Media Wars: Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and his Relationship with the Media

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January 27, 2013

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Communications

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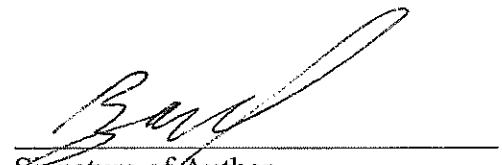

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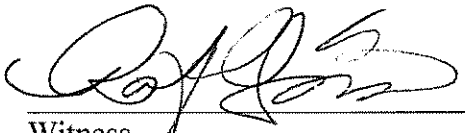

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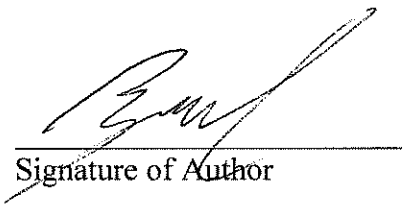

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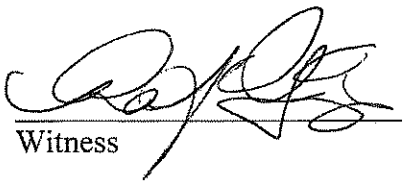

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Abstract

This research examines the contentious relationship President Hugo Chávez had with the Venezuelan mass media during the period of his administration ranging from1998 through 2012. During these 14 years, Chávez created multiple state-owned media outlets, often used exclusively for the promotion of his own political ideologies. He also restricted the rights of the media through threats, laws, and the cancellation of broadcasting licenses. The private media fought back, with media owners, managers, and journalists openly expressing their opposition to Chávez through opinionated news coverage and even involvement in an attempted coup d'état. The actions that comprise this media war for ideological power, and how they jeopardized democracy in Venezuela, are described and examined in this study through a cultural studies theoretical framework.

To my late mother Begoñe Cazalis.

To my father Daniel Cazalis for always inspiring in me a pursuit for the intellectual.

To my family, Asier, Yolanda, Ivonne, Vanessa, Carolina, and Camila

for their love and unconditional support.

To Rafael A. Gálvez for teaching me to be disciplined and work

tirelessly for what is important.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez Frias had a contentious relationship with the mass media during most of his administration. During the period studied in this research, from 1998 to 2012, Chávez attempted to control the media through the creation of multiple, state-owned media outlets, often used exclusively for the promotion of his own political ideologies. He also restricted the rights of the private media through threats, the creation of laws, and the cancellation of broadcasting licenses for radio and television stations. To a lesser extent, and perhaps with less power, the Venezuelan private media fought back during these 14 years. Private media owners, managers, and journalists openly expressed their opposition to President Chávez on several occasions through their opinions and media practices. From 1998 to 2012, the private Venezuelan media and President Chávez engaged in a power war that openly took place in the public arena.

Given that both the Chávez government and the private media were complicit in irresponsible behavior using the media as an ideological tool in a war for power, Venezuelan democracy was jeopardized between 1998 and 2012. The phenomenon and context under which this state of affairs occurred is complex, requiring a deep analysis of the factors that contributed to this situation.

This research describes and analyzes the events of the war for media influence and government control in Venezuela during the 14 years of Chávez's administration between 1998 and 2012, and shows how these behaviors ultimately eroded democracy, freedom of expression, and free and responsible journalism in Venezuela.

To ensure a better understanding of the research presented, the referenced terminology is explained. Media, in its broadest definition, includes television, radio, film, a large array of published works, and advertising. In this study, the word media is used to describe news media in particular, the emphasis of this being on content, not technology or delivery systems, because the press can be found on the Internet, newspapers, and airwaves. Advertising and entertainment also are referenced as media, as these venues have been used as a political tool by Chávez and the private media. The Venezuelan private media are all media channels that are privately owned and operated as private enterprises that are funded and profit mainly from advertisements.

Freedom of expression is defined in this study not only as freedom of verbal speech, but as any act that seeks, acquires, or conveys ideas and information. What constitutes objective and responsible journalism in this analysis is the willingness to report an event, or information, as in a manner that is as thorough and balanced as possible, regardless of its political implication. For example, on one side, the state-owned television station VTV consistently failed to report or disclose cases of government corruption, a form of journalism that is neither objective nor responsible. On the other hand, the same lack of willingness to report objectively and responsibly with a political end occurred in the failed coup d'état attempted against Chávez in 2002. Between April 11 and 13, 2002, when privately-owned stations such as RCTV only broadcast anti-Chávez marches, private media failed to cover the *chavista* protesters asking for his return to power. Five years later, in retaliation, Chávez denied the renewal of RCTV's broadcasting license, the oldest private station in Venezuela.

The name Chávez represents the man and the president, as well as the entire body of government, and *chavistas* represent those who are his supporters, inside and outside the government body. The opposition refers to government members, the population, or the media who openly oppose Chávez. This is the manner in which these terms are commonly applied in Venezuela.

This study demonstrates how the power struggle between President Chávez and the anti-Chávez private media, that occurred during much of the first 14 years of Chavez's time in power, contributed to the deterioration of ethical behavior in the media and objective journalism, in addition to having far reaching consequences for democracy in Venezuela. The Chairman of the Trans-Atlantic Dialogue on European Broadcasting, David Webster (1992), points out that a free society needs a free press, given that democracy requires "public debate and open decision-making, the free exchange of ideas, opinions and information" (n.p.). A self-governing society, by definition, makes its own decisions; without accurate information and an open exchange of ideas, society cannot decide. "Abraham Lincoln articulated this concept most succinctly when he said: 'Let the people know the facts, and the country will be safe.'" (Krimsky, 1997, n.p.).

The second chapter explains the theoretical framework of Cultural Studies used to analyze the deterioration of the press and, ultimately, the democratic institutions in Venezuela. Next, the qualitative methodology used for this research is outlined. The methodology is comprised of an extensive literary review and analysis of the sources' content.

The fourth chapter provides an examination and discussion of the historical context of the corruption-ridden Venezuela where Chávez ran for president.

The last part of the study analyzes the direct and indirect consequences of the media war, as well as the extent to which Venezuelan journalism and freedom of expression were affected, and what this means for Venezuelan democracy..

The questions that guide this study, and which help to examine the complex state of Venezuela's government-media relations, include the following:

- What does contemporary Venezuelan history reveal about journalistic practices and government control of the media before Chávez?
- What was the social and political context in which Chávez was elected president?
- What behaviors did Chávez and his government exhibit in relation to journalistic and media practices?
- What journalistic behaviors did the Venezuelan media on both sides of the spectrum practice under Chávez's regime?
- How does Cultural Studies serve as a theoretical framework for understanding the tumultuous relationship between Chávez and the private media in Venezuela during this period?
- How has the ideological fight in the arena of the media affected journalism, freedom of expression, and, ultimately, democracy in Venezuela?

To answer these questions, this study critically analyzes the events that contributed to the power war that took place in Venezuela between the privately-owned media and the Chávez government through the lens of a cultural studies theoretical framework. The study also addresses the historical context of Venezuela before Chávez, which allows for a better understanding of the circumstances surrounding his election. Then, the most important media events that occurred in Venezuela associated with this

issue during the first 14 years of Chávez's government are described and analyzed to understand the ultimate effect of this situation on responsible journalism practices, freedom of expression, and democracy in Venezuela.

Chapter II

Analysis through Cultural Studies Theory

Cultural studies provides the theoretical framework for this analysis on President Hugo Chávez's contentious relationship with the Venezuelan private media. It will attempt to show the power struggle that took place between the Venezuelan media, President Hugo Chávez, and the privately-owned media industry, through the lens of cultural studies theories. Cultural studies, which is part of the school of Critical Theory, is particularly relevant to the media and mass communication fields. It is defined as a collection of perspectives concerned with power struggles in societies, and the ways in which mass communication perpetuates domination of one group over another (Stanley, 2006, p. 178). This theory helps contextualize the situation in Venezuela when the government utilized mass media to perpetuate its domination and, in that way, contribute to the erosion of freedom of expression, responsible journalism, and democracy.

Stuart Hall, the father of cultural studies, serves as the primary source for analyzing the media's role under Chávez's regime in this work. Hall believes mass media provides the guiding myths that shape our perception of the world and serves as an important instrument for social control (Davis, 2004, p. 224). Hall's neo-Marxist ideas, wherein a power struggle is seen to take place in the arena of the media, are necessary for understanding the state of the media in Venezuela, where a power struggle between the opposition and the government occurred through the mass media during the period covered in this study. During this time, Chavistas and the Venezuelan opposition manipulated the information they provided to the Venezuelan audience using the news and other media forms as an ideological tool, and fulfilling Hall's neo-Marxist theories.

Chávez's Use of the Media as an Ideological Tool

Hall believes mass media helps maintain the power of those who are already in a position of power, while exploiting the poor and powerless. Additionally, as a critical theorist, he wants to not only philosophize on this problem, but make a change. The change Hall and most critical theorists want to accomplish is to empower people on the margins of society (Griffin, 2006, p. 371). It appears Chávez would agree with Hall. He created an avalanche of government-owned media justified by the idea of giving a voice to those oppressed by the privately-owned media: the have-nots, the poor in Venezuela, the masses. Hall's ideas, critical of the oppression of the status-quo and its power over the media, are in line with Chávez's objectives. Like Hall, Chávez also said he wanted to help give a voice to the voiceless proletarian.

Hall, however, maintains that he does not want to be a "ventriloquist" for the masses, but desires for them to "win some space" where their voices can be heard (Griffin, 2006, p. 371). In contrast, one can say that Chávez also wanted to win media space, but mainly for his own voice to be heard through dozens of government-sponsored media outlets, showcasing long hours of pro-government programming.

Nevertheless, the ideas shared by Chávez and Hall on the domination of a status-quo media, and the limited space the masses are given to express ideas, are not completely unfounded. Before Chávez's socialist government, Venezuela experienced a 40-year period of democracy, during which time elected presidents promoted a capitalist ideology. The government supported private industries, including the media. Venezuela had only one state-owned television station—*Venezolana de Televisión*—which generated very little content and received low ratings. Most of the broadcast

programming came from privately-owned media, which, according to Hall and Chávez, only supports one kind of elitist, status-quo ideology. Government media expansion under Chávez was justified by the same argument as Hall's: to create a more pluralistic media society and give voice to the masses.

Andres Izarra (2007), Venezuelan Minister of Communication and Information, and President of TeleSUR, a 24-hour news channel and the Venezuelan government's alternative to CNN and Fox, agrees with Chávez's expansion of the state-owned media to create a more pluralistic society:

> For years, we had 'controlled' news networks. Not controlled by Venezuelans or our government but by the countries that dominate international news like the United States and the United Kingdom, or by large media companies with international ownership of local Venezuelan channels. (n.p.)

Izarra (2007, n.p.), argued that TeleSUR (which was launched in 2005, with Venezuela owning 51 percent of the channel, and the leftist governments of Argentina, Cuba, Uruguay, and Bolivia owning the remainder) and other state-owned media outlets have increased the pluralism of Venezuelan television from what it was in the pre-Chávez period.

> Until recently, Venezuelan television news often became victim of media conglomerates with one-sided views…There are currently more than twenty major television broadcast organizations operating in Venezuela, including private, state-run and public channels. This pluralism is in contrast to the widely held view that the media in Venezuela is stifled or lacks freedom and diversity,

often purported by politicians and the media outlets that report on them. (Izarra, 2007, n.p.)

However, in the same article, Izarra points out that TeleSUR shares a common ideology with Chávez. To understand TeleSUR and the recent changes in Venezuelan media, he says, they must be seen in the context of the changes occurring in the region. According to Izarra, Chávez and his administration have expressed a desire for the integration of many aspects of society, including financial, social, and regional. "If integration is the end, TeleSUR is the means," Izarra said (2007, n.p.).

The Private Media's Use of the Media as an Ideological Tool

Without a doubt, it was openly acknowledged by the Venezuelan government that the state media was used as a tool to promote Chávez's ideology (Izarra, 2007, n.p.). At the same time, privately-owned media, which represented the other end of the spectrum in most cases – the haves, the opposition – fought back to retain power and promote anti-Chávez ideology. To do so, the private media often persecuted Chávez and his ideas through biased reporting, omission of news, and constant political commentary – as in Hall's Cultural Studies, using the power of media control to perpetuate an ideology and engage in a literal power struggle in the arena of the media.

The actions taken by privately-owned stations during the infamous coup d'état attempt against President Chávez in April 2002 is an important example of the private media's abuse of information. The privately-owned channel, Radio Caracas Television (RCTV), and other stations failed to report breaking news regarding the attempted coup d'etat to allegedly help the coup succeed.

Pro-Chávez representatives voiced their concern. Francisco Solorzano, official of the MVR, the Fifth Republic Movement, or Movimiento (V) Quinta Republica, which was founded by Chávez but dissolved in 2007, states: "On April 11 our media's credibility was proven.…They (the private news media) tried to hide the truth and everything was known through the international media, and that is really something to be worried about" (Perozo, 2004, n.p.).

Solorzano questioned the private media's credibility for their decision to have an information blackout during the events that occurred between April 11-13, when the coup d'état attempt took place. Private television stations such as RCTV, Venevisión, and Globovisión, broadcast only marches by the opposition that leading the coup against Chávez. When Chavista marches occurred, Chávez sent out a message that they be shown on all television stations, telling people to remain calm and that he was still in power, but private stations ignored these actions and showed cartoons and other entertainment programming instead, weakening their credibility and linking themselves with the attempted coup (Medina, 2007, p. 56).

RCTV, Venezuela's oldest private television station, was forced off the air at midnight on May 27, 2007. Chávez's decision to not renew the station's television license was said to be based on the network's indecent content, which was deemed inappropriate for children. Nevertheless, the general understanding is that their involvement in the coup, and their openly anti-Chávez programming, is what truly prompted the closure. Eleazar Díaz Rangel, Director of Últimas Noticias (Latest News), a fairly neutral and popular Venezuelan newspaper, agrees:

> Before the coup of April 2002, their [RCTV] information and opinions were oriented towards creating the right conditions for that coup, and when the constitutional forces emerged to reinstitute Chávez in power, they did not provide any information about it even if it was crucially important. The only freedom that Chávez is taking away by closing RCTV is the freedom of the owners of the channel to say their opinion. (Noboa, 2007, n.p.)

However, as Alberto Federico Ravell, former General Director of the privately-owned television channel, Globovisión, explains in a video interview with *The Miami Herald* (2009), "[Media is] the only power that denounces injustices and corruption in Venezuela and we end up playing a role that the media wouldn't otherwise play under normal conditions" (n.p.). Since there was no real system of checks and balances, or separation of power, the media ended up playing a more aggressive role. At the same time, Ravell explains, journalists were threatened constantly and unable to report, as is possible in most democratic societies, positioning them as the only ones to denounce injustices and defend press freedoms.

According to university professor and former judge of the Interamerican Court of Human Rights, Asdrubal Aguilar, under Chávez, the Venezuelan "accumulation of power and the decrease of political party's involvement, [has] left society with only one channel for articulation: the media." He points out that it was "inevitable that the media played a political role in defense of the institutional conditions for a democratic life" (Medina, 2007, p. 53).

Hall's theory, in which the oppressed tend to be voiceless before the most powerful entities that control the media, must be applied differently when looking at the

Venezuelan situation. In the power struggle that took place in Venezuela in the arena of the media between 1998 and 2012, the most oppressed entity, the privately-owned media, had fewer funds, lesser reach, and less power than the state-owned stations. However, they were not voiceless, and private channels also used their media power to defend their voices and ideologies.

Pluralism vs. Neo-Marxism

It is important to point out why a neo-Marxist theory must be applied to the Venezuelan case, instead of a pluralistic theory, as is often used to describe or analyze the media in the United States (U.S.). The circumstances under Chávez's regime created a particularly weak democracy in Venezuela. Therefore, a pluralistic theory, which refers to the media as a promoter of freedom of speech, and is commonly used to describe the media in democratic societies, such as the U.S., cannot be applied to the Venezuelan case. According to Gurevitch, Bennett, Curran, and Woollacott (1982), "Pluralists see society as a complex of competing groups and interests, none of them predominant all of the time" (p. 256). Media organizations are seen as organizations that enjoy an important degree of autonomy from the state, political parties, and institutionalized pressure groups.

The difference between a pluralistic theory and Venezuela's society is (refer to Appendix I) that the Venezuelan public and private media organizations do not enjoy "an important degree of autonomy from the state, political parties and institutionalized pressure groups" (Gurevitch et al., 1982, p. 256). The Venezuelan state has infiltrated the airwaves and the regulatory avenues that media have to go through in order to transmit. Hence, Gurevitch's (1982) idea that a free press encourages an environment where media professionals can express their views without censure from management does not apply.

Andres Izarra, who worked as a journalist at RCTV during the attempted coup, reported, as many other journalists and analysts did later, that RCTV and other private channels only ran news that supported anti-Chávez forces, including a false resignation letter purported to be signed by Chávez. Izarra further notes that "RCTV instructed its reporters to avoid covering pro-Chávez events and opinions, and ran Tom and Jerry cartoons when Chávez was restored to his office" (John, 2009, p. 54). Moreover, Izarra said he first noticed the end of "journalism as usual" in Venezuela when the government and opposition groups staged huge, competing marches only days apart during March of 2002 (John, 2009, p. 54). He claimed his station manager ordered him to give blanket coverage to an opposition march, so Izarra sent ten camera crews to the site, while the pro-Chávez march received no coverage.

