

**WHEN A COUP IS NOT A COUP: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA
COVERAGE OF THE 2002 COUP IN VENEZUELA**

By

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A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

As the elected president of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez has undertaken a different type of economic and political agenda – one that presents a challenge to American – led neoliberalism and one which represents one nation’s struggle towards a socialist project. In April 2002, there was a successful, yet short-lived, coup against Chavez. Many believe that the coup was heavily supported and financed by the Bush administration and the National Endowment for Democracy, an organization that serves the interests of American imperialism. Using Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky’s Propaganda Model in conjunction with Critical Discourse Analysis, this thesis critically examines the media coverage of the 2002 coup in the *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail*.

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CHAPTER 1

HUGO CHAVEZ AND VENEZUELA: HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The alternative that inspires the fight for change may be vague and naïve, but in the course of struggle that alternative is clarified, new questions and further clarifications are forced to the surface. There is the discovery, amongst those searching for a new society, of new capacities, both individual and collective, that people never realize they had. The issue, therefore, is less the absence of a comprehensive alternative, than the emergence of growing frustration with the status quo, combined with a commitment to a vision rooted in an alternative notion of social justice and confidence that the individual and organizational capacities to bring that vision to life can be developed (Gindin, 2003, p.17).

Chavez's 1992 Coup: Economic and Social Factors

Hugo Chavez, the elected president of Venezuela, has become a political icon for many people searching for an alternative to the neo-liberal economic agenda that has come to dominate many world political systems. "It is undeniable that Chavez, a rural man of mixed racial background, has become a symbol of revolt against U.S. political and economic interests throughout the hemisphere" (Kozloff, 2006, p.3). Under the leadership of President Hugo Chavez, Venezuela has undertaken a different type of economic and political project. The Venezuelan "experiment" has tried to redistribute some of the country's rich oil wealth and implement structural changes that will improve the social and economic conditions of the country's poor majority. For students interested in political change, the situation in Venezuela may be construed as an exciting example of one nation's struggle toward a socialist project that foregrounds peoples' needs. Although the Chavez government does not have all of the answers to implementing an inclusive, popular democracy with an egalitarian, socialist state, it appears to be willing to struggle with the fundamental questions.

Petras (2008, para37) suggests that in order to "discuss the highly polarized social confrontation between the pro-Chavez popular movements and the US-backed oligarch-

supported middle class movements, it is important to contextualize the social, political and economic relations, which preceded the ascendancy of the Chavez government”. Petras also contends “the United States was the key determinant of the economic conditions and the principle point of reference of Venezuela ’s oligarchy and middle class” and that “US-Venezuelan relations were based on US hegemony in all spheres – from oil to consumerism, from sports to life style, from bank accounts to marriage partners” (Ibid). Therefore in what follows, I examine the economic social and historical factors which led to Chavez’s presidency.

Since the overthrow of the nine-year military dictatorship of General Marcos Perez Jimenez in 1958, Venezuela has long been promoted as a model democracy in Latin America. The idea of Venezuela being an ‘exceptional democracy’ was buoyed by three underlying conditions. First, Venezuela was viewed as a privileged society in relation to the rest of Latin America. Second, Venezuela had not experienced acute class and racial conflicts that may have threatened political stability. Finally, Venezuela had a stable and established democratic and political system (Ellner & Salas, 2006). During the 1970’s the Venezuelan people saw a steady improvement in their standard of living due to the ‘oil boom’ and the expansion of the petroleum rents (Lander, 2006). The changes in material conditions occurred even though there were no major shifts in the pattern of income distribution. “Social indicators reflecting education levels, health standards, life expectancy, access to housing and public services, infant mortality, and employment (including levels of formal employment) all registered significant improvement” (Lander, 2006, p.21). The Venezuelan people began to have expectations of sustained growth and improved living conditions. Many believed that Venezuela was on its way to becoming a “modern integrated society” (Lander, 2006, p21).

In the 1980's and 1990's, the reality of a deteriorating political system and the deep class and socio-economic divisions that resulted began to debunk the myth of Venezuela as an 'exceptional democracy' (Ellner & Salas, 2006). The mid-1980's illustrated how divided Venezuelan society had become with greater income disparity, gated communities, high levels of violence, racial tensions and an expanding lower class (Ellner & Salas, 2006). "According to one estimate, total poverty in the country nearly doubled between 1984 and 1991, from 36 percent of the population to 68 percent" (Martel, 1993, cited in Lander, 2006, p.18). These social and economic conditions created an increasingly divided society resulting in segregation and class distinction, particularly in urban areas. This period of severe economic decline and marginalization of the country's poor majority led to public dissatisfaction with how the country was run under President Carlos Andres Perez.

Although President Perez campaigned for election using an anti-neoliberal platform, shortly after his election he attempted to implement 'the paquete' or 'package' of free market reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These austerity measures were directly in line with the 'Washington Consensus' and included privatizing state companies, tax reforms, and diminishing the role of the state in managing the economy.¹ For the Venezuelan people, these economic initiatives meant "stagnating incomes in the face of skyrocketing prices and monetary devaluation" (Ciccariello-Maher, 2007, para 3). Dissatisfaction with the Perez government turned to outrage, when as a result of the economic measures, petrol prices rose by 100% and public transportation costs increased by 30% (Ciccariello-Maher, 2007). Rioting, seen as the worst in Venezuela's history, began in Guarenas, near the capital city of Caracas, and spread across the country. The incident, referred to as the 'Caracazo,' has been identified as a

¹ The Washington Consensus is a standard set of economic policy mandates that economist John Williamson developed for implementation in 'third world' countries. The policies focus on trade liberalization, privatization of state enterprises, property rights and deregulation of restriction on capital in the marketplace (Naim, 2000).

historic uprising against the modern neoliberal agenda although, not as recognized as the protests in Seattle 1999, or the Zapatista's movement of 1994 (Ciccariello-Maher, 2007).

In an attempt to explain the motives behind the riots, Marquez (2003) argues that “the poor and the marginalized residents of the shantytowns, as well as many considered middle class, were no longer passively accepting price inflation, food shortages and the collapse of social services” (p.201). The uprising continued for three days and up to five days in some areas. In response, President Perez called for martial law, suspended constitutional rights, established a curfew, and brought in the military to use force to suppress the people (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 1999). Military personnel, who had been trained to defend the country against foreign threats were now ordered by the government to turn their guns against civilians. This had a profound effect on the consciousness of the military, many of whom came from poor sectors of the population. In some areas of the country, police and military fired openly and indiscriminately into crowds or at homes in poor neighbourhoods. Initial reports stated that approximately 300 people were killed, mainly civilians. Weeks later, mass graves were found containing bodies bringing the death toll into the thousands, as estimated by medical personnel.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights found that the government had committed numerous human rights violations, including extra judicial killings. The events of the Caracazo changed the Venezuelan political landscape and gave birth to a “constituent power” as the people rose up against oppressive government measures (Hernandez, 2004, p. 140). In many ways, the Caracazo changed the political consciousness of the Venezuelan people and prepared them for the military coup of 1992 and the eventual election of Hugo Chavez.

The current political situation in Venezuela centres on the leader of the ‘Bolivarian movement’ and president of the country, Hugo Chavez. Chavez was born in the town of

Sabaneta, Barinas a poor child of two school teachers. In his late teens he enrolled in the Venezuelan Academy of Military Sciences, and upon graduating, entered active military service as part of a counter insurgency battalion. It was during his time in the army that he became politicized, and together with fellow students developed a left-nationalist ideology based on the teachings of Simon Bolivar. Bolivar was the famed 19th century Venezuelan revolutionary who led many South American countries to liberation from their historic colonizers. In 1983, Chavez, together with fellow military officers, formed a political party - the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement 200 or MBR-200.

On February 4th, 1992, Chavez and a group of military officers who were part of MBR-200 attempted a military coup against the government of Carlos Andres Perez. Their goals were to gain control of the country by seizing President Perez and to eventually take over major military barracks and communications installations. An important aspect of the coup plot was to broadcast pre-recorded messages to the masses and call for a national uprising. Chavez and his group were able to gain control of some large, important cities such as Valencia, Maracaibo, and Maracay, but were unable to control Caracas. Betrayals within the ranks of the group and some unforeseen circumstances left Chavez surrounded by government forces with no way to communicate with his network of allies. Acknowledging defeat, Chavez negotiated his surrender with the condition that he could broadcast a televised message to his co-conspirators asking them to abandon the coup. Although Chavez had been captured, some of his military colonels were reluctant to concede defeat as they had control of important military barracks and major regions. Chavez asked the military officers to 'stand down' because the objectives of the coup had not been attained 'for now,' "por ahora." The Venezuelan people were inspired by his speech because Chavez took full responsibility for the coup, yet showed determination by suggesting

that he was only defeated ‘for now.’ Venezuelans, having witnessed years of political corruption were not accustomed to politicians who were accountable for their actions. This famous speech is said to have launched Chavez’s political career and endeared him to the masses of poor people. After spending two years in Yare prison, Chavez was finally pardoned in 1994 by President Rafael Caldera. Once released Chavez reconstituted the MBR-200 as the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR- Movimiento Quinta Republica).

Chavez’s Election

To understand the political factors that led to Chavez’s election one must consider the country’s political development in historical context. In 1958, after the defeat of General Marcos Perez Jimenez, political parties opposing the military dictatorship united to draft the Punto Fijo Pact. The Punto Fijo Pact, signed by politicians, created a system where political power was concentrated in the hands of the country’s two main political parties, the Democratic Action Party (AD), and the Christian Democrat’s Independent Political Electoral Organizing Committee (COPEI) (Marcano and Tyszka, 2004/2007). This bi-party system had a stabilizing effect in allowing the Venezuelan democratic system to develop and warded off coup d’etats throughout the tumultuous 1960’s and 1970’s. Conversely, it limited political party politics to a narrow, predominantly conservative, spectrum. The ‘pact democracy’ shut all “other political parties out of participation, and created a system of patronage [with] high levels of corruption” (James, 2006, para 2).

In 1998, Chavez began campaigning for the presidency of Venezuela based on a nationalist, anti-corruption, anti-poverty platform. Chavez envisioned an autonomous Venezuela that was not beholden to other countries or international organizations. Another important tenet of his campaign was to call for the elimination of the bi-party political system, which Chavez

referred to as ‘forty years of corrupt democracy.’ The election campaign appealed to the country’s poor majority and to a substantial sector of the middle class who were “fed up with the incompetence and corruption of the previous administration” (Marcano & Tyska, 2004/2007, p.5). More importantly, people were disillusioned with a political system that preached democracy yet ignored the extreme social and economic conditions of the poor majority.

