporting democracy in one place does not

necessarily mean the same as supporting it on a different one. Both the meaning and the nature of support for democracy may vary depending on the political context. So, besides studying it multidimensionally, it is illustrative to also examine it in comparative perspective, between countries where the democratic support debate has been constructed on different terms by the political elites. For the sake of this, we have chosen Chile and Venezuela as our cases for study, two countries with transcendental differences in their recent political pasts that make them appropriate for our analysis.

Prior to its dramatic democratic breakdown in 1973, Chile enjoyed a relatively long history of democracy, with institutions and a party system similar to those found in Western Europe (Valenzuela 1977). Then came the coup d'état of September 11, 1973 and the long and gruesome dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, which lasted until 1989. This dictatorship, despite facing intense internal problems and widespread international rejection, managed to obtain a great deal of support among important and significant sectors of the Chilean population throughout its entire period. Even after the reestablishment of democracy, support to Pinochet's regime was substantial, to the extent that the authoritarian-democratic conflict was a defining cleavage in the formation of the Chilean party system (Torcal & Mainwaring 2003). In this regard, both sides of the cleavage were represented in the post dictatorship party system: in very general terms, on the authoritarian side, *Renovación Nacional* and *Unión Democrática Independiente*, and on the democratic side, the *Concertación* coalition.

Pinochet's regime is arguably the most influential issue shaping Chileans' political attitudes in the last decades. It is on these grounds that the debate about the regime in Chile has been constructed: Chilean citizens have been permanently exposed to debates held by elites who strongly promoted democracy and its values vs. those who were, to call it somehow, more 'sympathetic' towards authoritarian regimes, personified by Pinochet. This is especially the case for older citizens, who experienced the dictatorship for themselves and are able to compare it to the democratic regimes that came after 1989. But even for the younger generations, the authoritarian-democratic conflict has been a defining issue, as it has been the basis of the competition between the Chilean political parties.

Some preliminary hypotheses can be derived from the nature of the debate about democratic support in Chile. First, that individuals' self-placement in the political left-right scale should have an influence on their attitudes towards democracy: we can expect people who locate themselves on the left side of the scale to be more supportive of democracy. This should happen both when looking at

the unidimensional indicator and the multidimensional analysis: left-wingers should have a greater tendency to both support ‘democracy’ in the abstract and specific democratic core principles.

One might also expect a positive effect of age on support for democracy: it could be argued that people who experienced Pinochet’s dictatorship for themselves appreciate more the virtues of democratic governance than their fellow citizens who were politically socialized after the dictatorship. But this might not be necessarily so. Good percentages of Chile’s older generations supported Pinochet during his regime and after it, making it also possible that the effect of age on support for democracy is null. If age will have a positive effect on democratic attitudes, it will most likely be an effect conditioned by ideology. In this sense, we might expect the relationship between self-placement in the left-right scale and democratic attitudes to be stronger among older citizens.

In Venezuela, the debate about democratic support in the last decades has been built in very different terms. Venezuela, unlike Chile, has not had an authoritarian regime since democracy was established in 1958, being one of the longer lasting representative democracies in the region, despite its clear deficiencies (references, Coppedge). The political elites in Venezuela have not constructed the political conflict in terms of authoritarianism versus democracy, but in terms of how democracy’s functioning could be improved (references). This conflict has been fully exacerbated since the arrival by democratic means of Hugo Chávez to the presidency of the republic.

Since the arrival of Hugo Chávez to the presidency in 1999, Venezuelan democracy has undergone important transformations. The increasing concentration of power on the executive branch has resulted in an almost inexistent horizontal accountability (Frank 2010), freedoms of expression and organization have been weakened substantially, and several concerns about the validity of the electoral processes held in the last decade have been voiced in the media. This has led opposition parties and media to continuously refer to Chávez’s regime as a dictatorship. But Chávez, on the other hand, has since the beginning of his mandate heavily promoted his regime as the ‘*Revolución Bolivariana*’, a ‘true democracy’ that is ‘deeply transforming Venezuela’. This has caused the Venezuelan population to be polarized around the figure of Chávez, and ultimately, around two different conceptions of democracy (Moncagatta 2012). On the one hand, there are the citizens who sympathize with Chavez and believe that ‘democracy’ is the type of regime his government is promoting. On the other hand, there are Chavez’s opponents, who believe ‘democracy’ is something else, a regime different from the one the government has been promoting throughout the last decade.

The preponderance of Chavez's figure in Venezuelan politics makes it safe to argue that it is citizens' alignments with him and with the different understandings of democracy what have shaped Venezuelans political attitudes in the last couple of decades. The debate about democracy here has not revolved around the question if people prefer democracy over authoritarian regimes, as in Chile, but if they prefer a certain 'kind' or of democracy over another: that is, if they are 'Chavist' democrats or not.