Media pluralists also assume a basic equality between the media and its audience. They argue audiences are involved in allowing information to penetrate their understanding, while being capable of manipulating the media in turn. "A basic symmetry is seen to exist between media institutions and their audiences … audiences are seen as capable of manipulating the media in an infinite variety of ways according to their prior needs and dispositions…enabling them to conform, accommodate, challenge or reject, what the media offers" (Gurevitch et al., 1982, p. 256). However, President Chávez ignored the capacity of audiences to be critical of the media, since he felt the need to exercise control over what he deemed to be a manipulative, powerful, imperialistic media (Padgett, 2009, n.p.).

Similarly, the private media did not seem to value the audience's ability to accommodate, challenge, or reject Chávez's message. Instead of providing allegedly

balanced coverage and unbiased information, and letting the audience accommodate or challenge the information themselves, the private media felt the need to promote their own ideology and act more as a political entities that make use of their power as communicators, rather than remain objective observers.

For Hall, the media enables dominant social elites to create and maintain power. Media provides the elite with a subtle, yet effective, means of advancing ideas favorable to their own interests. Mass media, then, can be viewed as a public arena in which cultural battles are fought to promote and forge a dominant or hegemonic culture power (Dennis & Stanley, 2006, p. 34). This theory can be applied to both sides of the political divide in Venezuela. The media was used by both groups to maintain power and advance ideas, and functioned a public arena where ideological battles were fought (see Appendix I, which provides a chart detailing the dynamics behind this interaction).

In Venezuela, however, two powerful ideologies were promoted in the media at the same time, instead of a dominant one. Both entities, the government and the privately-owned media, abused the media as a powerful ideological tool. The power struggle in the Venezuelan media, where both entities fought openly, is especially intriguing when compared to Hall's theories, where only one is dominant and the other side of the struggle remains completely voiceless.

The private media, which used to be the dominant, elite voice, became the least powerful entity when compared to Chávez's predominant message. Chávez, who represented the have-nots through his socialist revolution, was the dominant elite in this case, creating and maintaining power through the media hegemony. In Hall's Cultural Studies, the status-quo promoted through the media is presented as an elite, capitalist

empire, and not the revolutionary, leftist government of Chávez, which claims to represent the masses—the have-nots.

Hall (Griffin, 2006, p. 373) does not suggest the promotion of the status-quo is a conscious plot by the media. He believes media professionals enjoy the illusion of autonomy while promoting a dominant trend. This is another way in which the definition of neo-Marxism differs from Venezuelan reality. Public and private media professionals did not enjoy the illusion of autonomy; they understood and acted on their role as powerful persuaders of an ideology. The privately-owned media was aware of the punishment and hostility arising from the government whenever they were critical of said government. The private-media learned from the RCTV case and laws created by Chávez that increased censorship and, therefore, self-censored their own networks' journalists and content. In contrast, others channels, such as Globovisión, a 24-hour news television station, openly expressed their dislike of Chávez and set clear programming agendas that promoted their ideals, setting the stage for media that appeared biased and unreliable. "The news media that assumed critical positions created their own failing path by openly siding with civil and political organizations against the Chávez project" (Medina, 2007, p. 50).

Reporters from state-owned media were also aware that they were serving the government's interest; they belonged to socialist political organizations and openly expressed their discontent with the opposition. In a September 20, 2009, article published on Aporrea.org, a popular socialist news website, Gonzalo Gómez, a reporter from Aporrea.org, editor of the newspaper *Marea Socialista* (Socialist Tide), and member of the Communication Commission of the *Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (PSUV,

United Socialist Party of Venezuela), proposed a series of steps for the socialization of the media in Venezuela. Among its goals, he includes: "To continue with the measures of democratization of the public airwaves by transferring control to the Popular Power: This is vital for defending the Bolivarian Revolution from media offenses of the oligarchy and imperialism" (Aporrea.org, 2009, n.p.). Gómez presented this proposal for the socialist transition of the media in the Bolivarian Revolution (*Propuestas de Transición para la Socialización de los Medios en la Revolución Bolivarana*) at the Meeting of Counterinformation and Popular Communication in September 2009. This summit of pro-socialist journalists was organized in response to the *Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa's* (SIP) representatives visit to Venezuela in September 2009. Critics of SIP have referred to it as *Servidores Imperialistas de Prensa* (Imperialist Servants of the Press) (Aporrea.org, 2009, n.p.).

The Justification of Chávez and the Private Media

Both pro- and anti-Chávez media representatives did not hide their political positions, and felt they were serving the best interests of their country by counteracting each other's manipulation of the media. In a way, they were both like Hall: resisting. Hall wants to liberate people from an unknowing acquiescence to the dominant cultural ideology. The private media and Chávez, similar to Hall, wanted to create resistance against the opposing ideology.

Ignoring professional standards of objective and unbiased news reporting was justified by exercising resistance towards the opposing side. The mission of a cultural studies approach is, after all, raising consciousness of the media's role in promoting an ideology, which is the exact justification used by both sides during the power struggle in

Venezuela. Hall wants to liberate people from an unconscious acceptance of the dominant ideology (Griffin, 2006). Similarly, Chávez wanted to liberate the people from the "powerful, imperialistic, private media" (p. 371). Moreover, the private media took up the job of liberating the people from the information the government provided, even if that meant filtering or altering information in the same way the private and government media did.

It is important to mention Hall called his research cultural studies, rather than media studies, because he believed it to be a mistake to treat media institutions as a separate academic discipline from culture. He pushed for the idea of understanding mass communication within its specific context (Griffin, 2006). The historical, political, social, and cultural contexts of Venezuela are also crucial elements for understanding this media study.

Hall's cultural studies are rooted in other movements and theories that are also applicable to the Venezuelan situation, beginning with the Frankfurt School, the first to question why Marx's predictions failed and capitalism remained. Why have the have-nots, the working class, not revolted against the haves? They argued that the revolt did not occur because corporate-owned media was effective in sending a message that supported capitalism (Griffin, 2006). This idea echoes Chávez's arguments against the private media in Venezuela.

In the proposal for the socialist transition of the media for the Bolivarian Revolution, summarized in the Aporrea.org article (2009, n.p.), the Frankfurt School's argument that the private media is pushing a (harmful) capitalist ideology is evident. Point five of the proposal solicits the following:

> The non-renovation of the broadcasting licenses of large private radio and television stations. As well as the cancelation of the broadcasting licenses of the media connected with activities involved in the counterrevolutionary coup conspiracy, or state assassins, so that the menace of psycho-terrorism of the media can be ended, and give a forward step in the socialization of the capitalist media under social control (Aporrea.org, 2009).

Cultural Studies Roots and the Venezuelan Situation

Frankfurt School theorists addressed "the means of production of culture," in which media owners have an undue influence over ideology and political power. Although Hall is less heavy-handed, he agrees that corporate control of public communication creates a culture focused on maintaining the power of the status-quo by restraining free expression. Hall uses the term hegemony when he speaks of the cultural role of media. Hegemony, which is defined as the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group, has also been used by the Chávez administration to describe its plans for the Venezuelan media; even though this is the exact same thing it has criticized the privately-owned media of doing. In a January 8, 2007, interview with *El Nacional*, a Caracas daily, Izarra stated that the administration of President Chávez was building an "information hegemony" (n.p.). He qualified this statement by indicating that this hegemony did not mean the end of opposition, and that the media that criticized the government would continue to operate.

Another influence of cultural studies relevant to this case is that of French literary critic and semiologist Roland Barthes, who deconstructed symbols systematically to reveal their reinforcement of society's dominant values. Similar to Hall's argument on

the media's reinforcement of the powerful, Barthes holds that symbols also reinforce the dominant values of a culture. Signs are powerful. People tend to accept symbols without questioning them and without deconstructing them because they are already linked to meanings and need no explanation. Griffin argues, "Symbols go without saying. They don't explain, they don't defend, and they certainly don't raise questions" (Griffin, 2006, p. 364).

Chávez knew the power of symbols. Since his first presidential campaign, Chávez took on mythic signs that were already important to Venezuelans. He seized for himself the image of Simon Bolivar, Venezuela's most important independence hero. Every time Chávez talked about his ideas, goals, and dreams, he referred to them as Bolivar's dreams. He renamed parks, squares, and institutions after Bolivar, and the very name of his revolution, the Bolivarian Revolution, was further proof of his desire to be completely connected to Simon Bolivar. Chávez also adopted the Venezuelan flag for himself, the Venezuelan shield, and many other Venezuelan heroes. Who would question these symbols? They were already unquestionably connected to "good" ideas, such as patriotism and heroism, in the Venezuelan collective consciousness.

Chávez repeated these symbols constantly. He obviously was aware of the power of unquestionable signs, as well as propaganda theories that describe the efficiency of the repetition of messages and symbols (Dennis, 2006). It can be observed that both communist and fascist propagandists, for example, have used the continuous repetition of symbols to stimulate large-scale mass attention.

The last influence of cultural studies relevant to this context is that of French theorist Michel Foucault. His concept of discourse, which provides a bridge between

social power and communications, and between the symbols and the message, helped Hall create the concept of making meaning. The process of learning the meaning of a symbol requires someone to explain that meaning. It is important to recognize the source of that explanation. Not everyone in society has an equal voice or power to create meaning and define symbols. Those who can reach more people have more discursive power: power to create meaning. Undoubtedly, Chávez had more discursive power than the average Venezuelan resident. Therefore, he had more power to frame and create meaning. The privately-owned Venezuelan media, with its broad reach, also had great discursive power, which is the reason why Chávez attacked it directly and sought to significantly curb its influence.

The Problem of the Audience

The ultimate issue for cultural studies is not what information is presented, but whose information it is. The source of the information is perhaps the most important issue in the Venezuelan media under Chávez. Government-sponsored media and privately-owned stations in Venezuela became active propagandists on many occasions. The Venezuelan people were very aware of this, and, therefore, the ultimate question for them was who owned the media channel where the information was coming from. In Venezuela, it was quite obvious whether the media was government or privately owned.

The situation decreased Venezuelans' trust in the media. In September 2008, 79.6% of Venezuelans reported being suspicious of the Venezuelan media, both private and state-owned, according to a survey conducted and published by the Venezuelan Institute of Data Analysis (IVAD) (cited in Aporrea.org, 2008, n.p.). Yet, Chávez and the

private Venezuelan media were more concerned with combating each other's messages than with the audience's actual interpretation of those messages.

The fact that media presents an ideology, however, is no reason to assume audiences will completely accept their interpretations. This premise has taken precedence in post-modernist and phenomenologist theories, and has been proven through empirical studies.

Since the early 1940s, careful studies have overturned the assumption that the media affects a passive audience. Paul Lazarsfeld conducted carefully designed surveys and developed his theory based on empirical data. It is not enough to assume political propaganda is powerful – hard evidence is needed to prove the existence of its effects (Dennis, 2006). By the 1950s, Lazarsfeld and his colleagues found that people had various ways of resisting media influence, and that their perceptions were formed by numerous factors, including friends and family. His theory is known today as the limited-effect theory, which is the view of media as a force to reinforce social trends, and not as a powerful ideological tool.

Likewise, in his theory, Hall offers conciliation for the limited effect of messages on audiences. He presents the possibility of the powerless masses resisting the dominant ideology of the media and translating the message to one closer to their own interests. He describes three decoding options:

1. Operating inside the dominant code: The audience reading coincides with the media message.

2. Applying a negotiable code: The audience assimilates the leading ideology in general, but opposes its application in specific cases.

> 3. Substituting an oppositional code: The audience sees through the establishment bias in the media presentation and mounts an organized effort to demythologize the news. (as cited by Griffin, 2006, p. 378)

According to the results of the Venezuelan Institute of Data Analysis (IVAD) survey, nearly 80% of Venezuelans did not trust the media; therefore, the third decoding option – substituting an oppositional code – whereby the audience sees through establishment bias in media presentation, is most suitable for the Venezuelan situation.

Many analysts agree that it was quite easy to see the biases in the Venezuelan media, as well as to detect which media outlets sided with the government and which did not: "Watching television or reading the newspaper, it was obvious that various media were conducting intentionally a campaign to discredit the government", said Ignacio Ramonet, director of *Le Monde Diplomatique* and director of Media Watch Global, on May 15, 2002, in an interview with BBCMundo.com on the role of the private media during the 2002 coup attempt (n.p.). In contrast, many agree that "state media has become a propaganda brigade that seems willing to do anything to defend the Venezuelan President" (Marcano & Tyszka, 2007, p. 222).

The Irony of the Enemy of the Dominant Ideology

Even though 80% of Venezuelans distrusted the Venezuelan media, in addition to analysts constantly calling out noticeable media biases, Chávez ignored the audience's capacity to be critical of the media. He created various laws, such as The Law of Social Responsibility in Radio and Television, that reduced the power of the private media. He fined private stations and newspapers for various questionable reasons and labeled them "media terrorists" (EFE, 2012, n.p.). He censored media by not buying advertising space,

resulting in a significant loss of revenue for these, given that more private businesses were being nationalized. Chávez rarely spoke about the audience's role in understanding the information given by the media. He was predominantly concerned with taking away the private media's space for expression and gaining more space for his revolution, or, as he would say, space for the masses.

The apparent irony is that by trying to suppress the dominant oppressive ideology of the private media, Chávez's ideas became the dominant oppressive ideology. This same irony has been noted in the case of Hall; while his theory is concerned with resisting the dominant ideology, by promoting it, Hall runs the risk of turning it into a dominant ideology, one that would ultimately reduce pluralism. As Samuel Becker, chairman of the communication studies department at the University of Iowa, notes, "Hall knocks the dominant ideology of communication studies, yet he may himself be the most dominant of influential figures in communication studies today" (Griffin, 2006, p. 381).

The Never-ending Cycle

It is no surprise that the private media fought back in this war for ideological domination. The struggle for power continued in a never-ending cycle (Appendix II): As Chávez oppressed the private media by canceling broadcasting licenses, fining them, and constantly threatening them, the private media continued to fight back with biased information and constant criticism, the only weapon they had. Furthermore, as the private media continuously criticized Chávez's government, taking on the role of a political party, Chávez continued to treat them like a political party in the ongoing war for political power.

Each of the entities justified their media abuse with the charge that they were resisting the opposing ideology and helping audiences resist the opponent. Thus, the power war that took place in the arena of Venezuelan media was an example of Hall's cultural studies. However, this was an open war. The media acted as an ideological tool that worked toward promoting its own ideas while discrediting the ideas proposed on the opposite side of the political spectrum. In the end, this open power struggle resulted in the destruction of the credibility of the media for its audience and scaring away democracy in Venezuela, probably for many years to come.

Chapter III

Methodology

This research is a qualitative study that provides a historical analysis based on data collected through an extensive literature review on the relationship between Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and the media.

The method behind the study is a literary review, which relies on collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and data in order to gain insight into a particular phenomenon of interest (Airasian, 2006, n.p.). This methodology is appropriate because qualitative data found in the literature and interviews offer an in-depth understanding of the complex interaction between Chávez and the media. It also allows for a broad investigation that explores the historical and social context in Venezuela, as well as the intricate opinions of those involved, thus allowing the researcher to critically analyze the turn of events and ensuing consequences involving Venezuela's media during Chávez's regime.

To better understand the interaction between Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez's government and Venezuela's privately-owned media, the literature review examined published works about Venezuela's current history and events, as well as political analyses and journalistic commentary. A variety of academic and personal sources were examined to analyze and understand the hypothesis that there was a power struggle for control of the media in Venezuela that eroded ethical media practices, free expression, and democratic rule in the country, including:

- Published interviews with Venezuelan government officials and journalists who played a role throughout Chávez's mandate.

- News reports on events that relate to the struggle for control between the government and the private media.
- Studies on journalism and democracy, analyses of social context in Venezuela, political history, and Chávez's personal history
- Media and political theories, specifically Cultural Studies, which serve as a framework for explaining the manipulation of media messages for political power and its consequences.
- Personal and political blogs, Twitter, and Facebook accounts, and other internet sources by Venezuelan politicians and journalists that portray the situation of electronic media and the role it plays in a political media war.
- Personal interviews with Venezuelan and international journalists, politicians, and other experts on the subject, as well as members of the Venezuelan audience.
- The researcher's anecdotal observations from living in Venezuela during the pre-Chávez administration, and as an exile working as a media professional, also contribute to the analysis and conclusions.

To understand the evolution of Venezuela's media in the context of the power struggle between government and privately-owned media during the Chávez regime, this study addresses the following questions:

- What is the social and political context in which the Venezuelan media operated under Chávez, and how did it affect media practices?
- How did the Venezuelan media operate under this context?

- How did the Venezuelan situation relate to Stuart Hall's neo-Marxist media Cultural Studies?
- How did the Chávez-media relation affect Venezuela's democracy?

Literature Review

Various analytical pieces, including books, academic research, and countless journalistic works on the media-Chávez issue in Venezuela are explored in this study. For the purpose of the literature review, the literature is divided into the following areas:

- Theory and philosophical works to explain the framework of the study.
- Contemporary history, culture, and context of Venezuelan media-government relations.
- Chávez against the private media: How President Hugo Chávez made use of the media for his political benefit by manipulating messages, creating various powerful state outlets, and sanctioning the media that criticized his government.
- The private media against Chávez: How Venezuelan private media became a political entity that uses its communication power as an ideological tool, as opposed to being an objective journalism entity, whose purpose is to inform.
- The consequences of the struggle: How the ideological fight that took place in the arena of the media affected journalism, freedom of expression, and democracy in Venezuela.

