

Studies in support for democracy

Paolo Moncagatta

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DIRECTOR DE LA TESI

Prof. Dr. Willem E. Saris

Departament de Ciències Polítiques i Socials



**Universitat
Pompeu Fabra**
Barcelona

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This is the space where I am allowed to say anything I want. And with the syntax I want. And it is very important for me, so I will take my time. So buckle up and enjoy the ride 😊

Writing a doctoral thesis is a hard job. It takes forever. Things go wrong many times, and often after taking a step forward you have to take two backwards. At some points everything becomes extremely boring, and you start to question yourself why did you get into this in the first place? But then you see the light. And then you don't, once again. And so on...

But in the end you do see the light. After countless nights of not sleeping well, of writing and rewriting and deleting and rewriting, of analyzing little numbers and asterisks that you don't really know what they mean, you get to a point where you realize you have learned a lot. This is the point where I am right now. For me, writing a thesis on democratic support has been an excuse to learn how to do research. I have learned certain analytical tools and a little bit about political science literature, but more important, I have learned how to look at things from a new perspective. If today, almost six years after I started the PhD program at UPF I was asked if I would do it again, I would most certainly say yes.

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Ok. So here it goes...

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The end of writing this dissertation is also the end of my time in Barcelona. This is truly an amazing city, which has welcomed me and served as an extraordinary setting for my graduate education. I have been lucky to live in Barcelona for almost 8 years, and learn and share the Catalan culture, which I respect and admire in many ways. I think that it is necessary, in the acknowledgements of this dissertation, to thank Barcelona as a city. It has given me an education, a job, and a now a son, Lorenzo, who was born here and will remain our tight and permanent link to the city (I sing to him *El Cant del Barça* to make him go to sleep).

It feels both very good and very sad to be finishing this. No one will understand this better than my wife, China, who is the person that has given me all the emotional support to be able to write a thesis, which, as I said before, is not an easy task. She has given me all the necessary time, patience, support and encouragement when I have needed them. I am a really lucky man: I have found the best woman there is, and somehow I convinced her to marry me. I really don't know what would be of me without her.

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WOW,

I

am

DONE!

You have NO IDEA OF THE RELIEF I AM FEELING IN THIS MOMENT.

I can now go to sleep for a few days.

Thanks to all!

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Paolo

Barcelona, 4 de Mayo del 2015

ABSTRACT

Citizen support for democratic rule is considered by many scholars as a necessary condition for the consolidation and stability of democratic systems. This dissertation studies support for democracy from three different perspectives, with the objective of understanding what does it mean to support democracy in the early 21st century. Through the use of survey data and systematic comparative analysis, the thesis offers three main findings. First, that the meaning of democracy is multidimensional and support for it cannot be captured by any single indicator. Second, that supporting the ideal of democracy is not the same as having support for concrete democratic principles. And third, that the meaning of democracy is context-specific, and thus, citizens from different countries think of different things when they express democratic support.

RESUMEN

El apoyo ciudadano al gobierno democrático es considerado por numerosos académicos como una condición necesaria para la consolidación y la estabilidad de los sistemas democráticos. Esta tesis estudia el apoyo a la democracia desde tres perspectivas diferentes, con el objetivo de comprender qué significa apoyar a la democracia a principios del siglo veintiuno. Usando datos de encuesta y análisis comparado entre países, la tesis ofrece tres conclusiones principales. Primero, que el significado de la democracia es multidimensional y por lo tanto el apoyo a ella no se puede medir con un único indicador. Segundo, que apoyar el ideal de democracia no equivale a apoyar principios democráticos concretos. Y tercero, que el significado de la democracia depende del contexto: así, personas de distintos países piensan en distintas cosas cuando expresan apoyo a la democracia.

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT	xv
1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Theoretical framework	4
1.2 Support for democracy around the world ...	8
1.3 Outline and summary of the different chapters.....	12
References.....	18
2. SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA: DOES TRUST IN HUGO CHÁVEZ PLAY ANY ROLE?..	25
2.1 Introduction.....	26
2.2 Political support and its measurement.....	28
2.3 Support for democracy: advanced vs. developing democracies	33
2.4 Hypotheses.....	36
2.5 Data.....	37
2.6 Dependent variables	38
2.7 Independent variables.....	41

2.8	Results.	42
2.9	A closer look at the relationship between trust in the president and support for democracy.	47
2.10	Conclusions.	52
	References.	56

3. SAME SAME...BUT DIFFERENT?

SUPPORT FOR THE IDEAL OF DEMOCRACY VS. SOLID DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT 61

3.1	Introduction	62
3.2	Traditional measurement of support for democracy.	64
3.3	Measuring ‘solid democratic support’	72
	3.3.1 Conceptualization.	73
	3.3.2 Measurement	76
	3.3.3 Aggregation.	81
3.4	Case selection: Chile and Venezuela.	83
3.5	Support for the ideal of democracy vs. solid democratic support.	89
3.6	Explanations of democratic support.	92
3.7	Discussion	94
3.8	Concluding remarks.	100
	References	103

	Appendix I – Details on the construction of the ‘solid democratic support’ indicator	112
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	Appendix II – Independent variables used in the regression models: original questions, scales, recodings	115
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4. BEHIND CITIZEN SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY: THE DEMOCRACY PEOPLE SUPPORT.	121
4.1 Introduction	122
4.2 Support for democracy: theory and empirical measurement.	127
4.3 What attributes of democracy to consider?..	129
4.4 Data and operationalization	134
4.5 Null hypothesis and cases for study.	138
4.6 Methods	139
4.6.1 Correction for measurement error . . .	141
4.7 Results.	144
4.8 Discussion.	148
4.9 Concluding remarks.	154
References	157
Appendix I – Original covariance matrices.	164
Appendix II – Covariance matrices corrected for measurement errors (for qualities and CMVs)	166
Appendix III – Quality estimates of indicators.	168
Appendix IV – Common method variance estimates (CMVs).	169
Appendix V – Differences in regression results for uncorrected and corrected data.	171
Appendix VI – Additional regression models.	173
5. CONCLUSIONS.	175
5.1 Recapitulation.	175
5.2 The future of research in support for democracy.	179

Chapter 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

‘¡Democracia real YA!’ was the slogan the *‘Indignados’* in Spain used when they took the streets in May of 2011, demanding - literally- a ‘real’ democracy. Under this motto, the *Puerta del Sol* in Madrid, *Plaça Catalunya* in Barcelona, and many important squares in more than fifty other Spanish towns were flooded with protesters asking for radical improvements in the Spanish system of political representation, and expressing strong rejection towards the high rates of unemployment, budget cuts in social welfare programs, and the influence of supra-national entities in their country’s policy-making processes.

Spain is not the only country that has seen such virulent social protest recently. In fact, the beginning of the twenty first century has been witness to a series of social movements around the world that have stirred the political scenarios of many nations. The so-called ‘Arab spring’ uprisings, the student protests of late 2014 in Hong Kong, and the ‘Occupy’ movements in New York, London and other cities -to name a few cases- all share with the Spanish *‘Indignados’* a common concern: citizens’ demand for substantial improvements in their democracies. There is evidence that people throughout the world believe democracy is the best political system to govern their societies; however, there appears to be

widespread dissatisfaction with how democracies are functioning in practice (Dalton, 2004; Norris, 1999, 2011).

Support for democracy is a hot topic, not only for academic research but in everyday political life. While most people support democracy as an ideal, it is not so clear what exactly it is that they want. What did the Spanish *Indignados* mean when they asked for 'real' democracy? Did they expect the same as the students in Hong Kong? As the Tunisian and Egyptian protesters in 2010 and 2011? Democracy is a complex concept, there is no doubt about that. It has been shown through empirical analysis that different people will have different understandings of what it means and what to expect from it (Booth & Seligson, 2009; Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Linde & Ekman, 2003; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007). And it is likely that these understandings do not only vary across individuals, but are also affected by the specific characteristics of the context.

This dissertation studies citizen support for democracy from three different perspectives, aiming to obtain a detailed understanding of this highly important political attitude in the early twenty first century. It is made up of a collection of three separate articles, which can be read as independent pieces on their own. Still, the three articles follow a logical sequence which allows the dissertation to also be seen as a unitary piece. The first article looks at the specific effect trust in a charismatic political figure has on democratic support, and does so by analyzing this relationship in the case of Hugo Chávez's Venezuela. Article number two goes a

step beyond, and seeks to differentiate support towards the ideal of democracy from support towards concrete democratic principles, and how these can also vary when analyzed across different contexts. After studying how the sources of support for democracy may vary depending on the political context, the third article then looks at the specific meaning support for democracy adopts in different countries. While the three articles that make up the thesis are limited in their scope, as they focus on specific countries and moments in time, relevant findings are obtained that contribute to the current scientific debates on citizen attitudes towards democracy.

This introductory chapter will first present the broad theoretical setting that frames the dissertation. A conceptualization of support for democracy will be offered, and a review of the literature that has dealt with the issue will be discussed. As well, a general description of the levels of support for democracy found around the world will be presented by means of comparative survey data. Finally, a brief outline of the thesis will be offered, along with an explanation of how the three articles that compose it fit together as a coherent piece¹.

¹ Because of the form in which the dissertation is structured, some parts of it might seem repetitive, especially in the theoretical sections of each article. I have tried to avoid this as far as possible, but due to the fact that each one of the articles was originally written as a separate piece of its own, some redundancy will inevitably remain. This, however, by no means should affect the normal reading of the thesis.

1.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There is general agreement among social scientists that stable and consolidated democracies requires citizens who believe in democratic principles (Dalton, 2004; Diamond & Plattner, 2008; Easton, 1975; Linz & Stepan, 1996b; Norris, 1999, 2011; Rose, Mishler, & Haerpfer, 1998). For this reason, considerable effort has been put on understanding under what conditions citizens develop and maintain positive attitudes towards democratic rule.

Studies in citizen support for democracy, or democratic legitimacy, as some authors have dubbed it, can be traced back to the 1950's. Seymour Martin Lipset was among the first scholars to give citizens' attitudes towards democracy the weight they deserved in a democratic society. Lipset argued that legitimacy was an *essential* requisite for the existence and stability of democratic systems (Lipset, 1959). In the same line, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba argued in their seminal work *The Civic Culture* that affective orientations towards the political system served as a basis for the conformation of a solid civic culture (Almond & Verba, 1963).

But if the works of Lipset and Almond & Verba were very influential among students of political attitudes, it was the work of David Easton, developed mostly during the 1960's and 1970's, which became the reference point for the majority of research on political support to come in the following decades. More than forty

years ago, Easton put forward the idea that political support should be considered as a multidimensional concept, both in theory and in empirical measurement (1965, 1975). He originally proposed a dual conceptualization of political support that could account both for evaluations of the authorities' performance (specific support) and of more basic and fundamental aspects of the political system (diffuse support). According to him, these two types of support were different not only in their theoretical justifications but in their consequences for a political system. In his 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, specific support was conceptualized as being 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). In this sense, specific support is seen as a rather immediate attitude which sees its sources in citizens' responses to perceived general performance of authorities and institutions. On the other hand, diffuse support is described as a generalized attachment that is directed to what "an object is or represents – to the general meaning it has for a person – not of what it does" (Easton, 1975, p. 444). It is, according to Easton, that "reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed" (1975, p. 444). Diffuse support is described as a type of support which is independent of outputs and performance in the short run: it

mainly arises from childhood and continuing adult socialization, or from direct experiences accumulated over long periods of time (Easton, 1975; Easton & Dennis, 1967).

Easton not only differentiated between *kinds* of political support, but also between *objects* of political support. He distinguished three basic objects, which he arrayed in a scale of abstractness (1965). At one extreme lies the most intangible or 'abstract' object: the political community, or nation. At the other extreme lies the most immediate, concrete object: political authorities. Between the poles lies a third object of support, the regime, or the 'rules of the game' that allow democracy to be maintained. Easton warns that the fact that support for a political system can be broken down into three elements does not mean that support for each one of these objects is independent of each other. Many times the three kinds of support are "very closely intertwined, so that the presence of one is a function of the presence of one or both of the other kinds" (Easton, 1957, p. 393).

The influence of Easton's work has been substantial. Influential authors such as Pippa Norris (1999, 2011) and Russell Dalton (2004) have followed Easton's line in differentiating certain objects of support that are more generalized from others that are more concrete. Both authors offer refined versions of Easton's classification of objects of political support, suggesting a five-dimensional structure of support that includes attitudes towards the political community, regime principles, regime performance,

regime institutions and political authorities (Dalton, 1999; Norris, 1999). Booth and Seligson (2009) have found through confirmatory factor analysis a similar structure operating in several Latin American democracies, with the addition of a sixth dimension that reflects attitudes towards local government.

Researchers all around the world started to measure and analyze citizens attitudes towards democracy based on indicators developed from Easton's theories. Numerous indicators aiming to assess both specific and diffuse political support were designed in later decades. Linz proposed a categorical survey question to differentiate between three types of attitudes towards the ideal of democracy, used widely by survey programs in developing democracies to measure support for democracy (Linz, 1978; Linz & Stepan, 1996a, 1996b). Other indicators such as the ones proposed by Mishler & Rose were used in a similar manner for assessing support in post-communist societies (Mishler & Rose, 2001; Rose & Mishler, 1996).

But support for democracy has proved to be a difficult concept to study. Easton's ideas have been interpreted in many different ways, and this has led to non-cumulative and confusing research on political support (Kaase, 1988). Debates on the exact meaning indicators devised for measuring support date back to the famous Miller-Citrin debate in the 1970's (Citrin, 1974; Miller, 1974). Most research since then has focused on assessing levels of support for democracy (Booth & Seligson, 2009; Fuchs, Guidorossi, &

Svensson, 1995; Lagos, 2003b, 2008), or on separating ‘democrats’ from ‘authoritarians’ or ‘indifferents’ (Linz & Stepan, 1996b).

Recent research on support for democracy has taken a turning point. Instead of concentrating on separating people who support ‘democracy’ in the abstract from the rest, researchers have aimed at developing different classifications of democrats (Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Carlin & Singer, 2011; Crow, 2009; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007). The latest works in this regards are the ones currently being developed based on the European Social Survey’s round 6 data, which incorporated a rich module of questions aiming at assessing how Europeans view and evaluate democracy (Ferrín & Kriesi, 2015; Kriesi, Morlino, Magalhaes, Alonso, & Ferrín, 2010; Kriesi, Saris, & Moncagatta, 2015).

1.2 SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY AROUND THE WORLD

The “third wave of democratization” (Huntington, 1991) brought a renewed academic interest for assessing support for democracy throughout the world. These assessments mainly focused on developing democracies; examples of them are the ones performed in post-communist societies by William Mishler and Richard Rose (2001; Rose et al., 1998), the ones conducted in Africa by the developers of the Afrobarometer surveys (Bratton, 2002; Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Mattes & Bratton, 2007) and the

ones conducted in Latin America, first by the developers of the *Latinobarómetro* surveys (Lagos, 2003b, 2008) and later by the Latin American Public Opinion Project with its AmericasBarometer surveys (Booth & Seligson, 2009; Carrión, 2008). When it comes to assessing levels of democratic support in advanced industrial democracies, some surveys like the Eurobarometers, the European Values Surveys and the World Values Surveys also have included items to assess the concept in their questionnaires.

In general, two standard questions have been used in public opinion surveys in the last thirty years to monitor democratic support. The first one, derived from Churchill's famous dictum about democracy, asks citizens to agree or disagree with the statement "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government"² (for research using this indicator see Booth & Seligson, 2005; Dalton, 2004; Huang, Chang, & Chu, 2008; Inglehart, 2003; Klingemann, 1999; Seligson, 2007). The second one builds from Juan Linz's theorizing on democratic breakdown, and asks respondents with which of the following statements do they most agree: (a) "Democracy is preferable to any other form of government", (b) "Under some circumstances,

² 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": Winston Churchill, from a speech in the House of Commons given on November 11th, 1947.

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” (see Bratton, 2002; Lagos, 2003b, 2008; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Sarsfield & Echegaray, 2006). Most research that has used both of these ‘classic’ indicators for measuring support for democracy has assumed that they have been capturing unconditional –‘diffuse’-beliefs about the superiority of democracy.

Recent literature has shown that there are important differences between advanced and developing democracies regarding citizens’ commitments to the ideal of democracy (Lagos, 2003b; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Mishler & Rose, 2001). Advanced democracies are characterized by the presence of a vast majority of citizens who agree that democracy is the best and always preferable political arrangement. Aggregate levels of democratic support reported in most advanced industrial democracies have been stable for decades at levels of around 80-90% of the population (Dalton, 1999, 2004; Fuchs et al., 1995; Klingemann, 1999; Norris, 1999). If in the 1970’s authors were concerned that democracy may have been at risk because of high citizen discontent with politics (Crozier, Huntington, & Watanuki, 1975; Miller, 1974), these worries have now vanished. Support for democratic rule is considered a given fact in North America and Western Europe, to the point that the European Social Survey and other important surveys monitoring public attitudes in Europe have omitted

questions on the subject. This does not necessarily mean that citizens in these societies are satisfied with the way democracy works in their nations: in fact, many advanced democracies show remarkably high levels of citizen dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy coexisting with high and stable levels of support for the concept of democracy (Lagos, 2003b). But it does mean that the democratic ideal has found a safe place among the citizens of advanced democracies.

In newly established and developing democracies the picture is quite different. Aggregate levels of support for the democratic regime have been found to vary significantly across countries and through time (Lagos, 2003b). Support for democracy in these contexts has shown to be volatile, as Lagos shows for the Latin American region, where it can depend on evaluations of the economic and political situations, and partisan and ideological variations (2003a, 2008). Support for the democratic regime in these societies is not unconditional: there is evidence of a strong presence of utilitarian and instrumental reasoning influencing citizens' attitudes towards democracy (Bratton, 2002; Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Sarsfield & Echegaray, 2006, 2008). Economic and political performance have shown to correlate with citizens' attitudes (Mishler & Rose, 2001), as well as dissatisfaction with the way the system is functioning, discontent with high levels of corruption and a perception of general lack of receptivity of the political representatives (Diamond, 2002). Democratic support in

many of these nations seems to be capturing both deep-rooted attitudes and utilitarian calculations: while some citizens might be truly convinced that democracy is the best form of government in all instances, there is sound evidence showing that an important portion of the publics of these countries is only circumstantially expressing support, and that their preferences may change in very short periods of time (Bratton & Mattes, 2001).

1.3 OUTLINE AND SUMMARY OF THE DIFFERENT CHAPTERS

The origin of this dissertation can be traced back to 2009, when, in the process of writing my Master's thesis, I read David Easton's "A systems analysis of political life" (1965). This initial reading of Easton's work made me question several aspects about the effects citizen support had on political systems. One question stood out from the rest: how can the presence of a highly charismatic leader affect support for a political system in general? Can these types of leaders be beneficial for democratic systems in any sense? Looking backwards, I can now say that this was the initial question that drove me to design a research project that aimed to assess the sources of democratic support in countries where charismatic leaders were present, and in specific, the effect trust in these leaders could have in support for democratic rule.

In this line, **article one**, “Support for democracy in Venezuela: Does trust in Hugo Chávez play any role?” was my first approach to the topic of support for democracy. As said, I was interested in studying the sources of democratic support, in general, and more specifically, the relationship between support for charismatic authorities and support for democracy. After conducting some exploratory research dealing with democratic attitudes in the Americas, I concluded Venezuela was the most appropriate case of study for the article. Venezuela, besides being one of the oldest democracies in the region, was one of the countries which had enjoyed the highest levels of citizen support for democratic rule in the last decade. Furthermore, there was the presence of Hugo Chávez, which made Venezuela particularly interesting and relevant for my objective of examining the relationship between support for charismatic authorities and democratic support.

When conducting the initial regression analyses for this article, I found that none of the usual predictors of support for democracy played a role in explaining the attitude in Venezuela. Explained variances of the regression models were remarkably low, almost non-existent. This came rather as a surprise: the great majority of the sample expressed support for democracy as an ideal when asked through the direct indicators that tapped the concept, but it was impossible to assess what the sources of this outstanding support were. Only age and education showed statistically significant coefficients, but they were so small in size that they

seemed substantively irrelevant. Regarding the primary concern of my research, I found that trust in the president had no effect at all: attitudes towards Hugo Chávez had nothing to do with Venezuelans' support for democratic rule, it appeared.

But an article by Mishler and Rose (2001) gave me new ideas for developing the article. This article -which later became a very influential piece for the rest of my dissertation- proposed that most of the research on democratic support had been conducted from an erroneous perspective, which asked citizens about their attitudes towards democracy seen as an abstract ideal. Mishler & Rose suggested instead to study support towards the 'political system' and in this sense avoid "abstract, ambiguous and idealistic labels such as democracy" (2001, p. 307). In fact, when I ran for the 'support for the political system' dependent variable the same regression models I had previously specified for one of the traditional measures of support for democracy, I obtained completely different results. The model resulted in quite high explained variance, and the effect of trust in the president was very large. So after all, it seemed that in Venezuela, trust in the president had an important effect in support for the political system. The most relevant conclusions of the first article were related to that finding: different groups of citizens in Venezuela appeared to have different conceptions of what democracy meant. It seemed that everyone supported democracy, but not the same kind of democracy.