As the social and economic fabric of the country began to disintegrate Venezuelan society became more polarized. At the time of the election, Venezuela was experiencing a recession that claimed more than 350,000 jobs while 2400 businesses faced closure or near bankruptcy. Working people saw a decline in their living standards with purchasing power cut to one-third of what it was 20 years prior and a sense of insecurity became generalized within the population (Lander, 2006; Van, 1998). An extreme increase in the poverty rate and mass unemployment created a profound change in Venezuelan culture (Lander, 2006). A culture of violence began to develop and people feared for their personal safety. As a result “countless streets in the middle- and upper-class neighbourhoods were closed and privatized” and gated communities were established in urban areas (Lander, 2006, p.22). The poor were portrayed as a “dangerous class” particularly by the private media that would accentuate this point using racist overtones (Lander, 2006, p.22).

The social and economic conditions of the country were acknowledged and addressed through Chavez’s campaign. The poor supported Chavez’s populist ideas while the middle class were seen as casting ‘protest votes’ against the previous government (Petras, 2008). It was the middle classes who largely elected Chavez based on their disillusionment with the previous government which had allowed them to slip into poverty over a period of 20 years (Wilpert, 2007). Although, Chavez was largely supported by the poor, the middle and upper classes were

registered as voters in far higher proportion (Wilpert, 2007). When the ballots were finally counted, Chavez had won the election with 56.44 percent of the vote. His election signified the collapse of Venezuela's two party system as people rejected the traditional parties and elected a proverbial outsider.

Chavez's Presidency

James suggests that this "context of social, political and economic polarization created the political space for a new vision of the country based on social equality, political participation and economic development that gave birth to the Bolivarian project" (2006, para 2).

Chavez's presidency, to this point, has not resulted in the revolution that his political rhetoric once suggested would take place. The goal of the Bolivarian Revolution is a 'third way' toward twenty-first century socialism, yet it has not been able to completely eliminate the capitalist system. In order to increase the state's control of the economy, the government has nationalized strategic enterprises specifically in the oil and gas industries, steel, cement, food production and distribution (Petras, 2008). State ownership of key industries allowed for an increase in revenues deposited into the treasury; financing investment, social programs, and the ownership of associated processing plants and services (Petras, 2008). Critics of the Chavez administration also suggest that he has shied away from taxing the wealth of the country's elite. More broadly, the risk of capital flight has hindered Chavez's fight against foreign multinationals. In many areas of the country, poor people are still victims of crime, corruption and food shortages, due to hoarding and price speculation. The changes in law and policy that have been made by the Bolivarian Revolution have been admirable but there is considerable work to be done before there is a permanent change in economic structure and overall consciousness.

While being realistic about the limits of economic transformation that has taken place, we must acknowledge that the Bolivarian process has achieved accomplishments worthy of recognition. One of Chavez's first acts as president was to begin the process of writing a new constitution that reflected his agenda and the needs of the Venezuelan people. In April 1999, 88 percent of the people voted via popular referendum to convene a Constituent Assembly, an elected body that would be responsible for writing the new constitution (James, 2006). As a result of Chavez's overall popularity, of the 125 representatives who were elected, 95 percent were allied with the president's political project (Wilpert, 2003). The new constitution, approved by voters with 72 percent popular approval, changed the name of the country to the "Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela," acknowledging the role of Simon Bolivar in liberating many South American countries (James, 2006). The constitution changed various government structures and responsibilities, including the addition of both a citizen's branch and an electoral branch to the existing legislative, executive and judiciary bodies. Human rights were expanded to include social rights, such as, the right to education, health care, a clean environment and cultural rights for indigenous peoples. Citizens gained the power to change the constitution via referendum, to abrogate laws or to recall the president or other elected officials (Wilpert, 2003).

Although the 'Bolivarian' constitution is viewed as one of the most progressive in the world there have been some common criticisms lodged against it. One unsettling charge was that the constitution strengthened the military's role in Venezuelan society and centralized presidential power (Wilpert, 2003). The clause allowing the president to rule by decree in specific areas has been identified as potentially dictatorial (Sustar, 2007). The power of the presidential decree is tempered by the fact that the National Assembly has the right to make revisions and all decrees are subject to review by the Supreme Court. In general, the overall

popularity of the constitution is evident in its high ratification rate, a 72 to 28 margin and the fact that it is sold in miniature form on almost every street corner of major cities (Jones, 2007). In pro-government groups, such as the Bolivarian Circles, people read and study the constitution - something that can not be said about previously written constitutions (Wilpert, 2007)². The 1999 constitution not only resonates with the country's poor, it is also used as the framework for policy reform under the Bolivarian political project. In other words, "the 1999 constitution has become more than 'just' a constitution. It is a political project towards which pro-Chavez Venezuelans want to move the society" (Wilpert, 2007, p.43).

Since becoming leader of the country, Chavez has faced challenges to his presidency that have resulted in temporary instability and economic uncertainty. The April 2002 coup, followed by a strike/lockout in the oil industry and an attempted recall referendum have all been linked to U.S. interests. Yet in the face of U.S. interference and imperialism, Chavez has been able to implement programs that have benefited the Venezuelan people. Many aspects of the Chavez presidential agenda are carried out through fourteen fundamental social programs or 'missions.' The missions are a series of social welfare, poverty elimination, education, electoral and military recruiting programs. Overall, these programs have established thousands of public medical and dental clinics; launched massive literacy and higher education initiatives; subsidized food, gasoline, and other consumer goods; and assisted in the formation of numerous worker-managed manufacturing and industrial cooperatives. Funding for the social programs comes predominantly from the country's rich oil industry. Critics question if the country will be able to support such social programs if there is a drop in the high oil prices that have led to the current cash windfall.

² Bolivarian Circles are autonomous, grassroots, political groups dedicated to protecting and advancing the Bolivarian Revolution (Chaves & Burke, 2003).

The Forty-Eight Hour Coup

Approximately four years after his initial election, there was a successful, yet short-lived, coup against President Chavez. The coup was led by right-wing political parties, corrupt labour leaders, corporate interests, media moguls, and some high ranking military officers (Gollinger, 2008; Harnecker, 2005). The coup was directed, not only against the president himself, but was an attempt to overturn the entire political project of the 'Bolivarian Revolution.'

The week leading up to the coup was filled with demonstrations and anti-government propaganda. Venevision, one of the country's main television stations, owned by Gustavo Cisneros, substituted inflammatory anti-Chavez messages for its regular programming and was eventually ordered off the air. Cisnersos played an important role in the coup plot, meeting with U.S. officials and allegedly financing a portion of the affair. On the day prior to the coup, key Venezuelan political and business figures met with the U.S. ambassador at the Cisneros mansion and later at Venevision headquarters (Kozloff, 2006). One of the people present at the meetings with the Ambassador was Pedro Carmona Estanga, who would eventually be installed as the temporary coup president.

The events of the actual coup sprang from a demonstration, on April 11th, organized by anti-Chavez forces. Violence escalated outside the Presidential Palace and gunmen opened fire on protesting crowds, resulting in 15 people being killed and 157 injured. Initially, the gunmen were thought to have been pro-Chavez militia ordered by the president to fire at unarmed anti-government demonstrators. It was later shown that most of the people who were killed were pro-Chavez demonstrators shot by roof top snipers (Power, 2002). This incident was used as provocation by opposition instigators to ask the president to step down, and when that was not successful, to initiate a coup (Woods, 2005).

Military personnel arrived at the palace, arrested the President and transferred him to an isolated Venezuelan island. Pedro Carmona Estanga, president of Fedecamars (The Venezuelan Chamber of Commerce), declared himself the new interim president of Venezuela. Carmona's first act as president was to dissolve the National Assembly. He also abrogated the 1999 constitution, repealed key economic laws, and removed pro-Chavez mayors and Supreme Court judges. Such sweeping reforms were not part of the initial coup strategy and splintered the previously unified coup coalition (Smith, 2005; Woods, 2005).

When news of the coup reached the poor barrios, people took to the streets to protest the removal of 'their' president and the installation of a new government. In addition, some Generals denounced the Carmona government and many low ranking military personnel remained loyal to the president - refusing orders of anti-Chavez Generals. When information that Chavez had not resigned reached his supporters they filled the streets, surrounded the palace, rallied and protested for Chavez's return. After 48 hours they were able to pressure the coup government to reinstate the democratically elected president, Hugo Chavez. Private Venezuelan media did not cover the swell of support for Chavez or the events that led to the reversal of the coup. Instead they chose to broadcast a day-long marathon of American films resulting in a virtual media black out.

The initial response to the coup from the international community varied greatly. Of particular interest is the reaction of U.S. government bureaucrats who stated that "Chavez had it coming" and that the coup was a result of his "anti-democratic behaviour" (Clement, 2006, p.196). In stark contrast to the U.S. reaction, the 19 nations of the Rio Group of Latin American countries issued a statement condemning the "interruption of constitutional order" in Venezuela (Smith, 2005, p.132). More specifically, both Argentina and Paraguay referred to the Carmona

leadership as an illegal government. Additionally, the President of Mexico, Vincente Fox, would not recognize the government unless elections were held. A few days after the coup, U.S. officials acknowledged having had some contact with the coup plotters in the months prior to the actual coup (Smith, 2005). The U.S. denied overtly supporting the coup, yet documentation later emerged suggesting that the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) had been funnelling hundreds of thousands of dollars to anti-Chavez organizations.

American Foreign Policy and Venezuela

Post WWII relations between the United States and Venezuela were characterized as being of mutual friendship and cooperation. In *The United States and Venezuela: Rethinking a Relationship*, the authors discuss bilateral relations between the two nations as being based on four premises (Kelly & Romero, 2002). First, Venezuela was regarded as a trustworthy trading partner and oil supplier. Venezuela is the fifth largest supplier of oil in the world and the fourth largest supplier of oil to the United States (Kozloff, 2006). Venezuela is also listed as the nineteenth largest trading partner to the United States and receives forty-five percent of its imports from the United States (Kozloff, 2006). Second, Venezuela was recognized by the United States as having political and economic stability when compared to other South American countries which experienced violence, political unrest and turmoil. Third, political relations between the two countries were based on mutual co-operation, versus conflict. When the United States led the crusade against communism, Venezuela, which was not a major player on the world scene, managed to stay neutral on issues of invasion and generally kept a low political profile. Lastly, there was a mutual understanding between the two countries that neither party would interfere in the regional or global affairs of the other.