An extensive search for the literature related to these two entities (the Venezuelan government and privately-owned media) indicates that although much has been written

on both sides of the issue, very little impartial analysis is available on the role of the media and Chávez in eroding the freedom of the Venezuelan press.

Through an analysis of the existing literature, and observations of recorded behaviors and activities, this researcher attempts to present an objective analysis that brings a fresh perspective to the ongoing struggle in Venezuela.

Objectivity and Reliability

To fully understand what contributed to the escalating adversity between Chávez and the private media, an objective account is critical for a productive analysis of this ongoing phenomenon. While many books and narratives side with or against Chávez, these perspectives contribute to the full spectrum of views involved in this debate, and are needed for a comprehensive understanding of the interaction between these two factions, thus, providing the necessary factors for objectivity.

Contributing further to an objective analysis of the research question is that, while this researcher is a Venezuelan national, she closely followed the development of the media in Venezuela under Chávez from the perspective of an outsider, having resided beyond Venezuela during his mandate, and having abstained from Venezuelan political affiliations.

The validity of the research findings is demonstrated by the transparency of the data and its sources. It provides a detailed description of the context based on documents, interviews, films, and video. The use of various sources contribute to a comprehensive account of the events and, consequently, to the objective analysis of the matter.

Chapter IV

Historical Background

Chávez's victory and its relation to Venezuelan contemporary history.

In December 1998, Hugo Chávez Frías won the presidential election after four decades of what had been the longest period of democracy in Venezuela. The election of this candidate and his relation to the media are intrinsically tied to the political and media history of Venezuela prior to Chávez.

In 1958, the last military dictatorship, under Marcos Pérez-Jimenez, ended in Venezuela, when the main political parties that opposed the dictatorship signed a pact, known as *El Pacto de Punto Fijo*, to form a democratic government (Marcano & Tyszka, 2007, p. 38). For the next 40 years, the political parties known as *Acción Democrática* (AD, Democratic Action) and *Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente* (COPEI, Independent Committee for Political and Electoral Organization) took turns presiding over the country. By 1998, when Chávez won the election, this model was in crisis, and a need for change was felt in most sectors of Venezuelan society.

The frustration of Venezuelans came about after years of disappointment brought about by various governmental decisions regarding open markets, which were negatively affecting the country's economy. Policies, such as the Washington Consensus, which promoted free commerce, foreign investment, and the privatization of public organizations, had worsened the country's economic situation. Decades of high unemployment rates, a poor economy that was solely dependent on oil, and, thanks to the media, daily and highly publicized cases of corruption, created a frustrated and exhausted Venezuela with increasing crime and poverty rates (Marcano & Tyszka, 2007, p. 39).

Chávez won with a historical majority of votes: 56.44%. The middle class, tired of the inefficiency of the traditional political parties and their corruption, the media, which had been denouncing the elite in power, and the poverty-stricken sectors of society, all supported Chávez (Marcano & Tyszka, 2007, p. 43).

Venezuela's contemporary political and media history.

Historically, in Venezuela, a democratically elected president had never confronted the media in such a direct manner as did Chavez. Conversely, the Venezuelan private media had never shown such disrespect towards a president as much as it has towards Chavez (Tremamunno, 2002, p. 9). The history of interactions between the Venezuelan media and the government, however, has always been complicated.

During the dictatorship of Marco Pérez Jimenez (1952-1958), and prior to that in 1948 under the military dictatorship of *La Junta Militar de Gobierno*, the media performed in an environment of restriction with few rights. On January 23, 1998, Eleazar Díaz Rangel noted, during a Special Session of the National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela commemorating the 44th anniversary of Pérez Jimenez's downfall: "The press and journalism panorama was overshadowed by strict controls, censorship and other forms of repression. However, media companies were developed as modern capitalist enterprises" (Díaz Rangel, 2002, p. 17).

The restrictive environment for the media did not begin to change until 1958, when the press, through the active participation of journalists, editors, and media owners, became a fundamental player in overthrowing the dictatorship of Pérez Jimenez. At that time, the private media went on strike, leading the way to a general walkout. The ensuing chaos prompted the intervention of the army and forced Pérez Jimenez to flee the country

on the historic morning of January 23, ending his dictatorship over Venezuela. Many of those who met secretly during 1957 to organize against the dictatorship, publishing and distributing anti-government information, were journalists who had been incarcerated and tortured (Díaz Rangel, 2002, p. 17).

Despite the establishment of democratic governance in 1959, the government of Romulo Betancourt, a journalist and founder of the AD party, was not particularly known for respecting the press or allowing freedom of information. The government exercised pressure over newspapers through actions such as the expulsion of the owners of the daily, *La Razon*, and the suspension of various weeklies, such as *Clarin*, *La Hora*, *El Imparcial*, and *El Tiempo*, as well as the closure of the daily, *El Venezolano*. There was even a censorship law passed in 1962 that ordered that "all publications, whatever its nature, do not publish information related to the public order…without previously consulting government functionaries" (Díaz Rangel 2002, p. 26).

In 1963, the Chamber of Deputies declared that freedom of the press in Venezuela was experiencing one of its most difficult stages due to the systematic suppression of journalism and the persecution of media professionals, as well as the regime of censorship still in place (Díaz Rangel, 2002, p. 26). Instances of censorship and media restriction continued to occur for many decades in subsequent democratic governments. The government of Raúl Leoni (1964-1969) has a similar history of aggression towards the media: the daily, *La Extra*, was shut down and the magazine, *Venezuela Grafica*, was suspended. In April of 1965, the offices of the newspapers *Ultimas Noticias*, *La Esfera*, and *El Mundo* were raided. In 1971, during the government of Rafael Caldera (1969-

1974), an issue of the daily, *El Mundo*, was confiscated, while the offices of the newspapers *Critica* (from Maracaibo) and *La Religión* were raided.

The rise of the populist government of Carlos Andres Pérez (1974-1979) did not do much better with the press. Examples of this include Radio Caracas Television being suspended for two days, and issues of the magazines, *Al Margen* and *Resumen*, being confiscated, culminating in the detention of its editor. During the government of Luis Herrera Campins (1979-1984), there were disciplinary proceedings taken against leftist journalists, such as when journalist Maria Eugenia Díaz was taken to trial for supposedly revealing military secrets; a case that was followed and criticized internationally.

The presidency of Jaime Lusinchi (1984-1989) is considered one of the darkest periods for freedom of the press in Venezuela. There were cases of harassment against journalists, and the government silenced the press through powerful economic blackmail. This occurred through the administration of dollar distribution in the *Regimen de Cambios Diferencial* (Regime of Preferential Currency Change), in which the negotiation of dollar acquisition was used to pressure the media and functioned as a censorship tool. Media companies needed to acquire dollars to buy production items, such as paper, ink, cameras, and equipment from other countries, but would not be granted access to the dollars unless they complied with the government's wishes.

While all of these attacks against the freedom of the press were occurring, the Venezuelan news media was careful to maintain its status as observer and not become a political entity. Neither the *Bloque de Prensa* (Venezuelan Press Union), nor the radio and television chambers ever protested against the government, Díaz Rangel said in his speech (2002, p. 28). However, before Chávez had even been elected, on November 15,

1998, the *Bloque de Prensa* already declared its position against him. The union presented before the *Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa* (SIP) a proposal for a declaration that warned of the threats and dangers to freedom of the press if Chávez won.

From then, 1998 until 2012, the relationship between the private media and the government were characterized by periods of tensions, and harsh criticism and attacks by the president against specific media venues, some proprietors, and, in its first stage, against various journalists, explained Díaz Rangel (2002, p. 29). In contrast, the private media was also open about its campaign against the president and his government. "From 1936 until now never had a president or government been the most persistent object of attacks, bordering elemental limits of decency, like the ones we see today." (Díaz Rangel, 2002, p. 29).

During Carlos Andre Pérez's second presidential period (1989-1993), various cases of censorship and harassment against journalists were also registered. The rocky relationship between the media and the government was due largely to corruption scandals surrounding the misappropriation of funds that were constantly featured in the news. Even though Pérez's first presidency was well known as *La Venezuela Saudita* (Saudi Venezuela) because of its economic prosperity resulting from petroleum exports, his second period endured a harsh economic crisis and various social revolts, in many ways paving the way for Chávez's victory.

Despite the fact that Pérez ran on a populist campaign, only weeks after his victory he started implementing neo-liberal economic policies based on the Washington Consensus, a set of policies recommended by Washington, D.C. for developing countries in Latin America, which deregulate markets, promote free commerce, foreign investment,

and the privatization of public organizations. Programs include the deregulation of international trade, the rise of private industry, and cross-border investment. These policies caused the incremental increase of oil extraction in Venezuela, raising the price of transportation and other goods, and stirring a major popular protest in Caracas known as *El Caracazo*. On February 29, 1989, the National Guard was sent to end the riot, with thousands of people dying during the confrontation (Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the UK and Ireland, 2010).

Pérez's government also survived two coup d'état attempts: one in February of 1992, led in part by then Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez, putting him in the spotlight for the first time; and the second attempt led by other military officials later that year. In May of 1993, Pérez was forced out of office by the Supreme Court for the misappropriation of 250 million bolivars, about $7 million with the average conversion rate between 1991 and 1992, from the presidential discretionary fund. He was released in 1996 after two years of house arrest (Hernandez & Giusti, 2006, n.p.).

Economic crisis and coup d'état.

The last president to be elected before Chávez was Rafael Caldera (1994-1999). Just as during Pérez's presidency, Caldera's administration was quite influential in paving the way for Chávez's election. Caldera's government left the Venezuelan economy in a poor state, and Caldera pardoned Chávez for the coup d'état, releasing him from prison in 1994. Furthermore, even though Caldera's government did not impose any major restrictions against the press, his relationship with the media was contentious. Just as with Pérez, a downward economy resulting from years of neo-liberal economic policies and corruption gave way to friction with the media (Díaz Rangel, 2002, p. 30).

In 1994, Venezuela experienced a major banking crisis, starting a downward trend in the national economy. More than ten banks collapsed and lost most of their deposits and capital. Crucial financial help was granted to the banks by the government, which paid for the bailout by cutting services and social programs, affecting millions of people (*Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela*, 2009, n.p.).

Thousands of businesses went bankrupt because the dollar exchange rate imposed by the government prevented businesses from acquiring means for production. The price of goods, from food to clothing, rose uncontrollably, and thousands of Venezuelans became even more impoverished than they were already. The confidence of Venezuelans, foreign investors, and financial institutions was damaged critically (Marcano & Tyszka, 2007, p. 39).

This fragile political and economic background was what allowed the presidential victory for Chávez, a military man with zero political experience. For the first time, Chávez offered a change from the same political parties; an alternative to "Forty years of a corrupt democracy" was one of his campaign slogans (Marcano & Tyszka, 2007, p. 39). The editorial in *El Nacional* the morning after the elections of December 1998 clearly demonstrates Venezuelans' desire for change:

> Sunday's electoral results clearly show a Venezuelan society that hopes for a change that is already happening in its heart, but also show the impressive levels of frustration that the majority have developed against the old political leadership. It has been made completely clear that the entire country has decided for a different option to that which the traditional government class had tried to impose. (Editorial, *El Nacional*, Caracas, December 7, 1998)

Chávez won the elections with an antiestablishment position that was going to sweep out the old regime of elites and corruption, "The country celebrates bringing to power an outsider, punishing that way the traditional political parties" (Marcano & Tyszka, 2007, p. 30). The political and economic context allowed Chávez to win the elections, and his efficient use of the media was just as important.

Since the beginning of his political career, Chávez acknowledged the importance of the media and made great use of it to communicate with Venezuelans and the world. Moreover, Chávez's political career began with an event greatly televised and covered by the media: the military coup d'état attempt against President Carlos Andres Pérez on February 4, 1992.

More than 2,000 military men, led by five lieutenant colonels, among them Chávez, attempted to bring down the troubled government of President Pérez by force. That night, Chávez was in charge of seizing Caracas, while the rest of the leaders were in charge of other nearby cities. The plan was to capture the president and create a void of government so they could fill it. Yet, Pérez escaped in the midst of gunfire, and the actions did not go as planned. A sleepy President Pérez appeared on a nationwide broadcast around midnight announcing that there was a coup attempt by military men who were trying to terminate democracy and that those actions were destined to fail.

The media played a major role during that long night of the coup. Venezuelans were up at dawn watching the President's first address. Chávez was in La Carlota, a commercial airport he seized in Caracas, also watching the President's broadcast, yet surprised it was not his own face on television. He was hoping to see himself calling

Venezuelans to rise and rebel against the corrupt government of Pérez; it had been part of the plan.

A dozen leading military men had the mission of taking command of *Venezolana de Televisión* (VTV) station (the only state channel at the time), and broadcast Chávez's proclamation recorded on a VCR tape. Effectively, the men seized the station, but they did not know how to transfer the video to the UMatic format, a simple procedure unknown to them. They merely accepted the explanation from station employees: that it was just not possible (Marcano & Tyszka, 2007, p. 96).

Months later, the recording finally appeared on television when a group of military officers and civilians connected to Chávez (who was in prison as a result of his actions on February 4) attempted the second coup d'état of the year on November 27. The *golpistas* took over VTV by force and had a violent confrontation with the military, resulting in the deaths of 14 to 30 people (Colmenares, 2007, n.p.).

Chávez, however, appeared live on television the first night of the coup, the best publicity spot of the decade. This appearance initiated his complicated relationship with the media

At the Venezuelan Department of Defense, everyone was analyzing how to neutralize the rebellion in Caracas and the other states where revolts were taking place. They decided the solution was to have Chávez, who had already surrendered, appear on television asking his comrades to surrender as well. The Minister of Defense consulted Pérez to begin the broadcast, and the President agreed as long as it would be recorded first and then edited as necessary (Marcano & Tyszka, 2007, p. 102).

There was no time for recording and editing the message, and it was decided to broadcast Chávez live to millions of sleepless Venezuelans who were about to see the face of the coup. Chávez, knowing the importance of the symbolism behind his vestments, asked for his red beret and to be allowed to wash his face before going before the cameras. He appeared on every television station saying a spur-of-the-moment speech aimed at fellow rebels and Venezuelans. He wished Venezuelans a good morning and "famously declared that the rebels' goals had not, 'for the time being,' been fulfilled, laying open the possibility of his return from the political wilderness" (Beasley-Murray, 2002, n.p.). Even though Chávez was not the only leader of the operation, and was the only one who surrendered, Venezuelans remembered him for speaking in front of the cameras that morning after they saw images of tanks bringing down the walls of Miraflores, the presidential palace in Venezuela. Television stations repeated his message numerous times, unaware that this would become one of Chávez's most important publicity promotions. Chávez instantly became famous, and his long and complicated relationship with the media was born.

Chávez's Victory and the Media's Role

Perhaps President Chávez learned much about the power of the media while he was in prison after the coup. He became the symbol of a revolution. Hundreds of Venezuelans visited him in prison; they wanted to meet the *golpistas*. Journalists interviewed him, visited his hometown, and told the story of the charismatic military man who linked himself and the revolt to the father of Venezuela, Simón Bolívar. Even Venevisión owner, Gustavo Cisnero, one of the richest men in Latin America, supported

Chávez at the time, finding him an interesting figure with a different proposal (Medina, 2007, p. 53).

In 1994, President Rafael Caldera fulfilled his campaign promise of granting amnesty to the individuals involved in the coup d'état of 1992 and Chávez was liberated. Taking advantage of his popularity, and following the advice of a few politicians and intellectuals from the left who had approached him, Chávez decided to start his political career by running in a democratic election instead of following the route of a military take-over (Marcano & Tyszka, 2007, p. 41).

At first, the Chávez myth started to fade away. By 1996, he was barely at 7% in the popularity polls for the 1998 elections. After he was freed from prison, his name started disappearing from the headlines and the media began to lose interest in him. As Marcano and Tyszka write, "At this point, Chávez is considered a *galapago* (the guy who is not news but determined to be news), according to the cynicism of the Venezuelan media jargon. Chávez had already experienced the importance of media coverage, knowing it would be crucial for his presidential election to be featured as widely as possible.

He started traveling throughout Venezuela in *la burra* (the donkey), the name he gave to the Toyota pick-up truck he used to travel to every corner of the country to campaign door to door. By May of 1998, Chávez's support had risen to 30% in the polls, and to 39% by August. By then the Venezuelan media was back to paying attention to this colorful character that sang Venezuelan folk songs and wore *liqui liquis*, traditional Venezuelan attire (Marcano & Tyszka, 2007, p. 134). He offered an alternative to the

decades of "elite, corrupt politicians" who wore suits and ties, and had been benefiting illegally from Venezuela's oil revenue.

Although the 1998 race was close, and many analysts thought Chávez would never win the presidential elections, the media coverage of this man who changed his military uniform for a liqui liqui and of his campaign for a new Venezuela succeeded. His daring personality, personal story, and political style fit perfectly in a world where it was increasingly important for a leader to be effective on television and multiple forms of media.