The findings from the first article made me understand that I had to rethink some of my research project's original questions: that to be able to assess the sources of democratic support, it was first necessary to 'take a step back', and understand what exactly support for democracy meant. I had already found that supporting democracy as an ideal was completely different than supporting 'the political system'. Besides this, I had the intuition –based on different readings- that the meaning support for democracy adopted depended on the context. Following these ideas, **article two**, "Same same...but different? Support for the ideal of democracy vs. solid democratic support", performed a comparative examination of support for democracy between Chile and Venezuela, two countries with relevant differences in their democratic trajectories that made them interesting cases for analysis.

The aim of this second article was twofold: not only did I want to perform a cross-country comparison of the correlates of democratic support, but to demonstrate that supporting democracy as an ideal and supporting concrete democratic principles were two different things. For this, along with my coauthor Willem E. Saris, I proposed an indicator of what we labeled 'solid democratic support' to assess citizen attitudes towards the fundamental principles of democratic rule. Levels of 'support for the ideal of democracy' and 'solid democratic support' were compared, and logistic regression models were specified for

both indicators in both countries. Two main relevant findings resulted from this article: first, that the recent political histories of the countries mattered for determining the sources of support for democracy, both when seen as an ideal or as support for concrete democratic principles. And second, that ‘support for the ideal of democracy’ and ‘solid democratic support’ were two very different concepts, not only in theory but in their empirical relationships as well.

If in the first two articles I had found that a) support for democracy means different things for different people, and that b) the meaning of democratic support depended on the political context, it was time to investigate what specific meaning support for democracy adopted in different contexts. For this, **article three**, “Behind citizen support for democracy: the democracy people support” performed a new comparative analysis between two nations: this time, between the United Kingdom and Spain. Using a rich dataset coming from the European Social Survey, this article assessed which attributes of democratic rule were more strongly related to a general support for democracy measure in both countries. The most relevant findings obtained from the analyses performed in this article revealed clear differences in what Spanish and British citizens conceived as ‘democracy’ when they expressed support towards it: while in the U.K. democracy was mostly related to the electoral process, in Spain the conception of democracy

citizens supported was more elaborate, incorporating other aspects such as welfare and availability of political alternatives.

It is clear, in this sense, that the three articles that make up this dissertation, while studying democratic attitudes from different approaches, all have in common that they are centered on the *meaning* of support for democracy. It is from this perspective that this dissertation is able to offer relevant insights that enrich the academic debate on political attitudes and that it finds its place among the latest research conducted on the topic.

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Chapter 2

SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA: DOES TRUST IN HUGO CHÁVEZ PLAY ANY ROLE?¹

Abstract

By applying regression analysis to data from the 2010 Latin American Public Opinion Project's "AmericasBarometer" surveys, this paper examines the correlates of citizen support for democracy in Venezuela. Special attention is paid to evaluations of current economic conditions, satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and trust in the president as potential explanatory variables. The analysis of the models reveals at least two conceptions of democracy present among Venezuelans, which are strongly influenced by the degree of trust in the president they have. The findings suggest the need of studying support for democracy through more complex scopes, in order to acquire better understandings of citizens' attitudes towards their political systems.

Keywords: *support for democracy, trust in the president, Venezuela, Hugo Chávez*

¹ Chapter 2 is a revised version of the article previously published as: Moncagatta, P. (2013). [Support for democracy in Venezuela: Does trust in Hugo Chávez play any role?](#) *Revista Latinoamericana de Opinión Pública*, 3, 113–141.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Understanding citizens' attitudes towards their political systems has been a matter of utmost importance for students of democratization. Among the primary concerns of research in this area is the monitoring of popular support for democracy. Generalized support for democratic rule has been regarded by many scholars as a healthy characteristic of a democracy (Booth & Seligson, 2009; Dalton, 1999, 2004; Diamond & Morlino, 2004; Easton, 1975; Fuchs, Guidorossi, & Svensson, 1995; Linz, 1978; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Lipset, 1959, 1994). In this sense, unconditional support for democracy -support which is stable through time and held under any circumstance- has been argued to be a guarantee of stability for any democratic regime. As Russell Dalton has put it, "a democratic political system requires a reservoir of diffuse support independent of immediate policy outputs if it is to weather periods of public dissatisfaction" (1999, p. 59).

Important differences have been found between advanced and developing democracies regarding their citizens' commitments to the ideal of democracy (Lagos, 2003b; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Mishler & Rose, 2001). Advanced democracies are characterized by stable support for democratic rule from the majority of its citizens. In these nations, citizens might be dissatisfied with the functioning of the political system, and even disenchanted with politics in general, but will still tend to maintain preferences for democratic rule over other forms of government (Dalton, 1999, 2004; Norris,

1999). Support for democracy here is not affected by short-term fluctuations in the economy or the political scenario: it is a long-lasting attitude that does not change with ease. The situation in newly-established or developing democracies is quite different. In these contexts, citizen support for democratic rule has been found to vary significantly across countries and through time. There is evidence that citizens in many young democracies will change their preferences for democratic rule with ease, being significantly influenced by economic and political events (Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Sarsfield & Echegaray, 2008).

Having in mind these differences between advanced and developing democracies, this article seeks to examine the correlates of citizen support for democracy in Venezuela. It does so by looking at the relationship between democratic support and variables that tap citizens' evaluations of the current state of affairs in their country, concentrating on evaluations of both the economic and political spheres. Is support for democracy in Venezuela unconditional? Or are citizens subduing their preferences for democracy to factors such as evaluations of the economy or the political situation?

Special attention is paid to the role of citizen trust in their president as a potential explanatory variable. Does trust in Hugo Chávez have an effect in Venezuelans' support for democracy? One of the interests driving this article is to find out if the presence of a highly charismatic –and controversial– president may influence

citizen support for democracy. Hugo Chávez is (even if deceased) a charismatic figure who has concentrated most of the attention when it comes to debates about Venezuelan politics in the last decade. Very strong -and opposed- positions are held regarding him, both inside Venezuela and in the rest of the world. Being so salient in the Venezuelan political scenario, do attitudes towards him affect citizens' attitudes towards democratic rule in any way?²

2.2 POLITICAL SUPPORT AND ITS MEASUREMENT

Most research concentrating on citizens' attitudes towards political systems has departed from David Easton's ideas on political support. More than forty years ago, Easton put forward the idea that political support should be considered a multidimensional concept (Easton, 1965, 1975). He originally coined a dual conceptualization of support that could account both for evaluations of authorities' performance ('specific' support) and for attitudes towards more basic and fundamental aspects of the political system ('generalized' or 'diffuse' support). "Support is not all of a piece", he argued, and its constituent classes could vary independently from each other (1975, p. 437).

² At the time this article was being written, Hugo Chávez was still alive and holding the Presidential Office in Venezuela. Despite the recent changes in the Venezuelan political scenario, the influence Chávez continues to have in Venezuelan politics is undeniable. It is thus safe to assume that the relevance of this article remains unchanged.

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 the system and its authorities. It is, by definition, conditional on perceived benefits and satisfactions. Generalized, or 'diffuse' support, on the other hand, is related to 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; Dalton, 2004; Norris, 1999). Generalized 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 the "reservoir of favorable attitudes" (Easton, 1975, p. 444) that allows members of a system to accept or tolerate policy outputs to which they are opposed while maintaining esteem for the democratic principles.

The original idea of Easton was that people who showed 'diffuse' support for a political system would in general accept the authorities chosen through it. But they could also lose trust in these authorities and be dissatisfied with the functioning of their system while maintaining support for its fundamental principles.

'Diffuse' support and low levels of 'specific' support can live together: up to a certain threshold, they appear to be not strongly related. And as Easton himself proposes, "it is the unpredictability of the relationship between political dissatisfaction and tension on the one hand and the acceptance of basic political arrangements on the other that constitutes a persistent puzzle for research" (1975, p. 437).

While the basic distinction of political support into 'specific' and 'diffuse' has gained widespread acceptance among scholars, no agreement has been achieved in terms of the proper way to assess it through empirical research. Different understandings of Easton's ideas have led to a variety of schemes, approaches and indicators designed to study the nature and structure of political support. Discussions regarding which indicators are more appropriate for measuring both 'specific' and 'diffuse' support date back to the 1970's, when authors debated whether the increasing levels of discontent shown in surveys in the United States reflected attitudes towards the incumbents or towards the democratic regime in general (Citrin, 1974; Miller, 1974). Forty years later the debate is still open: indicators which have been used to measure both types of support have been strongly and recurrently criticized. There is no academic agreement on how exactly Easton's theory should be interpreted or empirically tested.

In democratic systems, when seeking to assess Easton's 'diffuse' support, political analysts have heavily relied on the concept of

'support for democracy'. Two standard questions have been frequently used in public opinion surveys in the last thirty years to monitor this concept. The first one, derived from Churchill's famous dictum about democracy, asks citizens to agree or disagree with the statement "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government"³ (for research using this indicator see Booth & Seligson, 2005; Dalton, 2004; Huang, Chang, & Chu, 2008; Inglehart, 2003; Klingemann, 1999; Seligson, 2007). The second one builds from Juan Linz's theorizing on democratic breakdown, and asks respondents with which of the following statements do they most 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" (see Bratton, 2002; Lagos, 2003b, 2008; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Sarsfield & Echegaray, 2006). Most research that has used both of these 'classic' indicators for measuring support for democracy has assumed that they have been capturing unconditional –'diffuse'– beliefs about the superiority of democracy.

³ 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": Winston Churchill, from a speech in the House of Commons given on November 11th, 1947.

In an important contribution, Mishler and Rose (2001) argued that measuring democratic support in what they label “incomplete” democracies is better achieved through a different kind of approach, which they call “realist”. This view differs from the traditional –“idealist”- approach in that it “avoids abstract, ambiguous and idealistic labels such as democracy” (2001, p. 307). Mishler and Rose argue that ‘realist’ measures of support are superior to ‘idealist’ ones in several respects: they tap ‘real’ attitudes, have greater face validity, and have greater generality (2001, p. 315). An example of a question belonging to the ‘realist’ approach would ask citizens about their attitudes to their ‘political system’, avoiding in that sense the bias that introducing a term like ‘democracy’ could produce in their answers.

When it comes to the assessment of Easton’s ‘specific’ support, political analysts have repeatedly relied on the concept of ‘satisfaction with the functioning of democracy’. This concept has traditionally been measured through one ‘classical’ indicator: most of the important survey programs around the world (American National Election Studies, Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, European Social Survey, AmericasBarometers, *Latinobarómetro*, Afrobarometer) use variations of the following question: “How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in (country)?”, and most of them include a four point scale with the categories ‘very satisfied’, ‘fairly satisfied’, ‘not very satisfied’ and ‘not at all satisfied’ as possible answers. Answers to this question have

shown to be strongly related to economic and political factors (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Linde & Ekman, 2003), and to rapidly change in time. In this sense, they have been said to tap 'specific' political support⁴.

2.3 SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY: ADVANCED VS. DEVELOPING DEMOCRACIES

Since the worldwide spread of democratic regimes in the 1970's, a considerable amount of research has been dedicated to understanding the sources of citizen support for democracy, both in advanced and developing democracies. Despite the great efforts deployed in explaining the individual level factors that influence citizens' preferences for democratic rule, no clear consensus has been achieved among scholars. Explanations have stressed the roles of early socialization processes (Easton & Dennis, 1967; Inglehart, 2003), interpersonal trust and social capital (Putnam, 1993), institutional arrangements (Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Norris, 1999), 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

⁴ The 'satisfaction with democracy' question has also been incorrectly used by analysts as an indicator of 'diffuse' support, although there are strong theoretical arguments and empirical analyses that have shown this has been a misconceived practice (Linde & Ekman, 2003).

influence across contexts has been significant and few sound conclusions have been reached.

Recent literature has shown that there are important differences between advanced and developing democracies regarding citizens' commitments to the ideal of democracy (Lagos, 2003b; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Mishler & Rose, 2001). Advanced democracies are characterized by the presence of a vast majority of citizens who agree that democracy is the best and always preferable political arrangement. Aggregate levels of democratic support reported in most advanced industrial democracies have been stable for decades at levels of around 80-90% of the population (Dalton, 1999, 2004; Fuchs et al., 1995; Klingemann, 1999; Norris, 1999). If in the 1970's authors were concerned that democracy may have been at risk because of high citizen discontent with politics (Crozier, Huntington, & Watanuki, 1975; Miller, 1974), these worries have now vanished. Support for democratic rule is considered a given fact in North America and Western Europe, to the point that the European Social Survey -possibly the most important survey monitoring public attitudes in Europe- has omitted questions on the subject. This does not necessarily mean that citizens in these societies are satisfied with the way democracy works in their nations: in fact, many advanced democracies show remarkably high levels of citizen dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy coexisting with high and stable levels of support for the concept of democracy (Lagos, 2003b). But

it does mean that the democratic ideal has found a safe place among the citizens of advanced democracies.

In newly established and developing democracies the picture is quite different. Aggregate levels of support for the democratic regime have been found to vary significantly across countries and through time (Lagos, 2003b). Support for democracy in these contexts has shown to be volatile, as Lagos shows for the Latin American region, where it can depend on evaluations of the economic and political situations, and partisan and ideological variations (2003a, 2008). Support for the democratic regime in these societies is not unconditional: there is evidence of a strong presence of utilitarian and instrumental reasoning influencing citizens' attitudes towards democracy (Bratton, 2002; Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Sarsfield & Echegaray, 2006, 2008). Economic and political performance have shown to correlate with citizens' attitudes (Mishler & Rose, 2001), as well as dissatisfaction with the way the system is functioning, discontent with high levels of corruption and a perception of general lack of receptivity of the political representatives (Diamond, 2002). Democratic support in many of these nations seems to be capturing both deep-rooted attitudes and utilitarian calculations: while some citizens might be truly convinced that democracy is the best form of government in all instances, there is sound evidence showing that an important portion of the publics of these countries is only circumstantially

expressing support, and that their preferences may change in very short periods of time (Bratton & Mattes, 2001).

2.4 HYPOTHESES

As already stated, contradictory evidence has been recently found regarding the factors that are related to citizen support for democracy. At the theoretical level, however, there is general agreement that support for democracy is a measure of 'diffuse' political support, and thus, that it should not be strongly related to immediate evaluations of the performance of the system or its authorities. Departing from this general idea about the nature of democratic support, this article tests the following three hypotheses in the Venezuelan case:

H1: There is no relationship between current economic evaluations and support for democracy.

H2: There is no relationship between evaluations of the functioning of democracy and support for democracy.

H3: There is no relationship between trust in the president and support for democracy.

To obtain a fuller understanding of the issues at stake, two multiple regression models will be performed: the first using a 'traditional' measure of support for democracy ('idealist' support,

in Mishler and Rose's terms) and the second using a 'realist' measure of democratic support. In both cases the three hypotheses remain unchanged: support for democracy, whether understood in an 'idealist' or 'realist' conception, in theory should not be related to evaluations of the economy, of the functioning of the political system, or to trust in the president.

2.5 DATA

The analyses in this paper are conducted using data from Venezuela of the fourth wave of the "AmericasBarometer" surveys, conducted by Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)⁵ in 2010. In the "AmericasBarometer" 2010 round, 26 countries throughout the Americas and the Caribbean were included, and over 36000 individuals were interviewed in total. In Venezuela, the project used a national probability sample design of voting-age adults, with a total N of 1500 people. It involved face-to-face interviews conducted in Spanish. The survey used a complex sample design, taking into account stratification and clustering. The sample consisted of six strata representing the six main geographical regions in Venezuela:

⁵ I 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.

Metropolitan area (capital), Zuliana, West, Mid-west, East and Los Llanos⁶.

2.6 DEPENDENT VARIABLES

To examine 'idealist' support for democracy in Venezuela the classic 'Churchillian' indicator is used. The question asks respondents to agree or disagree with the statement "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government". Respondents are given a 7-point scale which ranges from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", and they are asked to choose one point in the scale. The implication is that the more someone 'agrees' with the statement (gives a higher score in the scale), the more he/she believes in the superiority of democracy over other political arrangements.

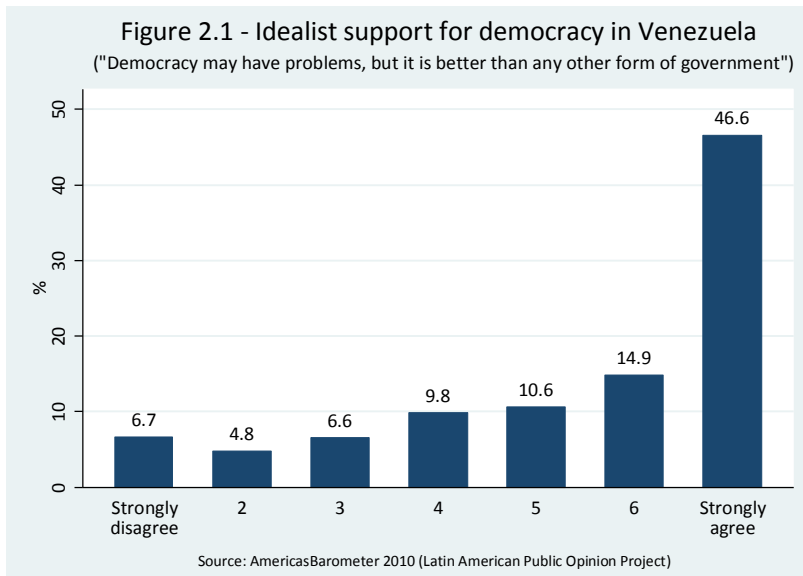
As Figure 2.1 shows, at a first glance, support for democracy in Venezuela is quite high. Over seventy percent of the sample chose the higher three answer categories, and almost half of the sample strongly agreed with the idea that although democracy may have problems, it is the best political system possible. A minority of around sixteen percent answered in the lower three categories,

⁶ Taken from

http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/venezuela/Venezuela_2010_Tech_Info.pdf.

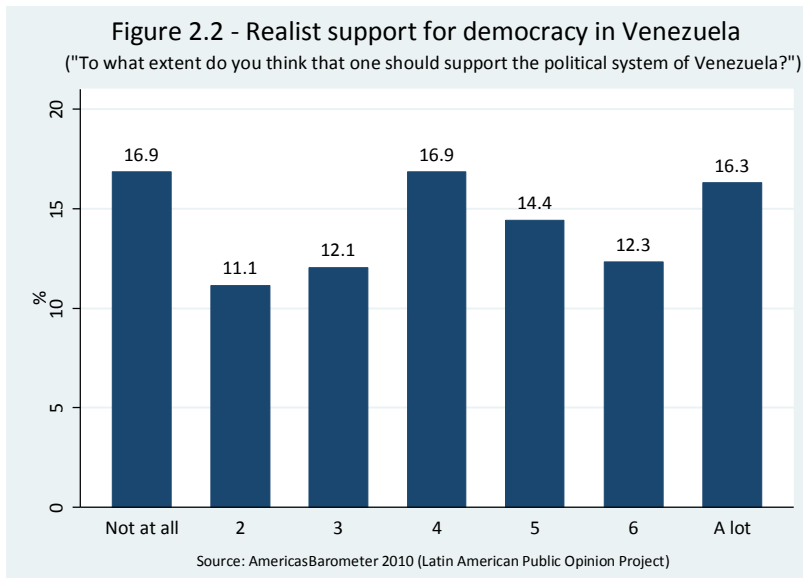
Date of consult: May 8th, 2013. For further information, visit LAPOP's website at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/>.

while only seven percent of the sample strongly disagreed with the statement.



To assess the second dependent variable analyzed in this article, 'realist' support for democracy, a question about 'support for the political system' is used. The question asks respondents the following: "To what extent do you think that one should support the political system of Venezuela?" Respondents are again given a 7-point scale which ranges from "not at all" to "a lot" to express their answer. As in the previous case, the implication is that the higher the number they choose as their answer, the more they are expressing support for their political system. As said, this question is supposed to capture a 'realist' version of citizens' attitudes towards democracy, by asking citizens to evaluate regimes as they

have personally experienced them, without referring to “abstract and ambiguous democratic ideals” (Mishler & Rose, 2001, p. 306).



The distribution of answers to the ‘system support’ question in Venezuela (Figure 2.2) is completely different to that of the ‘idealist support for democracy’ question. The three largest groups of respondents are located on three very different points of the scale: at the two extremes and at the midpoint. This tri-modal distribution implies that there is no agreement among Venezuelans when it comes to believing if their political system deserves support or not. This type of distribution already suggests that the questions about support for the democratic ideal and support for the operating political system are not measuring the same for all individuals: it appears Venezuelans are in fact making a distinction when expressing their attitudes about both issues.