In the early 1990's the relationship between the United States and Venezuela became somewhat strained as the Venezuelan economy was declining in the face of U.S. growth. Venezuelan society began to question the "validity" of what was perceived "as the American model of global economy" (Kelly & Romero, 2002, p.94). The relationship between the two countries had become difficult due to Venezuela's redefinition of its own security outside of the traditional role as a United States protectorate. Although relations were strained and political posturing continued the "broad fabric of the bilateral relation remained intact" due to the common trade interests of both countries (Kelly & Romero, 2002, p.95).

When Chavez was first elected in 1998 he initially experienced the same kind of ambivalent, trade based U.S. policy toward Venezuela. "It wasn't until George W. Bush arrived at the White House in 2000 that relations between Venezuela and the United States took a turn for the worse" (Golinger, 2008, p.14). One must wonder why Hugo Chavez, the democratically elected president of Venezuela is viewed as such a threat to the United States. He does not have weapons of mass destruction and has not declared war on the U.S. Nevertheless, Hugo Chavez is an influential member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and he supports the strategy of OPEC members to decrease oil output and maintain high oil prices. This stands in the way of U.S. government interests which would like to have the ability to manipulate oil prices thereby controlling an important aspect of the global economy (McQuaig, 2004). In addition, Chavez has strengthened the constitutional ban on the privatization of the state oil company, PDVSA - Petróleos de Venezuela Sociedad Anónima (Blum, 2004). The previous 60-year agreement taxed foreign oil companies as little as a one percent royalty while still allowing them tax breaks (Talbot, 2002). In order to continue his populist agenda, Chavez was required to change the way the country managed its rich oil resource. The changes angered the giant

transnational oil corporations and business interests which would have preferred to see the oil industry privatized. In “Coups making in Venezuela: The Bush and oil factor”, the author argues that one of the underlining motives of the failed April 2002 coup was an attempt to “privatize PDVSA, turning it over to a U.S. company linked to President George Bush and the Spanish company Repsol; plus the sale of CITGO, the U.S. subsidiary of PDVSA, to Gustavo Cisernos and his partners in the north; as well as an end to the Venezuelan government’s exclusive subsoil rights” (Talbot, 2002). By initiating the reversal of the traditional oil policy, which previously held the oil wealth in the hands of an elite few, Chavez became an important enemy of the Bush administration (Kozloff, 2006, p.5).

The United States is the “largest and most technologically advanced economy in the world” yet it is totally dependant on fossil fuel (Kern, 2006, para 8). Although the United States accounts for 5 percent of the world population, it consumes more oil than any other country in the world, approximately 25 percent of global daily consumption (Kern, 2006). Holding 3 percent of the world’s proven oil reserves the U.S. is dependent on foreign oil producers to satisfy its insatiable demand (Kern, 2006). Currently, 60 percent of the oil used in the U.S. is imported and this is expected to grow to 70 percent by the year 2025 (Kern, 2006). The reliance on imported oil is one of the main factors influencing American foreign and military policy. “The use of military power to protect the flow of oil has been a central tenet of U.S. foreign policy since 1945, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt promised King Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia that the United States would protect the kingdom in return for special access to Saudi oil” (Kern, 2006, para 4). In more contemporary times, the United States has used its military to protect supply routes, prop up friendly regimes, overthrow adversarial leaders and install compliant governments.

Chavez's Criticism of U.S. Foreign Policy and Trade

Chavez drew further attention from the U.S. government due to his open criticism of American foreign policy. Chavez publicly condemned the war with Afghanistan, stating it was “fighting terrorism with terrorism” (Blum, 2002, p.1). He denounced the ‘War on Iraq’ declaring it a bombing campaign and not a war (Blum, 2002). Regarding Venezuela’s relationship with Cuba, Chavez supported Cuba at the United Nations, directly petitioned President Clinton to end the embargo and opposed the Helms-Burton Law (Romero, 2002)³. Furthermore, Chavez has repeatedly denied the American government’s request to enter Venezuelan air space to pursue the initiatives of Plan Colombia and ‘the war on drugs’⁴.

Chavez openly opposed the U.S.-backed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). In an interview he was quoted as saying, that the “FTAA is the path to Hell” for South America (Palast, 2003, para 6). Venezuela’s position on the FTAA was “one of the main issues leading to acute confrontation” between the two nations (Lander, 2006, p.18). In Quebec City, at the Third Summit of the Americans in 2001, Venezuela maintained its position on the documents final negotiating schedule and on the accepted definition of democracy. Due to Venezuela’s position, for the first time in the history of the meetings, the final statement was not approved unanimously among the heads of the thirty-four member countries. During the Quito Ministerial Meetings of 2002, Chavez addressed the fact that the Venezuelan Constitution required a national referendum before such an important national policy could be agreed to or implemented

³ The Helms Burton Act extends the U.S. embargo against Cuba to penalize non-American companies for trading with Cuba.

⁴ Plan Colombia is an American initiative whose stated goal is to provide aid to the Colombian government in order to stabilize its economy and eliminate its coca fields. The program is controversial as 80 percent of the program is strictly military and government forces have been linked to right-wing paramilitary death squads. Additionally, the herbicides that are used to kill the coca plants destroy the legitimate crops of poor farmers. (Cooper, 2001) The program began in 2000 under the Clinton Administration and has given \$4.5 billion in aid to Colombia making it the top recipient of U.S. aid (Kern, 2006).

in Venezuela (Lander, 2006). The FTAA was an important U.S. trade agreement and Chavez's attempts to stall or subvert the process would have created conflict between the two nations.

Chavez has offered an alternative to the FTAA, called the Bolivarian Alternative for America (ALBA), which would see the wealthier nations of North and South America, fund development in the poorer states. The fact that South America could unite as an independent trading bloc is a threat to the current version of the FTAA, which favours American interests. As Venezuela pursues an independent course of development it serves as an example to other nations that there are other models of governance and development, besides the U.S. based neoliberal model. In his book *Against Empire*, Michael Parenti claims that "no country that pursues an independent course of development shall be allowed to prevail as a dangerous example to other nations" (Parenti, 1995). Therefore it is hardly surprising that Chavez has earned the wrath of the U.S. government.

Under Chavez's leadership, Venezuela progressively loosened its ties with the American dominated International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Shortly after taking office, Chavez paid Venezuela's debt to the IMF. In 2007, Venezuela repaid all debts to the World Bank five years in advance of their due date, thereby saving \$8 million dollars. As a symbolic gesture, in 2008, Chavez officially withdrew his country from both financial institutions and stated that it was the policies of the IMF and World Bank that were responsible for perpetuating poverty in Latin America. Chavez has proposed a Bank of the South, supported by oil money, to fund development projects in South America. 'Third world' or 'developing nations' which would have access to Venezuelan loans would not be beholden to the structural adjustment programs that are often conditions of borrowing from the World Bank and the IMF.

The National Endowment for Democracy : Puppet Master of American Foreign Policy

The promotion of “democracy” has been a fundamental part of U.S. foreign policy for most of the twentieth century. Since the 1980’s, when the U.S. became the world’s only superpower, “democracy promotion” began to play a greater role in international relations. The U.S. version of democracy promotion is synonymous with the expansion of economies and the promotion of free market principles. Latin American development was based on the adage that open economies “foster growth,” allow “greater political freedoms” and create democracies that are “reliable allies” (Youngers, 2000, p. 159). Generally, since the enactment of the Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. has acted as a paternalistic empire exploiting resources and influencing the internal affairs of Latin American countries.⁵ Domestic institutions and government agencies such as the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the state and justice departments, and government organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) were used to “strengthen” democratic institutions, principles and processes abroad (Romero, 2002; Golinger, 2008).

One of the most damaging institutions to have played a major role in Latin American affairs is the NED. The NED is an institution developed to provide political support to groups in other countries which are sympathetic to U.S. interests. As an extension of the American Congress, the NED is a key indicator of American foreign policy. Ron Paul, a U.S. Congressperson, writing for Anitwar.com describes the NED as “a heavily subsidized foreign policy loose cannon” (Paul, 2003, para 6). William Blum (2002) argues the NED was formed because of the negative international attention that the CIA received while performing

⁵ U.S. involvement in South America began with establishment of the Monroe Doctrine, 1823. The original purpose of the policy was to lessen the influence of colonial Europe on South American countries. The result was that it opened the door for the United States to play a major political role in the exploitation of South America. Roosevelt’s Corollary (1904) is an amendment to the Monroe Doctrine which justified the US as an international police force (Greene, 2005).

clandestine operations abroad. Allen Winstien, who assisted in drafting the initial NED legislation, said “A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA” (cited in Blum, 2000, p.179). As a quasi-private institution, the NED could continue to influence the political landscape of foreign countries while avoiding the stigma attached to the CIA. In regard to the situation in Venezuela, the NED, in cooperation with USAID, is proven to have played a destructive role in the April 2002 coup against Hugo Chavez by funding opposition parties and their affiliates (Golinger, 2005; Golinger, 2008).

After World War II, foreign governments, which were U.S. allies, experienced political resistance within their own countries. These political uprisings were viewed as a threat to democracy. The United States had no official organization to provide assistance to its allies. Instead,

U.S. policy makers resorted to covert means, secretly sending advisers, equipment, and funds to support newspapers and parties under siege in Europe. When it was revealed in the late 1960's that some American PVO's [Private Voluntary Organizations] were receiving covert funding from the CIA to ‘wage the battle of ideas at international forums,’ the Johnson Administration concluded that such funding should cease, recommending the establishment of ‘a public-private mechanism’ to fund overseas activities openly (Lowe, 2003, para 3).’

The idea of providing democratic support to one’s allies was first established in Germany. After WWII, German politics and political organizations were in disarray. In order to rebuild the political system, the German Federal Republic Party developed “stiftungen” or organizations dedicated to rebuilding the democratic institutions destroyed by the Nazis. There were four “stiftungen,” each one aligned with a major political party and each receiving funds

from the West German treasury. “In the 1960's they began assisting their ideological counterparts abroad, and by the mid-70's were playing an important role in both of the democratic transitions taking place on the Iberian Peninsula” (Lowe, 2003, para 6).