As the image-making expert he was, it was no surprise Chávez's campaign was crafted carefully, using strong symbols that resonated in the minds of Venezuelans and that 'looked good' in front of the camera. He chose red as his campaign color and made sure his red beret, the same one he wore the first time he appeared on television the morning after the coup, was a staple of his brand. He wore the traditional *liqui liquis* to be identified as a Venezuelan and called his campaign the Bolivarian Revolution, seizing the most important Venezuelan symbol for himself: Simón Bolívar. This independence hero who helped liberate Venezuela, as well as Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru, enjoys an almost religious admiration by Venezuelans and became the identity behind Chávez's campaign and his Bolivarian Revolution.

Chapter V

Government-Media Relations in Venezuela 1998-2012

The honeymoon, fight, and legislative control.

The process in which the Venezuelan private media went from being a free news agency to an opposition party directly attacked by the government is spread across the 14 years of Chávez's presidency, and can be divided into three major parts: The Honeymoon, The Fight, and The Legislative Stage.

The complicated relationship between Chávez and the media began with a private media that was disenchanted with the same old corrupt politicians, and was curious about this new character who promised to shake things up. The second stage started when the Chávez-Media relationship took a complete change of direction, and the two began to openly fight against each other for control. The private media realized that for the Chávez project to work, it required complete media manipulation, and so the media openly sided with the opposition, ceasing to remain an objective reporting entity and becoming more like a political party. Chávez also realized that for his project to work, an independent media could not exist – especially after 2002, when the private media was involved in a coup d'état against him. Chávez started to publicly attack the private media's owners, journalists, and managers, and became a media mogul himself. A power war took place between the private media and Chávez in front of millions of Venezuelans. Everyone knew there was, as Chávez called it, a *peleíta* (little fight) occurring between the two entities. The last stage is what can be called the legislative one; when the power war went from words and attacks to laws created by Chávez to manipulate and silence the

independent media, and where national money was utilized for the creation of state media that openly supported the government.

The honeymoon.

Chávez's relationship with the media began with his earliest appearance on television, six years before he won his first political election as president. It is then he became the face of a revolution that wanted to punish corrupt politicians and bring forth change.

During those first years in the spotlight, various important journalists and media owners, such as Gustavo Cisneros, one of the most powerful businessmen in Latin America and owner of the Venezuelan television station Venevisión, supported him because "they saw in him an interesting figure with at least a new proposal" (Medina, 2007, p. 53). Retired General Alberto Muller Rojas, Chávez's first campaign director, confirmed Cisneros supported Chávez with cash and free advertising space in Venevisión. Muller gave a detailed account of a dinner between the then candidate and the businessman (Marcano & Tyszka, 2007, p. 44). Both met surrounded by their collaborators, who served as intermediaries because the two never spoke directly to each other. "The compromise of Chávez and Cisneros was that Chávez was going to give him the monopoly of the Venezuelan educational television," assured Muller (p.44). If that was the case, the agreement never materialized.

By 1998, the media and Chávez continued their relationship on good terms. Journalists had followed the Chávez story during the coup, while he was in prison, and then as a presidential candidate. They also had witnessed and exposed decades of corrupt governments and faulty policies in Venezuela. To the media and voters alike, Chávez

appeared to be the ideal candidate to execute a punishment against the government officials who appropriated public funds in the past and made poor decisions for the country. "The media was decisive in the creation of a political vacuum as well as in the creation of Chávez as a myth and the figure capable of filling that emptiness," writes long-time Venezuelan journalist Rafael Poleo (2002) in his essay, *Los medios de comunicación como factor de poder en el proceso Venezolano* (The Media as an Element of Power in the Venezuelan Process) (p. 40).

El Chavismo ripped unstoppably through Venezuela with a movement of hegemony and clear enemies: the corrupt politicians from decades past, the elite, and the industrialized countries, specifically the United States. Two months before the elections, Chávez would talk about *freir* (frying) the corrupt politicians and after him the media would call it a *fritanga* (Poleo, 2002, p. 42). Poleo, in his essay, explained how he found it surprising that the media's resentment against the traditional parties, however legitimate, prevented them from seeing the grave distortion they were creating. However, Poleo (2002) pointed out that in the media moguls' support there was also a high level of opportunism. "Many of the most important media outlets cheated themselves into thinking that they could manipulate Chávez like they had done so before with former governments" (p. 42). Media owners were living their own fantasies, fed by a mixture of fear, ambition, and greed, that Chávez was going to both carry a leftist-socialist government that would punish the traditional elite and allow the same freedoms as a democratic society.

Some newspapers, such as *2001* and *Nuevo Pais*, denounced the fascist-Fidelist nature of *chavismo* in which a strong socialist government could be seen; nevertheless,

the media was generally taken aback by the same euphoria as the rest of the country. "The phenomenon surprised the media even more than it was expected from a social instrument that is supposed to be guiding public opinion," stated Poleo (2002, p. 41). So close were the Chávez-media relations upon his election that Chávez appointed the director of the Caracas dailyi *El Nacional*, as Secretary of Government in his first administration. Chávez entered the airwaves and gained the trust of the private media while he could. Then, he turned against them as soon as the media criticized him. His project of remaining in power through media hegemony was inconsistent with a free media. As Poleo (2002) explains:

> Chávez pierced them [the media] and used them, waiting for the moment to confront them, moved by the real reason that determined his relationship with the media power. That reason was that Chávez's political project was not possible with freedom of information. (p. 42)

Luis Tascon, a Venezuelan politician and member of the National Assembly, confirmed this thought, "They [the media] thought that he was going to be just one more president. But a transformation process requires removing certain privileges" (Medina, 2007, p. 53). Then, when the *Ley Habilitante* was approved in 2001 (which gave Chávez the right to legislate directly on any national issue), the private media united against the government. "They took off their masks and became political actors, and the big confrontation began" said Tascon (Medina, 2007, p. 53).

The short honeymoon between Chávez and the private media continued with ups and downs until 2001. Only then did the private media form, without need of agreement, a front of opposition against Chávez. By the second half of 2001, all the private media

channels loudly played the drums of disapproval against a regime that was internally disorganized and moving in a very undemocratic direction.

The fight.

Esta peleíta la quiero dar yo (I want to fight this little fight), said Chávez on television in September of 1999, referring to his relationship with the private media. By that time, he already had started publicly identifying his relationship with the media as a *peleíta*, rememberered Asdrubal Aguiar (Medina, 2007, p. 54). Aguiar, who served on the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and was governor of Caracas from 1994 to 1996, explained that Chávez was troubled on that occasion by an editorial of the daily *El Universal* that spoke negatively of the approval of the new constitution. Chávez accused the writer of the editorial, Andres Mata, of being against the Bolivarian Revolution and against the majority of Venezuelans. Since then, Chávez has referred to the private media as terrorists engaged in a "mediatic" war against him, a war he probably wanted to fight since he was elected.

During *La Trajedia de Vargas* in December of 1999, when torrential rains destroyed the mountain coast of the state of Vargas and thousands of people died, Chávez directed attacks against journalists who were denouncing human rights violations in the affected area. Those attacks continued against the most recognized journalists in the country and the confrontations have not stop since that time. "There is reason to believe that these confrontations [by Chávez] were done deliberately since the beginning as part of a long term project against the media," wrote Medina (2007, p. 55).

There is no denying that many journalists and media owners made their own misfortune when they joined political and civic anti-Chavista organizations. "The media

assumed this role, I think in a wrongful way because it made them lose their impartiality and assume a role that did not correspond to them," said researcher and university professor Marcelino Bisbal (Medina, 2007, p. 53).

What prompted Chávez in the first years of his presidency to make the private media his personal enemy, however, was mostly due to the independent media functioning as a government watchdog, which is supposed to be critical of unwarranted accumulation of power. It was inevitable that the media was going to criticize Chávez's project as soon as his plan started developing. Hence, as the media started to become critical of Chávez, the president began verbal aggressions against editors, journalists, and media owners. This led to physical aggression against media representatives by Bolivarian groups, the police, and the National Guard.

A report on *Freedom of Expression and Information* by the Venezuelan NGO Provea, which studied the period between October 2001 and September 2002, shows that even by this year, the media-Chávez war was already at a critical point with both sides being at fault. A total of 115 cases of attacks against the "Freedom of Expression and Information" of individuals and the media were recorded in the report. The cases were divided into aggressions 62 (45.6%), threats 44 (32.4%), and censorship 25 (18.4%). The state was found to be directly responsible in 52% of the cases, and the rest were Venezuelan citizens, members of the opposition, or government supporters (Provea, 2002, n.p.).

"At the root of the violence against the media and its employees are the intolerant and alienating speeches from government officials," reported Provea (2002, n.p.). The President's intimidating speeches, which presented the private media as a political enemy

to defeat, the report explained, persisted for the third year of his presidency in 2002. In contrast, the absence of pluralistic information on several of the main private media stations, the reoccurrence of classist and racist expressions in the language of some journalists, as well as the criminalization of the popular sectors that supported the government were also present in Venezuela this year, the report concluded.

The April 2002 coup d'état.

Without a doubt, the fight between Chávez and the private media peaked in 2002. "That was the year that Venezuelan journalism—already unfortunately and irreparably divided into two sides—gave its worst example," wrote Medina (2007, p. 56). He was referring to the actions of the media, both state and private, during the coup d'état against Chávez that took place from April 11 to 13, 2002. There were blackouts of information on both sides, as well as information manipulation to benefit each side's political preferences.

In November 2001, the National Assembly, constituted in its majority by Chávez supporters, approved 49 *Leyes Habilitantes* (enabling acts) which gave Chávez special powers to directly approve legislation. This allowed Chávez to sign a land redistribution law and an oil law, which gave the government a larger control over PDVSA, Petroleum of Venezuela. In December of that year, a general strike that paralyzed the country took place. The general strike in protest of the 49 *Leyes Habilitantes* was called into action by *Fedecamaras*, The Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce, and the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela* (CTV), a labor union federation with strong links to the anti-Chávez party *Acción Democrática* (AD).

In February 2002, Chávez announced he was going to force out the entire PDVSA administration and appoint a new management made up mostly by members of the government and the military. He promised the redistribution of profits that had been kept by few members of the elite: "We will distribute the richness among all of us so we can all live better. This is the richness of Venezuela, not of a minority," said Chávez in one of his speeches in early 2002 (Power, 2003, n.p.).

That same month a group of high ranking Venezuelan admirals appeared on various private television channels speaking against Chávez's decisions for PDVSA. One of them, General Nestor González González, appeared on all private television stations formally presenting his opposition against Chávez and even hinting at the possibility of a coup d'état. The military, however, was not the main force behind the events that prompted the 2002 coup. The events started to unfold April 9, 2002, when an opposition protest and general strike was again called into action by Fedecamaras. A television commercial, which advertised the strike, was shown repeatedly on the private television stations RCTV, Venevisión, Televen, and Globovisión. The ad ran free of charge.

The privately-owned media asked Venezuelans, through repeated commercials and programming, to go out to the streets of Caracas and demonstrate against Chávez and his control of the oil industry. Some private network newscasts compared Chávez to Musolini and Hitler, and linked him to Fidel Castro and the Colombian guerrillas (Power, 2003, n.p.). The Media-Chávez war was in full motion.

On the morning of April 11, 2002, the third day of the general strike, the opposition set out to march towards PDVSA's headquarters, following the directions of the private media channels and Pedro Carmona, Fedecamara's president. The first

information blackout took place that day on state television network VTV. On April 10, 2005, *El Universal* published a revision of VTV's programming on that first day of the coup, showing that the state network broadcast only images that aimed to minimize and hide the march that was taking place on the streets (Medina, 2007, p. 56). At 2:13 p.m., while a million people marched their way to the government palace to demand Chávez's resignation, on VTV, the Minister of Defense General Lucas Rincon, declared everything was calm on the streets of Caracas. At 3:45 p.m., there was a mandatory, simultaneous presidential broadcast *cadena* (chain) and Chávez appeared on every television channel saying the city remained at peace. The private channels decided, in the name of truth, to illegally split their screens into two, to concurrently show the President speaking and the violence that was taking place near the presidential office. The two images appeared next to each other until all the private stations' signals were taken off the air by the government. At 6 p.m., VTV, the only local station allowed on air, transmitted re-run shows; at 8 p.m. they showed a documentary about birds and at 9:58 p.m. transmission was suspended. Later that night, a message by a group of National Guards condemning the use of weapons against civilians appeared.

According to VTV, nothing was happening that day, but in reality an opposition march that included millions had been detoured from PDVSA headquarters to the presidential palace, Miraflores, where thousands of Chávez supporters were gathered, showing support for the President. The Mayor of Caracas, Freddy Bernal, appeared on VTV saying: "It is irresponsible of you [PDVSA leaders] to tell the members of the opposition march to go to the Palace when you know that there are millions of people congregated in Miraflores….You are looking for a confrontation" (Power, 2003, n.p.).

When the two opposing rallies met, military efforts to keep the two groups apart were futile and, as they got closer, shots were fired at the crowd. At the end of the confrontation, 19 people were dead and hundreds were wounded. Where the shots came from is still unknown and controversial. The opposition was quick to blame the deaths on the chavistas. Venevisión captured images of shooters firing from the top of a bridge. These images were repeated countless times by the private media stations and were reported as chavistas using force against the protesters. "At the time of the coup, the national and international news media showed little interest in verifying the electrifying reports they were carrying" (Hellinger, 2002, p. 25). This confrontation was used often as a justification for the coup because Chávez had broken his pledge to never turn the army against the people. Some of Chávez's supporters claimed those images were manipulated; that the supposed snipers were not shooting at anyone and this montage was all part of the plan for the coup (Power, 2003, n.p.). Days later, it was learned that demonstrators on both sides had died.

The language the private media used to report these events has also been criticized for its bias. "When the opposition marched on the presidential palace to demand Chávez's resignation, the media inside and outside Venezuela was quick to label them 'civil society.' The term was never applied to demonstrators in support of Chávez. More often they were labeled '*turbos*,' the mob" (Hellinger, 2002, p. 24). At around midnight, Minister Lucas Rincon appeared on the private stations and informed Venezuelans that Chávez had agreed to leave the presidency.

The next day on April 12, the private networks showed leaders of the opposition asking Chávez to step down. The private media was the only source of information

available since the signal of the state television station VTV had been taken off the air by coup organizers. At some point, a group of ministers was able to get a signal from one of the VTV's vans and they appeared, stating the opposition was to blame for the massacre, but the signal was soon cut off.

That day, opposition leaders arrived at Miraflores demanding Chávez's resignation and took Chávez prisoner. The private media was quick to inform the public about Chávez's resignation, which did not actually take place, and reported on the installation of the interim President Pedro Carmona, president of Fedecamaras. Leaders from the opposition involved in the coup appeared on the main private television stations confirming the new government of Carmona and thanking the private media for its important participation in the coup, which allowed for its success.

"The censorship began on Friday [April 12] when we are told that we are not allowed to show any chavistas protesters, zero chavismo on the screen," explained Andres Izarra then RCTV reporter, who resigned during the coup and, as of February 2013, was the Venezuelan Minister of Information and Communication (Power, 2003, n.p.).

The private television stations' coverage depicted the administration's takeover not as a coup d'état, but as a presidential voluntary resignation in light of the violence against the protesters. Chávez, on the other hand, never signed a resignation and was being held captive in an unknown location. On the night of Friday, April 12, Chávez's supporters were able to communicate with some members of the international media and were informed the president had not resigned but was being held captive. The news began to spread among the chavistas. The next day, on Saturday, April 13, thousands of

Chávez's supporters marched through Caracas towards Miraflores, singing: "*Chávez no ha renunciado, lo tienen secuestrado*" (Chávez has not resigned, they have kidnapped him) (Power, 2003, n.p.).

Izarra said he received specific orders from RCTV's directors "that no one was to appear on the air to contradict the official story even though international news agencies were reporting a different series of events" (Dinges, 2005, n.p.). Various protests by Chávez supporters had broken out in many parts of Caracas and included looting and violent riots; yet, the private television stations covered none of it. "Izarra said he was instructed to send reporters to parts of town where it was quiet, to get live shots of tranquility" (2005, n.p.).

Jon Beasley-Murray, a professor in Latin American Studies at the University of British Columbia, confirms this in his 2002 article for the *NACLA Report on the Americas*, "Venezuela: the revolution will not be televised; Pro-Chávez multitudes challenge media blackout," in which he narrates his experience in Venezuela during the coup. According to the private media, nothing was happening that day, he said. BBC World and Spanish-language CNN on cable, however, reported disturbances in various parts of Caracas that morning. "Now the self-censorship of soap operas and light entertainment stood in the way of any representation of what was slowly emerging as a pro-Chávez multitude"(Beasly-Murray, 2002, p. 111). Privately owned networks that had on so many occasions protested Chávez's so-called *cadenas*, in which all networks were ordered to broadcast Chávez's often long addresses to the nation, now instituted their own *cadenas* with a variety of shows that hid what was happening in the streets.