2.7 INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

To be able to test the proposed hypotheses for the 'realist' and 'idealist' measures of support for democracy, seven independent variables are included in both regression models. A first set of variables aims to test hypothesis number one, which states that there is no relationship between current economic evaluations and support for democracy. For this purpose, two questions asking about different economic evaluations are used. The first one refers to citizens' personal economic situation and asks respondents "In general, how would you rate your personal economic situation?" offering five possible answers: "very good", "good", "neither good nor bad", "bad" or "very bad". The second question refers to the country's economic situation and asks "How would you rate the country's economic situation?" having the same five answer categories available to respondents.

To test hypotheses number two, which states that "there is no relationship between evaluations of the functioning of democracy and support for democracy", the classic 'satisfaction with democracy' question is used as an only indicator. This question asks respondents "In general, are you (a) very satisfied, (b) satisfied, (c) unsatisfied, or (d) very unsatisfied with the way democracy functions in Venezuela?" As the question refers to the functioning of democracy and not to the concept of democracy itself, it is supposed to tap citizens' general evaluations of the performance of the political system (Easton's 'specific' support).

To test hypothesis number three, which states that there is no relationship between trusting the president and support for democracy, one indicator is used. It asks “To what extent do you have trust in the president?” Respondents are asked to place themselves on a seven-step ‘ladder’ that offers answers that range from 1 (‘Not at all’) to 7 (‘A lot’).

Finally, a set of social background variables that includes gender, age and years of education is used for control in both models.

2.8 RESULTS

Table 2.1 presents the multiple regression estimates obtained for the model of the ‘idealist’ (‘Churchillian’) measure of support for democracy. The numbers reported are the standardized (beta) coefficients.

Table 2.1 - Regression estimates for idealist support	
Gender (female)	-0.02
Age	0.08**
Education (years)	0.12***
Evaluation of country's economic situation	-0.02
Evaluation of personal economic situation	0.02
Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy	0.00
Trust in the president	0.04
Observations	1397
R-squared	0.02

Standardized beta coefficients. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The variation of responses to the 'Churchillian' support for democracy question is not strongly related to any of the variables included in the model. While there are two variables that show statistically significant coefficients, it would be imprudent to assume these variables have any strong substantive relationship to Venezuelans' preferences for democracy. The model accounts for only two percent of the variability of answers to the support for democracy question, and thus any speculation about possible causal effects is, to say the least, adventurous. In sum, variations in the degree to which citizens express a preference for democracy are not being determined by socio-demographics, evaluations of general performance of the system, economic evaluations, or trust in the president –at least not in the terms these variables are included in this model.

Having clarified this, it is still interesting to examine the two variables that have statistically significant coefficients in the model. Both of them are socio-demographic variables: age and education level. They both show positive, significant coefficients, implying that older and more educated citizens tend to express more support for democracy. A possible explanation to the positive relationship between age and support for democracy is that Venezuelans from older generations have experienced dictatorships and thus include comparisons between authoritarian regimes and democratic ones when answering the survey questions related to the topic. This in turn would lead them to

show stronger support for democracy than citizens who have never experienced dictatorships and cannot make any comparisons. The positive relationship between education level and support for democracy is not surprising, as citizens with higher education have been found repeatedly to appreciate the virtues of democracy more than citizens with lower levels of education (Dennis, 1966; Easton, 1975; Evans & Whitefield, 1995).

Interestingly, satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and evaluations of the economy, variables that have been found to correlate with support for democracy in developing democracies, show no effect at all in Venezuela. It is very saying that the satisfaction with the functioning of democracy variable has a coefficient of virtually zero. The same is true for trust in the president, which has a substantively small, statistically non-significant coefficient. All three hypotheses proposed are confirmed for the 'idealist' measure of support for democracy: no relationship is found between democratic support and (i) evaluations of the economy, (ii) of the performance of democracy, and (iii) trust in the president. It would appear Venezuelans' preferences for democratic rule are not being affected by immediate policy outputs or attitudes towards the incumbent.

Table 2.2 presents the multiple regression estimates obtained for the model of the 'realist' measure of support for democracy, or 'support for the political system'. The numbers shown are the standardized (beta) coefficients.

Table 2.2 - Regression estimates for realist support

Gender (female)	-0.01
Age	0.02
Education (years)	-0.01
Evaluation of country's economic situation	0.03
Evaluation of personal economic situation	0.03
Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy	0.17***
Trust in the president	0.57***
Observations	1364
R-squared	0.52

Standardized beta coefficients. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The model for support for the political system ('realist' support for democracy) yields drastically different results. The first thing that strikes is the fifty two percent explained variation of the dependent variable the model accounts for (versus the two percent found in the 'idealist' support for democracy model). This means that over half of the variation of responses to the question of how much Venezuelans think their political system should be supported is actually explained by the independent variables included in the model.

Citizens' economic evaluations, be them of the country or personal level, show no relationship at all to Venezuelans' support for their political system. The two dimensions seem to be completely unrelated. Hypothesis 1 is confirmed for the model of 'realist' support for democracy as well: no relationship is found between current economic evaluations and support for democracy.

Most, if not all, of system support's explained variation comes from two variables: in first place, trust in the president, and to a lesser extent, satisfaction with the functioning of democracy. Both factors show substantially strong, statistically significant coefficients. In this model, hypotheses 2 and 3 have to be rejected: the measure of 'realist' democratic support shows strong relationships to both (i) evaluations of the functioning of democracy, and (ii) trust in the president.

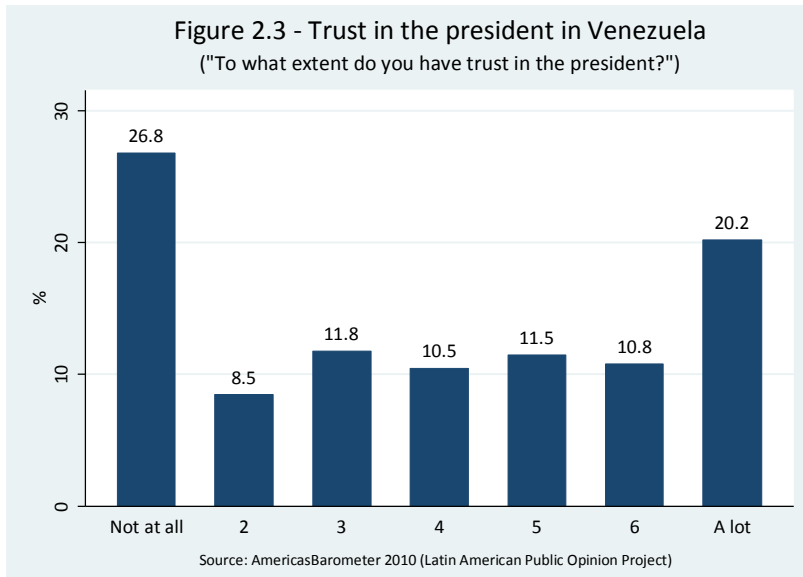
The strong relationship between trust in the president and 'realist' support for democracy is particularly relevant. Trust in the president shows, with great difference, the largest coefficient out of all the explanatory variables included in the model. Is this enough evidence to conclude support for the political system is in good part caused by attitudes towards Chávez? One thing seems clear: the Venezuelan president occupies a central position in the nation's political scene; when speaking and thinking about politics in Venezuela, his figure is without doubt more salient to citizens than a general concept such as the 'political system'. In first instance, it seems safe to argue that Venezuelans' attitudes towards Chávez act as a cause that determines their attitudes towards other political objects rather than the other way around.

2.9 A CLOSER LOOK AT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUST IN THE PRESIDENT AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

How important is the figure of Hugo Chávez in determining Venezuelans' support for democracy? While in the regression analyses no relationship was found between trusting Chávez and the measure of 'idealist' support for democracy, a strong relationship between trusting him and supporting the country's political system was observed. What implications do these findings have?

Venezuelan society has been repeatedly described as being polarized around the figure of its president⁷. Figure 2.3 shows the distribution of answers to the 'Trust in the president' question in the 2010 "AmericasBarometer" Venezuela survey. While more than a quarter of the sample responded they have "no trust at all" in Chávez, an important group of approximately twenty percent reported trusting him "a lot", the highest answer category possible. Another important group of around a third of the sample placed itself in the middle categories of the scale (scores 3-5).

⁷ The results of the last presidential election of April 14th, 2013, where there was an almost equal split of the vote between Nicolás Maduro and Henrique Capriles, are a clear sign of the extreme political polarization present today in Venezuelan society.

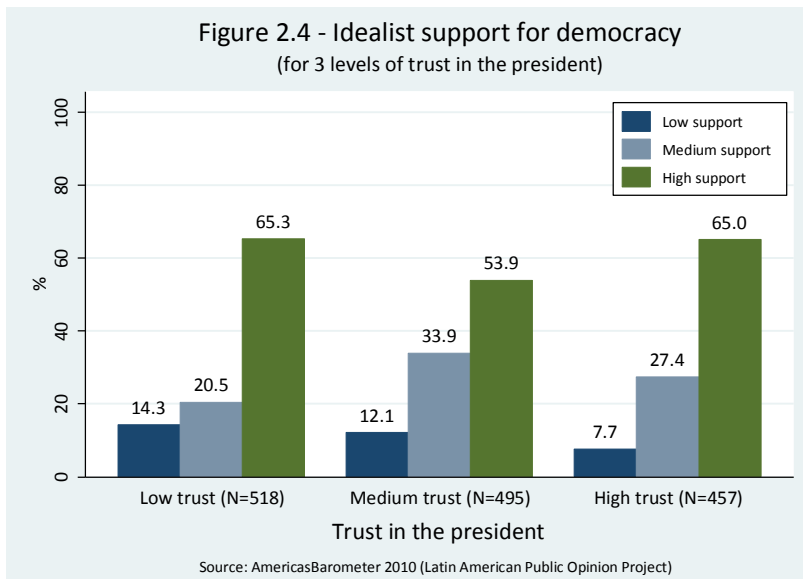


To perform a closer examination of the relationship between trust in the president and support for democracy, the sample was divided into three groups of citizens, depending on their degree of trust in Chávez: those with 'low' trust towards him (scores 1-2), those with 'medium' trust towards him (scores 3-5), and those who have 'high' trust (scores 6-7). The three groups resulted very similar in size, each being composed of close to a third of the sample.

Figure 2.4 shows the distribution of responses to the 'idealist' support for democracy question for the three groups of 'trust in the president' citizens⁸. Regardless of where citizens situate

⁸ For the construction of this figure, the 'idealist' support for democracy question was recoded in the following way: scores 1-2 = 'low support for democracy', scores 3-5 = 'medium support for democracy', scores 6-7 = 'high support for democracy'.

themselves on the trust towards Chávez question, there is a general tendency to support democracy as an ideal, confirming the null relationship found between the two variables in the regression analysis. In all three groups there is a majority of citizens who express high support for democracy; and in the two groups where citizens have the strongest attitudes towards Chávez –low trust and high trust- the value is practically the same: a strong 65 percent.



By introducing the third variable at stake, ‘support for the political system’, or ‘realist’ support for democracy, the picture becomes clearer. Table 2.3 illustrates the relationship between ‘idealist’ and

‘realist’ measures of support for democracy for the three levels of ‘trust in the president’⁹.

Table 2.3 - Crosstable between idealist and realist measures of support for democracy for 3 levels of trust in the President

		Idealist support for democracy			
			Low	Medium	High
Low trust in the president (N=508)	Realist support for democracy	Low	9.3%	12.4%	40.9%
		Medium	4.5%	5.9%	18.3%
		High	0.6%	2.4%	5.7%
	Total		14.4%	20.7%	64.9%
Medium trust in the president (N=470)	Realist support for democracy	Low	1.7%	4.7%	8.3%
		Medium	7.7%	24.7%	38.1%
		High	2.8%	4.5%	7.7%
	Total		12.2%	33.9%	54.1%
High trust in the president (N=444)	Realist support for democracy	Low	0.2%	0.5%	1.4%
		Medium	2.0%	13.5%	16.2%
		High	5.6%	13.7%	46.8%
	Total		7.8%	27.7%	64.4%

Cells are percentages of the total for each "trust in the President" group.

Source: AmericasBarometer 2010 (Latin American Public Opinion Project).

At least two well defined groups of citizens can be distinguished in table 2.3. Close to half (46.8%) of the citizens that have high trust in Hugo Chávez also show high support for the political system and for the ideal of democracy. This group of citizens (which accounts

⁹ For the construction of this table, the support for the system question was recoded in the following way: scores 1-2 = ‘low support’, scores 3-5 = ‘medium support’, scores 6-7 = ‘high support’.

for approximately 15% of the total sample) could be labeled the '*Chavist*' democrats: most likely, they will agree that Chávez is a democrat, and that the Venezuelan political system is an operating democracy. They find no incompatibilities in supporting the ideal of democracy ('idealist' support) and supporting their operating political system ('realist' support): for them, democracy is what they are living in at the moment.

A second important group of citizens can be considered the opposite: the '*Anti-Chavist*' democrats, if you will. They have remarkably low trust towards the president and low support for the political system, but still believe democracy is the best possible political arrangement. They make up 40.9% of the persons in the 'low trust' group, which is equivalent to a 15% of the total sample - a strikingly similar proportion to the one of the '*Chavist*' democrats. The differences observed here between supporting the ideal of democracy and the operating political system could be explained through the hypothesis that people in this group most likely qualify Chávez as a dictator and Venezuela's system as a dictatorship. Democracy is something they don't have, it is something desired. Thus, while they express high esteem for the ideal of democracy, they will express very low support for the operating political system.

Other groups of citizens are also visible. Around a tenth of the citizens in the low trust group (close to a 4% of the complete sample) have constant negative attitudes towards democracy.

They do not trust Chávez, do not believe their political system should be supported, and have lost faith (on never had any) in the ideal of democracy. While it could be hurried to call them ‘antidemocrats’, they at least seem disillusioned. Things are not going well, and democracy, which is not functioning correctly, would not help much even if it was working better. From this position to preferring the presence of authoritarian regimes there is probably not much ideological travelling to be done. Another group of similar size is the one which shows the same characteristics but ‘medium’ support for democracy. They do not trust Chávez, do not express support for their political system, but express ‘medium’ support for the ideal of democracy: they might still have some hope about the possibility of a true democracy being able to work things out, but they may very well be on their way to complete disillusionment.

2.10 CONCLUSIONS

There is evidence to conclude that there are at least two different conceptions of what ‘democracy’ is among Venezuelans. Most citizens express belief in the superiority of democracy, but it appears as if some believe democracy is what they are living in at the moment, while others believe it is something they do not –but

would like to- have¹⁰. The presence of different conceptions of what democracy is opens the debate about the validity of the traditional support for democracy indicators when used by themselves. Without knowing what citizens are referring to when they answer questions about an abstract construct such as 'democracy', it is very difficult to know what their answers to these questions actually mean. In fact, recent literature has cast doubts on the common practices used to measure support for democracy, which have mostly used a unidimensional perspective (Carlin & Singer, 2011; Inglehart, 2003; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007). The possibility that citizens answer survey questions on the topic from multiple perspectives reinforces the idea that support for democracy is a concept which can adopt many different meanings, and that it should be conceived -and measured- as such. This implies the need of using multiple indicators which cover distinct dimensions of democratic support (Linde & Ekman, 2003).

Trust in Hugo Chávez does not seem to play an important role in determining Venezuelans' support for the ideal of democracy; where it appears to be significant is in defining what democracy is for Venezuelans. As was seen, a good proportion of the citizens

¹⁰ Hugo Chávez's death and the changes in the political scenario that have recently taken place in Venezuela only reinforce this conclusion. All in the name of 'democracy', the nation finds itself strongly polarized between two opposing forces: Maduro has taken the legacy of the 'Chavist' conception of democracy, and the opposition, personified in Capriles, accuses the current regime of being a dictatorship and demands a 'true' democracy to be installed.

who trust Chávez seem to have a very different conception of what democracy is to those citizens who do not trust him at all. While it cannot be established with complete certainty, it seems safe to argue that the causal effect goes in the direction pointed out: at least in some cases, trust in Chávez affects citizens' definitions of democracy, and not the other way around.

As well, due to the multiple conceptions of democracy found among Venezuelans, it becomes problematic to consider a heterogeneous understanding of support for democracy as a guarantee of stability for the democratic system. Is the high level of support for democracy found in Venezuela really a guarantee of stability for its democratic regime? Or do the different –and encountered– conceptions of democracy pose a threat to the democratic institutions and regime in general? It may be argued in this case that a first glance at the 'traditional' indicators suggests democracy is not in crisis in Venezuela, but the profound polarization of its society may be in fact an indicator of the fragility of its democracy.

Understanding the differences in conceptions of democracy is fundamental for any further research seeking to unveil what the true levels of support for the democratic regime are. It seems evident that democracy does not mean the same for everyone, and thus, that the reported levels of support for democracy in many cases are not saying what they seem to be saying. In this line, it is more relevant for future analyses concentrating on support for

democracy to ask what models of democracy citizens support and not just if they support democracy or not. Researchers, policy makers, and scholars in general should be sensitive to this if any clear understanding of how citizens in developing democracies relate to their political regimes is to be found.

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Chapter 3

SAME SAME...BUT DIFFERENT? SUPPORT FOR THE IDEAL OF DEMOCRACY VS. SOLID DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT¹

Abstract

Measurement of citizen support for democracy has been problematic, as most research on the topic has focused on assessing support for an abstract concept: the ‘ideal’ of democracy. This article proposes a different conception of democratic support, labeled ‘solid democratic support’, which combines multiple items tapping attitudes towards various essential attributes of democratic rule. Using data from the “AmericasBarometer” surveys, the solid support measure is compared to a traditional measure of support for the ideal of democracy in Chile and Venezuela. Important differences are found in the levels of the two indicators and in their correlates, demonstrating that they are in fact different concepts. As well, substantial differences are found between the two countries, suggesting that analyses of democratic support that do not consider the political context may be flawed.

Keywords: *support for democracy, democratic culture, political attitudes*

¹ Coauthored with Willem E. Saris (Research and Expertise Centre for Survey Methodology - Universitat Pompeu Fabra).

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Support for the principles of democracy has been emphasized by many scholars as a necessary condition for the consolidation and stability of democracy (Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Dalton, 2004; Easton, 1965, 1975; Inglehart, 2003; Linz, 1978; Linz & Stepan, 1996b; Lipset, 1959; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Norris, 1999, 2011; Rose, Mishler, & Haerpfer, 1998). Not only do democratic regimes depend on the public's willing acquiescence and support for their survival and effective functioning (Easton, 1965, 1975; Mishler & Rose, 2001), but a democracy is only considered to be consolidated when democratic procedures and institutions become "the only game in town" (Linz & Stepan, 1996b, p. 15). In this line, a strong current of literature has granted great importance to understanding the conditions under which citizens develop and maintain positive attitudes towards democratic rule.

Still, support for democracy has proven to be a difficult concept to study. Discussions regarding which indicators are better suited for assessing it empirically date back to the 1970s (Citrin, 1974; Miller, 1974). Almost two decades later, the literature on democratic support was still being described as "ambiguous, confusing and noncumulative" (Kaase, 1988, p. 117). Today, the debate is far from closed, as indicators used to measure democratic support are still severely and recurrently criticized. There is no scholarly agreement on exactly how the concept of support for democracy should be interpreted or empirically assessed.

Building on an idea initially proposed by Mishler and Rose (2001), this article argues that most research on support for democracy has been misconceived, as it has adopted an “idealist approach (which) assesses popular support by measuring citizens’ commitment to democracy as an abstract ideal” (Mishler & Rose, 2001, p. 305). The main problem with this approach is that support for democracy in the abstract does not necessarily imply support for democracy’s essential attributes. For example, in certain contexts it is not hard to find people answering that ‘democracy is preferable to any other type of government’ to a survey question, while at the same time being in favor of restrictions on freedom of press or on the right to vote of certain individuals. Because there is strong evidence that citizens have different understandings and expectations of what democracy is and what it should deliver (Booth & Seligson, 2009; Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Linde & Ekman, 2003; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007; Vargas Cullell, 2006), not all citizens who express democratic support through the traditional support for democracy survey items necessarily refer to the same concept. In this sense, it is important to differentiate those citizens who only say they support democracy in the abstract from those who have actual, consistent democratic attitudes.

Three main contributions to the scientific literature on political attitudes are offered. First, an alternative measure of support for democracy is proposed, which we have labeled ‘solid democratic support’. The solid support measure is novel because it combines

multiple indicators that tap support for the essential attributes of a democratic system into a non-compensatory composite score, thus permitting the distinction of those citizens who have consistent positive attitudes towards democratic rule from the rest. Second, by means of logistic regression analysis, it is shown that there are important differences between the correlates of support for the ideal of democracy and those of solid democratic support. Third, it is demonstrated that when studying support for democracy, context matters: the recent political history of the country and the ideological position of the incumbent play a role in determining the sources of democratic support in nations.