In 1977, George Agree, an American political consultant, suggested the creation of a foundation, based on the German model. The purpose of the foundation would be “to promote communication and understanding between the two major U.S. political parties and other parties around the world” (Lowe, 2003, para 8). By 1980, the American Political Foundation had been formed. Initially its role was to provide briefings, appointments, and assistance to visiting members of foreign political parties, members of foreign parliaments and academics. In 1982, in a speech at Britain’s Westminster Palace, then President Ronald Reagan, discussed a study by the American Political Foundation to “determine how the U.S. can best contribute--as a nation--to the global campaign for democracy now gathering force” (Lowe, 2003, para 9). This speech was seen as a key foreign affairs event that would eventually lead to the development of the National Endowment for Democracy. The American Political Foundation, with the assistance of a \$300,000 grant from the Agency for International Development, launched a study that would become known as the “The Democracy Program.”

The Democracy Program recommended the establishment of a bipartisan, private, non-profit corporation to be known as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The Endowment, though non-governmental, would be funded primarily through annual appropriations and subject to congressional oversight. NED, in turn, would act as a grant-making foundation, distributing funds to private organizations for the purpose of promoting democracy abroad. These private organizations would include those created by the two political parties and the

business community, which would join the regional international institutes of the labour movement already in existence (Lowe, 2003, para 9).

The NED, although considered non-governmental, would receive funding from the government and be accountable to congressional oversight. One of the proposed objectives of the NED was to act as a “grant-making foundation,” distributing funds to the private organizations under its umbrella “for the purpose of promoting democracy abroad” (Lowe, 2003, para 9).

The categorization of the NED as ‘non-governmental’ is interesting to note given that the organization is funded and supervised through the Department of State and Congress (Golinger, 2008). Furthermore, the NED is accountable to Congress, the highest American political body. This ‘quasi-government’ organization was funded exclusively by congressional funds until 1994. Now the organization receives funding of approximately \$30 million dollars per year, budgeted through the USIA (United States Information Agency).

In 1983, under the Reagan administration, the National Endowment for Democracy was officially formed and funded by an act of congressional legislation. Soon after its establishment, four affiliate organizations were created as ‘core grantees’ all falling under the NED umbrella: the Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the American Centre for International Labour Solidarity (ACILS) also known as Solidarity Centre. The affiliates represent the interests of business and private enterprise, the Democratic Party, the Republican Party and labour via the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labour-Congress of Industrial Organizations). Lastly, there are “discretionary grants” which are distributed directly by the NED to assist “pro-democracy” organizations abroad which are working in the areas of law, anti-

corruption, independent media and conflict resolution (Conry, 1993). In 1994, two additional organizations were developed under the NED umbrella, the International Forum for Democratic Studies (IFDS) and the (DRC) Democracy Resource Centre (Raman, 2002).

The Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, House Committee on International Status of Democracy in Latin America, describes the NED's role in Latin America as focusing on four key areas: access to justice and the rule of law; promoting greater accountability and transparency of elected governments; broadening and improving political representation and participation; and miscellaneous programs to address country specific concerns (Sabatini, 1999). Despite its altruistic language, the effects of the NED's programs are insidious, subverting progressive union movements, manipulating elections and helping to overthrow democratically elected governments (Blum, 2000). Since its inception, the National Endowment for Democracy has been active in South America. The NED has reflected American government interests of fighting communism over people's rights to sovereignty and self-determination (Golinger, 2008).

One of the main concerns of the NED's opponents is its status as a "quasi-private organization," dependent on the U.S. taxpayer for funding through the State Department. This organization has the latitude to pursue "an independent foreign policy under the guise of 'promoting democracy' " and is exempt from "all political and administrative controls" which is a contradiction to its responsibility to Congress (Conry, 1993, para 7). This "enables the U.S. Government to deny any responsibility for NED's activities, and the NED can claim it is an independent non-governmental organization (NGO), and thus not subject to governmental scrutiny or oversight" (Sripes, 2004, para 13). The power to set foreign policy is a privilege given to the federal government by the Constitution. In the case of Venezuela, we must critically examine where the money that the government gives the NED is being spent. Is the NED

promoting democracy, or meddling in the affairs of a sovereign nation, and attempting to eliminate the democratically elected leader, Hugo Chavez?

Overwhelmingly, the documents obtained by the Venezuelan Solidarity Committee, through the Freedom of Information Act, show an “intricate and meticulous pattern of financing to the Venezuelan opposition that basically is penetrating all sectors of Venezuelan society” (“Hugo Chavez Accuses,” 2004, para 12). Grants have been given to the agricultural sector, education, the legal sector, police, military, and, most importantly, to strengthen political parties. Chris Sabatini, spokesperson for NED, has attempted to portray the NED’s role as supporting and defending human rights. This claim seems less than accurate when compared against the fact that only anti-Chavez groups have received money through the various arms of the NED. In his paper titled “The NED targets Venezuela,” Bill Berkowitz describes the NED as follows:

[The] NED functions as a full-service infrastructure-building clearinghouse. It provides money, technical support, supplies, training programs, media know-how, public relations assistance, and state-of-the art equipment to select political groups, civic organizations, labour unions, dissident movements, student groups, book publishers, newspapers, and other media. The organization's aim is to destabilize progressive movements, particularly those with a socialist or democratic-socialist bent (Berkowitz, 2004, para 8).

Documents obtained through the Access to Information Act show that the NED has given over \$1 million to projects related to anti-Chavez groups (“Hugo Chavez Accuses”, 2004). The NED quadrupled its budget in Venezuela prior to the April 2002 coup. “In addition to the \$157,337 to ACILS, NED provided \$339,998 to the international wing of the Republican Party; \$210,000 to the international wing of the Democratic Party; and presumably another \$171,125 to the Centre

for International Private Enterprise, the international wing of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce” (Scipes, 2005, p.).

One of the main ways that the NED operates to create political turmoil is by influencing the role of organized labour. The ACILS (American Centre for Labour Solidarity or “Solidarity Centre”) receives money from the NED. NED provided ACILS \$587,926 from 1997 to 2001 and \$157,377 in 2001 (Scipes, 2004). The amount of \$587,926 represents one quarter of the total budget that went to the ACILS for its work with the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (CTV). In 2002, the NED spent \$1,099,352 in Venezuela of which the ACILS received \$116,001. In total ACILS received \$703,927 between the years of 1997 to 2002 for its work in Venezuela alone (Scipes, 2004).

ACILS is a branch of the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labour-Congress of Industrial Organizations). The CTV, with its notoriously corrupt leadership, is affiliated with the AFL-CIO. The CTV opposes Chavez due to his attempts to force the organization to reform. Carlos Ortega, CTV leader, worked closely with Pedro Carmona and was invited by an NED affiliate to Washington to meet with Otto Reich, Assistant Secretary for Western Hemispheric Affairs (Blum, 2004). Pedro Carmona, a member of the Venezuelan business elite group FEDECAMARAS, was the man who assumed the presidency in the April 2000 coup. The Washington meeting of these three men has been highly criticized due to their political interests and the timing of the meeting prior to the coup.

When the coup attempt was not successful the American government and the NED tried other means to remove Chavez from office. The initiative to begin the recall referendum against Chavez was also heavily funded by the United States through the NED. In September of 2003, the Venezuelan company Sumate received more than \$50,000 from the NED (Berkowitz, 2004).

Sumate injected itself into the recall referendum signature collection process offering logistical and technical support. The Venezuelan constitution already provides for the National Elections Council (CNE), a non-partisan government body, which is dedicated to election issues and regulation. Furthermore, international observers from the Carter Centre and the OAS (Organization of American States) ensured that the CNE was doing an “evenhanded job” (Berkowitz, 2004, para 15). Therefore, Venezuela did not have a need for a company to provide logistical or technical assistance. The second part of Sumate’s mandate was to train a network of volunteers to promote popular support for the referendum (Blum, 2004). In fact, Sumate volunteers worked as allies to the anti-Chavez campaign and its supporters.

Chris Sabatini, NED senior program officer for Latin America and the Caribbean, stated that the NED planned to donate \$922,000 in Venezuela, largely to groups opposing Chavez (Jones, 2004). In President Bush’s 2004 State of the Union address, he pledged to double the budget of the National Endowment for Democracy. When former Minnesota Republican Congressperson Vin Weber took over as chair of NED’s board in July 2001, he made it clear that the organization was interested in playing a more dominant role in shaping and supporting U.S. foreign policy objectives. That is exactly what it appears to be doing in Venezuela. This mandate by the United States ensures that there will be continued conflict between the two countries, as Chavez has reacted strongly to U.S. interference. Chavez has threatened to cut off oil shipments to the United States if the Bush administration persists in its efforts to undermine him (Jones, 2004).

Although the NED and other bureaucrats have attempted to deny the fact that the NED and its affiliates have tried to overthrow the Chavez government, their own reports suggest otherwise. A report entitled, “A Review of U.S. Policy Toward Venezuela—November 2001-

April 2002,” suggested that the endowment, the Pentagon, and other U.S. assistance programs “provided training, institution-building and support to individuals and organizations understood to be actively involved in the brief ouster of the Chavez government” (Jones, 2004, para 21). Critics say the NED activities in Venezuela parallel President Bush’s desire to topple Chavez, an accusation NED officials deny. Bush has proven to be a strong supporter of the NED, speaking at the group’s 20th anniversary celebration. In addition, the Senate and the House have passed resolutions saluting the endowment’s work (Jones, 2004).

Canadian Foreign Policy and Venezuela

According to Canadian government sources, the Canadian Consulate General was established in Caracas, in 1948. Since that time Canada and Venezuela have had unbroken diplomatic relations (“Canada-Venezuela Relations,” 2008). In 1953, the Canadian Consulate General was given embassy status and Henry G. Norman was named the first Canadian Ambassador. The establishment of a permanent embassy served to cultivate trade and investment ties with Venezuela. Canada imports more products from Venezuela than it exports, specifically Venezuelan oil. A trade surplus exists in agriculture where Canada exports more food goods and commodities (wheat, pulses, potatoes) to Venezuela than it imports (“Agriculture”, 2006). In terms of aid, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has provided assistance to Venezuela. This aid has been limited “in scope and [has] not included any long term projects” (“Foreign Affairs,” 2008). The Canadian Foreign Affairs website states that “since 2002, when political tensions in Venezuela increased, Canada has supported initiatives by the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Carter Centre to promote a peaceful and democratic resolution to problems in the country (“Foreign Affairs”, 2008, para 4).