As Chávez's supporters surrounded Miraflores demanding his return, the guards of the Presidential Palace, many Chávez supporters themselves, bordered the palace and took over it. The interim president and ministers were able to escape, and ministers of the Bolivarian regime started returning to the palace one by one; none of these events were reported by the private media. VTV was still off the air, and the private and international media were still the only sources of information available. Carmona appeared on CNN saying the whole country was under control of his new government. But the President of the National Assembly got through to various international media channels and denied those claims. At around 8 p.m., the ministers and members of the Chávez administration were able to bring back VTV's signal, and the president of the National Assembly appeared live denying the government of Carmona. Later, the Bolivarian vice-president was sworn in, live on VTV. When Chávez finally landed in Miraflores, back from the island where he had been kept captive, he was restituted as president live on VTV.

On Sunday, April 14, Venezuela woke up under the government of Chávez once again. In contrast, all major private television stations halted news reports entirely, and most major newspapers did not circulate and did not announce the pivotal news. The private television stations claimed their decision not to report the news was because of the dangerous environment in the country. The same justification was used by *El Universal* and *El Nacional*, two of the main newspapers that did not circulate on April 14, explaining the printing staff was sent home for safety reasons. "Both canceled their Sunday editions, whose lead stories should have been about the crumbling coup and Chávez's imminent return to power" (Dinges, 2005, n.p.). Yet, according to a study by the Catholic University Human Rights Center, the same networks had sent many

reporters to the streets to cover equally or more tumultuous situations before the masses turned against the opposition. Various provincial networks did continue news transmission that Sunday, as well as a few tabloid papers. Also, the third largest newspaper, *Ultimas Noticias*, circulated on the streets with a limited edition reflecting the state of confusion and chaos that had taken place.

The blackout of information by the private media during the 2002 coup d'état was the largest demonstration of media opposition toward Chávez. They paid no attention to the popular and military mobilizations that claimed Chávez's return. They also omitted covering the crisis of the substitute government that closed down the state channel VTV. While the counter coup was taking place on Saturday, they were showing *Tom & Jerry* cartoons with the excuse that there were security issues that made it too risky to go out on the streets. It was obvious the private media had supported and celebrated Chávez's defeat. The headline in the edition of April 12, 2002, of *El Universal* showed this: "*¡Se Acabo!*" (It is Over!) (Medina, 2007, p. 56).

On the events that led to the February 11 coup, the private media reported exhaustively (Diaz Rangel, 2002, p. 34). "The networks daringly interrupted a presidential cadena and divided the screen in two to simultaneously broadcast the president's message and the multitudinous march against Chávez and the snipers shooting the crowd: all because of the supposed need to inform" (p. 34). Nevertheless, Rangel continues to explain, the events of April 12, 13, and 14, which culminated with the reinstallation of President Chávez, were not covered. "This is what I call the historic information silence, which from the journalistic perspective will never have an explanation" (Díaz Rangel, 2002, p. 34).

Globovisión.

Alberto Federico Ravell, former General Director of Globovisión (the only privately-owned channel that still openly opposes the president as of February 2013), explained in an interview with *The Miami Herald* that there was a blackout of information by the private media but that, nevertheless, the Venezuelan media acted differently than media in other countries because Venezuela was a country undergoing very special circumstances. Ravell (2009) explained in a video interview with *The Miami Herald* that in Venezuela, a country where there is no separation of powers, the media becomes a power. "[Media is] the only power that denounces injustices and corruption and we end up playing a role that the media wouldn't otherwise play under normal conditions." Ravell went on to explain how Venezuela is a particular democracy because journalists cannot ask all the questions they would like to ask and that the national assembly is comprised of only one political party (currently it is comprised of two parties). "I will be happy the day Venezuelans can denounce acts of corruption to the government or the authorities instead of coming to us, the press" (*Miami Herald*, 2009, n.p.).

Globovisión is the clearest example of the government-media war in Venezuela. Chávez has gone as far as calling the 24-hour news channel media terrorists, *terrorismo mediatico*, for their reporting, which constantly shows the darkest parts of the Chávez regime and is often at the edge of balanced and objective journalism. "We have to identify the enemies of the revolution. The people need to know who they are," said Chávez on August 4, 2001 during one of his speeches as he pointed to the gold and blue Globovisión logo on one of the microphones on the podium (Medina, 2007, p.59).

The Chavez administration perceived Globovision, which first broadcast over-the-air on December 1, 1994, as an entity of the opposition where government achievements were denied, plans to bring down Chávez were supported, adversaries to the government were celebrated, and people who supported the opposition were encouraged to destabilize the country (Medina, 2007, p. 59). A note emitted by the Venezuelan Office of Information and Communication on February 21, 2006 summarized how the government viewed the role of Globovisión:

> The channel is a spokesperson of the opposition and of the executors of the coup d'état of April 2002. It is also a spokesperson of the dissident military groups that took over a Caracas square this year, which had complete coverage by the channel; it is also a defender of the oil workers that paralyzed the industry between December 2002 and January 2003 and of the Miami terrorists, the paramilitary, the Colombian right and of all the enemies of the people and the Venezuelan nation. (Medina, 2007, p. 60)

There have been various attacks against Globovisión's headquarters. Twice during 2002, grenades and tear gas bombs were thrown at the entrance of the station's headquarters. The names of most of Globovisión reporters were added to lists kept by organizations that document cases of violence against journalists. Although the physical attacks against journalists from Globovisión and other privately-owned media were often perpetuated by civilian chavistas, and not members of the government, they were encouraged and approved by the government (Medina, 2007, p. 60). Chávez's speeches during many of his aired shows included long rants against the station and references to Globovisión journalists in more than insulting terms.

In July 2007, Guillermo Zuloaga, president of Globovisión, published a letter directed to then Vice-President of Venezuela Jorge Rodríguez. The letter described how the government used intimidation and hostility to restrain freedom of expression. Zuloaga said in his letter that the government threatened to close the channel numerous times, and he denounced Chávez's campaign to defame the station and its employees. The letter enumerated the attacks against the channel up to that year: 59 physical attacks against reporters, 174 verbal attacks by Chávez and other government officials, 19 judicial actions against the station, and 6 administrative sanctions, "all of this with clear political motivations" explained Zuloaga (EFE, 2007, n.p.).

The legislative stage.

In 2011, Venezuela's telecommunications regulatory agency fined Globovisión more than $2 million for its coverage of deadly prison riots that took place in June and July of that year. The 27-day standoff between government troops and prisoners at *El Rodeo II* prison was set off after a shoot-out between gangs inside the prison, in which at least 27 people died. More than 70 people were injured, and three more were killed, when the National Guard retook El Rodeo II, where they found hundreds of weapons, ammunition, and grenades. Prisoners surrendered after having subsisted on rain water for almost a month and suffered a tear gas attack by the military (Phillips, 2011, n.p.).

Pedro Maldonado, director of the National Telecommunications Commission, CONATEL, said Globovisión televised various interviews with the families of prisoners 269 times, which violated the *Ley de Responsabilidad Social en Radio y Televisión* (Law on Social Responsibility on Radio and Television) that sanctions creating public anxiety. Maldonado said that the station falsely claimed that the National Guard had "massacred"

prisoners and that the reporting could have stirred riots in the prison. Maldonado added that Globovisión failed to transmit the government's point of view in time (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2011, n.p.). Globovisión's legal advisor, Ricardo Antela, said the channel did the best it could to report under extremely difficult circumstances and that the government did not make an official declaration until six days after the riots began.

"Yet again, Venezuela is attempting to silence the television station Globovisión, this time saying the television station's reporting stirred public anxiety," said Carlos Lauría, Committee to Protect Journalists' senior coordinator for the Americas (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2011, n.p.). He stated, "Venezuelan authorities must end their systematic campaign of harassment against one of the country's only remaining critical media groups and withdraw the fine" (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2011, n.p.).

On June 29, 2012, Globovisión finally paid the $2.2 million fine. The day before, the Venezuelan Supreme Court had ruled an embargo on all of Globovisión's assets because the fine had not been paid. Globovisión had appealed the fine since it was first issued and accused Chávez's government of trying to shut the station down even though the channel did nothing wrong. Government officials repeatedly accused the channel of violating broadcast regulations and maintained the fine was appropriate (Associated Press, 2012).

Reporters without Borders called the Venezuelan Supreme Court's decision to embargo Globovisión's assets "a dangerous precedent for freedom to report the news, given the disproportionate financial penalty that threatens the very survival of the media organization" (n.p.). The Inter American Press Association, likewise, condemned the

court's order in a statement, saying it was a "flagrant attack on press freedom" (Associated Press, 2012, n. p.).

Globovisión representatives and other critics expressed the government was attempting to close down the channel since it provided a vital outlet for opposition candidate, Henrique Capriles Radonski, to deliver his message prior to the October 7, 2012 presidential elections. While state television and other state-run media exclusively broadcast coverage of Chávez's appearances and government events, Globovisión remained the only channel on Venezuelan's airwaves to offer the opposition's perspective. RCTV, the other channel that was aligned with the opposition, was canceled in 2007 when the government refused to renew its broadcast license.

The closing of the oldest private channel, Radio Caracas Televisión, RCTV, marked a pivotal point in the government's use of legislative power to attack the Venezuelan private media. For 53 years, RCTV produced hundreds of *telenovelas*, newscasts, and comedy shows for Venezuela, and many times successfully exported them to the international markets. But in the channel's last decade on air, although continuing to televise soap operas and comedy shows, newscasts headlining corruption, criticizing the increasing criminal violence, soaring poverty and overall chaos in the country were the norm.

On May 27, 2007, RCTV's anti-Chávez bulletins were silenced as the government refused to renew its broadcasting license for what was said to be the station's role in the 2002 coup against Chávez and its siding with the opposition. CONATEL, the National Telecommunications Commission, expressed its decision not to renew RCTV's broadcast license was based on the channel's violation of the *Ley de Responsabilidad*

Social en Radio y Televisión (Law on Social Responsibility on Radio and Television). Known as *La Ley Resorte*, the law was adopted by the National Assembly in December 2004, and its objective was to establish social responsibility in the diffusion of messages from media providers. The law's introduction states the following:

> To foment the democratic balance between the media's rights, duties and interests in order to promote social justice and further the development of the citizenry, democracy, peace, human rights, education, culture, public health, and the nation's social and economic development. (*Ley Resorte*, 2004, n.p.)

The law instructed Venezuelan television networks to rate all their programming on language, health, sex, and violence, and to advise if it is suitable for young children or teenagers. It also required them to specify if the product is a national production by the channel, an independent national production, or a foreign program. Networks were also required to air government campaigns and interrupt programming whenever government *cadenas* were broadcast.

RCTV was accused by the government of violating the *Ley Resorte* for televising content that was violent and sexual. Many critics of the decision, however, sustained that the real reason for the accusation was the government's goal to achieve media hegemony and protection against the opposition-sided, powerful television station. Chávez openly accused the network of helping to incite the failed coup in 2002, violating broadcast laws, and "poisoning" Venezuelans with programming that promoted capitalism. RCTV's managers denied wrongdoing. In a 2007 report issued after the closing of RCTV, the Committee to Protect Journalists found that "press freedom conditions have seriously

deteriorated in Venezuela," and that the decision not to renew RCTV's broadcast concession was "arbitrary and politically motivated" (Lauria, 2007, n.p.).

On May 27, 2007, thousands of government supporters, as well as oppositionists, marched on the streets in protest against the closing of RCTV and watched the changeover from RCTV's signal to the Venezuelan Social Television Station (TVES) (the new public-service channel that replaced the private station) on large screens (Lauria, 2007, n.p.).

Chávez often stated he was democratizing the airwaves by transferring the network's signal over to public use. However, the closing of the station, as well as the *Ley Resorte*, were seen as a backlash after the 2002 coup attempt, when the power of the privately-owned media became apparent. Chávez labeled the four privately-owned channels involved in creating a vacuum of information whenever news benefited Cháves during the 2002 coup d'état, as the "four horsemen of the apocalypse," and repeatedly called them media terrorists and fascists during his show, *Alo Presidente* (2007).

"People are scared and angry," said Moirah Sánchez (Carroll, 2007, n.p.), a lawyer who defended RCTV in an appeal process to the Supreme Court to overturn the government's decision to close the station. Sánchez admitted that "a mistake was made" during the confusion of the 2002 coup, but said this was not justification to shut down the channel: "Our concern is that the entire nation is losing what has been its voice for 53 years" (n.p.). With RCTV gone, the government could achieve its stated aim of information hegemony, she explained. "Of the four channels which sided against Mr. Chávez in the coup, two have since neutered their news coverage in an apparent deal with the government. RCTV was singled out because it posed a more serious challenge to

Mr. Chávez's radical agenda of nationalizations, land reform and constitutional change," said Sánchez (n.p.).

RCTV continued to televise its programming as a cable television network. In January 2010, three years after their broadcasting license renewal was denied, RCTV was sanctioned with temporary closure for failing to broadcast the president's *cadenas,* which other cable networks do not televise. CONATEL argued that although the channel was not in the national broadcasting spectrum, but on cable, it was still a national channel that created national content by Venezuelan producers and actors and, therefore, needed to adhere to the same laws as other local stations (Associated Press, 2010, n.p.).

Chávez was able to intimidate and limit freedom of expression and opinion, as well as the right to information and communication, through the implementation of laws such as *Ley Resorte*, *La Ley Orgánica de Telecomunicaciones* (The Organic Telecommunications Law), *el Código Penal* (the Penal Code), and various sentences dictated by the *Tribunal Supremo de Justicia* (Supreme Justice Tribunal). These laws are other ways through which he enforced legislative pressure against the media and freedom of expression.

La Ley Orgánica de Telecomunicaciones, which was approved in March of 2000, established that the executive branch has the power to suspend any type of message that threatens the interest of the nation. This law also gave the president the power to diffuse, through radio and television, all types of messages from presidential *cadenas* to the show *Aló Presidente* (*Ley Resorte*, 2004, n.p.). The *Ley Resorte*, the one used to deny RCTV's license renewal and ultimately close the network, also established that CONATEL had the authority to forbid the diffusion of content that could alter the public order.

These legislative pressures undoubtedly intimidated the media and ended up generalizing opinion and information. The laws were mechanisms that generated auto-censorship and threatened freedom of expression. In 2005, the opinion and information television shows, *24 Horas* by Venevisión, *La Entrevista*, *30 Minutos*, and *Linea Abierta* by Televen, and *En Profundidad* by CMT, were all taken off the air. According to a report by the IPYS (*Instituto de Prensa y Sociedad*) that was presented before the *Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos* (Interamerican Commission of Human Rights) between 2004 and 2005, a reduction of over 10 hours among these types of opinion and information programming was reported (Correa & Cañizales, 2006, p. 15).

A report by the *Misión de Información Electoral de la Unión Europea* (European Union Electoral Information Mission), which monitored the 2006 elections, stated "Venevisión dedicated 84% of its political information space to President Chávez, and only 16% to the opposition; while Televen dedicated 68% to Chávez and his campaign and 32% to the opposite candidate" (Bisbal, 2009, p. 105).

"Any way you look at it, it is evident that *La Ley Resorte* and *La Ley Orgánica de Telecomunicaciones*, as well as *La Ley Parcial del Código Penal*, have generated an effect of auto-imposed censorship in mass communication media," expressed Gustavo Hernández Díaz in his study *Comunicación Gubernamental en Venezuela durante el Periodo 1999-2008* (Government Communication in Venezuela During the 1999-2008 Period) (Bisbal, 2009, p. 104).

The hegemony of the message intended by the government was achieved through various legal practices, including the creation and implementation of laws that restrict content. To these legal practices of content restriction one adds pressures from SENIAT, the

government entity that oversees the import of goods (media organizations are often in need of purchasing equipment from international vendors). The private media was also pressured by the enormous purchasing power of the government, which has become the largest advertising buyer in the nation (Bisbal, 2009, p. 105). However, throughout the history of Chávez's regime, the largest and most expensive effort to achieve media hegemony has been placed on the creation of hundreds of state-owned and state-sponsored media outlets that have left Venezuela with an extremely undiversified media spectrum.

Achieving Information Hegemony through State-Sponsored Media

Following the coup that temporarily expelled Chávez from the presidency in April 2002, the government realized state communications were at a clear disadvantage, compared to the power of the privately-owned media, which often sided with the opposition. The state owned only three media outlets prior to 2002: the *Radio Nacional de Venezuela* network, *Venezolana de Televisión* (VTV), and Venpress, the official state news agency (Lauria, 2012, n.p.). By 2011, the government had control of six television stations with national reach, including the international-reaching TeleSur and 35 community-operated television stations that were often sponsored by the state. In addition to 110 government-supported Web pages, the state also operated the radio stations *Radio Nacional de Venezuela*, YVKE radio, and *La Radio del Sur*, and enjoyed positive coverage from 231 community-operated radio stations. Community television channels and radio stations receive support from the government by way of grants, equipment, and ease in application for permits and other bureaucratic procedures. Yet, the most important economic incentive is state-paid advertisement. The Venezuelan government is currently

the largest advertiser in the nation, exercising pressure over the content of not only community media but also privately-owned stations and newspapers (Cardenas, 2007).

Chávez guaranteed vast amounts of uncritical media coverage through state-owned media and occupied a large portion of the private media content through his incessant use of *Cadenas Presidenciales.* Between the years 1999 and 2006, the government transmitted 1,339 cadenas, equaling to 810 hours of transmission (Bisbal, 2009, p. 107). During the long presidential addresses, which were required to be broadcast on every Venezuelan television and radio station, President Chávez signed laws, lambasted the private media and other critics, celebrated his social programs and, during campaign time, benefited from the space to insult his opponents and promote his re-election (Bisbal, 2009, p. 107).