3.2 TRADITIONAL MEASUREMENT OF SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

In the political attitudes literature, support for democracy has been traditionally related to David Easton's concept of "diffuse" political support: a durable, generalized attachment that is normally "independent of outputs and performance in the short run" (Easton, 1975, pp. 444–445). Also interpreted as a measure of the legitimacy of a political system, diffuse support has been described as "a deep-seated set of attitudes towards politics and the operation of the political system that is relatively impervious to change" (Dalton, 2004, p. 23). As well, this type of support has been related to the "affective" orientations citizens have towards

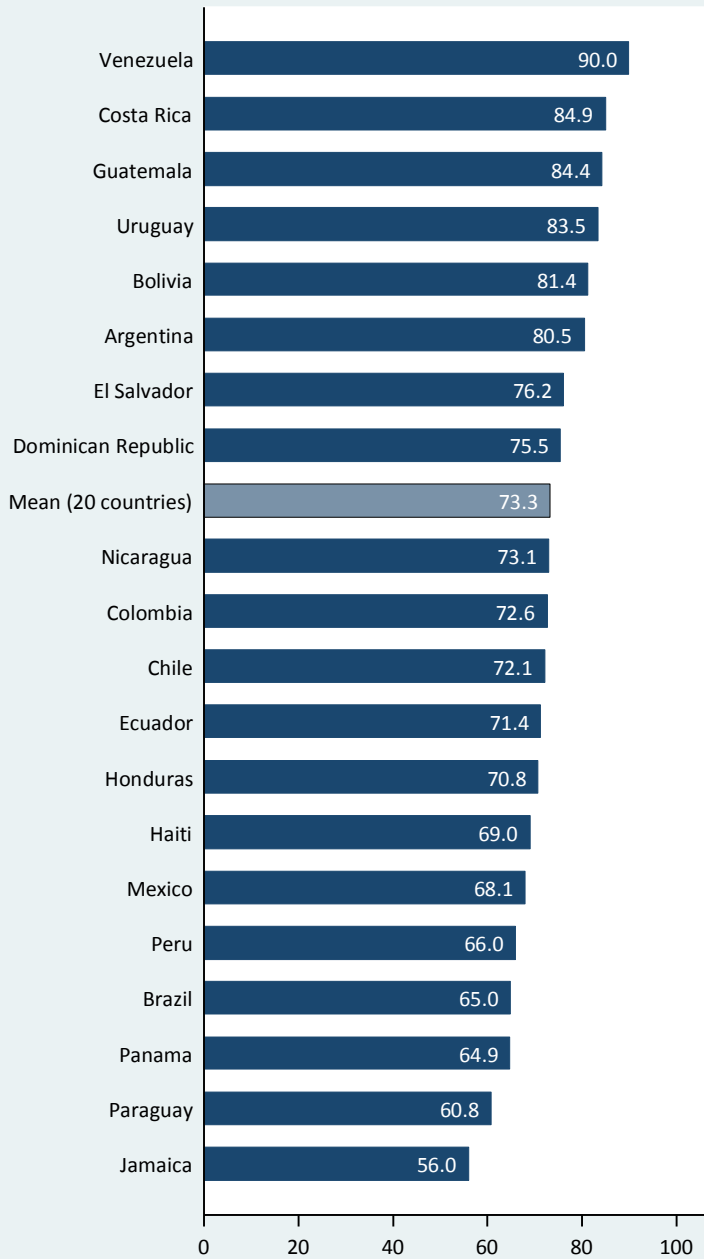
political systems (Almond & Verba, 1963; Dalton, 2004; Norris, 1999). It is that “reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effects of which they see as damaging to their wants” (Easton, 1965, p. 273).

When assessing support for democracy through survey data, most researchers have relied on items that captured citizens’ attitudes towards an abstract concept: that of the ‘ideal’ of democracy (for examples see Bratton, 2002; Fuchs, Guidorossi, & Svensson, 1995; Lagos, 2003, 2008; Linz, 1978; Linz & Stepan, 1996a; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Rose & Mishler, 1996; Sarsfield & Echegaray, 2006). A frequently used indicator that has monitored the concept in the last decades builds upon Juan Linz’s ideas on democratic breakdown (Linz, 1978; Linz & Stepan, 1996a). The AmericasBarometer Survey’s version of the *Linzian* indicator asks “With which of the following statements do you agree with most?” and offers respondents three possible answers: “(a) For most people it doesn’t matter whether a regime is democratic or non-democratic”, “(b) Democracy is preferable to any other type of government”, or “(c) In some circumstances an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one”.

Figure 3.1 reports the levels of support for the ideal of democracy found in twenty countries of North, Central, South America and the Caribbean in 2014 through the use of the aforementioned *Linzian* indicator by the AmericasBarometer Surveys. Although the range

between the countries with the highest and lowest levels of support is large, it appears a majority of the population expresses support for democratic rule in all countries. When considering democracy in abstract terms –as an ideal- there seems to be little doubt that citizens in the Americas agree that it is preferable to any other form of government.

Figure 3.1 - Support for the ideal of democracy
(% of people who believe democracy is preferable)



Source: AmericasBarometer 2014 (Latin American Public Opinion Project)

This indicator, widely used in studies of democratization, can provide a first impression of levels of citizen support for democracy across nations. This may, however, be a naïve impression, because of two reasons. First, because there is no certainty about what the actual meaning of this support in fact is. Figure 3.1 shows countries with very different democratic histories having similar levels of democratic support. Costa Rica, a nation that has enjoyed one of the longest democratic traditions in the Americas -as well as the highest ratings from the Freedom House organization throughout the last decades- has virtually the same level of democratic support as Guatemala, a country that experienced a remarkably unstable democratic trajectory in the twentieth century and that has consistently obtained very poor ratings from Freedom House since the late 1970s (Freedom House, 2015b; McClintock & Lebovic, 2006, p. 34)². The figure suggests the uncertainty we face regarding what citizens in different countries have in mind when thinking about an abstract construct such as democracy: it seems plausible that a nation's democratic trajectory determines the general conceptual framework under which its citizens understand democracy (Linde & Ekman, 2003; Rose et al., 1998). In this sense, it would not be correct to make cross-country comparisons of

² For producing its well known classification of 'free', 'partly free' and 'not free' countries, Freedom House gives numerical scores -from 1 to 7- to two categories in each country: political rights and civil liberties. It is to these ratings I make reference to. For detailed information on Freedom House's methodological procedures and the individual country ratings throughout the years see Freedom House (2015a, 2015b) and McClintock and Lebovic (2006).

levels of democratic support found through an indicator of this kind, as it is likely that we would be comparing different things, and even run the risk of not knowing what we are comparing at all (Canache, Mondak, & Seligson (2001) make a similar argument for research on satisfaction with the functioning of democracy). Country levels of support for the ideal of democracy should not be taken by themselves, but complemented with the meaning they acquire in each specific context.

Second, is the fact that traditional measures of democratic support³ such as the *Linzian* indicator have been assessing support for an abstract concept: the ideal of democracy. One may question if simply expressing 'lip service' to an ideal is enough for a person to be considered as having support for it. If the object to be measured is that "deep-seated set of attitudes towards politics" Russell Dalton talks about (2004, p. 23), there are enough grounds to question this. It seems safe to argue that it is not the same to answer that 'democracy is preferable to any other form of government' in a survey than to actually have positive attitudes towards the fundamental aspects of democratic rule.

In fact, recent literature has expressed doubts on the validity of some of the traditional indicators used to measure support for

³ Another example of a commonly used indicator measuring support for the ideal of democracy is the 'Churchillian' indicator, developed by Rose and Mishler (1996). The indicator asks respondents to agree or disagree with the statement: "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government."

democracy (Carlin & Singer, 2011; Ferrín, 2012; Inglehart, 2003; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007). There is an emerging consensus that democratic support is a multidimensional concept. Hence, an improved approach to its measurement would imply using several indicators that captured support towards specific core principles and institutions of a democratic system.

Efforts to analyze the multidimensional nature of democratic support through empirical research are fairly recent. One of the first steps in this direction was taken by Michael Bratton and colleagues, developers of the Afrobarometer surveys in the late 1990s. Bratton and Mattes differentiated the rationalities undergirding support for democracy in African citizens as either “intrinsic” or “instrumental” types of rationality: while some citizens will support 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), others will support democracy based on instrumental calculations, such as the alleviation of poverty and the improvement of living standards. In later works, the authors developed an “index of commitment to democracy” which included a direct question measuring support for democracy, plus other indicators asking for opinions on 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 democracy, but failed to consistently reject all other forms of authoritarianism.

In a similar line, but aiming to achieve a detailed understanding of citizens' conceptions of democracy, Schedler and Sarsfield developed a classification of what they called "democrats with adjectives": people who support the ideal of democracy in the abstract while rejecting one or more core principles of liberal democracy (2007). Through their index of support for democracy, these authors classified citizens into six different groups, based on their different ideological profiles towards democracy: "liberal democrats", "intolerant democrats", "paternalistic democrats", "homophobic democrats", "exclusionary democrats", and "ambivalent non-democrats".

Carlin and Singer (2011), performed an examination of citizens' support for the core values of "polyarchy", Robert Dahl's concept for real world approximations of true democracy (Dahl, 1971). They identified five profiles of support: "polyarchs", "hyper-presidentialists", "pluralist autocrats", "hedging autocrats" and "autocrats". They found that most Latin American respondents were not pure "polyarchs" or "autocrats", but showed mixed attitudes towards democracy. In an attempt to draw a clearer picture of the different groups of citizens they identified, they examined the socioeconomic, attitudinal and ideological correlates of the profiles and found that support for polyarchy is highest

among the educated, politically engaged, wealthy, and citizens who dislike the president (2011).

3.3 MEASURING ‘SOLID DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT’

In their influential revision of democratic indices, Munck and Verkuilen (2002) laid out three challenges that every researcher in the process of constructing an index should consider: “conceptualization”, “measurement” and “aggregation”. According to these authors, the initial task in the construction of any index is that of “conceptualization”, or the “identification of attributes that are constitutive of the concept under consideration” (2002, p. 7). Once the meaning of the concept has been correctly specified, the challenge of “measurement” arises, which accounts to the selection of the appropriate indicators for operationalizing the concept. When the concept has been defined and operationalized, the final challenge of “aggregation” must be confronted. In this step, analysts must “determine whether and how to reverse the process of disaggregation that was carried out during the conceptualization stage” (Munck & Verkuilen, 2002, p. 22).

This section presents the definition of democracy to be used as a basis for assessing ‘solid democratic support’. Following Munck and Verkuilen’s (2002) advice, the section is divided into three parts: the first part will address the issue of conceptualization, laying out the necessary conditions for a political system to be

considered a democracy. The second part will tackle the measurement challenge, describing what data and indicators are used to operationalize solid democratic support. The third part will explain the aggregation procedure chosen for constructing the solid support indicator, as well as the arguments behind that choice.

3.3.1 CONCEPTUALIZATION

One of the main arguments driving this article is that a measure of solid democratic support should consider citizen support for all essential attributes of democracy. What, then, are the essential features of a democratic system? In other words, what are the minimum necessary conditions for a political system to qualify as a democracy?

Multiple definitions of democracy have been offered throughout the last decades (for good revisions see Collier & Levitsky, 1997; Diamond & Morlino, 2004; Munck & Verkuilen, 2002; Schmitter & Karl, 1991; Tilly, 2007). 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). In recent years, however, a procedural minimum definition based on Robert Dahl’s concept of “polyarchy” (1971) has gained acceptance as a reference point for operationalizations of the

concept (Altman & Pérez-Liñán, 2002; Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi, & Przeworski, 1996; Baker & Koese, 2001; Carlin & Singer, 2011; Schneider, 2008; Vanhanen, 2003).

Dahl coined the term “polyarchy” for real world approximations of true democracy, which he thought was an unattainable ideal-type regime. According to him, the minimum requirements for polyarchy to exist are: (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 claimed 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 empirical studies of quality of democracy and democratization have adapted Dahl’s ideas to construct indices of

democracy. In fact, most of what the best known indices of democracy have been measuring (Alvarez et al., 1996; Coppedge & Reinicke, 1990; Freedom House, 2015b; Gastil, 1991; Marshall & Jaggers, 2002) consists of variations on Dahl's two dimensions (Coppedge, Alvarez, & Maldonado, 2008). The majority of these indicators have primarily focused on the contestation dimension, while only a few have reflected the inclusiveness dimension (Coppedge et al., 2008).

This article departs from Dahl's concept of polyarchy and its two dimensions to specify the definition of democracy used for assessing solid democratic support. In addition to support for polyarchy's dimensions of contestation and inclusiveness, one more dimension is included in our definition. The additional dimension deals with support for a key aspect of democratic institutionalism: an appropriate system of checks and balances. In their examination of citizen support for democratic ideals and institutions in the Americas, Carlin and Singer note that besides including support towards contestation and inclusiveness, measures of democratic support should also capture "citizens' orientations to the basic institutions that undergird these twin dimensions" (2011, p. 1505). They convincingly argue that support for democracy's principles "rings hollow unless accompanied by support for the vertical and horizontal checks and balances that ensure their maintenance" (2011, p. 1505). In this line, they introduce a dimension labeled "institutions and processes" which

measures respect for the institutions charged with exercising the checks and balances necessary to ensure the correct functioning of a democratic system.

In sum, the definition of democracy used in this article to assess solid democratic support consists of three dimensions: 'contestation', 'inclusiveness', and 'checks and balances'. All three dimensions are considered necessary conditions for a political system to be deemed a democracy and consequently, support towards all three is necessary for a person to be considered to have solid democratic support⁴.

3.3.2 MEASUREMENT

Data for this article is taken from the 2006/2007 round of the AmericasBarometer Surveys, a series of national representative surveys conducted by Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)⁵. The 2006/2007 round of the AmericasBarometers included a series of questions asking citizens about their attitudes towards different democratic principles and

⁴ While this article argues that the three dimensions specified are necessary conditions for a political system to be considered a democracy, no claims are made that the three of them taken together is sufficient for a system to be considered democratic. There may be other attributes that political systems are required to have to be considered democratic.

⁵ The authors 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.

institutions. A total of seven items were selected to operationalize the three dimensions outlined in the previous section—three in the case of ‘contestation’ and two in the cases of ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘checks and balances’. By no means are the selected items considered to be perfect measures of the concepts they aim to assess: it is evident that some are better measures than others; but they all are –to our judgment- the best indicators the database offered for each concept’s particular case. All indicators included in each dimension are considered to be formative indicators: that is, support towards every one of them is considered as necessary for their corresponding dimension to be fulfilled. In this line, while in the following paragraphs, for the sake of parsimony the seven indicators will be presented as subcomponents of their corresponding dimensions, in the end support towards all seven of them is seen as a necessary condition for a person to be considered to have solid democratic support.

a) Contestation

Some scholars have interpreted the dimension of democratic contestation as focusing solely on the electoral process: “democracy, for us, is thus a regime in which some governmental offices are filled as a consequence of contested elections” (Alvarez et al., 1996, p. 4). In fact, classical procedural minimum definitions of democracy have adopted this stance when defining the concept: as Przeworski states, democracy is “a system in which parties lose elections” (1991, p. 10). There are other authors, however, that

defend a broader definition of contestation, which, besides elections, includes subcomponents such as freedom of organization, freedom of expression and pluralism in the media (Coppedge & Reinicke, 1990). In Dahl's original terms, contestation refers to "the extent of permissible opposition, public contestation, or political competition" (1971, p. 4). While there is no doubt that free and contested elections are of utmost relevance for any democratic system, we argue that the existence of contestation should not be exclusive to the electoral process, but be extended to daily political practices. For this reason, we advocate a broad understanding of contestation and use three indicators for measuring support towards the distinct subcomponents of freedom of organization, freedom of press and freedom of opposition. The survey questions ask:

"To what extent do you approve or disapprove of a law prohibiting the meetings of any group that criticizes (the country's) political system?" (10 point scale: 1 = strongly disapprove → 10 = strongly approve) (**freedom of organization**);

"To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the government censoring any media that criticized it?" (10 point scale: 1= strongly disapprove → 10 = strongly approve) (**freedom of press**);

"Taking into account the current situation of (the country), I would like you to tell me with which of the following statements do you agree with more? (a) It is necessary for the progress of the country

that our presidents limit the voice and vote of the opposition parties, or (b) Our presidents have to permit that the opposition parties enjoy all the liberty to oppose to the president's policies with their voice and vote, even if the opposition parties delay the progress of the country" (**freedom of opposition**).

b) Inclusiveness

The dimension of inclusiveness has been neglected from various indices of democracy, for diverse reasons (Munck & Verkuilen, 2002). For example, Alvarez et. al. (1996) and Coppedge & Reinicke (1990) argue that their research is concerned with the post-World War II era and that universal suffrage can be taken for granted in this period, making it acceptable, in their case, to concentrate on the contestation dimension. However, while it could be argued that universal suffrage is an attribute of democracy that could be taken for granted today, the same is not necessarily true with citizen attitudes towards it. As the aim of this research is assessing citizens' attitudes towards the fundamental attributes of democracy, it is necessary to also include the dimension of inclusiveness in the definition of democracy used for analysis. In this line, we use two indicators to assess support towards inclusiveness, conceived here as the extent to which every citizen has the right to participate in political life. The first one concentrates on the most common conception of the inclusiveness dimension, that is, the universal right to vote. But participation in the political process should not be solely interpreted as having the

right to vote: it also implies citizens having equal eligibility for public office (Dahl, 1971). Therefore, we include a second item in our assessment of inclusiveness that taps opinions towards the universal right of running for public office. The items ask:

“There are people who speak negatively of (the country’s) form of government, not just the incumbent government but the form of government. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people’s right to vote?” (10 point scale: 1 = strongly disapprove → 10 = strongly approve) (**universal right to vote**);

“There are people who speak negatively of (the country’s) form of government, not just the incumbent government but the form of government. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people being permitted to seek public office?” (10 point scale: 1 = strongly disapprove → 10 = strongly approve) (**universal right to run for public office**).

c) Checks and balances

Finally, the dimension of respect for democratic checks and balances aims to tap citizen respect for the institutions charged with exercising these controls in a democratic system. Here, we borrow the conceptualization of this dimension from Carlin and Singer (2011) and operationalize it, as they did, through two items:

“Do you think that sometimes there can be sufficient grounds for the president to close down the Congress or do you think there can

never be a sufficient reason to do so?” (yes / no) (**respect for legislative**);

“Do you think that sometimes there can be sufficient grounds to dissolve the Supreme Court of Justice, or do you think that there can never be sufficient grounds to do so?” (yes / no) (**respect for judiciary**).

3.3.3 AGGREGATION

Solid democratic support is defined as having consistent positive attitudes towards all of democracy’s essential components. Because all seven indicators described above tap distinct essential features of democratic rule, they are all considered necessary conditions for a complete understanding of solid support. In this line, only those citizens who show positive attitudes towards each and every one of the seven indicators are considered to have this type of support.

A common mistake made by theorists of democracy is that “almost everyone, which is a large number of people, conceptualizes democracy in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, but at the same time almost no quantitative measures use the mathematics of logic appropriate to the concept. Instead the inappropriate mathematics of addition, average, and correlation are almost universally adopted” (Goertz, 2006, p. 11). In fact, by relying on aggregation rules based on addition or correlation, such as factor analysis, the empirical measurement of democracy

usually falls prey to what he calls the most common form of measurement-concept inconsistency: “a necessary and sufficient concept with an additive (or averaging) measure” (Goertz, 2006, p. 98).

To avoid this mistake, we constructed a binary non-compensatory composite score as the measure of solid democratic support. The construction process itself was made up of three steps. In the first step, answers to all seven indicators measuring support for democracy’s essential attributes were recoded in binary fashion, where positive answers were given a score of one and all other answers a score of zero. In the second step, the scores of all seven binary items were added to create an aggregated variable with scores ranging from zero to seven. Finally, the binary non-compensatory composite indicator of ‘solid support for democracy’ was constructed, where only scores of seven in the aggregated variable were recoded as ‘solid support’⁶.

The use of a non-compensatory composite indicator as the measure of solid democratic support is the most appropriate, as the primary interest of this article is differentiating those citizens who have consistent positive attitudes towards all of democracy’s essential features from those who show inconsistent or negative attitudes. This argument is similar to the one proposed by Alvarez et al. (1996) for developing their dichotomous classification of

⁶ For complete details on the three steps followed to construct the ‘solid democratic support’ binary indicator, refer to appendix I.

political regimes. These authors justify their use of a nominal classification to differentiate between democracies and dictatorships with the argument that “the analogy with the proverbial pregnancy is thus that while democracy can be more or less advanced, one cannot be half-democratic: there is a natural zero point” (Alvarez et al., 1996, p. 21). In this article, that natural zero point is having solid democratic support: here, we are not interested in finding the degree of democratic support an individual has, but in differentiating those who have consistent democratic attitudes from all others. The advantage of using a non-compensatory composite indicator is that, unlike factor scores, it does not allow for negative answers to one or more questions to be compensated by positive answers to the other questions included in the index, that way avoiding possible conceptualization-measurement inconsistencies⁷.