On the surface Canada has had a mutually beneficial trade relationship with Venezuela and foreign relations between the two nations could ostensibly be classified as diplomatic. However, over the last decade Canada has allowed its international relations to be led by the United States. Canada, via its Liberal and Conservative governments, has matched many of its foreign policy initiatives and international relationships to those of the United States. This is evident in the signing of the Free Trade Agreement and the meshing of military and security policies. Although Canada has not played a leading role in the politics surrounding Latin America, in other international conflicts Canada has acted as a junior partner to the American empire.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The power of the U.S. propaganda system lies in its ability to mobilize an elite consensus, to give the appearance of democratic consent, and to create enough confusion, misunderstanding and apathy in the general population to allow elite programs to go forward (Herman, 1996, p.2).

For most of the general public the mass media are primary sources of information regarding current events, making them among the most powerful institutions in society (Ahmed, 2002). In a democratic society, it is imperative that the media act as conduits of information that transfer social, political and cultural information to the electorate. A healthy and functioning democracy with intrinsic checks and balances depends on a reasonably informed citizenship. The media are supposed to act as “intermediary vehicles that reflect public opinion, respond to public concerns and make the electorate cognizant of state policies, important events and viewpoints” (Klaehn, 2005[a], p.1). In today’s society the media are enmeshed in the established capitalist system, causing them to legitimize dominant ideological principles and promote economic systems that serve elite interests. Capitalist media tends to frame news discourse, limit the allowable spectrum of debate on issues and influence public opinion in a way that does not challenge the market system. By analyzing mainstream media we gain insight into the overall structure of society, the power relations between the public and powerful elites, as well as the ideologies produced by the media and their impact on society (Ahmed, 2002).

The Propaganda Model (PM)

The Propaganda Model (PM) was developed by Herman and Chomsky (1988/2002), as a framework for analysing and understanding the structure of American mainstream media. Herman and Chomsky (1988/2002) view the media as vehicles to amuse, entertain and inform,

while inculcating the general public with values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that integrate them into the structure of a larger capitalist society.

Initially, the PM was criticized as a 'conspiracy theory' because of its focus on the social-political power that lies behind the media allowing it to function as a system. The model suggests that free market forces affect the operation of the press in particular ways so that the media serve elite class interests. Jeffery Klaehn (2005[b]) views the conspiracy theory critique as merely a false label used to unfairly question the legitimacy of the model. Klaehn (2005[b]) rebuts this argument by stating that conspiracy "implies controls that are divorced from normal institutional channels," whereas, the PM looks at "patterns of media behaviour and attempts to explain them in structural terms" (p.223).

At first glance, we may associate 'media propaganda' with a state controlled media system. Herman and Chomsky (1988/2002) suggest that it is "difficult to see a propaganda model at work where the media are private and formal censorship is absent" (p. 1). The PM allows us to view the ways in which, even in a competitive market advocating free speech, the news is constructed in a particular way so as to serve elite class interests. According to the PM, news must pass through five filters before being consumed by its audience: (1) the size, ownership and profit orientation of major news sources; (2) advertising; (3) the sources of mass media news; (4) 'flak'; and (5) an anti-Communist filter. Together these filters represent the "multi-level capability of powerful, business and government entities and collectives (e.g., the Business Roundtable; U.S. Chamber of Commerce; industry lobbies and front groups) to exert power over the flow of information" (Herman, 1996, p.1).

Ownership acts as a media filter because it forms the structural context in which news is produced. Free market conditions, the constant drive for profits, and the enormous capital

investment required to own a news agency has concentrated the media into the hands of wealthy individuals, families, and corporations. The dominant elites, who control media production, share common political, economic and social interests that are then reflected in the media (Klaehn, 2005 [a]). They share common interests with “major corporations, banks, and government” (Ahmed, 2002, p.4). Media conglomerates may have “interlocking” board members, where one person sits on the board of more than one corporation. Being interlocked with other large corporations allows the board of directors or executives to use their influence and contacts to further their business agendas.

In the United States, media outlets have consolidated to form media conglomerates that control almost every aspect of media development, production, and distribution. McChesney and Waterman (2000) state that the media trends of the 21st century are toward increased corporate concentration, conglomeration, and hypercommercialism. These large media entities are profit-oriented corporations which are often integrated into the stock market and subject to pressures from stockholders, directors and bankers (Ahmed, 2002). This situation is particularly concerning because some of the businesses that the conglomerates own, specifically the media, are responsible for providing the general public with news, information and entertainment. In *The New Media Monopoly*, author Ben Bagdikian (2004) states that the majority of American media are currently controlled by five “global dimension firms” (p.12). The concentration of ownership is significantly different from prior decades (i.e. the 1980’s), when fifty companies were identified as dominant media corporations. By 2003, Time Warner was the largest conglomerate in the world, followed closely by The Walt Disney Company; Murdoch News Corporation of Australia; Viacom; and Bertelsmann of Germany. The ‘Big Five,’ as they are known, have holdings in all the various modes of media, from newspapers, magazines, book

publishers, motion picture productions, to radio and television. Furthermore, concentrated conglomerate control of media presents a possible conflict of interest when a news agency reports on affairs in which the parent company has direct or indirect dealings.

Canada has one of the highest levels of ownership concentration for media outlets in the industrialized world (Manifesto, 2008, para. 3). “Today, four conglomerates control 70 percent of the country’s daily papers, three corporations broadcast most of the televised news and two companies own the majority of radio stations” (Manifesto, 2008, para 4). In the case of Canadian daily newspapers, concentration of ownership has increased over the last four years. As of 2006, thirteen media companies owned all of the daily newspapers. Many of the largest daily newspaper companies have increased the number of papers they own. For example, Quebecor/Sun Media went from owning four papers in 1994 to seventeen in 2006. By comparison, independently owned newspapers have declined from ten in 1994, to four in 2006 (“A profile,” 2007).

Our news is further homogenized when we consider that media conglomerates often centralize news production and disseminate the same news to all of their media platforms (Manifesto, 2007, para. 3). For example, the *Globe and Mail* is owned by the multimedia company CTV Globemedia Inc. In addition to the national newspaper, CTV Globemedia also operates 27 conventional television stations across the country, with interests in 35 specialty channels; CHUM division radio, which operates 35 radio stations in different areas of the country; and Dome Productions which is a high definition production facility (CTVglobemedia, 2008).

Advertising revenue significantly impacts the budget of a newspaper and serves to offset production costs. Without sufficient advertising a newspaper cannot be economically viable

under the free market system. Although newspapers are produced to be sold to subscribers, circulation revenue accounts for far less of the total revenue of a newspaper than advertising. For this reason, newspapers that rely on subscription fees alone are at a severe disadvantage and are often forced out of business. Due to the exorbitant amount of money derived from advertising dollars one could argue that it is the advertisers that decide which media outlets are viable and which ones are doomed to fail. Under this system, consumer demand has almost no influence over the success of a newspaper. Instead, media prosperity and survival are determined by the advertising decisions of big business (Herman & Chomsky, 1988/2002).

Media outlets require a continuous volume of information, which they can process into news stories. The cost of investigating information and gathering facts about pertinent current events causes the media to concentrate their efforts where significant news occurs, and where regular press conferences are held (Herman & Chomsky, 1988/2002). Therefore, media outlets are often forced to rely on information from governments, corporations, trade groups, or universities. These sources are seen as credible, standardized, and reliable producers of information due to their status and prestige. According to the PM, the media's mandate to use 'official sources' or the power that government and corporate sources have is a filter that the news must pass through.

Additionally, corporate sources have sophisticated and well-funded public relations departments producing pre-packaged information and lobbying materials. Herman and Chomsky (1988/2002) suggest that large bureaucracies of the powerful "subsidize the mass media," and gain special access because their contributions reduce the media's costs of acquiring the "raw materials of information" (p.22). Through their co-dependent relationship with the media,

bureaucrats and corporate executives have the power to ‘manage the news’ by flooding the media with stories promoting a particular bias.

Occasionally, media statements or programs may offend individuals or groups of people. When individuals or groups protest the media in some way, such as by writing letters, petitions, logging complaints or staging boycotts they are producing ‘flak’ for the media. Advertisers do not want to be associated with controversial, ‘flak’ producing issues. The PM argues that because of the mass media’s dependence on revenue from advertising, they are forced to self-monitor messages, programs, or stories that may produce ‘flak.’ Consumers are not the only ones who produce ‘flak’ in response to offensive programs or stories. The rich and powerful can produce ‘flak’ directly, through the use of connections and political pressure, or indirectly by funding right-wing think tanks. Right-wing think tanks push the agenda that the media are too ‘liberal’ and do not fairly represent the interests of business. Right-wing ‘flak’ impacts the media that are conditioned to “expect trouble (and cost increase) for violating right-wing standards of bias” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988/2002, p.28).

Over the last twenty years, world politics have shifted, and there is little threat of former Communist powers or, more generally, of state Communist ideology, dominating the world order. Although Communism is no longer a threat to American hegemony, the media’s need to ‘protect’ us from viewing alternative economic models as viable is alive and well. Herman and Chomsky’s reference to an “anti-Communist filter” has now come to be known by other names, such as the “evil-empire filter” or the “anti-ideology filter.” This filter is synonymous with supporting capitalist ideology while demonizing anyone or anything perceived as a threat to the free market system. By instilling fear of a perceived enemy, elites can terrify the general population into supporting continuous arms production and aggressive military mandates

(Cromwell, 2002). The concept of a perceived enemy is intentionally unclear so it can be used to discipline or control anyone who is against a free market ideology (Klaehn, 2002). This narrowing of debate creates a situation where the spectrum of political discussion presented in the news is limited to conservative ideas. Dissenting voices, or voices purposing alternatives, are discredited or silenced.

Not only are enemies of the market attacked, there is an almost religious belief in the free market itself. The anti-Communist filter can be expanded to include a belief in the free market as a 'benevolent' and 'self-sustaining' economic model. Any economic incidents that may expose the failings of the free market system are manipulated to reinforce the 'the miracle of the market' (Herman, 2003). For example, the stagnation of the 1980s Soviet Union market was assigned to the absence of markets, while the collapse of capitalist Russia, in the 1990s, was blamed on the politicians and workers who did not allow the market to 'work it's magic' (Herman, 2003). The anti-communist filter serves to automatically dismiss progressive alternatives by labelling them 'Communist' thereby reinforcing the neoliberal model. Amplifying the power of this filter is the fact that the market economy is presented as if there is no alternative (TINA). Previous failed 'state capitalist' models, that have been referred to as 'communist,' are used as evidence that alternatives to capitalism are futile. Furthermore, non-free market economic initiatives or models are presented as unrealistic or utopian.