On June 15, 2012, minutes before 2012 presidential candidate Henrique Capriles Radonski started a speech in front of a crowd in the state of Maracaibo, President Chávez started a radio and television *cadena* that lasted 3 hours and 35 minutes, reported the newspaper *El Nacional* (Morales, 2012, n.p.). On that *cadena*, after Chávez signed 11 decrees into law in front of the camera, he said: "If that *majuenche* (inferior, bad, or mediocre) were to rule Venezuela, all the national wealth would be taken by transnational companies." *Majunche* is the name Chávez gave to Capriles Radonski months before the elections of October 7, 2012, and that is how Chávez referred to the opposing candidate during many of his televised addresses. Additionally, in the months leading to the 2012 election, daily 12-minute radio and television programming that the executive was allowed for free, in accordance to the *Ley Resorte*, always included sthe logo and slogan of Chávez's presidential campaign.

State media in a democratic state should serve the interest of all citizens and provide information free of political influence. According to a 2009 report by the special rapporteur for freedom of expression of the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, public media should be "independent of the executive branch; truly pluralistic; universally accessible; with funding adequate to the mandate provided for by law; and they must provide community participation and accountability mechanisms" (Lauria, 2012, n.p.).

The benefits for Chávez were clear: The official state media funded with Venezuelan public funds allowed him to multiply the reach of his message, while serving as a platform for his campaign and attacks on critics. "This contradicts the basic notion of press freedom. Not only do these tactics add commercial and political influence to media outlets, but they effectively regulate free speech from the top down" (Lauria, 2012, n.p.).

Venezuelan state television is rarely without political commentary. An analysis of TVES (*Televisora Venezolana Social)* by the *Instituto de Investigaciones de la Comunicación de La Universidad Central de Venezuela* (ININCO, Communication Research Institute of the Central University of Venezuela), in which 72 hours of programming were reviewed afforded the following results: TVES content was 33% argumentative, 12% government propaganda, 10% variety, 9% spectacle, 5% promotion of other programming, and only 4% informative content. Argumentative content, which includes opinion shows and government advertising, enjoyed far greater airtime than informative programs (Bisbal, 2009, p. 109).

Chávez took over the great majority of Venezuelan media because he understood early in his political career the importance of controlling the medium and message in

order for his political project to succeed. In 1999, a year following his first election, Chávez launched his own television show *Aló, Presidente*, (Hello, President). For the program's 13th anniversary in May 2012, the *Aló, Presidente* Website boasted a total of 378 shows equal to 1,656 hours and 44 minutes of transmission, "equivalent to 69 uninterrupted days of direct connection between the President and the people" (Caraballo, 2012, n.p.).

During the program, President Chávez performed a variety of acts, including signing laws, covering social welfare programs, singing folkloric Venezuelan songs, traveling through the country, and even broadcasting from various international countries. He also answered calls from citizens who asked questions, praised him, or talked about their problems. In the show's 13 year run, 8,020 persons interacted with the president on air, 996 calls were broadcast, and thousands of letters were mentioned or read on air. After Chávez started using Twitter in 2012 as a means of mass communication, he started reading tweets from followers on air. The show's episodes often ran for more than three hours—with one episode in May 2009 lasting a record breaking eight hours.

On *Aló, Presidente,* Chávez often shared personal stories with the public, life advice, and even reading recommendations. Chavez even became a book critic on his show. "The first national Chief of State (being that he is the first communicator in the country) has recommended during each televised edition [of *Aló, Presidente*] approximately 539 books and texts" (Caraballo, 2012, n.p.). Among the books Chávez recommended that are reported on the show's Webpage are *Open Veins of Latin America* by Eduardo Galeano, *Hegemony or Survival* by Noam Chomsky, *Real Socialism and*

Beyond Capital by István Mészáros, and *Third Millennium Socialism* by Luis Britto García—all texts that promote socialist political ideology.

"This is an abuse of the state media," said Juan Carlos Palencia (Forero, 2009, n.p.), a state legislator opposed to Chávez, in a 2009 interview with the *Washington Post*. "This is a tedious program, a long program, and the only ones who watch it are people on his side" (n.p.).

Andres Izarra, *Ministro de Poder Popular para la Comunicación y la Información* (Minister of Popular Power for Communication and Information) said, in an article about the 13th anniversary of the show posted on the show's Website, that *Aló, Presidente* was a call for the people to its leader. "Chávez becomes the whip of the state he represents: He is a leader that stirs up the people against the bureaucracy of the State" (Caraballo, 2012, n.p.).

Izarra played an important role in the management and growth of Venezuela's state media under Chávez. After he left his position as RCTV news director because of the channel's handling of the April 2002 coup, he started working for the Venezuelan government—first in Washington D.C. at the Venezuelan Information Office, which he helped found, and then in 2004 as the country's minister of information. In 2005, he was appointed as president of TeleSUR, one of the most ambitious media projects by the Venezuelan government.

TeleSUR is a 24-hour news television station labeled by Venezuelan government officials as the Latin American alternative to CNN and Fox. It was launched in July 2005 with Venezuela owning 51% of the channel, Argentina 20%, Cuba 19%, and Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Bolivia owning a minority. TeleSUR's signal was broadcast

from Caracas to Latin America and some of Europe and the United States. “Critics say TeleSUR should really be called ‘TeleChávez’ as the government funnels public funds to finance a network that is oriented to give Chávez and his supporters in the region positive coverage,” wrote Carlos Lauria (2007, n.p.), a senior program coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists, in his essay “Chávez does no such thing: Press freedom conditions have seriously deteriorated under his regime.”

However, Izarra defended TeleSUR by explaining the channel is the first alternative to Latin American news covered from a Latin American perspective. Izarra explained that for years, Latin Americans watched news only through the eyes of CNN in Atlanta or BBC in London, or through channels with corporate agendas, and that TeleSUR is the first alternative to those perspectives (Izarra, 2007, n.p.).

Aram Aharonian, former director of TeleSUR agreed and explained in an interview that the channel is just an alternative to Latin Americans seeing themselves through the lens of Madrid, London, or New York. “TeleSUR is merely a tool so that people get to know what’s happening in Latin America. And this may spur the process of integration” (Zozloff, 2008, p. 199). This integration of the left in Latin America and Venezuela was to be achieved by information hegemony.

In a January 8, 2007 interview with the Caracas daily *El Nacional*, Andres Izarra clearly stated that Chávez’s administration is constructing “information hegemony” in Venezuela. He explained this did not mean the end of media that criticizes the government, but that there are indeed two sides in this war. “For the new strategic scenario that is discussed, the struggle that falls in the ideological field has to do with a battle of ideas for the hearts and minds of people,” said Izarra, “we have to prepare a new

plan, and the one we are proposing is aimed at achieving the state's communication and information hegemony" (Lauria, 2007, n.p.).

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Throughout the first 14 years of Hugo Chávez's presidency in Venezuela, a power war openly erupted between the government and the private media. Chávez's struggle for informational hegemony, often obstructed by the critical private media, ultimately resulted in the creation of unfavorable circumstances for the development of an ethical and independent media. The media power grab also created a weaker democracy for a country where voters had less access to information that was critical of the government, and offered members of the oppositions less room for expression.

Forming a communicational hegemony, which was necessary for Chávez's political project to succeed, came close to being fulfilled through the creation of multiple state-owned media channels, the cancelation of private ones, and the use of threats and other tactics that often drove independent media to auto-censorship. Chávez created and approved various laws that restricted the media and its messages. *La Ley Orgánica de Telecomunicaciones* (the Organic Telecommunications Law), the *Código Penal* (Penal Code), and sentences dictated by the *Tribunal Supremo de Justicia* (Supreme Justice Tribunal) were only some of the legislative actions Chávez's government took against the private media and its criticism of his government. The *Ley de Responsabilidad Social en Radio y Televisión* (Law on Social Responsibility in Radio and Television), a law created solely for media control, was used in several instances to fine and restrict media channels, and as a justification to deny RCTV's broadcasting license renewal and, ultimately, to close down the oldest private Venezuelan network.

While laws were created to restrict the private media, Chávez also dramatically increased the number of government-owned media channels that were often used exclusively for the promotion of his political ideologies and projects. This gave Chávez ample media space for his message, while restricting the dispersion of the opposition. Long presidential addresses known as *cadenas* were often imposed as programming on all television stations, and Chávez's own television show, *Aló Presidente*, aired more than 330 episodes during the past 13 years. During these spaces, Chávez frequently delivered intimidating speeches in which he condemned the private channels as terrorists and enemies of the country. The government's support of Bolivarian media was extensive and included community blogs, Websites, and rural radio stations - all kinds of state media that served as a propaganda vehicle for Chávez's government and political campaigns, as well as TeleSur, a television channel broadcast across various Latin American countries.

Chávez understood the importance of filling the media space with strong Bolivarian symbols and messages that supported his ideology. He also worked diligently toward reducing messages of criticism and opposition through various avenues, such as preventing the growing number of government agencies from purchasing advertising from private media channels. He invested billions of dollars from Venezuela's state fund towards promoting himself and his ideology, and in restricting the opposition's criticism. The success of his project can be measured through his fourth re-election on October 7, 2012. Chávez was elected to be in power for six more years, for a total of 20 years, while oil prices plummeted, the Venezuelan currency *El Bolivar* was about to be devalued, government spending doubled, violent crimes were on the rise, and he was suffering from

an undisclosed form of advanced cancer. Without the control and power Chávez had over the media and the message, a strong political opponent or even a weak one would have defeated him under these problematic conditions. Chávez, as *cultural studies* explain, utilized and manipulated mass communication to perpetuate domination. As Rafael Poleo puts it in his 2002 essay (quoted in Chapter V), Chavez confronted the media motivated by the fact that his political ambitions were not possible with freedom of information (Poleo, 2002, p. 42).

There were two main arguments Chávez used to justify his government's control of the media. The first one was the pluralization or diversification of Venezuelan media based on the fact that a majority of the programming was produced with a bias by international media organizations such as CNN or BBC. However, legislative pressures, media intimidation, and proliferation of Bolivarian media undoubtedly ended up generalizing opinion, programming, and information instead of pluralizing it. The second argument was the government was only defending itself from unfounded attacks of *terrorismo mediático* (media terrorism) attempting to discredit Chávez in favor of neo-liberal governments that threatened his socialist project.

Indeed, Venezuelan private media filled a political void as the opposition's presence was erased from the national arena. Journalists abandoned the role of objective observers and became active critics of a government that was threatening their own function and existence. Private media owners, managers, and journalists openly expressed their opposition to President Chávez on several occasions through their opinion and media practices. Reports found an absence of pluralistic information in several of the main private media stations, and reoccurrence of classist and racist expressions in the

language of some journalists, as well as the criminalization of the popular sectors that supported the government. Television stations and newspapers expressed their antagonism for President Chávez 's regime, which was internally disorganized, and moved in a very undemocratic direction, through strong opinions, biased reporting and even involvement in the 2002 coup d'état attempt against the president. During the April 11th to 13th, 2002 coup d'état attempt, there were blackouts of information from both sides, especially by the private media, as well as information manipulation to benefit each side's political preferences.

Nevertheless, as Alberto Federico Ravell, former General Director of Globovisión, explained in a 2009 interview with *The Miami Herald* (quoted in Chapter II), the private media in Venezuela behaved differently from the media in other countries because Venezuela was undergoing very special circumstances. In a country with no separation of powers, or checks and balances, the media becomes a power: the only one that denounces injustices and corruption. The private media reacted against a government that had clearly sworn them as enemies of the *revolution*. In defense of freedom of expression, and acting as the only entity for checks and balances in the country, the private media ceased to try to be objective observers and documenters, and became political players. "Accumulation of power and the decrease of political party's involvement, left society with only one channel for articulation: the media," explains university professor and former judge of the Interamerican Court of Human Rights, Asdrubal Aguilar (Medina, 2007, p. 53). It was inevitable for the media to play a political role in defense of the conditions for democracy.

Mass communication was an important factor in the 14 years of Chávez's government covered in the present study. The political life of Hugo Chávez was, since its inception, in one way or another, marked by the presence of television cameras, microphones, journalism, and media. Journalists followed him from his first coup d'etat attempt in 1992 to his presidential election in 1998, and then throughout his regime and re-elections. The independent media started acting as the government watchdog it is supposed to be in democratic nations, and ended up becoming an active political critic, filling the void of the disappearing opposition.

Media control was necessary for Chávez to be able to achieve his project of *Bolivarian Revolution,* in which every aspect of the Venezuelan life was to be taken over by his new socialism (*Socialismo del Siglo XXI)*. The opposition's message needed to be silenced, and Chavez's message played constantly and loudly. He achieved this through the creation and support of hundreds of Bolivarian media channels and through legislative means that allowed him to close down entire television networks and radio stations. Self-censorship, legislative measures to control media content, and extensive government support of Bolivarian media channels are some of the ways in which Chávez manipulated the media during the past 14 years. A tight control of the message allowed him to perpetuate his power in a questionable democracy.

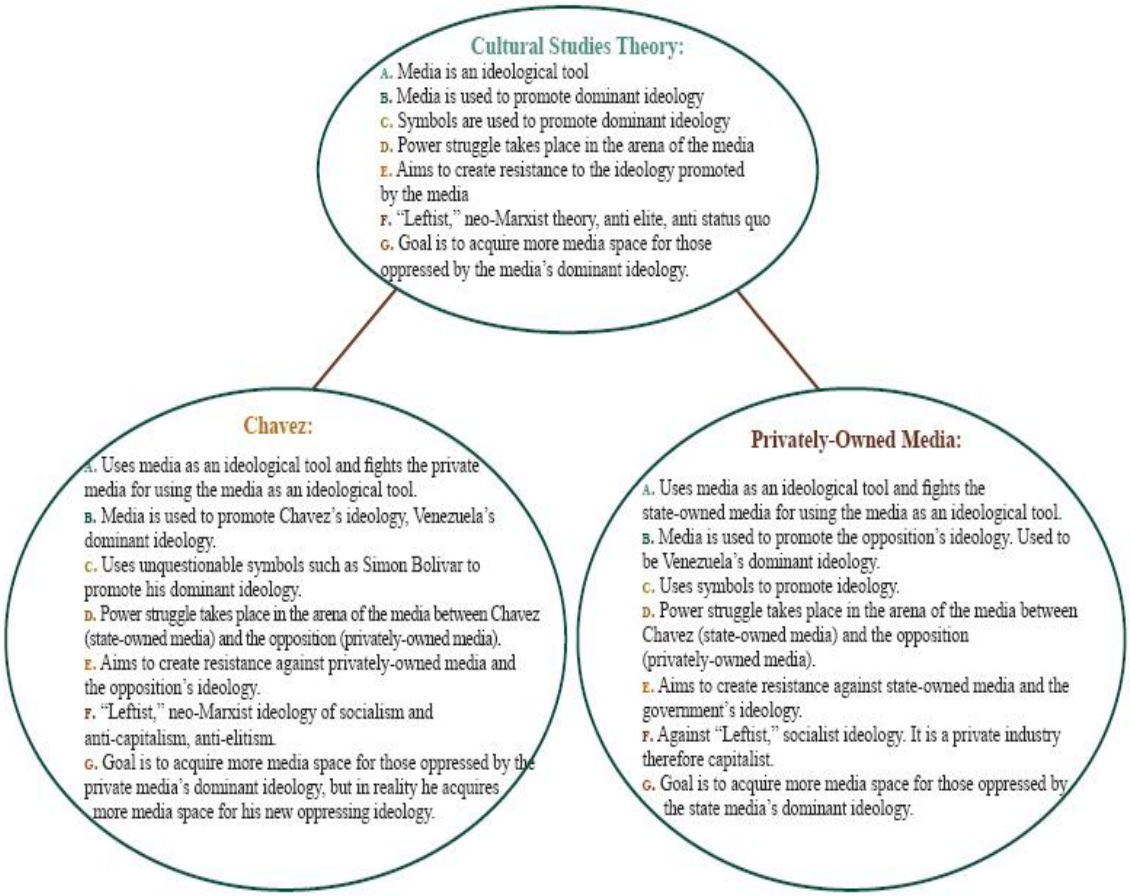
The war for media power that lasted throughout Chávez's presidency from 1998 to 2012 changed the definition of journalism in Venezuela. No longer were journalists expected to report as close to the truth and as objectively as possible. Venezuelan journalists were either working for a Bolivarian medium describing the unquestionable flawlessness of the government, or reporting for a private media channel that was either

an active critic of Chávez or, most likely, self-censoring its news for fear of being fined or appearing as an enemy of the government.

An attack on freedom of expression and on free press is ultimately an attack on democracy. A true democracy can only exist if there is a free exchange of ideas, opinion, and information. Although Chávez was re-elected on four different occasions by winning a majority of the democratic vote, his political campaign extended into government media, paid with state funds, and the voice of the opposition was silenced through various means. The informational hegemony that Chávez almost achieved created a questionable democracy in Venezuela. A self-governing society, by definition, makes its own decisions and without accurate information and free exchange of ideas, this one cannot decide.