3.4 CASE SELECTION: CHILE AND VENEZUELA

We have argued that expressing support for the ideal of democracy in the abstract does not necessarily imply supporting democracy’s essential principles; and that because of this, democratic support should be studied by looking at support for the

⁷ Also, the use of a non-compensatory composite indicator implies all indicators used in the analysis are given the same importance for the final measure. Thus, it makes no sense in applying different weights to the indicators if they are all considered necessary for a complete understanding of solid support.

fundamental attributes of a democratic system. As well, we argue that supporting democracy in one place does not necessarily mean the same as supporting it in a different one. Both the meaning and the nature of support for democracy may vary depending on the context. In this sense, it is illustrative to perform a comparative examination of countries where the democratic support debate has been constructed on different terms. We have selected Chile and Venezuela as this article's cases for study because they are two countries with transcendental differences in their democratic trajectories that make them appropriate for comparative analysis.

Prior to its dramatic democratic breakdown in 1973, Chile enjoyed a relatively long history of democracy, with a party system and institutions similar to those found in Western Europe (Valenzuela, 1977). The *coup d'état* of September 11, 1973 resulted in the long and gruesome dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, which lasted until 1990. This regime, despite facing intense internal problems and widespread international rejection, managed to maintain a great deal of support among important sectors of the Chilean population throughout its entire period. Even after the re-establishment 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 fact, both sides were represented in the post dictatorship party system: in broad terms, the authoritarian side through the right-wing "*Renovación Nacional*" and "*Unión*

Democrática Independiente” parties and the democratic side through the leftist “*Concertación*” coalition.

There is no doubt that Pinochet’s regime has been very influential in shaping Chileans’ political attitudes in the last decades. It is on these grounds that debates about democracy in Chile have been held upon: Chilean citizens have been permanently exposed to discussions held by elites who strongly promoted democracy and its values versus those who were, to call it somehow, more ‘sympathetic’ to authoritarian regimes, personified by Pinochet. This is particularly the case for older citizens who experienced the dictatorship firsthand and are able to compare it to the democratic regimes that came after 1990. 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 proposed from the nature of the debate on democratic support in Chile. First, that individuals’ self-placement in the left-right scale should have an influence on their attitudes towards democracy: because Pinochet’s regime can be considered a ‘right-wing dictatorship’ it would be expected that those who locate themselves on the left side of the scale would be more supportive of democracy. This should occur for both measures of support: Chilean left-wingers should show a greater tendency to both support democracy as an ideal and to have solid democratic support.

One might also expect a positive effect of age on support for democracy. It can be argued that those who experienced Pinochet's dictatorship firsthand will appreciate the virtues of democratic governance more than their fellow citizens who were politically socialized after the dictatorship had ended. However, this might not necessarily be the case as a good percentage of Chile's older population supported Pinochet during his regime and afterwards, making it also possible that the effect of age on support for democracy is null.

In Venezuela, the debate on democratic support in the last decades has been built on very different grounds. Unlike Chile, Venezuela has not had an authoritarian regime since democracy was reestablished in 1959, which makes it one of the longer lasting representative democracies in the region, despite its clear deficiencies (Coppedge, 2005; Roberts, 2008). The political elites in Venezuela have not constructed the regime debate in terms of preferences for authoritarianism versus preferences for democracy, as in Chile, but in terms of how democracy's functioning could be improved (Canache, 2002). This conflict has been exacerbated in the last decades since the arrival of Hugo Chávez to the presidency of the republic.

Venezuelan democracy since Chávez's arrival 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 substantially weakened, and several concerns about the validity of the electoral processes held in the past decade have been voiced in the media. This has led opposition parties and media to continuously refer to Chávez's regime as a dictatorship. Chávez himself, on the other hand, has heavily promoted his regime as the "*Revolución Bolivariana*", a true democracy that is deeply transforming Venezuela. This has resulted in the polarization of the Venezuelan electorate around the figure of Chávez, and ultimately, around two different conceptions of democracy (Moncagatta, 2013). On one side, stand the citizens who sympathize with Chávez and believe that 'democracy' is the type of regime his government has established. On the other side, stand Chavez's opponents, who believe 'democracy' is something else, a regime different from the one the incumbent government has been promoting throughout the last decade.

The influence of Chávez in Venezuelan politics makes it safe to argue that Venezuelans' political attitudes in the last decades have been shaped by citizens' alignments in respect to him and with the different understandings of democracy that arise from these alignments. The debate over democracy in Venezuela has not revolved around the question of whether people prefer democracy over authoritarian regimes, as in Chile, but if they prefer a certain kind of democracy over another. In other words, if they are '*Chávist*' democrats or not.

At least two conceptions of democracy are present in Venezuela's political scenario and it is important to identify what specific attitudes are related to each conception. Because the conception of democracy Chávez has promoted is one that has allowed concentration of power in the executive, limits on freedom of expression and organization, and other non-democratic practices, it could be expected that citizens who align themselves with this conception of democracy will, in general, possess weaker democratic attitudes, at least in the measurement of solid democratic support. In this sense, citizens who evaluate Chávez's mandate in positive terms should tend to show lower levels of solid democratic support than their counterparts who evaluate his performance in poor terms. If ideology is to have any effect on Venezuelans' support for democracy, it should be in the opposite direction than in Chile: because Chávez's regime is considered by his opponents as a left-wing populism (and even dictatorship), it could be possible that right-wingers in Venezuela show stronger democratic attitudes.

However, it is likely that there is no relationship between support for the ideal of democracy and alignment with Chávez. It is impossible to know what type 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*' or it might be support towards a completely different -and utterly

opposed- model of democracy. What citizens' conceptions of democracy are should not make a difference, at least in principle, in the levels and explanations of support for democracy as an ideal.

3.5 SUPPORT FOR THE IDEAL OF DEMOCRACY VS. SOLID DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT

Democracy is a concept which in general has positive connotations, and it can be expected that most people express support for it, whether that expressed support is based on real attitudes or not. In this line, there are reasons to be suspicious about the levels of support for a concept with such positive connotations, as they might be inflated by the presence of vacuous conceptions of democracy, social desirability and a number of other biases (Baviskar & Malone, 2004; Carlin & Singer, 2011; Carrión, 2008).

Figure 3.2 illustrates how both Venezuela and Chile appear to enjoy high levels of support for the ideal of democracy when assessed through the *Linzian* indicator. Venezuela displays outstanding and quite stable levels of around ninety percent of the people who answer that 'democracy is preferable to any other type of regime' between 2007 and 2014. These levels of support are among the highest recorded in the Americas throughout the whole period, and as high as the levels found in the last decade in some of the most advanced Western European democracies

(Booth & Seligson, 2009; Diamond & Plattner, 2008; Lagos, 2003; Moncagatta, 2015). Chile also shows stable levels of support for the ideal of democracy in the last decade, although somewhat lower than the ones found in Venezuela. While a strong majority of the Chilean population still supports democracy as an ideal, there is a history of sympathy for authoritarian regimes, a legacy of Augusto Pinochet’s rule. It is no surprise to find that throughout the whole period (2006-2014), there is roughly a quarter of the Chilean samples who stated to be either open to the possibility of having an authoritarian regime or indifferent to the type of regime.

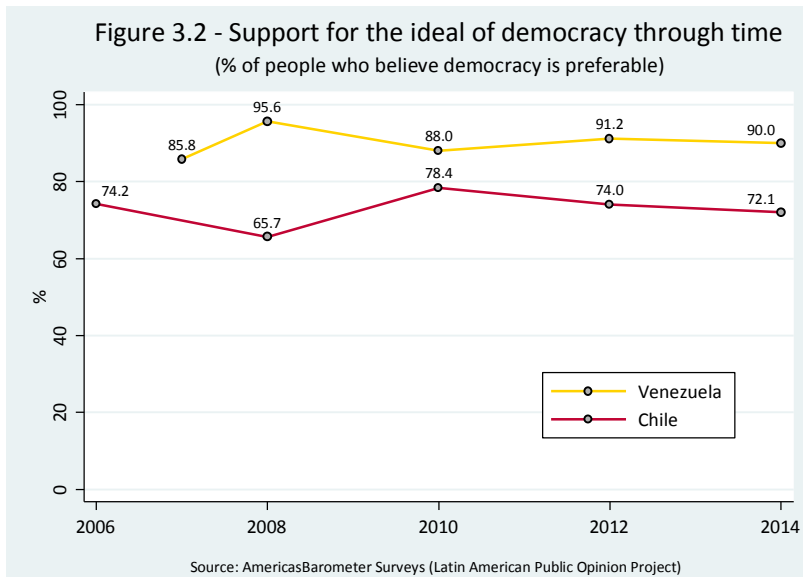
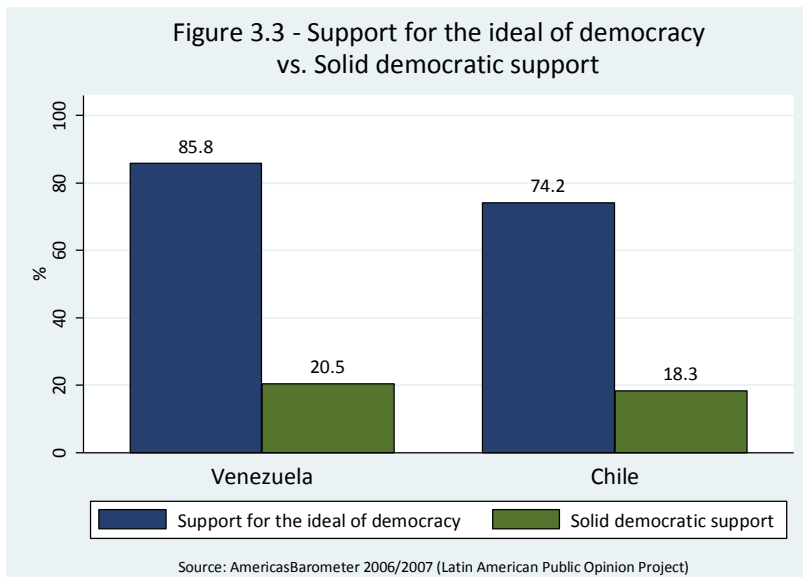


Figure 3.3 compares the levels of support for the ideal of democracy and the constructed measure of solid democratic support found in Chile and Venezuela in the 2006/2007 wave of the AmericasBarometer survey. There is a large difference

between the percentages of citizens who express support for the ideal of democracy and those who have consistent democratic attitudes and can be considered to have solid democratic support: only around a fifth of the samples in both countries can be considered to have solid democratic support. While Venezuela presents a higher percentage of citizens who have solid democratic support than Chile, the difference in this measure is substantially smaller than the one found between both countries on support for the ideal (2.2% vs. 11.6%). It seems clear that these indicators are not measuring the same, as they are only weakly correlated, with $r = 0,195$ in Venezuela and $r = 0,150$ in Chile⁸.



⁸ The numbers refer to Pearson's r correlation coefficients, and both were significant at the 0.01 level. The correlations were calculated between the binary measure of solid democratic support and a recoded version of the *Linzian* indicator, where 1 = 'support for the ideal' and 0 = 'all other answers'.

3.6 EXPLANATIONS OF DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT

The assessment of the sources of citizens' support for democratic rule has been an important and recurrent issue in the political attitudes literature. Despite the considerable 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 (Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Norris, 1999), citizens' previous electoral experiences (Anderson, Blais, Bowler, Donovan, & Listhaug, 2005; Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Anderson & Tverdova, 2001; Singh, Lago, & Blais, 2011), 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.

This section examines the correlates of support for the ideal of democracy and solid democratic support in both Chile and Venezuela. The aim is twofold: first, to demonstrate that explanations of supporting the ideal of democracy may differ from explanations of actually supporting democracy's essential principles, and second, to distinguish the different effects variables show in different contexts. With these objectives in mind, two logistic regression models were specified for each country: the

first, for support for the ideal of democracy, and the second, for solid democratic support.

The independent variables used in the regression models include some of the usual predictors found in theoretical explanations of support for democracy. A first set includes six relevant modernization and demographic variables: age, gender, education, wealth, urban/rural residence, and religion. A second set of variables deals with psychological engagement in politics, and includes measures of political interest and political knowledge. A third set is composed of political variables and includes ideology - through the use of left-right self-placement- and a variable that distinguishes citizens who voted for a losing candidate in the last presidential election. Finally, three variables assessing short-term outputs of the political system were included: the first is an evaluation of the president's performance while the other two are current evaluations of the country's economy and of personal finances⁹.

Table 3.1 presents the results of the four logistic regression models. The dependent variable used in the models of support for the ideal of democracy is again the *Linzian* indicator, recoded in binary fashion: answers stating that 'democracy is preferable to

⁹ For details on the wordings of the original questions and any recodings performed, refer to appendix II. To facilitate the interpretation of the regression coefficients, all independent variables were recoded from negative (left) to positive (right) when necessary.

any other form of government' were given a value of one (supporters) and those who chose either of the two other answer possibilities (non-supporters/indifferent) were given a value of zero. The dependent variable used in the models of solid democratic support is the binary indicator constructed previously with one equating to solid support and zero equating to non-support.

Table 3.1 - Logistic regression coefficients for support for democracy

	Venezuela		Chile	
	ideal	solid	ideal	solid
Age	0.01	0.00	0.02**	0.00
Gender (female)	0.09	-0.18	0.02	-0.28
Education (years)	0.08**	0.00	0.01	0.01
Wealth (quintiles)	0.01	0.10+	0.04	0.07
Residence (urban)	0.22	-0.18	-0.01	0.36
Religion (catholic)	-0.22	0.09	0.15	-0.19
Political interest	-0.06	-0.16+	0.02	0.12
Political knowledge	-0.01	0.20**	0.18**	0.14+
Left-right self orientation	0.02	0.05	-0.16***	-0.07*
Voted for losing candidate	-0.30	0.33	-0.47*	0.13
Evaluation of president	-0.34**	-0.21*	0.16	-0.07
Evaluation of country's economy	-0.20	-0.25*	0.27**	0.29*
Evaluation of personal economy	0.14	0.05	-0.16	-0.16
Observations	920	920	1141	1141
Pseudo R-squared	0.0504	0.0808	0.073	0.0444

+ $p < 0.10$ * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

3.7 DISCUSSION

There are clear differences in the variables that show significant relationships to the two conceptions of democratic support. This is

evidence that it is not the same to express support for the ideal of democracy as an abstract concept as to expressing support for an indicator that incorporates the essential attributes of democracy. In Venezuela, only the evaluation of the president has a significant effect in both the models for support for the ideal and solid support. This effect is negative, implying that those citizens who evaluate the president the best tend to show less support for democracy, both as an ideal and as solid democratic attitudes. In Chile, there are more variables that show significant effects for both conceptions of support: political knowledge, left-right self-placement and the evaluation of the country's economy all have similar effects in both of the models.

The table also shows that the reasons behind support for the ideal of democracy and solid support are not the same in Venezuela as in Chile. In the case of solid support, there is only one variable – political knowledge- that has a similar significant effect in both countries: people who know more about politics tend to show more solid support for democracy in both Chile and Venezuela. An interesting variable is the evaluation of the country's economy, which has significant effects in the solid support models in both countries, but while in Venezuela it shows a negative effect, in Chile it has a positive effect. This is a relevant finding that reinforces the argument that the political context should be taken into account when studying support for democracy. While Carlin and Singer, in their region-wide analysis of the Americas, found

that “citizens who judge the national economy as strong or report an improved personal situation are significantly less supportive of polyarchy” (2011, p. 1518), in Chile we find the exact opposite: as evaluations of the national economy improve, there is a higher tendency to have solid democratic support (and support for the ideal of democracy, as well). This suggests that performing analysis of political attitudes without taking into account the political context may obscure important relationships and lead to erroneous generalizations.

In the case of support for the ideal of democracy, there are no variables that have significant effects across both countries. In Venezuela only education and evaluation of the president show significant effects in this model. This implies that the more educated and those who give worse evaluations of Hugo Chávez tend to show more support for democracy as an ideal, as was proposed in the preliminary hypotheses offered for Venezuela. Having only two variables that show significant coefficients in this model could be related to the fact that the regime debate in Venezuela revolves around different conceptions of democracy, and it is more difficult to discern which conception citizens have in mind when expressing support for democracy in the abstract. While a good proportion of the citizens (85.8%) expressed support for democracy through this indicator, it is likely that many of them expressed support for different conceptions of democracy. 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 the ideal of democracy competing, any explanatory model will face difficulties, as it will be in fact explaining two concepts instead of one. This seems to be the case for support for the ideal of democracy in Venezuela.

In Chile, a different scenario can be seen regarding support for the ideal of democracy: five variables have significant relationships to this measure. These are: age, political knowledge, left-right self-placement, evaluation of the country's economy and having voted for a losing candidate. One could argue that Pinochet's dictatorship serves as a clear reference point that grounds Chileans' attitudes towards the concept of democracy. In this sense, the regime debate is primarily held in terms of democracy versus authoritarianism and because the dichotomy is held in these terms, it could be proposed that Chileans have a more unitary conception of democracy than Venezuelans. In general terms, support for democracy in Chile means one thing: opposition to authoritarianism. This could be a reason why possible explanations gain weight, and we find more independent variables that show statistically significant coefficients in Chile than in Venezuela.

The finding that older Chilean citizens tend to show more support for democracy as an ideal (but not as solid democratic attitudes) confirms the hypothesis that those who experienced Pinochet's regime first-hand would show more democratic support, at least as an abstract concept. But for Chile the most interesting findings

regarding support for the ideal of democracy probably have to do with political variables: both left-right self-placement and having voted for a losing candidate in the last presidential election show negative effects to support for the ideal. As expected, Chilean left-wingers are more likely to support the ideal of democracy: after all, they are the ones that have fought for democracy in Chile since the transition period of the eighties and nineties. In that same line, it is not surprising to find that voting for a losing presidential candidate (the right wingers Sebastián Piñera and Joaquín Lavín, in this case) decreases the probabilities of expressing democratic support. Finally, the evaluation of the country's economy shows a positive, significant effect to both support for the ideal of democracy and solid democratic support in Chile: it is not surprising that well-evaluated short-term outputs have a positive relationship to democratic attitudes, in general.

Differences in Venezuela can be found regarding the variables that have effect on solid democratic support. As stated previously, those who give worse evaluations of Chávez have a higher probability of showing solid democratic support. In the same line we find those who evaluate the country's economy the worse and the wealthier citizens, who are, very probably, Chávez opposers. What is interesting is to see that a variable like the evaluation of the personal economy has no significant effect (in any of the models, as a matter of fact). In conclusion, those in opposition to Chávez appear to possess more democratic attitudes than the

president's supporters. As to the positive effect of political knowledge (also found in Chile), it is not surprising to find that those most knowledgeable in politics have a stronger tendency to support democracy's core principles and institutions (Carlin & Singer, 2011).

Only few relevant explanations for solid democratic support in Chile are found. The only variables that show significant coefficients are political knowledge, left-right self-placement and evaluation of the country's economy. In line to what was previously proposed, left-wingers have a higher tendency of showing solid democratic attitudes: it is seen that in Chile those citizens who locate themselves towards the left side of the ideological scale do not only have higher esteem for democracy as an ideal, but also higher support for the specific principles of democracy. Finally, it is seen that good evaluations of the country's economy are positively related to this type of support as well.

In summary, in both Chile and Venezuela the variables that focus on attitudes towards the political system and its outputs are the ones that seem to have relationships to citizens' support for democracy. While showing different patterns in the two countries, political knowledge, ideology, and evaluation of the president and of the country's economy demonstrate statistical significance, be it for support for the ideal of democracy or solid support. Few other variables seem to play a role in influencing support for democracy, as modernization and demographic variables do not have any

significant relationship to solid support, except for wealth in Venezuela, while only age in Chile and education in Venezuela have significant coefficients in the models of support for the ideal of democracy.

3.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, democracy is far from being consolidated in many nations throughout the world. The severe problems numerous countries in Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, and Asia are currently facing are examples of why it is still important today to understand the conditions that lead to stronger democratic cultures. This study offers useful insights that can contribute to a better comprehension of citizen support for democratic rule.

Conclusions at various levels are obtained. First, the most evident: assessing support for democracy through the use of an only indicator is a limited approach. As Mishler and Rose (2001) have argued, asking citizens about support for an abstract concept such as democracy will lead to unclear conclusions, as people have different things in mind when thinking about this issue. It is unwise to perform comparative analyses of support for democracy by using only one indicator, and necessary to probe deeper into the specific meanings democratic support holds for different citizens to

obtain any useful substantive insights on the concept. Multidimensional perspectives for the analysis of citizens' attitudes towards democratic rule will certainly yield more informative conclusions than unidimensional analyses.