The fact that market economic policies are developed to serve the capitalist system is rarely discussed in the media. In the article "Extending and Refining the Propaganda Model," Sparks (2007) argues that although capitalists, as a class, may compete on an individual level they have a common agenda. Capitalists are concerned with maintaining their rights to "dispose of the means of production as private property and to ensure that they are able to expropriate the

surpluses generated in production” (Sparks, 2007 p.72). Further to their economic interests, historically, the capitalist class has had common political interests and has been closely intertwined with the nation state (Sparks, 2007). The situation in Venezuela is heavily influenced by how the American nation state has tried to influence the outcome of the Bolivarian Revolution. According to Sparks (2007), “it is the collusion between the interests of capital and the policy of the state that is the substance of modern imperialism” (p.73). The PM is useful when examining the media coverage of Venezuela because it acknowledges that the elite western media maintain a propaganda function by “adhering to an imperialist ideology and by legitimizing U.S. interventionist forays” (Klaehn, 2002[a], p.167). By doing so the media indirectly protect capitalist corporations while they exploit the natural resources of the developing world (Klaehn, 2002[a]).

As a result of the five filters which potential news stories must pass through, citizens receive a sanitized version of the news. In the mass commercial media we are likely to see news that reflects the interests of media owners, does not offend advertisers, and that relies on ‘credible’ bureaucratic sources. The general public can expect news to promote the interests of dominant elite groups and oppose or vilify any ‘anti-capitalist’ views or challenges to the status quo. Herman and Chomsky (1988/2002) suggest that the filters are a natural consequence of free market forces allowed to operate without significant government control. In general, capitalist ideology and the profit motive determine what becomes news, and how it is reported, interpreted and produced.

While I have briefly outlined the five filters of the PM here, for the purposes of this thesis I will focus mainly on the fifth filter. My rationale for doing so reflects Herman and Chomsky’s acknowledgement that the anti-communist filter- as originally conceptualized- may not be as

relevant in today's post-Communist world. As previously noted, there have been considerable shifts in the global political landscape since the PM was first conceived. However, while blatant anti-Communism may no longer be employed directly, echoes of it are clearly discernible in the media coverage of countries, such as Venezuela, which have challenged the free market orthodoxy of neoliberal ideology and the "Washington consensus." Therefore, in subsequent chapters, I will foreground the anti-Communist filter since the North American mainstream media's privileging of capitalism over socialism arguably informs the criticisms of the Chavez government. This filter best illustrates the ways in which the news is produced and shaped in order to present a particular image of Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Project.

Criticisms of the Propaganda Model

Although the PM is generally accepted as one of the most thoroughly researched and empirically verified models of media analysis, there have been some scholarly criticisms of the work. One common charge against the model suggests that the authors have failed to solicit the input of reporters regarding their actual working conditions and the editorial pressures they face (Herman, 1996). Furthermore, critics suggest the PM discounts journalists' abilities to remain professional and objective. These critics fail to realize that the 'professionalism' movement in the press was not an autonomous movement of the workers against the media owners. It was encouraged by owners and therefore has served to allow journalists to internalize some of the owner's commercial values particularly around attaining credible, official and inexpensive sources (Herman, 2003). Critics like Hallin and LaFeber (cited in Herman, 1996) discuss Ronald Reagan's interventionist policies in South America as examples of media reporting that ran counter to U.S. foreign policy. This example is used to imply that the PM is not conscious of situations where the media have opposed or resisted elite policy. Herman and Chomsky

(1988/2002) clearly state that there are conditions that will lead to varied media coverage of events when elites are divided or have limited interest in an issue. In this case, a ‘range of debate’ may ensue, although the debate will likely be a disagreement of methods versus overall interests. In the case of Reagan’s South American agenda, the debate focused on which tactics to use not whether the U.S. had the fundamental right to pursue an interventionist policy (Herman, 2003). In many respects, this is similar to contemporary media coverage of the “war on terror” – while tactics and military strategy are often debated within the “bounds” of the permissible, American foreign policy and its imperial ambitions are rarely, if ever, accorded critical attention.

The other major criticism of the model is that it views media behaviour from an overly deterministic stance and tends to be plagued by sociological reductionism (Klaehn, 2002). In addition, critics claim the model is mechanical and functionalist (Herman, 2003). Suggesting that the model is determinist ignores the fact that all models have determinist elements. One must prove that a model is “not logically consistent, operates on false premises, or that the predictive power of the determining variables is poor” for that assumption to be valid (Herman, 1996/2003). One of the strengths of the PM is that it uses “mechanisms and policies,” which lie behind the system, to illustrate how “the powerful protect their interests naturally and without overt conspiracy” (Herman, 2003, p.7). The model is able to expose a “dynamic and self protecting system in operation” (Herman, 2003, p.7). Despite such critiques, the PM is generally accepted by communications scholars as an important framework for analyzing media structures and news outputs. In addition, the model is recommended as an essential resource for media literacy by groups such as Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), the Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy (GRIID), and the Oxford-based Corporate Watch (Ahmed, 2002).

Critical Discourse Analysis

In addition to using the PM as a conceptual framework, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be used as a methodology to analyse the articles of the *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail*. In the past, news has been viewed for its political, social, or psychological aspects while the fact that the news itself is a particular discourse has been ignored (Van Dijk, 1988). Media discourse and news reports are now acknowledged in their own right as “particular types of language use or text and as specific kinds of sociocultural practice” (Van Dijk, 1988, p.2).

CDA uses a multidisciplinary approach to research relevant social problems and political issues affecting people’s lives. It aims to do more than antiseptically describe discourse structures and instead aims to explain discourse in relation to larger social and political contexts. CDA attempts to show the interrelationship between the text, the discursive practices that create and interpret the text, and the larger social context (Huckin, 2005). This approach differs from other forms of textual analysis because it tends to take an ‘ethical stance’ against “power imbalances, social inequities, non-democratic practices and other injustices” (Huckin, 2005, p. 2). CDA specializes in deconstructing the meaning of texts (written or oral) that are “deemed to be politically or culturally influential to a given society” (Huckin, 2005, p.2). Texts are viewed as being products of “discursive practices, including production, distribution and interpretation,” which are immersed in “social practices” (Huckin, 2005, p.2). CDA attempts to expose how socially constructed views of reality are created to favour dominant forces in society.

Huckin (2005) has outlined a very effective and pragmatic method of approaching written text which I use when examining the newspaper coverage of the 2002 coup against Hugo

Chavez. Huckin's strategy suggests reading any given text from two perspectives – first more broadly as a 'typical reader,' then with more depth as a 'critical reader.'

Huckin identifies five categories which can be used to analyze the production of media texts. A text is read for its perspective, angle or slant, which is referred to as framing.

Foregrounding /backgrounding occurs when an article gives prominence to certain concepts and/or de-emphasizes other concepts. This can be as a result of style or due to structural expectations of certain genres. One of the most egregious forms of backgrounding is omission. Omission is particularly important because readers do not have the opportunity to challenge something that is not presented as part of the discussion. Readers can also be manipulated through the writer's use of presuppositions. Presupposition, refers to the use of language that takes certain ideas for granted while giving the impression that there is no alternative.

Discursive differences, or the writer's change of style, can be used to emphasize the authority or expertise of one position within a text.

Once the researcher has assessed the text as a whole, Huckin suggests reading the text on a 'sentence to sentence' level. For this level of analysis, a variety of elements are highlighted. Topicalization is a sentence level version of foregrounding where the sentence topic position is used to reinforce importance in the text. Choosing which subject is put in the topic position of a sentence is a choice made by the writer and provides insight into the article's perspective or slant. It is also important to notice which subjects are put in the agent position (active exerting power) and which subjects are described from a patient (passive recipient) perspective. At the sentence level, agentless passive construction occurs in order to delete or omit the agent all together. For example, a headline reading "Massacre of 25 Villagers" does not give any insight into who may be guilty of the crime (Huckins, 2005). A critical reader would discover various

forms of assumptions in the body of a text, mainly in the form of presuppositions or insinuations. Both of these elements are difficult to challenge, as they are easily and subtly manipulated aspects of the text. Presuppositions occur when a statement is made which leads the reader to assume the statement is actually a taken-for-granted fact. Insinuations are suggestive comments with a double meaning and if questioned, the writer can claim the less inflammatory meaning.

Finally, Huckin (2005) suggests viewing the text from the level of words and phrases while looking for connotations, labels metaphors, register and modality. Connotations give certain words or phrases special meanings derived from their common use in a social context. Connotations can take the form of labels or can be conveyed using metaphors or figures of speech. The level of formality or informality and its degree of technicality are considered the register of the text. Discourse can also be read for its modality, or the tone of statements with regard to their degree of certitude and authority. Phrases “like, may, might, could, will, must, it seems to be, without a doubt, and it’s possible” denote modality (Huckin, 2005, p. 8).

Article Selection

To search for potential newspaper articles I used the *Proquest Historical Newspapers* database, the *New York Times* and the *Canadian Newsstand* database. To obtain articles, I searched each database using the keywords ‘Chavez’ and ‘Venezuela’. Initially, the search parameters were set for the time frame of 1998, when Chavez was first elected, until 2004. As this was an unmanageable sample and resulted in many irrelevant articles, I changed the time frame of my search. A time frame spanning from December 2001 to December 2002 allowed for the inclusion of articles leading up to the April 2002 coup attempt, and encompassed all relevant articles after the coup.

The sample that I worked with included eighteen articles from the *Globe and Mail* and sixty articles from the *New York Times*. Given my intent to focus mainly on the fifth filter of the propaganda model – anti-communism and its more contemporary configurations – I conducted a preliminary examination of the articles to look for discernible patterns in the way in which the events related to the 2002 coup were covered. That analysis revealed that certain themes such as pro-neoliberalism, “democracy” –or more specifically, the conflation of democracy with free market ideology, and characterizing political figures who challenged neoliberal orthodoxy (in this case, Hugo Chavez) as anti-democratic and even sympathetic to terrorism shaped and informed the coverage of the 2002 coup in Venezuela.