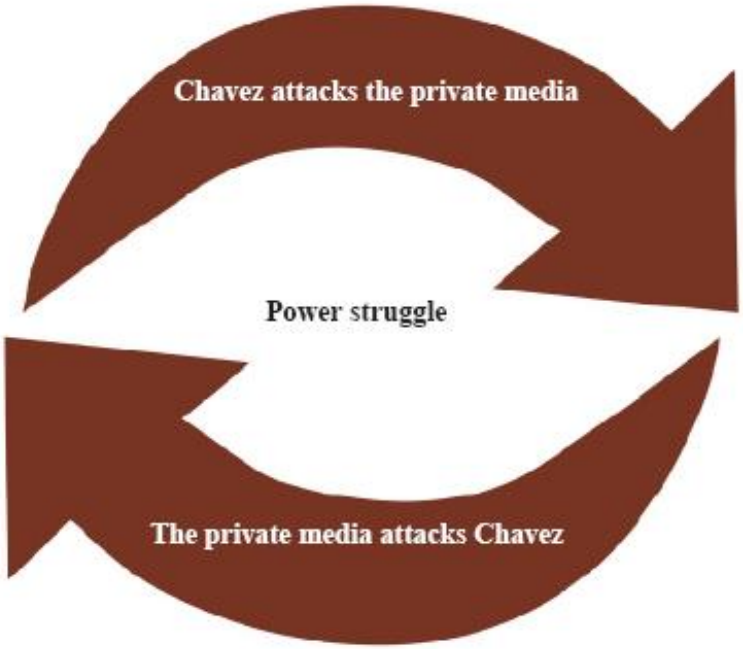
Appendix I

Similarities between the Cultural Studies Theory and Chavez and the Privately-owned media conflict in Venezuela



Appendix II

The Never-Ending Cycle of the Media Power Struggle in Venezuela



Appendix III

http://chavezandthemedia.weebly.com

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Media Wars: Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and his Relationship with the Media

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez Frias had a contentious relationship with the mass media during most of his administration. Through the period studied in this research, from 1998 to 2012, Chávez attempted to control the media, among other ways, through the creation of multiple state-owned media outlets, often used exclusively for the promotion of his own political ideologies. He also restricted the rights of the private media through threats, the creation of laws, and the cancellation of broadcasting licenses of radio and television stations. To a lesser extent, and perhaps with less power, the Venezuelan private media fought back during those 14 years. Private media owners, managers, and journalists openly expressed their opposition to President Chávez on several occasions through their opinion and media practices. From 199 to 2012, the private Venezuelan media and President Chávez were engaged in a power war that took place openly in the public arena.

Given that both the Chávez government and the private media were complicit in irresponsible behavior using the media as an ideological tool in a war for power; Venezuelan democracy was jeopardized between 1998 and 2012. The phenomenon and context under which this state of affairs occurred is complex, requiring a deep analysis of the factors that contributed to this situation.

This research describes and analyzes the events of the war for media influence and government control in Venezuela during 14 years under Chávez' administration and shows how these behaviors ultimately eroded democracy, freedom of expression, and free and responsible journalism in Venezuela.

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Appendix IV

Online Summary

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez Frias had a contentious relationship with the mass media during most of his administration. Through the period studied in this research, from 1998 to 2012, Chávez attempted to control the media, among other ways, through the creation of multiple state-owned media outlets, often used exclusively for the promotion of his own political ideologies. He also restricted the rights of the private media through threats, the creation of laws, and the cancellation of broadcasting licenses of radio and television stations. To a lesser extent, and perhaps with less power, the Venezuelan private media fought back during those 14 years. Private media owners, managers, and journalists openly expressed their opposition to President Chávez on several occasions through their opinion and media practices. The private Venezuelan media and President Chávez were engaged in a power war that took place openly in the public arena. Given that both the Chávez government and the private media were complicit in irresponsible behavior using the media as an ideological tool in a war for power; Venezuelan democracy was jeopardized between 1998 and 2012. The phenomenon and context under which this state of affairs occurred is complex, requiring a deep analysis of the factors that contributed to this situation. This research describes and analyzes the events of the war for media influence and government control in Venezuela during 14 years under Chávez' administration and shows how these behaviors ultimately eroded democracy, freedom of expression, and free and responsible journalism in Venezuela.

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Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela. (2009). *Nuestros Presidentes* [*Our Presidents*] Retrieved August, 27 2010, from Venezuelan Bolivarian's Government Websitewebsite: http://www.gobiernoenlinea.gob.ve/venezuela/perfil_presidente35.html

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Hall, S. (1989). Ideology and communication theory. In B. Dervin, L. Grosberg, B. O'Keefe, & E. Wartella (Eeds.), *Rethinking communication theory*, (Vol. 1: Paradigm issues). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

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Izarra, A. (2007). Chávez promotes robust, uncensored news media in Venezuela. *Television Quarterly, 38*(1), pp. 15-16.

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Krimsky, G. (1997, February). The role of the media in a democracy. *eJournal USA, 2*(1). Retrieved June 10, 2009, from http://usinfo.org/media/press/essay3.htm

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Lauria, C. (2012, April 25). State-owned media and the public interest. Retrieved July 20, 2012, from http://www.americas-forum.com/aq-state-owned-media-and-the-public-interest/

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Medina, O. (2007). Teoria de la rana que no reacciona. *Gato Pardo, 79*, p. 49.

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Padgett, T. (2009, September 22). Chávez and the Latin Left: Muzzling the media? *Times.* Retrieved on December 11, 2009, from http://www.time.com/time/ world/article/ 0,8599,1925129,00.html

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Phillips, T. (2011, June 28). Venezuela prison siege: El Rodeo directors arrested. *The Guardian.* Retrieved on September 19, 2011, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/28/venezuela-prison-siege-el-rodeo-arrest

Poleo, R. (2002). Los medios de comunicación como factor de poder en el proceso venezolano [The media as power entity in the Venezuelan process]. In M. Tremamunno (Ed.), *Chávez y los medios de comunicación social* [*Chávez and the mass communication media*]. Caracas, Venezuela: Alfadil Ediciones.

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Tremamunno, M. (Ed.). (2002). *Chávez y los medios de comunicación social* [*Chávez and mass communication media*]. Caracas, Venezuela: Alfadil Ediciones.

Webster, D. (1992). *Building free and independent media*. Retrieved June 10, 2009, from http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/state/freedom1.htm

Zozloff, N. (2008). *Revolution! South America and the rise of the New Left.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

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An article on a survey carried out on Venezuelans and their trust in the local media. The survey results show Venezuelans do not trust the local media, either private or public. The results of this survey are relevant for the purpose of this research because it is important to understand the position of the Venezuelan audience in relation to the media.

Alonso, J. F. (2002, November 11). 1.574.233 firmas validas se entregaron al CNE [1.574.233 valid signatures given to CNE]. *El Universal*.

This is an article from one of Venezuela's main daily newspapers, El Universal*, about the signatures that were collected by the opposition asking Venezuela's president, Hugo Chávez, to resign.*

Aporrea.org. (2009, September 20). Reunión de Comunicadores Populares contrapuesta a la cumbre de los "Servidores Imperialistas de la Prensa" (SIP) Propuestas de transición para la socialización de los medios, expuso Gonzalo Gómez (de Aporrea.org) en el Encuentro de Contrainformación [Meeting of popular communicators opposed to the summit of "Imperialist Servers of the Press" Proposal of the transition for the socialization of the media, exposed by Gonzalo Gómez (from Aporrea.org) at the meeting of counterinformation]. Retrieved October 31, 2009, from http://www.aporrea.org/ medios/n142539.html

An article from a Venezuelan, socialist online news site that describes the summit of journalists in favor of the "socialization of the media." The article shows the perspective of the state-sponsored media and their strong intent to use the media as a political tool, as well as their full intent to eliminate private media.

Asamblea Nacional de La Republica Bolivariana de Venezuela. (2005, December 12). Ley de responsabilidad social de radio y television [Law of radio and television social responsibility]. Retrieved January, 12, 2009, from http://www.leyresorte.gob.ve/leyresorte/100

The Law of Radio and Television Social Responsibility, drafted and approved by the Venezuelan National Assembly on December 7, 2004. According to the Venezuelan Bolivarian Government website, the law's objective is to establish social responsibility in the media, and in this way, foments democratic equilibrium, and has the media promote social justice and contribute to formation of civics in the audience.

Avalo, J. L. (2004). *Globovisión violadora de los derechos humanos?* [Globovisión violator of human rights?] Caracas, Venezuela: La Litis.

This book is an openly pro-Chávez analysis of the private Venezuelan news television station, Globovisión, and its approach to news reporting. The book, which had very limited printed editions, and was purchased in a pro-Chávez Venezuelan bookstore, is a window to the type of message manipulation taking place in Venezuela on opposing political views. It is also a window into the history of Globovisión and the impact it has had on the pro- and anti-Chávez audiences.

BBCMundo.com. (2003, September 4). Venezuela: sigue polémica por firmas [Venezuela: continues polemic about signaturas]. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/latin_america/newsid_3081000/3081214.stm

A BBC article on the signature controversy in Venezuela, when millions of signatures from the opposition were collected to remove Venezuela's president, Hugo Chávez, from the government.

Beasley-Murray, J. (2002). Venezuela: the revolution will not be televised; Pro- Chávez multitudes challenge media blackout. *NACLA Report on the Americas, 36*(1), 16-21.

This academic article criticizes the decision of private Venezuelan media stations to not broadcast images of pro-Chávez protesters rioting in the streets during the coup attempt. Private television stations and newspapers covered only actions that were beneficial to the coup, and did not cover important events that benefited Venezuela's president, Hugo Chávez. The article was written the same year as the attempted coup, and offers valuable examples and perspectives for the purpose of this research.

BBCMundo.com. (2002, May 15). Los medios sustituyeron a los partidos de oposición. [The media substituted the opposition parties]. Retrieved October 31, 2009, from http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/latin_america/newsid_1989000/1989658.stm

BBC Interview with Ignacio Ramonet, the director of Le Monde Diplomatique*, who also directs a Media Watch Global Group. The interview takes places in Venezuela right after the 2002coup attempt against Chávez. Ramonet, who is in Venezuela supervising the conduct of the Venezuelan media, serves as an*

objective voice who offers an analysis and criticism of the media's behavior, both private and public, during the coup attempt.

Becker, S. (1994). *Communication studies: Visions of the future.* In L. C Fred (Ed.),. *Rethinking communication theory* (Vol. 1). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

This book offers a perspective and analysis of Cultural Studies, the theoretical framework used in this research. The author, Samuel Becker, chairman of the communication studies department at the University of Iowa, notes in one of his essays that Stuart Hall, father of media Cultural Studies, knocks the dominant ideology of communication studies, yet he himself becomes the dominant ideology. This same irony can be noted in Chávez' decisions and arguments, as explained in this research.

Brooks, B. S., Kennedy, G., Moen, D. R., & Ranly D. (2005). *News reporting and writing*. Boston, MA: Bedford St. Martin's.

Introductory textbook to journalism in which the main elements of media, such as ethics, responsibility, legality, and history are included. Although the book is mainly about media in the United States, it includes international case studies, and presents the role and rights of the media in a democratic country, such as Venezuela.

Boas, C. T. (2005). Television and neopopulism in Latin America: Media effects in Brazil and Peru. *Latin American Research Review, 27*(23) p. 28-49. Retrieved March 15, 2009, from http://proxy.stu.edu:2066/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=107&sid=f8fff16a-6b64-48a7-

a103-48a18d6fc8f1%40sessionmgr102

Research on the effects of neopopulsim in the media in Brazil and Peru. Although the governments of Brazil and Peru carry out a more moderate populism than that of Venezuela, the research serves as a background and comparison for the purpose of this research.

Castillo, A. (2003, August). Breaking democracy: Venezuela's media coup. *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy, 12*, 145.

This article describes and analyses the private media's role in the April 2002 coup attempt against Venezuela's president, Hugo Chávez. The author tries to show how the unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the government exposed the politicized nature of Venezuela's private commercial media.

Colegio Nacional de Periodistas. (1988). *Código de ética del periodista Venezolano* [*Code of ethics for Venezuelan journalists*]. Merida, Venezuela: Colegio Nacional de Periodistas. Retrieved March 20, 2009, from http://www.cnpven.org/data.php?link=8

The Code of Ethics of Venezuelan journalists is relevant for the purpose of this research to compare how Venezuelan journalists have or have not respected their own Code of Ethics.

Concepcion, C. (2009, August 7). El ataque del gobierno venezolano a los medios de comunicación [The government attack against the media]. *La Voz Digital*. Retrieved September 24, 2012, from http://www.lavozdigital.es/cadiz/20090807/internacional/venezuela-libertad-expresion-200908071134.html

This article from a Spanish news website describes and analyses the closing of 34 radio stations in Venezuela, and condemns Venezuela's president Hugo Chávez's decisions as an attack on the media.

Davis, H. (2004). *Understanding Stuart Hall*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

This book offers an in-depth analysis of Stuart Hall's theories. Specifically used for the purpose of this research is the analysis of his cultural studies media theory, which is used for the theoretical framework of this research.

Delgado-Flores, C. (2008). *Trincheras de papel: El periodismo Venezolano del siglo XX en la voz de doce protagonistas* [*Paper trench: Venezuelan journalism in the XX century in the voice of twelve protagonists*]. Caracas, Venezuela: Los Libros del Nacional y Universidad Católica Andres Bello.

This book presents the life and experiences of 12 Venezuelan journalists who witnessed the country's fate through their perspectives and memories. Among some of the themes covered in the book relevant to this research are analyses of the future of Venezuela and the media, the future of journalism, the state of the country, and the history of journalism in Venezuela.

Dennis, D. K., & Stanley, B. (2006). *Mass communication theory*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth.

Textbook on theories of mass communication that includes analyses and definition of cultural studies theory, which is the theoretical framework behind this research.

Dizard, J. (2008). An unfinished transition: Latin America's performance in freedom in the World. *Harvard International Review, 30*(1), 64-69.

An academic journal article that analyzes the Latin American results of the 2007 Freedom House Survey, which has been surveying freedom in the world for the past 35 years. The article concludes that a look at the numbers shows that Latin America has advanced in general towards freedom, compared with decades of military dictatorship and corrupt governments. Only Venezuela, under the heavy-handed governing methods of President Hugo Chávez, has experienced a reduction of more than 2 cumulative points in the most recent 10 year period.

Edwards, D. (2007). Chávez and RCTV: Media enemies at home and abroad (MALA) (Hugo Chávez, Radio Caracas Television). *NACLA Report on the Americas, 40*(5), 51-53.

President Hugo Chávez, usually portrayed by U.S. and British media as an enemy of the press, has created a more pluralistic media society by creating an almost non-existent state medium, according to the author. The article presents the reasons why Chávez denied Radio Caracas Television's broadcasting license after the network was involved in the 2002 coup d'état attempt.

Ellul, J. (1973). *Propaganda: The formation of men's attitudes*. New York: Vintage Books.

French philosopher Jacques Ellul argues modern propaganda is scientific by nature. The author sees propaganda as a sociological phenomenon, rather than as something made by certain people for certain purposes.

Forero, J. (2007, October 9). Venezuela's Chávez promotes nation's films. [Audio podcast]. Retrieved March 30, 2009, from http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=15117392

Radio cast by a National Public Radio journalist showcasing Venezuela's president Hugo Chávez's sponsorship to create state film studios. However, all films produced by the state's studios had some political message beneficial to his socialist government.

Forero, J. (2007, January 18). Pulling the plug on anti-Chávez TV: Venezuela's decision not to renew station's license draws accusations of censorship. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved September 14, 2009, from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/17/ AR2007011702003.html

This Washington Post *article, written soon after Venezuela's president Hugo Chávez's decision not to renew RCTV's broadcasting license, explains how this decision raised accusations of censorship. However, the author makes it clear how other stations, such as Globovisión, constantly "lambaste" Chávez, and tries to show how there is still free expression in Venezuela. The author tries to remain objective and shows both sides of the issue by giving examples and quotes that are relevant to this research.*

Fox, E. (Ed.). (1988). *Media and politics in Latin America: The struggle for democracy.* London: Sage Publications.

This book is a collection of essays on the history of the media-government relation in Latin America. The book helps set the historical background of the thesis, and an understanding of how Latin American politics are connected to the media.

Gianneto, G. (Ed.). (2002). *Crisis politica y medios de comunicación* [*Political crisis and the media*]. Caracas, Venezuela: Fondo Editorial de Humanidades y Educacion

Universidad Central de Venezuela e Instituto de Investigaciones de la Comunicación.

The book documents a series of seminars on the political and media crisis in Venezuela. The panelists are journalists, politicians, and experts on the subject of journalism in Venezuela during the Hugo Chávez administration.

Glock, C., Calderon, D., & Gomez, I. (2006) *Mapa de riesgos para periodistas* [*Map of risks for journalists*]. Miami, FL: Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa.

The book tracks violent crimes against journalists in Latin America. It covers the importance of freedom of the press for a democracy.

Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela. (1999). Constitución de la Republica Bolivariana de Venezuela [Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela Constitution]. Caracas, Venezuela: Asamblea Nacional Constituyente.

The first constitution drafted by Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez, which replaces the original Venezuelan constitution. This particular article is on the possibility of petitioning to hold an election.