Second, the specific meaning that support for democracy adopts can vary depending on the political context. In some places, ideology will play a stronger role, in others, economic evaluations, and so on. In order to understand support for democracy in a particular context, it is necessary to take into account the recent political history of the country, and the grounds upon which the regime debate has been constructed on. It was seen, for example, that evaluations of the economy had a positive relationship to democratic support in Chile, while having a negative relationship in Venezuela. Performing aggregated region-wide analyses of democratic support can very likely obscure important substantive findings such as this. Supporting democracy in one place may mean something very different than in another, and only by taking into account the specificities of the particular context can one achieve a clear understanding of the issue.

Very low levels of solid democratic support were found in both countries. Is this something to be alarmed about? Questions concerning what is in fact important for a democratic regime can be raised. It has been repeatedly argued in the literature that support for democracy is a healthy characteristic for a democratic regime, if not essential to its survival. What, however, should we

take as important for the strengthening of democratic cultures: the very high levels found of support for the ideal of democracy or the much lower levels found of solid support? It is not implausible to hypothesize that a measure of solid support for democracy, such as the one proposed here, could be a stronger indicator of democratic stability than traditional measures of support for the ideal of democracy. This is an interesting question that further research should look into.

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APPENDIX I – DETAILS ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ‘SOLID DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT’ INDICATOR

Step 1. Recoding of the original questions into binary variables of support for each democratic attribute.

a) ‘Contestation’ dimension.-

Freedom of organization: “To what extent do you approve or disapprove of a law prohibiting the meetings of any group that criticizes (the country’s) political system?”

(10 point scale: 1 = strongly disapprove → 10 = strongly approve)
scores 1 -> 4 = “1” (support); scores 5 -> 10 = “0” (non-support)

Freedom of press: “To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the government censoring any media that criticized it?”

(10 point scale: 1= strongly disapprove → 10 = strongly approve)
scores 1 -> 4 = “1” (support); scores 5 -> 10 = “0” (non-support)

Freedom of opposition: “Taking into account the current situation of (the country), I would like you to tell me with which of the following statements do you agree with more? (a) It is necessary for the progress of the country that our presidents limit the voice and vote of the opposition parties, or (b) Our presidents have to permit that the opposition parties enjoy all the liberty to oppose to the president’s policies with their voice and vote, even if the opposition parties delay the progress of the country”

Answer ‘b’ = “1” (support); answer ‘a’ = “0” (non-support)

(APPENDIX I CONTINUED)

b) 'Inclusiveness' dimension.-

Universal right to vote: “There are people who speak negatively of (the country’s) form of government, not just the incumbent government but the form of government. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people’s right to vote?”

(10 point scale: 1 = strongly disapprove → 10 = strongly approve)
scores 7 -> 10 = “1” (support); scores 1 -> 6 = “0” (non-support)

Universal right to run for public office: “There are people who speak negatively of (the country’s) form of government, not just the incumbent government but the form of government. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people being permitted to seek public office?”

(10 point scale: 1 = strongly disapprove → 10 = strongly approve)
scores 7 -> 10 = “1” (support); scores 1 -> 6 = “0” (non-support)

c) 'Checks and balances' dimension.-

Respect for legislative: “Do you think that sometimes there can be sufficient grounds for the president to close down the Congress or do you think there can never be a sufficient reason to do so?”
(yes / no)

Answer ‘no’ = “1” (support); answer ‘yes’ = “0” (non-support)

Respect for judiciary: “Do you think that sometimes there can be sufficient grounds to dissolve the Supreme Court of Justice, or do you think that there can never be sufficient grounds to do so?”
(yes / no)

Answer ‘no’ = “1” (support); answer ‘yes’ = “0” (non-support)

(APPENDIX I CONTINUED)

Step 2. Aggregation of all the binary variables.

All of the binary variables created in the first step were added together to create an aggregated variable of support for democracy's essential attributes, with scores ranging from zero to seven.

Step 3. Recoding of the aggregated variable into the 'solid democratic support' indicator.

The aggregated variable constructed in step two was recoded in the following way:

score 7 = "1" ('solid democratic support'); scores 0 -> 6 = "0" (non-support).

APPENDIX II – INDEPENDENT VARIABLES USED IN THE REGRESSION MODELS: ORIGINAL QUESTIONS, SCALES, RECODINGS

Age:

Original question: “What is your age in years?”

Gender (female):

Original question: “Sex (note down; do not ask): (1) Male (2) Female”

(*Recoded as:* Female = 1; Male = 0).

Education (years):

Original question: “What was the last year of education you passed?”

_____ Year _____ (primary, secondary, university)
= _____ total number of years [Use the table below for the code]

(for CHILE)	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th
None	0							
Primary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Secondary	9	10	11	12				
University	13	14	15	16	17			
Superior (not University) / Technical	11	12	13					
DK / NA	88							

(for VENEZUELA)	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
None	0					
Primary	1	2	3	4	5	6
Secondary (“basic”)	7	8	9			
Secondary (“diversified”)	10	11				
Superior (not University) / Technical	12	13	14	15		
University	12	13	14	15	16	17+
DK / NA	88					

(APPENDIX II CONTINUED)

Religion (catholic)

Original question: “What is your religion? [Don’t read options] (1) Catholic (2) Non-Catholic Christian (including the Jehovah Witnesses) (3) Other non-Christian (4) Evangelical (5) None (8) doesn’t know or doesn’t want to say”

Recoded as: Catholic = 1; All others = 0.

Residence (urban):

Original question: “Code as 1. Urban 2. Rural”

Recoded as: Urban = 1; Rural = 0.

Wealth (quintiles)

The variable of “wealth (quintiles)” was developed based on an index of relative wealth, constructed by using indicators of ownership of the following assets:

Television set, refrigerator, cellular telephone, vehicle(s), washing machine, microwave oven, motorcycle, drinking water indoors, indoor bathroom, computer.

To estimate weights of the different assets for the index of relative wealth, principal components analysis was used. For details on the procedure refer to Filmer & Pritchett (2001), Ghalib (2011) and Vyas & Kumaranayake (2006).

Political interest:

Original question: “How much interest do you have in politics: a lot, some, little or none? 1) A lot 2) Some 3) Little 4) None 8) DK”

Recoded as: None = 1; Little = 2; Some = 3; A lot = 4.

(APPENDIX II CONTINUED)

Political knowledge:

Additive index constructed using correct answers to the following questions:

1. "What is the name of the current president of the United States?"
2. "What is the name of the President of Congress in (country)?"
3. "How many provinces does (country) have?"
4. "How long is the presidential term in (country)?"
5. "What is the name of the president of Brazil?"

Left-right self placement:

Original question: "On this sheet there is a 1-10 scale that goes from left to right. Today, when we speak of political tendencies, we talk of those on the left and those on the right. In other words, some people sympathize more with the left and others with the right. According to the meaning that the terms "left" and "right" have for you, and thinking of your own political tendency, where would you place yourself on this scale? Indicate the box that comes closest to your own position (1=Left; 10=Right).

Evaluation of president:

Original question: "Speaking in general of the incumbent government/administration, would you say that the work being done by President (NAME CURRENT PRESIDENT) is: [Read the options] (1) Very good (2) Good (3) Neither good nor bad (fair) (4) Bad (5) Very bad (8) DK/NA".

Recoded as: Very bad = 1; Bad = 2; Neither good nor bad = 3; Good = 4; Very good = 5.

(APPENDIX II CONTINUED)

Voted for losing candidate:

(for Chile)

Original question 1: “For which candidate did you vote for President in the first round of the last presidential elections? [DON’T READ THE LIST] 0. No one (voted but left ballot blank or annulled their vote); 1. Michelle Bachellet; 2. Sebastián Piñera; 3. Joaquín Lavín; 4. Tomás Hirsch; 77. Other; 88. DK/NA; 99. Did not vote.

Original question 2: “For which candidate did you vote for President in the second round of the last presidential elections? [DON’T READ THE LIST] 0. No one (voted but left ballot blank or annulled their vote) 1. Michelle Bachellet; 2. Sebastián Piñera; 88. DK/NA; 99. Did not vote.

Recoded as: Loser = 1 (voted for a losing candidate on the first round (codes ‘2’, ‘3’, ‘4’ or ‘77’) and in the second round (code ‘2’)); all others = 0.

(for Venezuela)

Original question: “For which candidate did you vote for President in the last presidential elections? 0. No one (voted but left ballot blank or annulled their vote) 1. Hugo Chávez; 2. Manuel Rosales; 77. Other; 88. DK/NA; 99. Did not vote.

Recoded as: Loser = 1 (voted for a losing candidate (codes ‘2’ or ‘77’)); all others = 0.

(APPENDIX II CONTINUED)

Evaluation of country's economy:

Original question: "How would you describe the country's economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad? (1) Very good (2) Good (3) Neither good nor bad (fair) (4) Bad (5) Very bad (8) Doesn't know".

Recoded as: Very bad = 1; Bad = 2; Neither good nor bad = 3; Good = 4; Very good = 5.

Evaluation of personal economy:

Original question: How would describe your economic situation overall? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad? (1) Very good (2) Good (3) Neither good nor bad (fair) (4) Bad (5) Very bad (8) Doesn't know".

Recoded as: Very bad = 1; Bad = 2; Neither good nor bad = 3; Good = 4; Very good = 5.

Chapter 4

BEHIND CITIZEN SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY: THE DEMOCRACY PEOPLE SUPPORT¹

Abstract

Citizen support for democratic rule has been widely regarded by political scientists as a necessary condition for the consolidation of democratic systems. However, there are important critiques as to how this attitude has been traditionally assessed: it is not completely clear what it means when citizens express support for democracy. This article argues that support for democracy adopts different meanings in different contexts. This is empirically tested by using multi-group structural equation modeling with correction for measurement error to perform a comparative analysis of the meaning of democratic support in Spain and the United Kingdom. Findings suggest British citizens support a model of democracy mainly centered on the electoral process, while Spanish citizens support a more elaborate conception, where other democratic features such as welfare, availability of political alternatives and the protection of minority rights also take importance.

Keywords: *support for democracy, meaning of democracy, structural equation modeling, correction for measurement error*

¹ This chapter was awarded the prize to the “Best paper written by a PhD student” of Universitat Pompeu Fabra’s Department of Political Science in 2014.

“Good morning!” said Bilbo, and he meant it. The sun was shining, and the grass was very green. But Gandalf looked at him from under long bushy eyebrows that stuck out further than the brim of his shady hat.

“What do you mean?” he said. “Do you wish me a good morning, or mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not; or that you feel good this morning; or that it is a morning to be good on?”

“All of them at once,” said Bilbo. “And a very fine morning for a pipe of tobacco out of doors, into the bargain...”

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

4.1 INTRODUCTION

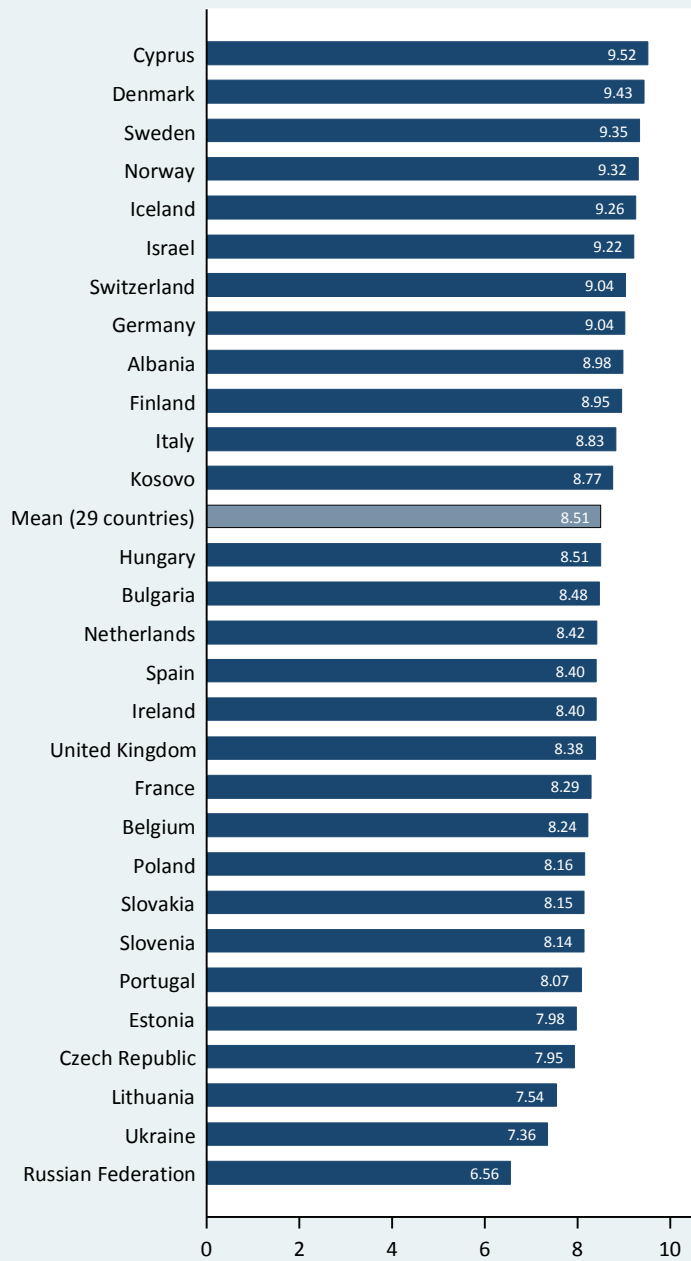
There is broad consensus that citizen support for democratic rule is a valuable attribute for any democratic system (Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Dalton, 2004; Easton, 1965, 1975; Inglehart, 2003; Linz, 1978; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Lipset, 1959; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Miller, 1974; Norris, 1999, 2011). Democratic regimes rely on the public’s willing acquiescence and support for their survival and effective functioning (Easton, 1965, 1975; Mishler & Rose, 2001). The stability of democracy depends on popular legitimacy: citizens must view it as “the most appropriate form of government for their society” (Diamond, 1990, p. 49). Going even further, some

theoretical currents have argued that a democracy can only be considered to be consolidated when the vast majority of its citizens endorse democratic values, procedures and institutions (Linz & Stepan, 1996). For these reasons, political analysts have granted great importance to the assessment of levels of democratic support in nations and to the study of the conditions under which citizens develop and maintain positive attitudes towards democratic rule.

Many of the studies on the topic have focused on making cross-country comparisons of levels of democratic support, using indicators as a diagnostic of the health of the different regimes (Booth & Seligson, 2009; Dalton, 2004; Fuchs, Guidorossi, & Svensson, 1995; Lagos, 2003). When doing this, they have assumed that support for democracy adopts the same meaning everywhere and that the levels found in different nations can be immediately compared. Figure 4.1, for example, presents such a comparison for twenty nine countries included in the European Social Survey's Round 6 (2012). The scores represent the weighted² mean country answer to the question: "How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?" which was measured using a scale where 0 = "not at all important" and 10 = "extremely important".

² Sampling weights (called "design weights" in the European Social Survey) were applied to all data to adjust for different selection probabilities. For complete details on weighting ESS data see the guide "Weighting European Social Survey Data" (2014).

Figure 4.1 - Support for democracy
(mean score by country)



Source: European Social Survey Round 6 (2012)

A first look at the mean levels of democratic support across the twenty nine countries suggests substantially high esteem for democratic rule in the majority of cases. Twenty four out of the total twenty nine have mean scores of above 8, and the grand mean score for the twenty nine nations is of 8.51. It seems evident that the ideal of democracy has found a safe place in practically all of Europe.

But even if this figure is illustrative in that it offers a general overview of the aggregate levels of democratic support in nations, it remains quite superficial. Democracy is an abstract and complex concept which embraces several distinct aspects, and thus, it can mean many different things. In this sense, a figure such as the one presented, by itself, cannot reveal what exactly is behind the mean country scores. What were the citizens that answered this question in the ESS really saying? What specifically about democracy made them think that it is so important “to live in a country that is governed democratically”? Being able to elect rulers through fair elections? The existence of institutions that guarantee the protection of individual rights and liberties? Social welfare programs? A combination of all of these aspects (or of some of them)? Many hypotheses can be put forward -and it is likely that some of them offer plausible explanations- but it is impossible to know for sure until more detailed analyses are conducted.

If there is uncertainty about what the meaning of support for democracy is, it is not unreasonable to also have doubts about the

cross-national comparability of indicators measuring it. Going back to figure 4.1: we don't know if the 9.52 mean score found in Cyprus is enough to qualify it as a country that enjoys 'greater democratic support' than say, Switzerland, with a mean score of 9.04, or even a country with a significantly lower score, such as Portugal (mean score = 8.07). Is the high level of support for democracy found in Albania (8.98) equivalent to the one found in Finland (8.95)? In fact, can they be compared at all? We do not know. Such a general question (the importance of 'democracy' in abstract terms), does not permit us to assess what exactly support for democracy means, and without knowing this, we run the risk of making meaningless cross-country comparisons.

As stated, most of the studies that make these types of comparisons of levels of democratic support across nations make the assumption that the attitude can be interpreted similarly in different contexts: that the concept can "travel" (Sartori, 1970) without problems. This is the basic premise placed in doubt in this article. Taking this as a point of departure, two main contributions to the scientific literature on attitudes towards democracy are offered. First, a theoretically-driven multidimensional suggestion for capturing the meaning of support for democracy is proposed. And second, by assessing the differences in which a wide variety of democratic attributes are seen as important for democracy, it is empirically demonstrated that support for democracy does not have a unique meaning across countries.

4.2 SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY: THEORY AND EMPIRICAL MEASUREMENT

It is useful to anchor research on citizen attitudes towards democracy on David Easton's seminal contributions to the field of political support (1965, 1975). More than four decades ago, Easton made the important distinction between two kinds of support: "specific" and "diffuse", which he proposed were different not only in their theoretical justifications but in their consequences for a political system. On the one hand, Easton conceptualized specific support as being 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). In this sense, specific support is seen as a rather immediate attitude which sees its sources in citizens' responses to perceived general performance of authorities and institutions. On the other hand, diffuse support is described as a generalized attachment that is directed to what "an object is or represents – to the general meaning it has for a person – not of what it does" (Easton, 1975, p. 444). It is, according to Easton, that "reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed" (1975, p. 444). Diffuse support is described as a type of support which is independent of outputs and performance in the short run: it mainly arises from childhood and continuing adult socialization, or from direct experiences

accumulated over long periods of time (Easton, 1975; Easton & Dennis, 1967).

Support for democracy has traditionally been conceived by scholars as an indicator of Easton's diffuse political support, in that it aims to assess citizens' attitudes towards the regime itself and not necessarily to its performance. But the study of support for democracy has not gone without problems. Discussions regarding which indicators are better suited for assessing it empirically date back to the 1970's (Citrin, 1974; Miller, 1974). A decade and a half later, things had not become any clearer: the literature on democratic support was still being described as "ambiguous, confusing and noncumulative" (Kaase, 1988, p. 117). Today, the debate is far from being closed: the 'standard' indicators which have been used to measure democratic support are still criticized severely and recurrently. There is no scholarly agreement on how exactly the concept of support for democracy should be interpreted or empirically assessed.

One of the common limitations of traditional assessments of support for democracy is that they have adopted an "idealist approach (which) assesses popular support by measuring citizens' commitment to democracy as an abstract ideal" (Mishler & Rose, 2001, p. 305). When asking citizens about their attitudes towards the abstract concept 'democracy', analysts are prone to receiving answers with different meanings from respondents. Only in the last decade has the literature on political support paid attention to

the possibility that citizens have different things in mind when expressing support for democracy. There is evidence that citizens have different understandings and expectations of what 'democracy' is and what it should deliver (Booth & Seligson, 2009; Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Crow, 2009; Linde & Ekman, 2003; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007; Vargas Cullell, 2006). In this sense, not all citizens who express democratic support through the traditional 'support for democracy' survey items would be referring to the same concept (Ferrín, 2012). Authors such as Carlin and Singer (2011), Schedler and Sarsfield (2007) or Inglehart (2003) have raised doubts on the traditional measures of democratic support, which assessed the concept through unidimensional perspectives. Recent initiatives to understand the multidimensional nature of support for democracy in more detail include the works of Kriesi, Saris, & Moncagatta (2015) and Ceka & Magalhães (2015), who have found that Europeans share a common model of democracy, which only varies in its degree of sophistication (Kriesi et al., 2015).