If at least two conceptions of democracy are competing in the Venezuelan political scenario, it is important to identify what specific attitudes are related to these different conceptions. An indicator that should allow us to grasp Venezuelans' conceptions of democracy, even if superficially, is their evaluation of how democratic their country is. It is clear that those citizens who think their country is not democratic at all will have a very different conception of what democracy is from those who think their country is very democratic. It shall be interesting to see the relationship between this evaluation of how democratic Venezuela is and the four dimensions of democracy specified in the previous section. For example, do "Chavist" democrats have more positive attitudes towards democracy than their opponents? Because the conception of democracy Chávez has been promoting is one that has allowed concentration of power in the executive, limits on freedom of expression and organization, and other non-democratic practices, we can expect that citizens who align themselves with this conception will have, in general, weaker democratic attitudes. This should be observed in the relationships between the conception of democracy (measured by the evaluation of how democratic Venezuela is) and each of the dimensions of democracy defined in the previous section. But we should not expect any relationship between the conception of democracy and Venezuelans' support for the concept of 'democracy' in the abstract: it is impossible to know what kind of regime people are supporting in Venezuela when they agree with the statement that "democracy is always preferable" in a survey question. The support expressed might be support towards Chavez's '*democracia bolivariana*', but it might as well be support towards a completely different –and utterly opposed- kind of democracy. And whatever citizens' conceptions of democracy might be should not make a difference, at least in principle, in their support of 'democracy' in the abstract.

3) Methods

Data for this paper was taken from the 2007 round of the AmericasBarometer surveys, a series of national representative surveys conducted by Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion

Project (LAPOP)². In the AmericasBarometer 2007 round, 22 countries throughout the Americas and Caribbean were included, and over 30,000 individuals were interviewed in total. In both countries, the surveys were performed using national probability sample designs of voting-age adults; in Venezuela the total N was of 1510 people, while in Chile it was of 1517.

For confirmation of the 4-dimensional structure solution found by Carlin and Singer (2011), we performed principal component analyses with varimax rotation and Kaiser Normalization using the 12 indicators described before for both countries. The results yield the same factor structure these authors obtained for all Latin America, with 4 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, and the same indicators loading into the same factors in both countries. This 4-factor structure is able to account for more than 70% of the explained variance of the 12 indicators in both Venezuela and Chile³.

Once the 4-dimensional structure was confirmed, the measurement instruments for support for each one of the dimensions were constructed. Because we have argued that all of the 12 indicators included in our study represent core principles of democracy, we chose to construct binary non-compensatory composite scores for each dimension, in order to differentiate citizens who are consistent in their positive answers towards each aspect of democracy from citizens who show inconsistent or negative attitudes. Non-compensatory composite scores, unlike factor scores, do not allow for negative answers to one or more questions in a dimension to be compensated by positive answers on the other questions. The way they work is that only those citizens who give positive answers to each and every one of the questions included in a dimension are considered to be supportive of that dimension and given a score of “1”. All other citizens (those who did not give positive answers to every item) are not seen as supporters and given a score of “0”, as their attitudes are considered inconsistent at the least, if not negative.

² We thank the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) and its major supporters (the United States Agency for International Development, the United Nations Development Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, and Vanderbilt University) for making the data available.

³ Although we do not use factor scores in any of the subsequent analyses of our paper, we constructed scales and tested for their reliability for every dimension. All scales, in both countries, show high reliabilities: Inclusive participation: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0,89$ (Venezuela); $0,91$ (Chile). Limits on the executive: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0,71$ (Venezuela); $0,69$ (Chile). Public Contestation: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0,76$ (Venezuela); $0,86$ (Chile). Institutions and processes: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0,81$ (Venezuela); $0,71$ (Chile).