Like many critical qualitative approaches, CDA emphasizes the importance of self-reflexivity and thus demands that the researcher identify any personal involvement with the issue under investigation. Therefore, it must be noted that in 2006, I had the opportunity to travel to Venezuela and view, first hand, some of the government initiatives and their social impacts. While in Caracas, I toured day care centres, workers’ cooperatives, medical clinics and subsidized markets. One of the most impressive of the government initiatives was the ‘Barrio Adentro’ program which established small medical clinics in poor neighbourhoods where people previously had no access to medical treatment. Many poor neighbourhoods lacked running water, sanitary systems and roadways. In the midst of these impoverished conditions are small modern buildings which have all of the equipment to provide basic medical treatment. The medical clinics are staffed by Cuban doctors through a trade arrangement that exchanges doctors for oil.

Having had the opportunity to speak to some working class Venezuelan people, I was overwhelmed by their passion and commitment to Hugo Chavez. The topic of my thesis has

been inspired by the recent political situation in Venezuela and by the Venezuelan people who have been willing to struggle for a different type of society. The vision of President Chavez and the Venezuelan people has been challenged many times, predominantly by American interests who still view the countries of South America in a paternalistic way, as ripe for exploitation. Despite these challenges the people of Venezuela have led the way to a collective pursuit toward socialism.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA COVERAGE

We may agree that the point, as always, is not to interpret the world but to change it; the problem, however, is that to interpret it convincingly is to change it. (Attridge, 2004, p.121)

The Propaganda model (PM) argues that the corporate media legitimize the dominant ideology “by systematically defending the principal economic, social and political agendas of dominant elites and social institutions” (Klaehn, 2005[a], p. 7). Herman and Chomsky predict that the propaganda function of the media will be apparent when analyzing the media’s selection of stories, quantity and quality of coverage, and manner in which some stories are handled over others (Klaehn, 2005[a]). In regard to the political situation in Venezuela, elite interests favour the removal of Hugo Chavez. In an era of accelerated globalization, Chavez has rejected the violence of the American empire and has abandoned the neoliberal model in favour of an economic system that prioritizes social welfare (Gindin, 2004). Based on the predictions of the PM, particularly the ‘anti-communist’ filter, we expect to find newspaper coverage that justifies the interests of an elite driven neoliberal agenda while discrediting alternative economic models. The current world order is dominated by American imperialist views which advocate for neoliberal globalization. The expanded definition of the fifth filter alerts readers to media coverage favouring a free market system, American economic interests and American foreign policy. The following discussion of the media coverage of the April 2002 coup against Hugo Chavez is based on the theoretical foundations of the PM, specifically the anti-communist filter as it is now understood. Critical Discourse Analysis is employed to examine the media coverage of the coup in the *Globe and Mail (GM)* and *The New York Times (NYT)*.

Tensions Build Prior To the Coup

The articles published by the *NYT* in the days leading up to April 11, 2002 seemed to warn of an impending coup. The news coverage of the coup focused on the perspectives of right wing groups opposed to Chavez. Generally, the coverage systematically foregrounded the concerns of the groups who were directly responsible for inciting the coup: the Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CTV), a right wing labour union, high ranking military officers and the oil company bosses. Articles published in the *NYT*, from March 26th to April 11th, centred around a perceived military dissatisfaction with Chavez's leadership and a 'labour dispute' at the state owned oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA). Surprisingly, in the tumultuous days leading up to the coup there was no coverage of the events taking place in Venezuela by the *GM*. The only pre-coup article that may have alerted readers of a political conflict in Venezuela was published a full month before tensions reached their peak. On February 15, 2002, Paul Knox discussed Chavez's presidency and briefly made mention of the strained political situation that existed in the country (Knox, 2002[c], p.A19).

Pre-coup Discussion of the Military

At the time of the coup, some right wing military officers took political positions against President Chavez and in line with the Venezuelan elite. One of the first order predictions of the PM is that the media will "suppress and distort, advocate and promote in the interest of establishing an ideologically serviceable consensus that will legitimize and facilitate corporate and state moneyed interests" (Klaehn, 2005[a], p.11). The *NYT* article of March 26, one of the longest and most in-depth pre-coup articles, is framed to give credibility to the complaints of a small group of military officers opposed to Chavez. The reporter foregrounded the high-ranking military officers desire to have Chavez removed as President. Quotes from military Admiral

Molina call on all Venezuelans to “unite to demand the immediate resignation of President Chavez” (Forero, 2002[j], p.A3). The article goes on to discuss how, “officers close to the military say the discontent in the armed forces has risen sharply as more Venezuelans have turned on its once-popular leader” (Forero, 2002[j], p.A3). The article’s only counter to the charges are two short statements from the government, one from president Chavez saying, “there are no serious threats from the military ranks to the nation” and another from armed forces top Commander Lucas Rincon declaring “there are people who are inciting rebellion, calling for a coup d’etat, promoting confrontation, they are playing with fear and panic, it is very dangerous” (Forero, 2002[j], p.A3). There are clear discursive differences in the way that the two contradicting positions are presented in the coverage. Most notable is the fact that the reporter wrote the article from the perspective of the military and not the incumbent government thereby placing the military in the active agent position—initiating actions and exerting power. The government’s perspective was backgrounded by the lack of coverage in contrast to the military’s position, the defensive frame, and placement near the end of the article.

Omitted from the article were the *exact* reasons certain high-ranking members of the military were opposed to Chavez. Instead, the author gave a general sense that the officers had simply turned on the left-leaning Venezuelan president (Fonero, 2002[j]). Nowhere in the article did it state specifically which left-leaning policies the officers were opposed to or what they perceived might be their disastrous impacts. The passing of the Bolivarian constitution changed the role of the military, expanding its function from a security force to a social agency. The change allows the military to be called on to fulfill various aspects of social policy ranging from building houses to delivering food. Although the fact that the military’s role has change is

mentioned briefly, there is no discussion regarding the policy's positive social impacts or the military's potential distress about their new role.

It is interesting to note that the reporter from the *NYT* chose statements from Mr Carratu, a former director of the Institute for National Defence Studies (INDS), a foreign organization, to support his article. Carratu claims to have been in contact with many active officers who “are of the belief that if society does not organize to take steps, they [the military] are going to have to take control” (Forero, 2002[j], p.A3). He further stated that the military did not want “blood shed to oust Chavez;” nor [did] they want to “gain a place in history with a coup.” Instead, “if they want to pass into history, then what they want to do is support civil society in its protests” (Forero, 2002[j], p.A3). Framing the discussion in this way gives the impression that it was the entire military body which had turned on the President. In reality there were only four military officers who made strategic statements intentionally attempting to incite a coup. The fact that it was the military which intended to take control if Chavez was overthrown was not challenged by the reporter. Furthermore, there was no discussion of what the proper democratic, constitutional channels would be if the government were to collapse - something which is outlined in the constitution.

Although the article states that the military was not calling for a coup, it is very clear that they were attempting to incite a coup. The reporter presupposes that the military had the right to challenge the government and call for a coup. Rick Rozoff of the website the *Emperor's New Clothes* best sums up how slanted this news coverage was by saying “To put things in perspective, imagine a U.S. Colonel demanding a popularly elected president step down. The press would be full of warnings about threats to democracy, the rule of law, national security and stability” (cited in Gowans, 2002, para 34).” Instead, Chavez was criticized for previously

forcing disloyal military officers into retirement. One can only imagine what would happen to high-ranking officers who attempted to incite a coup against a Western government.

Pre-coup factors: Oil Policy or Oil Executives

The expanded 'anti-communist' filter of the PM predicts that media coverage of an event will promote corporate interests while presenting alternatives to the free market model as unattainable or utopian. In discussions of government policy specifically, Herman and Chomsky maintain reporting will typically be framed to "legitimize and facilitate elite (geo)political-economic interests and prevent opposition to corporate hegemony" (Klaehn, 2005[a], p.11). In fact, news coverage of the 'oil strike' at PDVSA followed this pattern closely. The state oil company, PDVSA, has always been at the centre of the ideological struggle between privatization and public ownership. The Venezuelan elite advocated for the formal privatization of PDVSA while the vast majority of citizens believed PDVSA should be held as a state resource. The new constitution, written under the Chavez government, declares that "for reasons of economic and political sovereignty and of national strategy, the state will maintain the totality of the shares of PDVSA or of the entity created to manage the oil industry" (Wilpert, 2007, p.94). The intention of this clause in the constitution was to make a definitive break from the neoliberal economic policies that previous governments had pursued in regard to PDVSA (Wilpert, 2007). With the passing of the new constitution PDVSA was reaffirmed as a national entity and a property of the government.

The media coverage of the labour dispute at PDVSA, presupposes that workers and the managers were united against Chavez's policies. A *NYT* article published just prior to the coup, states that employees at PDVSA had "orchestrated a successful work slowdown to protest moves by President Hugo Chavez to exert greater control over the company and to divert more of its

profit to the national treasury” (Banerjee, 2002[c], p.A1). At issue was the fact that Chavez replaced board members at PDVSA with people faithful to him, people who shared the ideology of the Bolivarian process. In general, the coverage foregrounded the concerns of executives, backgrounded the desires of the Venezuelan people and omitted changes to the constitution that justified Chavez’s actions. Any discussion regarding the executives’ attempts to privatize the national oil company were completely absent from the coverage. Generally, the media coverage of PDVSA was framed to promote privatization as natural and logical, while Chavez’s policies were made to seem extreme or radical.

The *NYT* quotes Chavez’s criticism of PDVSA as being run as a ‘state within a state,’ yet the reporter did not provide any context for this statement (Forero, 2002[i]). Previously, PDVSA was being operated as its own entity with oil executives benefiting from what should have been the nation’s wealth. PDVSA was rife with corruption, wastefulness, misappropriated funds, cronyism and nepotism. Executives were living luxurious lifestyles while there was little accountability for profits. Managers were known to have awarded themselves enormous salaries and to have diverted funds to private companies they controlled outside the country (McQuaig, 2004). In her book, *It’s The Crude Dude*, Linda McQuaig (2004) describes PDVSA as a “world of its own, a privileged, self-perpetuating dynasty in the midst of a land of poverty, feeding off the country’s fabulous oil wealth (p.111).”