4.3 WHAT ATTRIBUTES OF DEMOCRACY TO CONSIDER?

If it has been argued that democracy is a complex concept which embraces several distinct attributes, it is necessary to explicit which of these attributes will be taken into account in order to assess differences in citizens' conceptions of democracy. To

conduct my analysis, I select a broad list of democratic attributes that citizens may associate with 'democracy' rather than a theoretically constrained definition of the concept, as the aim of this article is to understand attitudes towards democracy as citizens see it, and not towards any given theoretical definition. This said, it is still useful to review some of the most important definitions of democracy that I have used as reference to build the list of attributes.

It must first be said that democracy is an essentially contested concept, in 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). In this sense, definitions of democracy have been offered by dozens by political theorists in the last decades (for good revisions see Collier & Levitsky, 1997; Diamond & Morlino, 2004; Munck & Verkuilen, 2002; Schmitter & Karl, 1991; Tilly, 2007). Some have focused on establishing procedural minimum definitions that capture the essential characteristics of a democratic system, while others have elaborated 'thicker' definitions that include not only the minimum necessary requirements for a political system to be considered a democracy, but other attributes as well. In general, I agree with Crow (2009) in that the different aspects mentioned by various definitions of democracy can be classified into three broad categories, which in the scope of this article will be labeled 'dimensions': the

‘electoral’, **‘liberal’**, and **‘social’** dimensions. These three dimensions cover most of the spectrum of democratic attributes, and thus they will be used to classify the attributes selected for conducting the analysis.

The **‘electoral’** dimension focuses on what for many is the central issue when defining a democracy: the electoral process. While some authors will not agree that having free and fair elections is sufficient for having a democracy, there is no doubt that it is a necessary condition. In fact, minimum procedural definitions of modern democracy have emphasized electoral competition as *the crucial feature* for identifying a political system as democratic. This type of definitions can be traced back to Schumpeter, who conceptualized democracy as an “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions” (1942, p. 284). Another classical definition in this line is Przeworski’s, who described democracy as “a system in which parties lose elections” (1991, p. 10). Minimalist definitions such as these have been extensively used by empirical analysts of democracy, for their advantages both in conceptualization and operationalization (Huntington, 1991). Much empirical comparative work on democratization and consolidation of democracy has relied almost solely on the existence of free elections to differentiate between democratic and non-democratic regimes (Boix & Stokes, 2003; Przeworski, Cheibub, Limongi, & Alvarez, 2000).

Other authors have argued in favor of more complex definitions of democracy. These elaborated beyond the exclusively 'electoral' characteristics and included other aspects, more related to the **'liberal'** rights and personal freedoms frequently associated with democracy. Robert Dahl's concept of "polyarchy"(1971), for example, has inspired a good number of operationalizations of democracy in the last couple of decades (Altman & Pérez-Liñán, 2002; Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi, & Przeworski, 1996; Baker & Koesel, 2001; Carlin & Singer, 2011; Marshall & Jagers, 2002; Schneider, 2008; Vanhanen, 2003). Dahl coined polyarchy as a term for real world approximations of true democracy –which he thought was an unattainable ideal-type regime. According to him, besides the various characteristics that guarantee a free and fair electoral process, the minimum requirements for polyarchy to exist included freedom of expression, freedom of organization, equal eligibility for public office, and availability of diverse sources of information about politics (1971). O'Donnell (2004) and Diamond and Morlino (2004) have stressed the need of including aspects such as horizontal accountability and the rule of law among democracy's essential attributes, as a safeguard of citizens' rights: "rule of law is the base upon which every other dimension of democratic quality rests" (Diamond & Morlino, 2004, p. 23). In the same line, important research projects on democratization such as the one conducted by the Freedom House organization have also incorporated in their definitions of democracy measures of political rights and civil liberties that –besides the characteristics

related to elections-include the rule of law, protection of minority rights, freedom of association, media freedom and equality of opportunity, among others (Freedom House, 2015; Gastil, 1991).

A dimension of democracy sometimes neglected by theorists is what I label here the **'social'** dimension. It is true, as Crow (2009) recognizes, that "adherents to the electoral and liberal views of democracy might object that while greater socioeconomic equality may be desirable, it is not an indispensable element of democracy *per se*" (2009, p. 25). But there are authors who have argued in favor of including aspects of social justice in their definitions as well, such as Huber, Rueschemeyer & Stephens who talk about a definition of social democracy which includes "increasing equality in social and economic outcomes" (1997, p. 324). Diamond & Morlino, in the same line, state that while "democracy does not demand a certain set of substantive social or economic policies, it does in practice presuppose a degree of political equality that is virtually impossible if wealth and status inequalities become too extreme" (2004, p. 27) and thus include 'social equality' among the six dimensions they use to assess quality of democracy. This argument is later picked up by Ferrín & Kriesi when assessing Europeans' views and evaluations of democracy (2015). While I am aware that democracy could be compatible with many forms of economic organization, there is evidence that 'social justice' characteristics are many times important for shaping citizens' conceptions of democracy (Crow, 2009). Because the objective of

this paper is to analyze citizens' support for democracy as they view it, and not as theorists define it, it is appropriate to include the 'social' dimension when conducting the analysis.

4.4 DATA AND OPERATIONALIZATION

All data used in the analysis is taken from the European Social Survey's 6th round (2012), which included a special module on attitudes towards specific attributes of democracy that permits a detailed examination of citizens' views and evaluations of democracy (Kriesi et al., 2010). Support for democracy, the dependent variable in all models, is operationalized as 'importance of living in a democracy' (or 'importance of democracy'), and measured through the following survey item:

"How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically? Choose your answer from this card where 0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important" (**importance of democracy**).

Nine indicators are used for operationalizing the three dimensions of democracy proposed earlier. They are listed below, in 'dimension order' for the sake of parsimony³.

³ All nine items used were measured using a scale that ranged from 0 = "Not at all important for democracy in general" to 10 = "Extremely important for democracy in general".

The first dimension -the '**electoral**' dimension- focuses on free and open political contestation through the electoral process. Elections are the main instrument citizens have at their hands for selecting the best people and political programs, but also for sanctioning politicians who do not perform up to their standards. Several aspects have to be taken into account for elections to guarantee open contestation and true representation. For this article, three indicators which cover the essential aspects of the electoral dimension have been selected. The first one is a general question that asks how important is the existence of 'free and fair elections' for a democracy. The second covers the importance of 'vertical accountability', the mechanism through which elections serve to hold governments responsible for their actions and punish rulers who perform poorly (Manin, Przeworski, & Stokes, 1999). The third refers to the availability of 'political alternatives' of where to choose from: even if the electoral process may appear to be free and fair and there might exist the possibility that incumbents are voted out of office if they perform poorly, if there are no political alternatives of where to choose from, everything else rings hollow. The three survey items are the following:

"Please tell me how important you think it is for democracy in general that..."

- 1) ...national elections are free and fair? (**free and fair elections**)

- 2) ...governing parties are punished in elections when they have done a bad job? (**vertical accountability**)
- 3) ...different political parties offer clear alternatives to one another? (**political alternatives**)

The '**liberal**' dimension refers to the basic rights and personal freedoms that underlie a democratic regime. Four attributes frequently considered by advocates of 'liberal' definitions to be necessary for the existence of a democratic system are included in this dimension: 'rule of law', 'horizontal accountability', 'rights of minorities' and 'freedom of press' (Ferrín & Kriesi, 2015). The survey items used to assess attitudes towards these attributes are the following:

"Please tell me how important you think it is for democracy in general that..."

- 4) ...the courts treat everyone the same? (**rule of law**)
- 5) ...the courts are able to stop the government acting beyond its authority? (**horizontal accountability**)
- 6) ...the rights of minority groups are protected? (**rights of minorities**)
- 7) ...the media are free to criticize the government? (**freedom of press**)

Finally, the dimension which covers the '**social**' aspects of democracy was operationalized through two concepts: societal welfare (government protection from poverty) and income

equality. The concepts were measured using the following survey items:

“Please tell me how important you think it is for democracy in general that...”

- 8) ...the government protects all citizens against poverty?
(welfare)
- 9) ...the government takes measures to reduce differences in income levels? **(income equality)**

No claims are made in regards to this list of aspects constituting a definition of democracy of any sort. I am aware that certain attributes which some authors might find essential for a democratic system may be missing from this list, and that possibly there are other aspects which have been included that may not be seen as necessary by some. The list offered here is one which I believe includes most of the fundamental principles and procedures of democratic functioning, and at the same time incorporates different aspects that cover a wide spectrum of features that citizens could possibly associate with the concept ‘democracy’. It is, in this sense, a list of attributes designed as a tool for empirical analysis on democratic support rather than a closed theoretical definition of what democracy is.

4.5 NULL HYPOTHESIS AND CASES FOR STUDY

If indeed democratic support has the same meaning everywhere, as most research on the topic has implicitly assumed, no differences should be found in terms of the importance any specific attribute of democracy acquires for the general meaning of democratic support across different contexts. For my analysis, I propose the null hypothesis that states that all nine attributes of democracy taken into account can be treated as being of equal importance for the meaning of democratic support across countries.

This hypothesis is tested using two countries which had very similar mean scores in the general ‘support for democracy’ measure (see Figure 4.1) but with important differences in their political systems and democratic trajectories: Spain and the United Kingdom. If in fact support for democracy can “travel”, as it is assumed, these differences in political trajectories should not matter and the meaning of democratic support should be the same (or very similar) in both countries.

Besides the important institutional differences between the Spanish and British political systems, other factors make them interesting cases for comparison. First, and very relevant, is the ‘age’ of democracy in both countries. While Spain is considered a new democracy belonging to the so-called “third wave of democratization” (Huntington, 1991), the United Kingdom is one of

the oldest democracies in the world, dating back to the early 19th century. The main reason why this is important is that a good percentage of the Spanish population lived –and was politically socialized- under a dictatorship, which could be a significant factor affecting the meaning ‘democracy’ has for them. On the contrary, it is safe to assume that no British citizen has been socialized under a dictatorship. Another factor that makes it interesting to compare Spain and the United Kingdom is the fact that this study is conducted with data collected in 2012, in the middle of the greatest economic crisis Europe has faced in the last decades. This is particularly relevant because the crisis has had very different effects in both nations. Not only are there important differences in macroeconomic patterns between the two nations since the crisis began, but also differences in how citizens’ attitudes towards democracy have changed: while in the UK there has been stability (and even a slight increase) in citizens’ satisfaction with the functioning of democracy between 2006 and 2012, in Spain there has been a sharp decline in satisfaction with democracy in the same period (Moncagatta, Weber, & Cordero, 2015).

4.6 METHODS

For assessing which attributes of democracy are more strongly associated to the general indicator of democratic support, multiple regression analysis using data corrected for measurement error is

used. The dependent variable in all models is the general support for democracy ('importance of democracy') measure. As independent variables, all nine indicators tapping importance of the different attributes of democracy discussed earlier were included. Finally, age and education level, two social background variables commonly used in analyses of democratic support, were included in all models as control variables.

In order to identify which effects were significantly different between countries and which ones could be treated as being equal, the regression models were specified as a multiple-group path analysis (Acock, 2013, p. 240), using the structural equation modeling (SEM) commands available in Stata 13 (StataCorp, 2013b). The multiple-group path analysis setup allowed me to first test the null hypothesis that stated there should be no differences in the relationships between any of the nine characteristics of democracy and general support for democracy between the two countries. For this, every one of the regression models was initially specified with all parameters constrained to be equal across groups: that is, making the assumption that there is not any statistically significant difference between the effects of each variable on support of democracy between Spain and the U.K. Subsequently, modification indices obtained from the SEM commands were used to relax constraints of equality of parameters, one by one, until the best fitting models were obtained each time (StataCorp, 2013a, Chapter 11).

4.6.1 CORRECTION FOR MEASUREMENT ERROR

It is common knowledge among researchers that survey data are far from being perfect measures of the desired theoretical concepts. However, very few actually do something about it. I am aware that measurement errors are present in each and every one of the variables used in the analysis, and that correcting for them is necessary to obtain proper estimates of the relationships under study. As Alwin has put it, “statistical analyses ignoring unreliability of measures generally provide biased estimates of the magnitude and statistical significance of the tests of mean differences and associations among variables” (2007, pp. 2–3). Correction for measurement errors takes special relevance when conducting comparative research across countries, as “we run the risk of giving explanations for differences between countries on substantive grounds that could be due to differences in measurement quality of the instruments” (Sarıs & Gallhofer, 2014, p. 324). In order to be able to compare the results obtained for the two countries in the analysis, corrections for two types of measurement errors were performed: a) imperfect qualities of survey items and b) errors due to ‘common method variance’. Both types are briefly described below⁴.

⁴ For instructions on the process we followed to perform corrections for measurement errors refer to de Castellarnau & Sarıs (2014).

a) Quality of survey items

Several characteristics of the survey measurement process result in the observed variables not being exactly what researchers aim to measure. Among these characteristics are random errors that may occur when answering survey questions, and different types of ‘systematic’ errors that happen because of linguistic characteristics, scale forms, specific wordings, etc... (de Castellarnau & Saris, 2014). In this sense, survey items have reliabilities which are not perfect, and if we account for this in our analyses, our estimated relationships will be closer to their true values.

The program Survey Quality Predictor (SQP) 2.0 (Saris & Oberski, 2014) is a web application that predicts the quality coefficients⁵ of survey questions from their characteristics, based on a meta-analysis of over 3000 questions. SQP 2.0 allows researchers to recognize measurement error, choose the best measurement instruments for their purpose, and account for the effects of errors in their analyses of interest. Once the quality coefficients of the survey items of interest have been calculated through the program, the original correlation (or covariance) matrix used to perform the regression analysis can be corrected using these

⁵ For a detailed definition of the ‘quality’ of a survey question, see Saris and Gallhofer (2014).

obtained qualities⁶. Details on how to correct a correlation (or covariance) matrix for imperfect qualities of survey items can be found in de Castellarnau & Saris (2014).

b) Common method variance (CMV)

Besides survey indicators not being perfect, one can expect relationships between variables that are measured through similar methods to be inflated by what are called “method effects” (Saris & Gallhofer, 2014, pp. 177–179). That is, people may have different reactions to the measurement method used, and these reactions will be stable throughout the different questions that share the same method of measurement. In this sense, part of the correlation between two variables measured with the same method can be accounted to the fact that they share the same method of measurement. This part of the correlation that is determined by the method is called “common method variance” (CMV) (Saris & Gallhofer, 2014, Chapter 10).

Because all nine items capturing the importance of the different characteristics of democracy came after one another in a battery in the ESS questionnaire, and shared the same measurement scale, it is safe to assume that part of their correlations is due to common method variance. These CMV coefficients were calculated for each

⁶ The quality estimates obtained through SQP for the survey questions used in our analysis can be found in appendix III.

pair of items, and used to correct the original covariance matrix for this type of error too⁷.

One last methodological note: as the objective of this paper is to compare effects across two countries, I focus on the unstandardized regression coefficients. It is appropriate to work with the unstandardized solution when comparing groups, because we are interested in finding which predictors have significantly different effects between groups (Acock, 2013, p. 240). Unstandardized parameters, by not being affected by the relative variances of the variables, reflect the forms of the relationships between variables of interest, unlike standardized coefficients, which reflect the strengths of the relationships (Acock, 2013, pp. 229–230). To perform correction for measurement errors for obtaining the unstandardized solution, the corrections must be applied to the covariance matrix rather than the correlation matrix (de Castellarnau & Saris, 2014, Chapter 6)⁸.

4.7 RESULTS

As expected, the estimates obtained for the data corrected for measurement errors were dramatically different from the ones

⁷ See appendix IV for the complete table of CMV coefficients for all pairs of independent variables in both countries.

⁸ See appendices I-II for uncorrected and corrected covariance matrices for both countries.

obtained for the original data. Not only did the regression coefficients change substantially in magnitude, but also the total explained variances the models were able to account for increased greatly in both the United Kingdom and Spain. As said before, the results without correction for measurement error cannot be trusted, as the estimates are biased. Thus, I focus my analysis on the results obtained for the corrected data, as they are closer to the true values we want to determine. Full results for both the uncorrected and corrected data can be found in appendix V.

Tables 4.1a and 4.1b present the main results of the analysis conducted: the unstandardized regression coefficients for the 'importance of democracy' dependent variable, for both Spain and the U.K. It is illustrative to not only look at a 'full model' including all the independent variables, but to specify various models for the different 'dimensions' of democracy by separate. In this sense, four different models were specified: the first three correspond to the three dimensions by themselves, while the fourth model includes all the variables to produce a 'full model'. A careful analysis of all the models should permit a more subtle understanding of the differences in the variables associated to 'importance of democracy' between the two countries.

Table 4.1a - Unstandardized regression coefficients for importance of democracy

		(1)	(2)
		Electoral	Liberal
Free and fair elections	Spain	0.567***	
	U.K.	0.906***	
Vertical accountability	Spain	0.289***	
	U.K.	0.067***	
Political alternatives	Spain	0.325***	
	U.K.	0.079***	
Rule of law	Spain		0.253***
	U.K.		0.253***
Horizontal accountability	Spain		0.186***
	U.K.		0.186***
Rights of minorities	Spain		0.500***
	U.K.		0.223***
Freedom of press	Spain		0.174***
	U.K.		0.292***
Welfare	Spain		
	U.K.		
Income equality	Spain		
	U.K.		
Age	Spain	0.008***	0.007***
	U.K.	0.012***	0.013***
Education level	Spain	0.163***	0.157***
	U.K.	0.072***	0.150***
Observations	Spain	1720	1720
	U.K.	1842	1842
R ²	Spain	0.4867	0.4195
	U.K.	0.7766	0.5704

Results for data corrected for measurement errors.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.1b - Unstandardized regression coefficients for importance of democracy (continued)

		(3) Social	(4) Full model
Free and fair elections	Spain		0.464***
	U.K.		0.841***
Vertical accountability	Spain		-0.020
	U.K.		-0.020
Political alternatives	Spain		0.230***
	U.K.		0.035**
Rule of law	Spain		0.088*
	U.K.		-0.130***
Horizontal accountability	Spain		0.052
	U.K.		0.200***
Rights of minorities	Spain		0.219***
	U.K.		0.084***
Freedom of press	Spain		0.148***
	U.K.		0.148***
Welfare	Spain	0.581***	0.245***
	U.K.	0.539***	-0.044*
Income equality	Spain	0.137***	0.057*
	U.K.	-0.142***	0.116***
Age	Spain	0.011***	0.006***
	U.K.	0.022***	0.011***
Education level	Spain	0.309***	0.145***
	U.K.	0.362***	0.037**
Observations	Spain	1720	1720
	U.K.	1842	1842
R ²	Spain	0.2459	0.5658
	U.K.	0.3410	0.8311

Results for data corrected for measurement errors.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

As seen, the null hypothesis that stated that no differences should be found between countries in terms of the variables more strongly related to the general 'importance of democracy' question has to be rejected. The full model shows only two variables with coefficients that cannot be considered to be significantly different between countries: 'vertical accountability', which has no statistically significant association to the dependent variable in neither Spain nor the U.K., and 'freedom of press' which has a positive, significant coefficient in both cases. All other variables show differences between countries in the full model. In the next section, the differences observed are discussed in detail.

4.8 DISCUSSION

If elections are the key feature for a political system to be seen as democratic, like minimalist definitions argue, it should come as no surprise that by far the variable that shows the greatest coefficient in both countries is 'free and fair elections': both in Spain and the U.K. the way the electoral process itself is conducted is strongly associated to the general meaning of democratic support. This variable takes special relevance in the United Kingdom, where its coefficient is more than four times the size of the second largest in the full model (0.841 of 'free and fair elections' vs. 0.200 of 'horizontal accountability'). In Spain, it is also the variable more strongly associated to 'importance of democracy', but in this

country it does not have the same importance it has in the U.K: in the full model, its coefficient is not even twice the size of the second largest variable's coefficient (0.464 of 'free and fair elections' vs. 0.245 of 'welfare').

When assessing the explanatory power of the models for the different dimensions of democracy, it is seen that the model for the 'electoral' dimension has the greatest power in both the U.K. ($R^2=0.78$) and Spain ($R^2=0.49$). But the relevance of the variables that belong to this dimension is different between countries. In the U.K., it can be seen that the two other variables belonging to this dimension (besides 'free and fair elections') show no important association to support for democracy. Both 'vertical accountability' and 'political alternatives' have coefficients that, while being statistically significant, are substantively marginal. The large percentage of explained variance in 'importance of democracy' this model is able to account for in the U.K. seems to be related almost solely to the 'free and fair elections' variable (the control variables of 'age' and 'education level' also have substantially irrelevant coefficients). This is again confirmed in the full model, where the 'free and fair elections' variable maintains its very large coefficient while the 'vertical accountability' and 'political alternatives' coefficients remain unimportant in substantive terms.