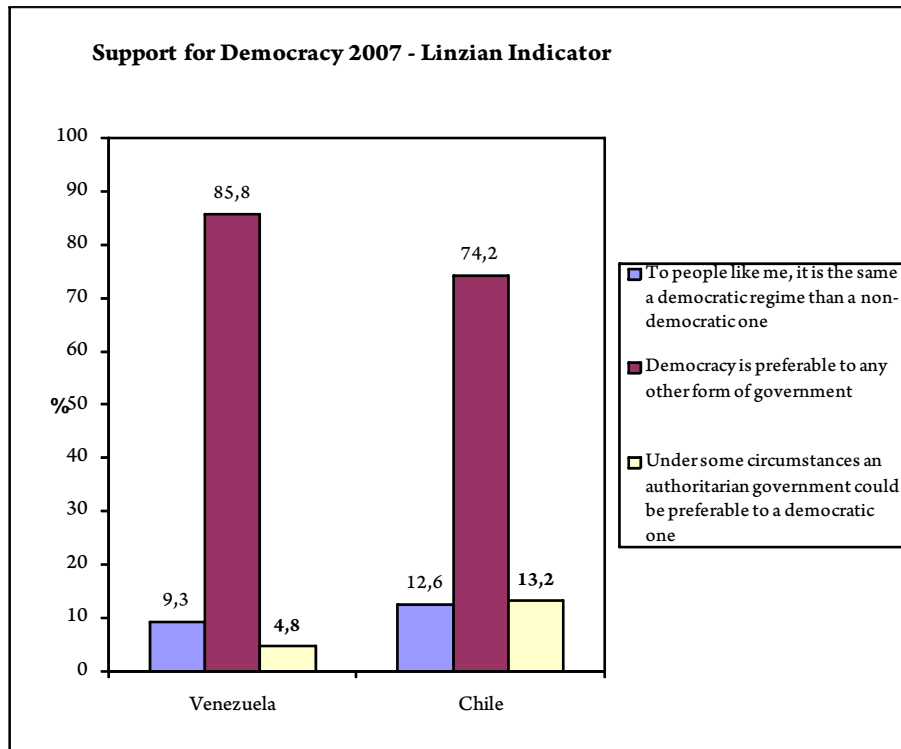
In order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of democratic support in both Venezuela and Chile, we ran three types of analysis in our paper. The first was a comparison of the aggregate levels of support for the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract and for the four dimensions of democracy. This was done using the complete samples in both countries and the ‘Linzián’ question as the indicator for support for ‘democracy’ in the abstract, and the four non-compensatory composite scores as indicators of support for the four dimensions. The second analysis was a typology of the different kinds of ‘self-declared democrats’ found in each country, and involved distinguishing citizens who expressed support for democracy in the abstract but showed different configurations of support towards the other aspects of democracy. For this, we analyzed only those people who responded that ‘democracy is preferable to any other form of government’ to the Linzián question, and again we used the non-compensatory composite scores as our measures for support for the dimensions. The third analysis involved regression models to look for the explanations of both support for the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract and for the four dimensions. In this case, as in the first analysis, we used the complete samples from both countries and the ‘Linzián’ question as the indicator for support for ‘democracy’ in the abstract, and the four non-compensatory composite scores as indicators of support for the four dimensions.

4) Unidimensional and multidimensional analyses of support for democracy

Both Venezuela and Chile appear to enjoy high aggregate levels of democratic support when seen through the “Linzián”⁴ direct indicator (figure 1). Venezuela displays an outstanding 86 percent of people who answer that “democracy is preferable to any other type of regime”. This support is as high as the one present in some of the most advanced Western European democracies (Lagos 2003, p.474). Chile shows a somewhat lower level of democratic support. While a strong majority of the population (74,2%) still supports ‘democracy’ in the abstract, there is a history of sympathy for authoritarian regimes in the Chilean population as a legacy of Augusto Pinochet’s rule. Thus, it is no surprise that a quarter of the Chilean population is either open to the possibility of having an authoritarian regime in their country (13,2%) or indifferent to the type of regime (12,6%).

⁴ The question asks: “With which of the following phrases do you agree the most? a) To people like me, it is the same a democratic regime than a non-democratic one, b) Democracy is preferable to any other form of government, or c) Under some circumstances an authoritarian government could be preferable to a democratic one.

Figure 1 – Support for Democracy in Venezuela and Chile – “Linzian” Indicator



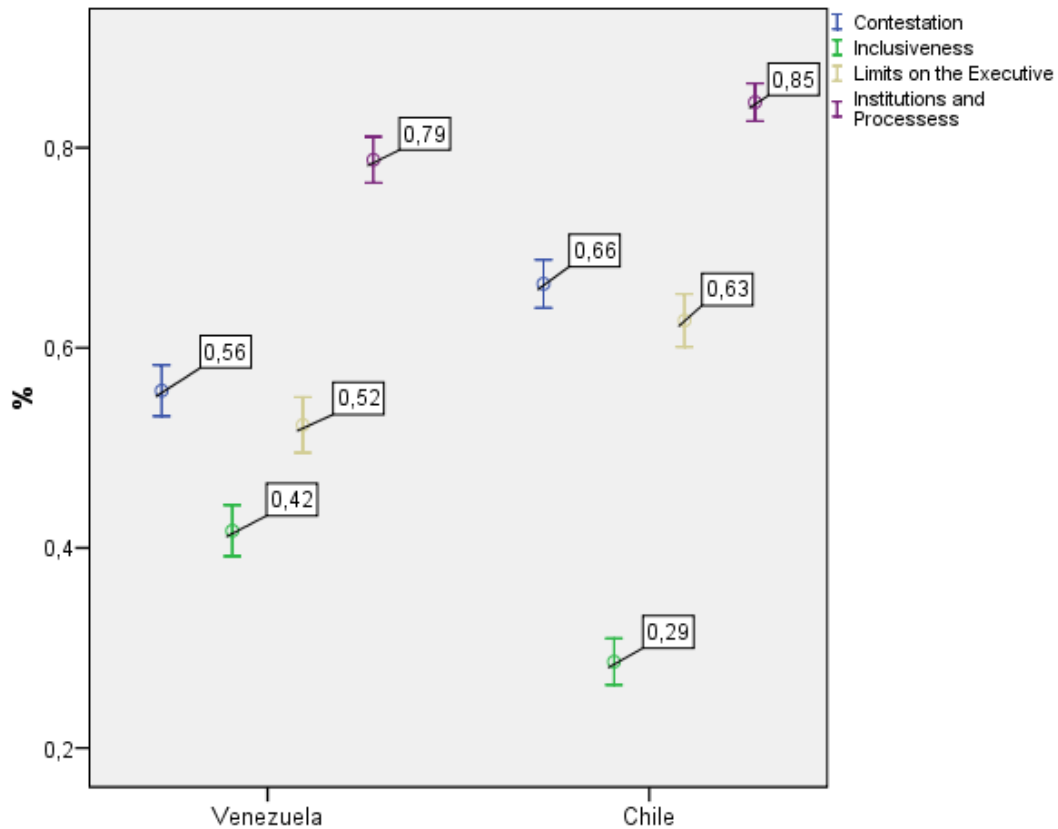
Source: AmericasBarometer 2007 Survey, Latin American Public Opinion Project