Gonzalez, S., & Lauria, C. (2007). Static in Venezuela. Retrieved May 18, 2010, from Committee to Protect Journalists website, http://cpj.org/reports/2007/04/venezuela-07.php

An article by the Committee to Protect Journalists, which argues that media conditions have deteriorated in Venezuela under Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. It explains how Chávez's decision to close RCTV, as well as other decisions against the media, are politically motivated and arbitrary.

Griffin, E. (2006). *Communication, communication, communication: A first look at communication theory.* New York: McGraw Hill Higher Education.

This introduction to Communication Theory is helpful for the theoretical section of this research. Chapter 26, which explains Cultural Studies theory, is important for an understanding of the theoretical framework.

Gurevitch, M., Bennett, T., Curran, J., & Woollacott, J. (1982). *Culture, society, and the media.* (Part 1: Class, ideology and the media). London: Methuen.

An analysis of media theories with an emphasis on culture and society. The book serves to explore how various media theories that are based on democratic and pluralistic societies are not applicable to this research because of Venezuela's current political state.

Hall, S. (1989). Ideology and communication theory. In B. Dervin, L. Grosberg, B. O'Keefe, & E. Wartella (Eds.), *Rethinking communication theory* (Vol. 1: Paradigm issues). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Stuart Hall's main work on cultural studies media theory, which is used as the theoretical framework for this research.

Hellinger, D. (2007). Media reform or grab for power in Venezuela (Radio Caracas Television license not to be renewed). *St. Louis Journalism Review, 29*(3), 29-32.

The author of this academic article, who has written extensively on President Hugo Chávez's government in Venezuela, argues the decision not to renew the broadcasting license of RCTV was made based on the unethical and corrupt actions taken by the television station. The article delves into the events of the 2002 coup d'état attempt in Venezuela, and how RCTV helped the opposition and

coup perpetrators by not covering important issues occurring during the event that would benefit Chávez.

Hellinger, D. (2003). Media mayhem: Violence in Venezuela sparked by press. *St. Louis Journalism Review, 33*(253), 24-26.

Historical research about the violence imposed by Venezuelan citizens on the state and private media. This academic article showcases a history of polemics in which freedom of the press is threatened by Venezuelan citizens, for or against Chávez, and members of the private and publicly-owned media. It also offers insight on how the violence against the privately-owned media has received more coverage than violence against community, non-mainstream media, and state media in Venezuela.

Hellinger, D. (2002). Mass-mediated coup in Venezuela. *St. Louis Journalism Review, 32*(246), 24-26.

This academic article argues that the 2002 coup attempt against Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez was facilitated by the private media. It offers various specific examples on how the private, as well as the public media, manipulated information for a political purpose, and that, therefore, there is still free media expression in Venezuela.

Izarra, A. (2007). Chávez promotes robust, uncensored news media in Venezuela. *Television Quarterly, 38*(1), 15-16.

This article by TeleSUR President, Andres Izarra, offers the unpopular perspective that the closing of privately-owned RCTV, and the creation of state-sponsored media, has actually increased diversification and pluralism in

Venezuelan media. He focuses on his experience with President Hugo Chávez Frias' new model for TeleSUR, which, according to him, has created a robust, uncensored news media climate in Venezuela with content that is independent from the government.

John, D. (2009). Soul search: In Venezuela, the press struggles to regain its bearings after serving as a tool of the anti-Chávez movement. *Columbia Journalism Review, 44*(2), 52-59.

An academic analysis on how the private media in Venezuela has struggled to be able to regain its audience's trust after serving as an instrument for the anti-Chávez movement. The article paints a timely and objective portrait of the situation occurring with the Venezuelan private media.

Larrain, J. (1996). Stuart Hall and the Marxist concept of ideology. In D. Morley & K. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies.* New York: Routledge.

An in-depth analysis of Stuart Hall's theories. This book is relevant for the theoretical framework part of the research because it analyses and defines Hall's theory, which is the theoretical framework of this research.

Lauría, C. (2009). Chávez does no such thing: Press freedom conditions have seriously deteriorated under his regime. *Television Quarterly, 38*(1), 16-17.

Carlos Lauria, an experienced Latin American journalist, gives his take on Chávez's actions against Venezuelan television. The closing of the oldest privately-owned television station, RCTV, and the Law of Radio and Television Social Responsibility are just some of the events the author explains and analyzes

in detail. His conclusion is that the government's ultimate goal is to take the power of the media for itself.

Lull, J. (2003). *Hegemony in gender, race, and class in media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

The article highlights the concept of hegemony, which in Lull's view, represents the power or dominance of one social group over another. The author traces hegemony's origin to Marxist materialist theory. The author argues that owners of media outlets can produce and reproduce content and ideas favorable to them more easily than other social groups because they have more power of voice.

Manuel, J., & Wilkinson, D. (2008, October 9). Hugo Chávez versus human rights. *Human Rights Watch.* Retrieved May 20, 2010, from http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/10/09/hugo-ch-vez-versus-human-rights

Two Human Rights Watch members share their experience of how they were expelled from Venezuela after releasing a report that President Hugo Chávez was undermining the human rights system in the country. Other details on Chávez's human rights issues, and the degradation of democracy in Venezuela are discussed.

Marcano, C., & Tyszka, A. A. (2007). *Chávez sin uniforme* (2nd ed.) [*Chávez without uniform*]. Ciudad México, México: Debate.

A biography of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez written by two experienced and knowledgeable journalists. The narrative discusses the life of Chávez from childhood until his rise to power, and is helpful in understanding the history of Venezuelan politics and the context of the situation in which Chávez won the

Venezuelan elections. It serves as a guide for understanding Chávez's rise to power, the role of the media, and the many controversial events that have occurred during his administration.

Martin, C., Pilger, J. (Directors), & Young, W. (Producer). (2007, June 15). *The War on Democracy*. United Kingdom: Youngheart Entertainment, Granada Productions.

A documentary that focuses on Latin American politics, as well as how the United States intervention in domestic policies of foreign countries does not contribute to the democratic process. Pilger conducts an interview with Venezuela President Hugo Chavez in which they discuss the United States' view of his government as a threat, as well as his government's inclusion of the poorer segments of Venezuela.

McCullagh, C. (2002). *Media power: A sociological introduction*. New York: Palgrave.

This text sheds light on the debate of how much power and influence the media actually has on modern society. It covers media ownership, bias, and the captive role of the audience, all important elements for this research.

McQuail, D. (Eds.). (2002). *McQuail's reader in mass communication theory.* London: Sage.

A collection of essays that cover all aspects of media theory. The book is helpful in delineating all aspects of media that are important to consider when conducting media research.

Medina, O. (2007 August). El canal incomodo [The uncomfortable channel]. *Gato Pardo, 82*. Retrieved May 25, 2010, from http://www.gatopardo.com/numero-82/cronicas-y-reportajes/el-canal-incomodo.html

An article from Colombian magazine, Gato Pardo*, on Globovisión, a traditionally*

anti-Chávez, Venezuelan 24-hour news channel. The article considers the question of Globovisión being the next television station to be closed down by President Hugo Chávez after RCTV.

Medina, O. (2008 August). La reinvencion de un gremio [The reinvention of a trade]. *Gato Pardo, 93*. Retrieved June 30, 2010, from http://www.gatopardo.com/numero-93/club-de-periodistas/la-reinvencion-de-un-gremio.html

An article on the new directors of El Colegio Nacional de Periodistas, an organization that protects journalists' rights and duties. The new directors are the first ones to have been elected after 10 years under government-appointed directors. The article considers the state of the organization after the controversial events that occurred among the Venezuelan media and highlights new directions for the organization.

Miorelli, R., & Panizza, F. (2009). Populism and democracy in Latin America. *Ethics and International Affairs, 23*(1), 39-47.

An academic journal article that explores the new populist left in Latin America and the differences between that and a democratic country. It compares the main Latin America presidents from the left: Bolivia's Evo Morales, Ecuador's Rafael Correa, and Venezuela's Hugo Chávez. It conducts an in-depth analysis of the history of the new left and its relation to the media and other institutions.

Montaldo, M. J. (Ed.). (2002). *Justicia y libertad de prensa, ensayos de la cumbre hemisférica sobre justicia y libertad de prensa en Las Americas* [Justice and freedom of the press, essays from the hemispheric summit on justice and freedom

of the press in the Americas]. Miami, FL: Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa.

This book contains a collection of essays by Latin American journalists on freedom of the press and justice in Latin America. The book offers a look at the Latin American media's struggle to keep freedoms of expression because of government, criminal entities, and others.

Mungiu-Pippidi, A. (2003). From state to public service: The failed reform of state television in central Eastern Europe. In S. Miklos & P. Bajomi-Lazar (Eds.). *Reinventing media: Media policy reform in east-central Europe* (pp. 31-63). New York: Central European University Press.

The author analyzes whether the transformation of state television into public service television was successful in former communist countries, such as Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. The article provides an examination of how public service television operated and evaluated its editorial independence.

Munoz, B. (2008, February). Chávez: La huida hacia delante [Chávez: The escape forward]. *Gato Pardo, 87*. Retrieved June 15, 2010, from http://www.gatopardo.com/numero-87/cronicas-y-reportajes/Chávez-la-huida-hacia-adelante.html

Article on the future of Chávez's altering of various events that are not beneficial to his government, such as the loss of the constitutional reform elections and the freeing of FARC hostages, which worsen his relation to Colombia and weaken Venezuelan support.

Murphy, H. (2005, April 17). Chávez's blacklist of Venezuelan opposition intimidates voters. *Bloomberg*. Retrieved August 12, 2010, from http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid= newsarchive &sid=abASlsAyXgoE&refer=latin_america-redirectoldpage

This is an article on the signatures that were collected by the Venezuelan opposition to remove Chávez from government, and how this list was turned into a blacklist, affecting those who signed for years. The practice of denying government jobs and other jobs to some of the 3.4 million Venezuelans who signed the petition was common and ended by intimidating the opposition and helping Chávez.

Nelson, B. A. (2009). *The silence and the scorpion: The coup against Chávez and the making of modern Venezuela.* New York: Nation Books.

The events of the April 2002 coup attempt against President Hugo Chávez are brought to light in this investigative article. The author concludes that Chávez's countercoup was done through communication and media, rather than force, and denies any direct U.S. involvement.

Noboa, R. (2007, May 28). Chávez cierra RCTV. Quienes seguirán? [Chávez Closes. RCTV. Who will follow?]. *El Nuevo Diario*. Retrieved Feruary 18, 2010, from http://impreso.elnuevodiario.com.ni/2007/05/28/nacionales/49854

Article from a Nicaraguan newspaper published after Chávez's decision not to renew the RCTV broadcasting license. The article suggests that other privately-owned media outlets that oppose the president will also be closed down.

Ortega, D., Rodriguez, F., & Edwards, M. (October 2008). Freed from illiteracy? A closer look at Venezuela's Robinson Literacy Campaign: Economic development and cultural change, forthcoming. *Wesleyan Economics Working Papers.* Retrieved March 20, 2010, from http://ideas.repec.org/p/wes/weswpa/2006-025.html

A study that shows how President Chávez made false claims about a literary program he created. The real data shows the failure of this social program, as opposed to the data Chávez released, which claims the program was a success. The interesting issue is that no one questioned his claims, and this false data was repeated throughout the world by various media outlets, and other governments and institutions.

Padgett, T. (2009, September 22). Chávez and the Latin left: Muzzling the media? *Time.* Retrieved March 11, 2010, from http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1925129,00.html

An article on how Chávez and the Latin American left attacked the private media for their own political gain. The article offers various examples relevant for this research.

Panizza, F., & Miorelli, R. (2009). Populism and democracy in Latin America. *Ethics & International Affairs*, *23*(1), 39-47.

The article describes how new populism in Latin America, specifically that of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia, and Rafael Correa in Ecuador, are different from the moderate left in Latin America in countries such as Chile and Brazil. It does not defend one over the other, but explains how the

new radical left is a result of years of failure under a democratic administration filled with corruption and poor management that created a larger socioeconomic gap.

Patterson, P., & Wilkins, L. (2005). *Media ethics issues and cases* (5th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

This is a textbook on media ethics guidelines based on international cases. Its examples are useful for comparing current situations in Venezuela, and understanding definitions and standards of media ethics.

Perozo, M. (2004, June 27). Periodistas en el ojo del debate ético [Journalists in the eye of the ethic debate]. *Panorama.* Retrieved June 15, 2010, from http://www.rnv.gov.ve/noticias/index.php?act=ST&f=15&t=6325

An article on the actions taken by the private media in Venezuela that are considered to be ethical violations. The article offers citations by experts and examples relevant for this study's ethical media component.

Pueblo en Linea. (2009, August 3). Lanza gobierno venezolano exhorto a medios de comunicación [Venezuelan government launches an exhortation to the media]. Retrieved June 15, 2010, from http://spanish.peopledaily.com.cn/31617/6716929.html

A news article from a traditionally leftist international news website that showcases the president of Conatel, a government organization that supervises the media, arguing that the decision to close radio and television stations in Venezuela is beneficial for the democratization of the media.

Reel, M. (2006, May 25). Chávez educates masses at a university in his image. *The Washington Post.* Retrieved May 30, 2010, from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/05/24/AR2006052402444.html

An article on the Bolivarian University in Venezuela, which was created and sponsored by President Hugo Chávez's government. The school is the largest university in Venezuela with about 180,000 students enrolled. The article cites many examples and people who agree that the government is using education as a political tool. Specific to this research is the number of journalists graduating from the university, which the government believes to be a necessary alternative to the opposition-controlled national media.

Rennie, E. (2006).*Community media a global introduction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

This text offers a collection of data from various parts of the world and how their relation to the media is based on various cultural elements. It also explains how community and Internet media have challenged the mainstream media. These are important issues to understand for the purpose of this research, since the Internet has changed the role and power of the mainstream media in Venezuela. It has reduced the power of both the private media in Venezuela, as well as of the state-owned media, since the audience is now active in creating content.

Rodriguez, F. (2008). Venezuela's revolution in decline: Beware the wounded tiger. *World Policy Journal, 25*(1), 45-59.

An academic article on the history of events that have lowered Chávez's

popularity. The author explores various events that are important for understanding the history and context of Chávez's actions against the media and democracy, such as lists of signatures of members of the opposition, which were made available to the public. Data suggest the people who signed these lists were often fired from their jobs, taxed at a higher rate, or never found jobs again. It also discusses Chávez's political need to identify enemies, such as the United States, the Venezuelan elite, and the media.

Stevenson, N. (2002). *Understanding media cultures.* Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

The book describes a wide range of media and social theories. It covers all the major theories in the field of social studies with relation to the media.

Tan, A. S. (1981). *Mass communication theories and research* (2nd ed). Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Lubbock.

This textbook explains theory and research development in media. It explains how research and theory development in media is different from research and theory development in other academic subjects.

The Miami Herald. (2009). Venezuelan TV chief talks to Herald editors. Retrieved July 11, 2009, from http://www.miamiherald.com/video/?genre_id=4275#

This video interview from The Miami Herald *with the director of Venezuela's television station, Globovisión, and one of the station's journalists, is extremely relevant to this study because it offers views from a director of a privately-owned television station accused of being extremely biased and anti-Chávez in its broadcasting.*

Trotti, R. (1999). *Impunidad nunca mas: Crimenes sin castigo contra periodistas* [*Impunity never again: Crimes without punishments against journalists*]. Miami, FL: Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa.

The book is a narrative of the search for justice in various cases of violence against journalists in Latin America. It analyzes cases that have threatened the free press, as well as the consequences of these cases.

Tungate, M. (2004). *Media monoliths: How great media brands thrive and survive.* London, United Kingdom: Kogan Page Limited.

An in-depth research and analysis of powerful mainstream media in the United States, including newspapers, magazines, and broadcasters that have remained in power across decades despite increased competition, the internet, and an economic downturn. The author focuses on analyzing how these channels have not only survived, but remained on top, by answering questions such as what marketing strategies they used, what their branding elements are, and how they continue in a new era of digital media.

Verdery, K. (2002). Anthropology of socialist societies. In N. Smelser & P. B. Baltes (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences*. Amsterdam: Pergamon Press.

This study defines and describes the various aspects of socialist societies. Socialist societies are defined by the author as a class of twentieth-century societies that share two distinctive features: the political dominance of a revolutionary party and extensive nationalization of the means of production, with a consequent predominance of state and collective property. Although the author

focuses on Eastern European countries, Venezuela fits both of those distinctive features.

Webster, F. (Ed.). (2002). *Theories of the information society* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

This book offers a critique of informational power. The author offers a different approach to Cultural Studies Theory, which is the theoretical framework used for this research.

Wilpert, G. (2004). Community airwaves in Venezuela. *NACLA Report on the Americas*, *34*(2), 34-36.

This article argues that, until the late 1990s, Venezuela's leaders often persecuted community media, mainly radio stations housed in homes or small offices. It claims they would be raided constantly, prompting the stations to close because of fear and little opportunity. As a result, many community media outlets support Chávez.

Young, K. (2008). Colombia and Venezuela: Testing the propaganda model. *NACLA Report on the Americas, 41*(6), 50-53.

A comparison of U.S. media coverage of political decisions and events that took place in Venezuela and Colombia. The analysis recounts various questionable situations between Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and the Venezuelan media, and how these were reported by U.S. media in a particularly negative light. Similar actions taken by the Colombian President Alvaro Uribe were not mentioned by the U.S. media.