In Spain, this is not so: while 'free and fair elections' is still the most important variable of the 'electoral' dimension model, the variable of 'political alternatives' also seems to have a strong

association to ‘importance of democracy’. In fact, in the full model for Spain, ‘political alternatives’ has the third largest coefficient of all variables (0.230). The variable of ‘vertical accountability’, while seeming to have a substantively important coefficient in the ‘electoral’ dimension model, sees its coefficient become statistically non-significant in the full model⁹. The finding that a variable like availability of ‘political alternatives’ takes special relevance in Spain is quite interesting at a point in time when many Spanish citizens have expressed growing dissatisfaction with the two-party system that has governed the nation for more than three decades, and with how democracy functions in their country in general (Moncagatta et al., 2015). The rise of *Podemos*, a newly appeared political party that in its first electoral participation (the 2014 European Parliament election) won 8% of the popular vote (and that opinion polls place today as the second political force in Spain) could be seen as a direct implication of this.

The second model in terms of explanatory power is the one for the ‘liberal’ dimension (U.K. $R^2=0.57$; Spain $R^2=0.42$). With regards to the variables included in this model, it can be seen that in Spain, the ‘rights of minorities’ variable is the most relevant. In the model which analyzes the ‘liberal’ dimension by itself (model #2), this

⁹ In fact, ‘vertical accountability’ was the only variable with a statistically non-significant coefficient that the best-fitting full model also found to not have any statistically significant difference across countries. In sum, ‘vertical accountability’ can be assumed to have a non-significant coefficient in both Spain’s and the U.K.’s full models.

variable has a coefficient of almost twice the size of the second largest (0.500 vs. 0.253 of 'rule of law'), and its coefficient remains the largest of all the 'liberal' independent variables in the full model. The three other variables belonging to this dimension ('rule of law', 'horizontal accountability' and 'freedom of press'), in Spain, have coefficients of similar magnitude in model #2, but they substantially change when introducing variables from other dimensions. In the full model, 'horizontal accountability' loses the statistical significance it had in model #2, while 'rule of law' sees its coefficients' size drop substantially. Besides the 'rights of minorities' variable, only 'freedom of press' remains with a statistically significant, substantively important coefficient in the full model for Spain.

In the U.K. it is different: while in the 'liberal' model all four variables belonging to the dimension showed similar coefficients, in the full model, only 'horizontal accountability' and 'freedom of press' -in that order of importance- remain with statistically significant coefficients of medium magnitude¹⁰. 'Rights of minorities' ends up having a very small coefficient, while 'rule of law', surprisingly, sees its coefficient become negative when introducing variables from other dimensions of democracy in the full model. This is probably due to the possible overlapping of its own explanatory power on 'importance of democracy' and the

¹⁰ No statistically significant difference was found on the effect of 'freedom of press' between Spain and the U.K. in the full model.

explanatory powers of the new variables introduced in the full model.

The model for the 'social' dimension comes third in terms of explanatory power (U.K. $R^2=0.34$; Spain $R^2=0.25$). In Spain, it is clear that 'welfare' is the most important variable in this dimension, as it has by far the largest coefficient of the two 'social' variables in both model #3 and the full model. In fact, 'welfare' has the second largest coefficient in the full model for Spain (0.245). It is again interesting to find 'welfare' as another democratic attribute given special relevance in Spain. The Spanish welfare system, one of the better developed in Southern Europe in the past decades, has been drastically affected by the global crisis. In the last few years the Spanish government, following orders from the 'Troika', has applied profound economic reforms, involving huge cuts on social spending, especially in sectors such as public education and health. The finding that Spanish citizens see protection against poverty -or some notion of societal welfare- as important for democracy should not come by surprise.

The results for the U.K. regarding the 'social' dimension are not so clear: while in model #3 'welfare' has a large coefficient and 'income equality' has a negative coefficient, in the full model, it is the coefficient for 'welfare' which becomes negative while 'income equality' shows a positive, statistically significant coefficient. It has to be noted that in model #3, which analyzes the 'social' dimension of democracy by itself, the 'education level' variable included as a

control, has the second largest coefficient for both Spain and the U.K. This does not occur in the full model (or in any of the other models, for this sake). Thus, for assessing the associations of 'welfare' and 'income equality' on our dependent variable, it seems safer to look at the coefficients of the full model rather than the ones of model #3. This would imply accepting 'income equality' as the most important variable in the 'social' dimension in the U.K., but noting that its coefficient is small in size –especially when compared to the 'free and fair elections' coefficient.

Summarizing all findings: 'free and fair elections' is the variable more strongly associated to support for democracy in both countries, although it takes more importance in the U.K. than in Spain. In the U.K., other variables that appear to be relevant, although in a much weaker form than 'free and fair elections' are 'horizontal accountability' and 'freedom of press', in that order. If we take into account the large percentage of explained variance the full model for the U.K. is able to account for (83.11%), and the great difference between the magnitude of the 'free and fair elections' coefficient and the rest, the saliency the electoral process has for British citizens' conception of democracy is evident. In Spain, the picture is more complex: while 'free and fair elections' can also be considered the most important variable of all, there are others that seem to be of relevance too. The variables of 'welfare', 'political alternatives' and 'rights of minorities' all seem to be strongly associated to the meaning of importance of democracy,

and all three have coefficients of similar magnitudes (each one being about half the size of ‘free and fair elections’). Finally, in Spain, ‘freedom of press’ also seems to play a role, although of less importance than the other variables mentioned¹¹.

4.9 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Several relevant conclusions can be obtained from this article. First, and most obvious, is that support for democracy does not mean the same in Spain and the United Kingdom. It is true that important similarities were found between both countries, such as the fact that having a free and fair electoral process is central to both Spanish and British citizens. But more relevant for further research are the differences found. In this specific analysis, Spain showed a more elaborate conception of what matters for democracy, which besides free and fair elections, included the protection of minority rights, the availability of political alternatives and societal welfare.

¹¹ Additional regression models for both the U.K. and Spain were specified using the variables found to be more relevant for each case. Our initial conclusions were confirmed in both cases: in the U.K., a model including just the ‘free and fair elections’ variable by itself (plus the two control variables) was able to account for almost 77% of the explained variance of ‘importance of democracy’ (this is over 90% of the total variance the original ‘full’ model was able to account for). In Spain, the relative importance of the other relevant variables besides ‘free and fair elections’ can be observed, as the R^2 increases substantially as new independent variables are introduced in the models. See appendix VI for complete details.

Whether this finding can be extrapolated to other cases should be confirmed through more research, but it appears likely that differences will be found in the aspects of democracy that are highlighted between countries with different democratic trajectories. This is something that a few researchers have begun to propose in the last few years, but that not many have been able to empirically demonstrate. The few efforts in this direction, to my best knowledge, belong to Ferrín (2012), Ferrín & Kriesi (2015) and Kriesi et al. (2015).

The recognition of the existence of different meanings of support for democracy across countries is only a first step in the direction of a complete, thorough understanding of democratic support. Once these differences are more clearly identified, the next step would be to understand the sources related to the different views of democracy held by citizens. I have offered here some possible explanations as to why in the Spanish case democratic aspects such as availability of political alternatives and welfare were given importance. But these were only very primary ideas derived from intuition and observation of everyday political events. Further rigorous analyses will have to be conducted in order to make more serious claims as to how the different meanings of support for democracy develop, both at the individual and country levels. The same holds for the effects of the different meanings of democratic support: further research should look into the possible

consequences of the different models of democracy citizens show support towards.

Contrary to what is sustained by many scholars who believe support for democratic rule is a 'given' at this point in history, this paper has shown that debates around the concept are far from being resolved. Its findings open many possibilities of further research to be done. How do support for different models of democracy change throughout time? What do they depend on? What are their effects? How are they different across individuals and across nations, and even across cohorts? These are only some of the possible questions political analysts will have to address in order to achieve a better understanding of democratic support in the 21st century.

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APPENDIX III – QUALITY ESTIMATES OF INDICATORS

Quality estimates of indicators	Spain	U.K.
Importance of democracy*	0.695	0.680
Age**	0.997	0.997
Education level**	0.929	0.929
Importance of free and fair elections (for democracy)*	0.647	0.629
Importance of vertical accountability (for democracy)*	0.605	0.608
Importance of political alternatives (for democracy)*	0.589	0.592
Importance of rule of law (for democracy)*	0.604	0.597
Importance of horizontal accountability (for democracy)*	0.584	0.571
Importance of protection of rights of minorities (for democracy)*	0.606	0.592
Importance of freedom of press (for democracy)*	0.604	0.594
Importance of welfare (for democracy)*	0.599	0.593
Importance of measures to reduce income inequality (for democracy)*	0.596	0.585

* obtained through Survey Quality Predictor (SQP) 2.0 (Sarıs & Oberski, 2014).

** Alwin (2007).

APPENDIX IV – COMMON METHOD VARIANCE ESTIMATES (CMVs)

Common method variances (unstandardized)		Spain	U.K.
free and fair elections	* vertical accountability	0.369	0.638
free and fair elections	* political alternatives	0.539	0.679
free and fair elections	* rule of law	0.293	0.548
free and fair elections	* horizontal accountability	0.397	0.624
free and fair elections	* minority rights	0.399	0.664
free and fair elections	* freedom press	0.548	0.693
free and fair elections	* welfare	0.336	0.644
free and fair elections	* income equality	0.448	0.762
vertical accountability	* political alternatives	0.609	0.836
vertical accountability	* rule of law	0.331	0.675
vertical accountability	* horizontal accountability	0.449	0.768
vertical accountability	* minority rights	0.451	0.817
vertical accountability	* freedom press	0.620	0.853
vertical accountability	* welfare	0.380	0.792
vertical accountability	* income equality	0.507	0.938
political alternatives	* rule of law	0.483	0.719
political alternatives	* horizontal accountability	0.656	0.817

APPENDIX IV (CONTINUED)

	Spain	U.K.
political alternatives	0.905	0.909
* freedom press		
political alternatives	0.555	0.844
* welfare		
political alternatives	0.741	0.999
* income equality		
rule of law	0.356	0.660
* horizontal accountability		
rule of law	0.358	0.703
* minority rights		
rule of law	0.492	0.734
* freedom press		
rule of law	0.302	0.681
* welfare		
rule of law	0.402	0.806
* income equality		
horizontal accountability	0.485	0.799
* minority rights		
horizontal accountability	0.667	0.835
* freedom press		
horizontal accountability	0.409	0.775
* welfare		
horizontal accountability	0.545	0.917
* income equality		
minority rights	0.670	0.888
* freedom press		
minority rights	0.411	0.825
* welfare		
minority rights	0.548	0.976
* income equality		
freedom press	0.565	0.862
* welfare		
freedom press	0.753	1.020
* income equality		
welfare	0.462	0.947
* income equality		

All coefficients were calculated using Survey Quality Predictor (SQP) 2.0 (Sarlis & Oberski, 2014).

APPENDIX V – DIFFERENCES IN REGRESSION RESULTS FOR UNCORRECTED AND CORRECTED DATA

Unstandardized regression coefficients for importance of democracy (for uncorrected and corrected data)					
		(1) Electoral		(2) Liberal	
		uncorrected	corrected	uncorrected	corrected
Free and fair elections	Spain	0.381***	0.567***		
	U.K.	0.558***	0.906***		
Vt.accountability	Spain	0.124***	0.289***		
	U.K.	0.008	0.067***		
Political alternatives	Spain	0.164***	0.325***		
	U.K.	0.036	0.079***		
Rule of law	Spain			0.175***	0.253***
	U.K.			0.175***	0.253***
Hz. accountability	Spain			0.079***	0.186***
	U.K.			0.079***	0.186***
Rights of minorities	Spain			0.309***	0.500***
	U.K.			0.124***	0.223***
Freedom of press	Spain			0.068**	0.174***
	U.K.			0.147***	0.292***
Welfare	Spain				
	U.K.				
Income equality	Spain				
	U.K.				
Age	Spain	0.011***	0.008***	0.010***	0.007***
	U.K.	0.016***	0.012***	0.017***	0.013***
Education level	Spain	0.215***	0.163***	0.213***	0.157***
	U.K.	0.209***	0.072***	0.267***	0.150***
Observations	Spain	1720	1720	1720	1720
	U.K.	1842	1842	1842	1842
R ²	Spain	0.2132	0.4867	0.1860	0.4195
	U.K.	0.3534	0.7766	0.2572	0.5704

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

(APPENDIX V CONTINUED)

Unstandardized regression coefficients for importance of democracy (for uncorrected and corrected data)					
		(3) Social		(4) Full model	
		uncorrected	corrected	uncorrected	corrected
Free and fair elections	Spain			0.300***	0.464***
	U.K.			0.482***	0.841***
Vt. accountability	Spain			-0.026	-0.020
	U.K.			-0.026	-0.020
Political alternatives	Spain			0.111***	0.230***
	U.K.			0.009	0.035**
Rule of law	Spain			0.044	0.088*
	U.K.			0.044	-0.130***
Hz. accountability	Spain			0.030	0.052
	U.K.			0.030	0.200***
Rights of minorities	Spain			0.184***	0.219***
	U.K.			0.058**	0.084***
Freedom of press	Spain			0.053***	0.148***
	U.K.			0.053***	0.148***
Welfare	Spain	0.349***	0.581***	0.122**	0.245***
	U.K.	0.288***	0.539***	0.039	-0.044*
Income equality	Spain	0.080**	0.137***	-0.039*	0.057*
	U.K.	-0.049*	-0.142***	-0.039*	0.116***
Age	Spain	0.012***	0.011***	0.010***	0.006***
	U.K.	0.021***	0.022***	0.015***	0.011***
Education level	Spain	0.292***	0.309***	0.197***	0.145***
	U.K.	0.378***	0.362***	0.181***	0.037**
Observations	Spain	1720	1720	1720	1720
	U.K.	1842	1842	1842	1842
R ²	Spain	0.1195	0.2459	0.2384	0.5658
	U.K.	0.1721	0.3410	0.3660	0.8311

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

APPENDIX VI – ADDITIONAL REGRESSION MODELS

Unstandardized regression coefficients for importance of democracy - Spain					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Free and fair elections	0.826***	0.713***	0.576***	0.471***	0.477***
Welfare		0.470***	0.419***	0.298***	0.306***
Political alternatives			0.310***	0.266***	0.238***
Rights of minorities				0.313***	0.257***
Freedom of press					0.139***
Age	0.011***	0.009***	0.008***	0.007***	0.006***
Education level	0.192***	0.187***	0.188***	0.154***	0.140***
Observations	1720	1720	1720	1720	1720
R ²	0.3656	0.4389	0.5122	0.5445	0.5604

Results for data corrected for measurement errors. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

(APPENDIX VI CONTINUED)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Unstandardized regression coefficients for importance of democracy - U.K.				
Free and fair elections	0.973***	0.889***	0.804***	0.825***
Horizontal accountability		0.182***	0.173***	0.123***
Freedom of press			0.170***	0.163***
Income equality				0.099***
Age	0.012***	0.013***	0.010***	0.010***
Education level	0.072***	0.061***	0.037**	0.053***
Observations	1842	1842	1842	1842
R ²	0.7669	0.7863	0.8096	0.8202

Results for data corrected for measurement errors. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

“In the eyes of those lovers of perfection, a work is never finished -a word that for them has no sense- but abandoned; and this abandonment, whether to the flames or to the public (and which is the result of weariness or an obligation to deliver) is a kind of an accident to them, like the breaking off of a reflection, which fatigue, irritation, or something similar has made worthless.”

Paul Valéry, *Au Sujet du Cimetière Marin*

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 RECAPITULATION

As with every scientific discipline, the gathering of knowledge dealing with political attitudes is a cumulative process. This dissertation has drawn from long currents of theory and empirical research and from scholars coming from many different fields. In the beginning of this closing chapter, I find it appropriate -even if not mentioning them by name- to acknowledge them all. It would be both pretentious and naïve to think this dissertation changes

dramatically the state of the art in political attitudes research. However, it does reach interesting conclusions about the study of democratic support that make relevant contributions to the existing literature.

First, and foremost, is the idea that measuring and understanding citizen support for democracy is not as simple as is commonly assumed. There is a long tradition in political science of studying support for democracy through single indicators, and in this dissertation several arguments have been offered against this practice.

The first article showed how groups of citizens which demonstrated high support for the concept of democracy in the abstract -but held different understandings of what democracy is-coexisted in the same nation. In Venezuela, everybody seemed to support democracy, but a *different kind* of democracy. On one side, there were those who trusted Hugo Chávez and supported the model of democracy he promoted, and on the other side there were those who opposed him and supported a different model of democracy. If we only took the high levels of support for the ideal of democracy obtained through a single indicator to assess the attitude in a politically polarized country such as Venezuela, we would be missing this very relevant detail.

In a similar line, the second article demonstrated how attitudes towards the ideal of democracy were completely different from

attitudes towards concrete democratic principles. Not only did they differ in their theoretical explanations, but they also showed substantial differences in their aggregate levels and in their correlates. In Chile, for example, it was seen that having voted for a losing presidential candidate had a negative effect on support for the ideal of democracy, but no significant effect on support for concrete democratic principles. And in both countries it was seen that while great majorities of the population expressed support for the ideal of democracy (86% in Venezuela and 74% in Chile), only around 20% of the samples in each case had consistent democratic attitudes ('solid' democratic support).

The third article confirmed that the use of single indicators to analyze support for democracy is a limited approach, by showing that citizens from different countries mean different things when they express support for democracy. In sum, all three articles suggest that we should study support for democracy using several indicators that cover the complex nature of the attitude. Multidimensional perspectives for the analysis of citizens' attitudes towards democratic rule will certainly yield richer assessments than unidimensional analyses.

Another key conclusion of the dissertation -observed most clearly in the second and third articles- is that support for democracy should be studied in relationship to its political context, because the *meaning* of democracy is determined by the context. In this sense, it is necessary to take into account the recent political

history of the country, and the grounds upon which debates regarding democracy have been constructed on. In this respect, the second article showed how the sources of democratic support varied across nations. It was seen, for example, that in Chile those who gave better evaluations of the economy showed more 'solid' support for democracy while in Venezuela it was those who gave the worse evaluations of the economy those who tended to show more 'solid' support. The third article offered a detailed picture of the conceptions of democracy citizens from two different countries supported: British citizens supported a conception of democracy strongly related to the electoral process, while Spanish citizens – besides elections- also cared about welfare, the availability of political alternatives and the protection of minority rights.

The findings of these articles highlight the idea that performing aggregated region-wide analyses of democratic support can very likely obscure important substantive findings. It was seen in all three articles that levels of support for the ideal of democracy were high in most countries in Europe and Latin America. But, as shown, supporting democracy in one place may mean something very different than in another, and only by taking into account the specificities of the particular context can one achieve a clear understanding of the issue. Aggregate levels of support for the ideal of democracy should not be taken by themselves, but complemented with the meaning they acquire in each specific context.

5.2 THE FUTURE OF RESEARCH ON SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

Democracy is far from being consolidated in many regions of the world. The recent social uprisings mentioned in the introductory chapter of this dissertation are clear indications that political systems are constantly changing and that, even if the ideal of democracy is supported by most people, there is widespread citizen unrest with how democracies function in everyday practice. It is of great importance today to understand the conditions that lead to stronger democratic cultures. This dissertation has offered useful insights that can lead to a better comprehension of citizen support for democratic rule, and which can contribute to the improvement of research in the area of political attitudes.

Future lines of research on support for democracy should make use of the findings and conclusions offered here to develop new indicators and approaches for the study of political support. It is not enough, as was shown repeatedly throughout the dissertation (and has also been argued by numerous research) to assess support for democracy through individual indicators, as they might lead to incomplete and erroneous analyses. The ideas proposed in the articles that make up this thesis are possibilities in this direction; but there is certainly room for refinement and improvement.

As well, besides developing better indicators of political support, it remains for future research to perform more substantive analyses on the sources and effects of the different models of democracy supported by citizens. As has been shown, citizens have different understandings of what democracy is, and it is very likely that these different understandings have diverse implications for political systems. The second article suggested that the 'solid democratic support' indicator proposed could be a better predictor of the stability of a political system. Examining this possibility was beyond the scope of this dissertation, but the hypothesis seems plausible (especially when the traditional indicators of support for the ideal of democracy have many times proved to be weak predictors of democratic stability). In the same line, by developing better indicators of democratic support, scholars will be able to assess which factors are related to having stronger democratic cultures and not only citizens who just say they prefer democracy without actually committing to democratic principles. The second article of this dissertation made a first attempt in this direction, but more empirical research on the subject is necessary to reach sound conclusions.

Political systems are constantly changing, as are citizens' attitudes towards them. Democracy today does not mean the same it did thirty years ago, when most of the traditional indicators to assess attitudes towards it were developed. There is the need to constantly reinvent our approaches to be able to keep up with the

rapidly changing world we face today. This dissertation has offered some ideas on how to assess and analyze attitudes towards democracy in the twenty first century. Yet, it remains for us political scientists to permanently devise new ways to analyze political attitudes with creativity and intelligence. Giving a twist to Paul Valéry's quote, our work will never be finished, but only reinvented.