This indicator, widely used in studies of democratization, can give a first impression of general citizen support for democracy in a country. But we must be aware that this may be a *naïve* impression, because we do not know what the meaning of this support really is. By looking at figure 1, it seems that Venezuela enjoys a stronger commitment to democracy from its citizens than Chile, but is it so? The possibility that Venezuelan citizens have different conceptions in mind when expressing support for democracy, as we have argued, might mean democratic attitudes in Venezuela are in fact weaker than in Chile. To be able to assess this, it is necessary to perform a multidimensional analysis, and look at citizens’ attitudes towards the components that make up democracy, one by one.

The point estimates reported in figure 2 correspond to the proportions of citizens in both countries who expressed support for each of the four dimensions of democracy through the non-compensatory indicators we have constructed earlier. An initial look the figure provides a general idea of the complexity of citizens’ attitudes towards democratic rule. While strong majorities of the samples in each country were considered “democrats” when looking at the “Linzian” indicator, when assessing attitudes towards specific democratic principles, the picture becomes quite more complicated. Not only are most of the proportions of support for the different dimensions lower than the ones for

support for ‘democracy’ in the abstract (the only exception being support for ‘institutions and processes’ in Chile), but the range of the proportions of citizens expressing support for the different dimensions is huge, going from a 29% (‘inclusiveness’) to an 85% (‘institutions and processes’) in Chile, and from a 42% (‘inclusiveness’) to a 79% (‘institutions and processes’) in Venezuela.

Figure 2.- Support for the 4 dimensions of democracy



Source: AmericasBarometer 2007 Survey, Latin American Public Opinion Project

From the graph it is clear that high levels of support for the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract can coexist with very low support towards specific democratic core principles, as in the case of the dimension of ‘inclusiveness’ in both Venezuela and Chile. This gives a first indication that expressing support for the concept of ‘democracy’ does not necessarily mean supporting all of its values and norms. In fact, it gives an indication that supporting ‘democracy’ in the abstract is rather easily fulfilled when compared to supporting most of the other dimensions. ‘Democracy’ is a concept which in general has positive connotations, and we can expect most people to express support for it, whether that support is real or not. But there are enough reasons to be suspicious about the numbers regarding support for a concept with such positive connotations, as they might be

inflated by social desirability and other biases. Proof of this is that when citizens are assessed about specific democratic principles, the aggregate numbers are much lower. It could easily be argued that these numbers provide a more realistic picture of citizen democratic attitudes in a country.

The results reported in figure 2 also strengthen our argument that it is adventurous, to say the least, to analyze support for democracy by using only one indicator. When looking at the ‘Linzián’ direct indicator for support for democracy, Venezuela seemed to enjoy greater democratic support than Chile, but now, when looking at citizens’ attitudes towards specific democratic principles, it appears as if Chile has stronger support for democracy. Chile shows higher aggregate support in three out of the four dimensions, the only exception being the dimension of ‘inclusiveness’, where it shows a remarkably low proportion of citizens who support it (29%). While we accept that it is still important to know if citizens say they prefer democracy over other political arrangements, we believe that more important is to understand the underlying attitudes behind these stated preferences; and that only a multidimensional perspective which combines both direct and indirect indicators of support for democracy can lead to a comprehensive understanding of the matter.

5) Typology of ‘self-declared democrats’

We have seen that at the aggregate level, high support for the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract can coexist with lower support for specific democratic principles. This implies that at the individual level, there are citizens who support the ideal of democracy while not supporting some of its core principles. Expressing that one thinks democracy is preferable to any other form of government in a survey question does not necessarily mean one has positive attitudes towards all aspects of democracy. In fact, it may mean very different things for different people.

By using the four dimensions defined in this paper, we have constructed a typology of ‘self-declared democrats’: citizens who agree that “democracy is preferable to other forms of government” when asked the ‘Linzián’ question, but that do not necessarily support all of democracy’s core principles. For construction of the typology we have first isolated the ‘Linzián’ democrats from each sample, and then classified them in accordance to their attitudes towards the four other dimensions, by using the non-compensatory composite scores constructed earlier: a score of “1” in a dimension means supporting that dimension, while a score of “0” means not supporting it. A democrat of “type 7”, for example, supports ‘limits on the executive’ and ‘contestation’, but not ‘inclusiveness’ or ‘institutions and processes’. The result is sixteen types of ‘self-declared democrats’, who support ‘democracy’ in

the abstract but show very different configurations of attitudes towards the four other dimensions of democracy (table 1).

Table 1.- Typology of ‘self-declared democrats’

	inclusiveness limits on the executive contestation institutions and processes				Chile		Venezuela	
					N	%	N	%
Type 1	0	0	0	0	23	2,50%	37	4,31%
Type 2	0	0	0	1	72	7,82%	82	9,56%
Type 3	0	0	1	0	21	2,28%	27	3,15%
Type 4	0	0	1	1	115	12,49%	88	10,26%
Type 5	0	1	0	0	11	1,19%	13	1,52%
Type 6	0	1	0	1	110	11,94%	87	10,14%
Type 7	0	1	1	0	27	2,93%	19	2,21%
Type 8	0	1	1	1	233	25,30%	88	10,26%
Type 9	1	0	0	0	3	0,33%	10	1,17%
Type 10	1	0	0	1	14	1,52%	37	4,31%
Type 11	1	0	1	0	13	1,41%	13	1,52%
Type 12	1	0	1	1	45	4,89%	77	8,97%
Type 13	1	1	0	0	5	0,54%	13	1,52%
Type 14	1	1	0	1	29	3,15%	58	6,76%
Type 15	1	1	1	0	20	2,17%	27	3,15%
Type 16	1	1	1	1	180	19,54%	182	21,21%
TOTAL					921	100,00%	858	100,00%

Among the sixteen types of ‘self-declared democrats’ there are some that are more relevant than others, because of their magnitude and substantive importance. Probably the most important group is the one of people who has positive attitudes towards all four aspects of democracy (type 16). These citizens are the closest to what a ‘true democrat’ would be like: they consider themselves as democrats and also show consistent positive attitudes to every one of the democratic values and institutions included in the analysis. Even though they only account for around a fifth of the total of democrats in both countries, it is relevant that it is the biggest group found in the typology for Venezuela by far (more than double than the second largest group) and the second largest in Chile.

Another important group is type 8, which accounts for a quarter of the democrats in Chile and a ten percent of those in Venezuela. These are citizens who have democratic attitudes when it comes to placing limits on the executive, allowing public contestation or respecting democratic institutions, but that do not have consistent positive attitudes towards the inclusive participation of political opponents. Chileans, as seen before, seem to have a hard time fulfilling this characteristic and the high percentage of Chileans found in this type is most likely a reflection of this.

It is also interesting to see that, while small, there is a group of citizens that supported democracy through the ‘Linzián’ indicator but does not show consistent positive attitudes towards any of the four aspects of democracy (type 1). And a similar group is type 2, which is made up of citizens who only show positive attitudes towards institutions and processes, and makes up close to a tenth of the sample in both cases. These two groups are evidence that it is adventurous, to say the least, to assess citizen support for democracy through the use of an only indicator.

But rather than the differences in magnitudes across types and countries, what is most important about this typology is the fact that it provides strong evidence to what we have been arguing: that expressing support for the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract does not necessarily mean supporting all of its principles. The fact that we find sixteen different configurations of attitudes towards our four dimensions of democracy gives a picture of the complexity of the issue. Supporting democracy can imply very different things for different people, and measuring it through an only indicator that asks about an abstract concept is a very limited approach towards achieving a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

6) Explanations of democratic support

What are the explanations of citizens’ support for democratic rule? This has been one of the most important and recurrent questions in the political attitudes literature. Despite the great efforts deployed in identifying the variables that influence support for democracy, no clear consensus has been achieved among scholars. Common explanations have stressed the roles of early socialization processes (Easton & Dennis 1967; Inglehart 2003), interpersonal trust and social capital (Putnam 1993), institutional arrangements (Norris 1999; Mattes & Bratton 2007) or the performance of democratic institutions and leaders (Evans & Whitefield 1995; Whitefield & Evans 1999). While all

of these factors have been shown to play a role, the variation of their influence across contexts has been significant and few sound conclusions have been reached.

In our analysis we examine both the explanations of support for the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract and for the four dimensions of democracy defined previously, in both Chile and Venezuela. Our aim is twofold: first, to distinguish the different effects variables acquire in different contexts, and second, to show that explanations of supporting the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract may be different from explanations of supporting specific democratic principles. With these objectives in mind, we ran a series of logistic regression models, first, for support for ‘democracy’ in the abstract, using the ‘Linzián’ indicator as the dependent variable, and then, for the four dimensions of democracy, using the composite scores computed previously as dependent variables.

The independent variables used in the regression models include some of the usual correlates found in the common theoretical explanations of citizen support for democracy. A first set of control variables includes age, gender and education level. A second set of variables deals with political attitudes, and includes an evaluation of how democratic your country is, left-right self-placement and political interest. A variable measuring interpersonal trust is also included. And finally, a set of two variables assessing economic evaluations, of the country and personal, are also included. For the specific wordings of the questions and the scales used, refer to appendix 1.

a.- Explanations of support for the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract

Table 2 reports the logistic regression model results for support for the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract for both countries. The dependent variable used is the ‘Linzián’ indicator, recoded in a binary fashion: people who answered “democracy is preferable to any other form of government” were given a value of “1” (supporters) and people who chose any of the two other answer possibilities were given a values of “0” (non-supporters / indifferent). For an easier interpretation of the coefficients, all independent variables were recoded from negative (left) to positive (right) when necessary.

Table 2 .- Logistic regression model for support for democracy in the abstract

Support for democracy ('Linzian' indicator)					
	Chile		Venezuela		
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	
Constant	-0,61	0,63	0,68	0,69	
Age	0,01 **	0,01	0,01	0,01	
Gender (female)	-0,10	0,14	0,03	0,16	
Education level	0,05 *	0,02	0,07 **	0,02	
Country democratic?	0,51 ***	0,10	0,15	0,10	
Left - Right scale	-0,19 ***	0,03	0,04	0,03	
Interpersonal trust	-0,07	0,08	-0,06	0,09	
Political interest	-0,04	0,08	0,10	0,08	
Country's economy	0,21 *	0,09	-0,38 **	0,11	
Personal economy	-0,04	0,10	0,14	0,11	
-2 Log likelihood	1311,3		1028,6		
Nagelkerke R ²	0,11		0,04		
N	1252		1220		
Significance level: *p<0,1; **p<0,01; ***p<0,001.					
Source: AmericasBarometer 2007					
(Latin American Public Opinion Project)					

It is not surprising to see that the percentages of explained variation are not high in any of the models (11% in Chile and only 4% in Venezuela). These low numbers are common for regression models explaining democratic support. What is more important to note regarding the explained variations, is that in Chile it is almost three times what it is in Venezuela. This is most likely related to something we have argued previously. In Chile, Pinochet's dictatorship serves as a clear reference point that grounds Chileans' attitudes towards the concept of democracy. The debate, as stated before, is primarily held in terms of democracy vs. authoritarianism. Because the dichotomy is held in these terms, we can argue that Chileans have a more unitary conception of democracy than Venezuelans: democracy in Chile is something opposed to authoritarianism. And because of this, possible explanations gain weight (the fact that many more independent variables show statistically significant coefficients in Chile than in Venezuela is proof of this) and the explanatory power of the model in Chile is much higher.

In Venezuela, where the debate revolves around different conceptions of democracy, it is more difficult to discern which conception citizens have in mind when expressing support for 'democracy' in the abstract. It doesn't make a difference whether you are a left or right winger, or if you believe your country is democratic or not: you will still have the same tendency to support 'democracy' in the abstract. The key is that you will be supporting a different conception of democracy. Because of

this, it is not surprising that variables like self-placement on the left-right scale or evaluation of how democratic the country is do not show any statistically significant coefficients. In this context, it makes little sense to try to find explanations for support for a unitary conception of democracy. When, in the abstract, there are at least two conceptions of democracy present, any explanatory model will face difficulties, as it will be in fact explaining two concepts instead of one. This seems to be the case in Venezuela, and this is probably why its model yields very low explanatory power.

When it comes to the correlates of support for the concept of democracy, very few similarities can be found between the models for the two countries. Only education level seems to play the same role in both countries, confirming that better educated people tend to express more support for ‘democracy’ in the abstract. This is not surprising, and has been repeatedly confirmed in the literature (references). The only other similarities found between the two countries are the facts that some variables do not have significant effects: neither gender, interpersonal trust, interest in politics or evaluation of personal economy show a significant coefficient in neither Chile nor Venezuela.

As expected, left-right self placement has a significant effect on Chileans’ support for ‘democracy’. Left wingers have a greater tendency of supporting the ideal of democracy. The positive effect of age, even if very small, is also significant, confirming that Chileans from older generations who experienced Pinochet’s regime firsthand have a greater tendency to appreciate democracy. Two other variables have statistically significant coefficients in the model for Chile: the evaluation of how democratic the country is and the evaluation of the current state of the country’s economy. Both have positive and relatively strong effects, implying that those citizens who think the country is very democratic and who think the country is doing very well in economic terms tend to show a higher support for democracy. Again, none of these effects come as a surprise. In fact, they strengthen the hypothesis that Chilean support for ‘democracy’ in the abstract is a result of the comparison citizens make between their current system and the dictatorship they experienced.

In Venezuela the only variable, besides education level, that shows a statistically significant coefficient is the current evaluation of the country’s economy. People who evaluate the country’s economy in negative terms have a greater tendency to show greater support for the concept of democracy. Nonetheless, it is surprising to see that the current evaluation of the personal economy does not have a significant effect. This could lead to think that the relationship between evaluation of the country’s economy and support for democracy must be driven somehow by attitudes towards Chávez. However, the non-significance of the coefficients for the variables tapping self-placement

on the left-right scale and evaluation of how democratic the country is, variables which correlate with attitudes towards Chávez, makes the interpretation of this coefficient rather puzzling. The only clear thing is that there is a tendency for those who evaluate the country's economy as bad to show more support for the concept of democracy.

b.- Explanations of support for the 4 dimensions of democracy

Table 3 reports the coefficients for the logistic regression models for the four dimensions of democracy in both countries. As can be seen, some variables play different roles, not only across dimensions, but across countries as well. While the patterns found are not absolutely clear in most cases, there are some indications of which variables are more important in each country, and in which sense.

Table 3.- Logistic regression models for each dimension of democracy

Dimension 1. Contestation					Dimension 2. Inclusiveness				
	Chile		Venezuela			Chile		Venezuela	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.		B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Constant	-0,02	0,57	1,22 *	0,53	Constant	-0,73	0,59	-0,78	0,52
Age	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,01	Age	0,00	0,00	0,01 *	0,01
Gender (female)	-0,22 *	0,13	0,08	0,12	Gender (female)	-0,26 *	0,14	-0,32 **	0,12
Education level	0,07 ***	0,02	0,03	0,02	Education level	0,10 ***	0,02	0,05 **	0,02
Country democratic?	-0,10	0,09	-0,35 ***	0,08	Country democratic?	0,03	0,10	-0,03	0,08
Left - Right scale	-0,08 **	0,03	0,10 ***	0,02	Left - Right scale	-0,06 *	0,03	0,08 ***	0,02
Interpersonal trust	0,16 *	0,07	-0,04	0,07	Interpersonal trust	-0,21 **	0,08	0,14 *	0,06
Political interest	-0,08	0,07	0,21 **	0,06	Political interest	-0,20 **	0,07	0,04	0,06
Country's economy	0,16 *	0,09	-0,39 ***	0,08	Country's economy	0,16 *	0,09	-0,28 ***	0,08
Personal economy	0,03	0,09	-0,09	0,09	Personal economy	-0,08	0,10	-0,11	0,08
-2 Log likelihood	1558,5		1516,1		-2 Log likelihood	1395,2		1563,9	
Nagelkerke R ²	0,06		0,18		Nagelkerke R ²	0,08		0,08	
N	1276		1228		N	1258		1220	
Dimension 3. Limits on the Executive					Dimension 4. Institutions and Processes				
	Chile		Venezuela			Chile		Venezuela	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.		B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Constant	-0,63	0,58	0,12	0,55	Constant	0,15	0,73	1,10 *	0,64
Age	0,02 ***	0,00	0,00	0,01	Age	0,00	0,01	0,00	0,01
Gender (female)	-0,01	0,13	-0,08	0,13	Gender (female)	0,40 *	0,17	0,16	0,15
Education level	0,05 *	0,02	0,04 *	0,02	Education level	-0,03	0,02	0,00	0,02
Country democratic?	-0,18 *	0,10	-0,33 ***	0,08	Country democratic?	0,06	0,12	-0,18 *	0,10
Left - Right scale	0,05 *	0,03	0,06 **	0,02	Left - Right scale	-0,08 *	0,03	-0,01	0,03
Interpersonal trust	0,16 *	0,07	0,11	0,07	Interpersonal trust	0,17 *	0,09	0,07	0,08
Political interest	-0,16 *	0,07	0,17 *	0,07	Political interest	0,30 ***	0,09	0,13 *	0,08
Country's economy	0,11	0,09	-0,15 *	0,08	Country's economy	0,03	0,11	0,06	0,09
Personal economy	-0,04	0,10	-0,04	0,09	Personal economy	0,20 *	0,12	0,04	0,10
-2 Log likelihood	1459,7		1411		-2 Log likelihood	1028,7		1092,6	
Nagelkerke R ²	0,05		0,10		Nagelkerke R ²	0,05		0,02	
N	1138		1075		N	1234		1047	

For all models: Significance level: *p<0,1; **p<0,01; ***p<0,001.

Source: AmericasBarometer 2007- (Latin American Public Opinion Project)

A striking first feature has to do with the percentages of explained variation found in these models. Whereas in the models for support for the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract Venezuela showed a remarkably low percentage of explained variation (4%), the models specified here show much higher explained variations (except for the one of ‘institutions and processes’ with an almost non-existent 2%). In Venezuela, the same independent variables are able to explain about two times as much of the variation of ‘inclusiveness’ (8%) and ‘limits on the executive’ (10%), and more than four times as much of the variation of ‘contestation’ (18%) than the variation for support for ‘democracy’ in the abstract (4%). In Chile it is the contrary: while in the initial model the percentage of explained variation was of 11%, in all of these four models these go down to between 5% and 8%. These numbers support our argument that in a country like Venezuela, where the regime issue debate revolves around different conceptions of democracy, it is better to assess citizens’ attitudes towards specific democratic principles rather than their attitudes towards the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract.

Important findings in these models have to do with the differences (and similarities) in which variables are significant explanations of the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract and which are significant explanations of the different democratic core principles. As expected, in Venezuela, the variable tapping citizens’ evaluations of how democratic their country is proved not to be an explanation of support for the concept of ‘democracy’ in the abstract. In these models, however, it shows significant importance towards their democratic attitudes. In three of the models – ‘contestation’, ‘limits on the executive’, ‘institutions and processes’- the coefficient is statistically significant and substantively large. There is a clear tendency of people who think Venezuela is very democratic to show less support for democratic principles in general, and in particular, to allow more space for a more “relaxed” conception of democracy: one that is lenient towards not placing limits on the executive, towards not allowing public contestation and towards not respecting institutions and processes.

In Chile, as expected, a variable that shows relevance is individuals’ self-placement among the left-right scale. In three out of the four models the variable shows statistically significant, negative coefficients. This implies Chileans who place themselves more to the right of the scale have a higher probability of not supporting the dimensions of ‘institutions and processes’, ‘contestation’ and ‘inclusiveness’. The positive and statistically significant coefficient the variable shows in the model for ‘limits on the executive’ may be explained by the fact that when the fieldwork for the survey was

conducted, the center-left *Coalición* government of Michelle Bachelet was in office. It is fair to expect that any citizen sympathetic towards the right would agree on placing limits to the executive power (the same phenomenon is found in Venezuela, where the variable shows a statistically significant, positive coefficient).

Left-right self-placement plays the opposite role in Venezuela. In this country, right wingers show higher probabilities of supporting democratic principles in three out of the four dimensions (the only dimension where this does not happen is ‘institutions and processes’). Venezuela’s right wingers, those in opposition to Chávez, seem to have in general more democratic attitudes than the president’s supporters.

Other variables, such as evaluation of the country’s economy, also seem to have opposite effects in both countries. While in Venezuela those who evaluate the economy the worst show a higher probability of having positive attitudes towards democracy, in Chile it seems to be the other way around: it is those who evaluate their economy the best the ones that seem to have the most democratic attitudes. This is probably related to the relationship between left-right self placement and evaluation of the country’s economy.

Overall, it seems that Venezuelans’ attitudes towards democracy, when looked at through this multidimensional lens, are connected to citizens’ attitudes towards their incumbent: to their evaluations of the functioning of democracy and the economy in their country. In Chile, on the other hand, while the pattern is not as clear, left-right self-placement seems to be a defining feature of democratic attitudes.

7) Conclusions

Democracy is far from being consolidated in many nations. It is still important today to understand the conditions that lead to stronger democratic cultures. We believe our study offers useful insights that can contribute to the better comprehension of citizen support for democratic rule.

Conclusions at two levels can be obtained. First, that assessing support for democracy through the use of an only indicator is a very limited approach. Asking citizens about support for an abstract concept such as ‘democracy’ may conduce to unclear conclusions, as people might have different things in mind when thinking about it. It is necessary to probe deeper into the specific meanings

democratic support have for different citizens to obtain any useful substantive insights on the concept. Multidimensional perspectives for the analysis of citizens' attitudes towards democratic rule will give much more informative conclusions than unidimensional analyses.

Second, is that the specific meaning support for democracy obtains can vary depending on the political context. In some places, ideology will play a stronger role, in others, economic evaluations, and so on. But not only can the explanations of support for the concept of 'democracy' vary across contexts: so can the explanations of the different core principles of democracy. In order to understand support for democracy in a particular context, it is necessary to take into account the grounds on which the regime debate has been constructed on. Supporting democracy in one place may mean something very different than in another, and only by including the specificities of the particular context can one achieve a clear understanding of the matter.

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