Prior to Chavez assuming the presidency, PDVSA executives found a loophole in the ban on foreign investment and placed ‘marginal’ oil fields out for international bid (Margonelli, 2007). Company executives had planned to privatize PDVSA and were holding discussions about how to permanently remove the influence of the state (Margonelli, 2007). PDVSA’s profits were being rerouted to avoid the state treasury by selling discounted oil to its subsidiaries

abroad. “By the late 1990’s PDVSA was transferring as much as \$500 million per year from Venezuela to its foreign subsidiaries” and these subsidiaries did not pay dividends back to the parent company (Wilpert, 2007, p. 91). In addition to this income diversion scheme, PDVSA lobbied the government for a reduction in its already low tax obligations, arguing that tax payments were undermining the company’s ability to invest in technological advances (Parker, 2006). Knowledge of the corrupt, bureaucratic practises of PDVSA provide some context to Chavez’s statement claiming PDVSA was operating outside of the government as a ‘state within a state’.

President Chavez could not change the direction of the oil company without changing some of the people who were in key positions and had been part of the privatization attempt. Chavez’s new oil policies were made through the democratic process of the new constitution and ratified by the Venezuelan people in a popular referendum. In Western countries, by comparison, it is an accepted fact that the state law impacts business practices. If the laws of the land change, it is the responsibility of the board of directors and company executives to run the business within the framework of the new laws. If a major corporation underwent a change of fundamental policy and company executives did not want to adopt the new philosophy, they would face the possibility of being fired. North American media would likely report that company executives were terminated for failure to follow the company’s new policies.

Clearly, corporate hegemony and a belief in the ‘miracle of the market’ informed the media coverage of PDVSA. There was no criticism of the corruption and waste that occurred when the company was being run as a market driven business. Instead, Chavez’s policies were presented as the reason for the instability in the oil market and the frustration of the company

executives. In implementing the reforms laid out in the constitution and re-nationalizing PDVSA, Chavez was called a dictator, described as autocratic and uncompromising.

The Oil ‘Strike’

The articles preceding the coup were framed to give the sense that business and labour leaders were opposed to Chavez’s policies in the oil industry and that their opposition was representative of the population as a whole. Former American trade minister, Moises Naim, now working in the United States for *Foreign Policy Magazine*, is quoted in the *NYT* as saying that the labour dispute has “brought together large swaths of society, and they see it as an opportunity to get rid of Chavez” (Banjeree, 2002[c], p.A1). In fact, not all labour leaders were opposed to Chavez and many were in support of changes that redistributed the country’s oil wealth. The ‘work slowdown’ and ‘strike’ by the business leaders and middle management were discussed in the lead up to the coup as if they were democratic protests and not economic sabotage or a violation of state law.

During the oil strike, Carlos Ortega from the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (CTV) and Pedro Carmona head of Fedecámaras - the Chamber of Commerce, are quoted as calling for an extension to the strike. In the weeks that followed, both of these men were implicated as key figures in the April 14th coup attempt. Missing from the article is any question as to why a supposedly independent trade union would be supporting the actions of the business association and particularly, why a trade union would be opposed to money from the nation’s main government owned corporation, PDVSA, going into the national treasury for social programs. The situation presented is so far removed from labour’s traditional principles that it would be as odd as a trade union striking to increase CEO salaries. Secondly, there was no mention that the union involved, the CTV, is a historically bureaucratic and corrupt union that

did not hold free secret ballot elections until the Chavez government made it the law for unions to do so (Gindin, 2004). In addition, the CTV has been repeatedly criticized for ‘working with the bosses’ and for being a part of the Venezuelan oligarchy (Fuentes, 2005). Gregory Wilpert (2002) asks some key questions in regard to the oil strike:

Are the Chamber of Commerce, the labour federation leadership, the upper class, and significant sectors of the middle class really primarily concerned about the ‘politicization’ of PDVSA and the appointment of pro-government board of directors? (p. 4). Does opposition to these appointments justify a general strike? Definitely not (Wilpert, 2002, p.4).

These are excellent questions to consider and the reader is left wondering why these same questions were not asked in the mainstream media.

Articles published in the *NYT* generally gave the sense that protests by the oil workers had the support of the broader labour community and that the work stoppage was gaining support among the general public. An April 11th *NYT* article by Juan Forero, filled with anti-Chavez commentary, contained one small paragraph at the end of the article which concluded with “officials said most Venezuelans continued to support Mr. Chavez, adding that few people took part in the work stoppage, which began to wane in its second day” (Forero, 2002[f], p.A6). In fact, the strike was initiated by Fedecámaras, of which the majority of large businesses were members. Businesses associated with Fedecámaras would have participated in the ‘strike’ by closing their doors and effectively locking out their employees. Although the media portrayed the strike as having had widespread support, it is difficult to tell if workers actually believed in the strike and stayed away from work to protest the government or whether they were absent due to businesses being closed by management (Wilpert, 2002). When one takes into account the

public and informal sectors, it seems a large percentage of workers did not participate in the general strike. Workers in the informal sector continued to sell their wares on the street and many other businesses remained open (Wilpert, 2002). All government offices and banks were open for business accounting for approximately 40 percent of Venezuela's workforce.

Summary of Pre-Coup Articles

In contrast to the six articles published in the *NYT*, the *Globe and Mail* (*GM*) did not allocate any coverage to the pressures mounting in the days leading up to the Venezuelan coup. There was little significant coverage until President Chavez was removed from power and the coup had begun. In total, pre-coup coverage consisted of a short article by Paul Knox, published on February 15, describing Hugo Chavez's presidency and a sixty word brief, on April 11. Paul Knox's article, printed approximately one month before the coup, labels Chavez a "blowhard" who has "railed against dastardly elites—the rich, the media, the Roman Catholic Church" (Knox, 2002[c], p.A19). The main focus of the article was the decrease in oil prices occurring in the world market. The argument the author presented was that the success of the Chavez government was dependent on oil prices. Knox suggests, "As long as oil prices were high and he [Chavez] was able to spread some of the profits around, his popularity remained strong." Knox took an inflammatory position when he stated that "demagoguery and political marketing only get you so far. After you win there's still a country to run – in this case a troubled nation of 24 million people" (Knox, 2002[c], p.A19). The insinuation was that Chavez's policies were not based on any viable economic alternative and that without the oil wealth Chavez could not lead the country. Knox leads the reader to believe Chavez's popularity was based on charity and not on sound political policy or his ability to improve the material conditions of the Venezuelan people. The article implies that Chavez was not capable of instituting real change and goes as far

as to say that he was damaging public institutions. In reality, Chavez had, at that point in his presidency, already established social programs that positively impacted the lives of many Venezuelans, as previously discussed.

One can only surmise the reasons for the *GM*'s newsroom decision not to follow the events that occurred in the days that led up to the coup. One possibility is that, unlike the United States, there was a lack of conflict between the Venezuelan and Canadian governments therefore having made the situation less newsworthy to Canadian readers. As Venezuela is not one of Canada's main trading partners, events occurring in that nation do not have as large an impact as they would in the United States. The papers editors could have seen the unrest that was brewing in Venezuela as just another Latin American incident that would not have lasting effects. Another factor which may have resulted in more American coverage may have been that journalists from the *NYT* would have had greater access to American government officials who would have been keenly aware of events taking place in Venezuela.

The April 2002 Coup d'état

The *NYT* articles, printed the day after the coup, were framed to imply the coup evolved naturally from dissatisfaction with Chavez's decision to replace managers at PDVSA. According to news accounts, this dissatisfaction quickly turned into a general strike where Chavez supporters became violent. Due to the violence, the military took control of the country and handed the presidency to a respected business leader. One of the initial articles covering the coup, claims that,

“this week's crisis began with a general strike against replacing professional managers at the state oil company with political cronies. It took a grave turn Thursday when armed Chavez supporters fired on peaceful strikers,

killing at least 12 and injuring hundreds. Mr. Chavez's response was characteristic. He forced five private television stations off the air for showing pictures of the massacre. Early yesterday he was compelled to resign by military commanders unwilling to order their troops to fire on fellow Venezuelans to keep him in power. He is being held at a military base and may face charges in Thursday's killings" ("Hugo Chavez Departs," 2002, p.A16).

In contrast, the *GM* carried a story that discussed the price of oil falling due to tensions in Venezuela. The article contained one line referring to Chavez calling for "talks to end the general strike" (Brethour, 2002, p.B3). The *GM* did not carry in depth coverage regarding the coup until April 13th, one full day later.

The expanded definition of the anti-communist filter includes the methods that the media employ to naturalize the ideology of the capitalist system. When looking at the hard news coverage of the coup itself, certain themes seemed to emerge. I will focus my discussion around three specific themes: economic policy, "democracy", and President Chavez himself. Two important aspects of the capitalist system are the way in which the state manages the economy and the perception of democracy amongst the people. The discussion of Hugo Chavez as president is filtered through the PM's original definition of anti-communism. Initially, the anti-communist filter served to elevate opposition to anything that could be perceived as 'communist'. Communism as an oppositional ideology is intentionally left unclear so that it can be used against anyone "advocating policies that threaten property interests or support accommodation with Communist states and radicalism" (Herman and Chomsky, 1988/2002, p.29).

Economic Reasoning

The government of every nation has the right and the responsibility to ensure the stability of its economy. A state must manage the production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of its goods and services at home and in the international community. The PM suggests that the only economic policies that are seen as viable are those that promote the capitalist system and free, open markets. The term 'Free Trade' represents a number of economic policies that "expand the rights of multinational corporations and investors to operate in more locations, under fewer regulations, with less commitment to any specific location" (Juhasz, 2006, p.4).

Advocates of the free market system contend that companies and individuals can amass greater wealth and spur economic growth when they are free of government regulations (Juhasz, 2006).

The increased wealth created will filter down through the economy to the masses, therefore benefiting all. Critics of the free trade system refer to these same policies as 'corporate globalization' and suggest that the wealth created only adds to the wealth of elites and rarely benefits society at large (Juhasz, 2006). Under corporate globalization, governments are restricted from implementing policies that protect small local business, workers, or the environment, in favour of programs that benefit multinational corporations. Often these strategies result in increased inequality within nations, great social economic gaps between nations, job loss, poverty and disease (Juhasz, 2006).

The changes that Chavez made to Venezuela's internal economic policies are often blamed as one of the factors that led certain sectors of the population to support a coup. Many of the articles published in the *NYT* during the coup contained statements like, "Mr. Chavez's left-leaning economic policies and autocratic style [have] antagonized much of the business class" (Rohter, 2002, p.A9). Coverage of Chavez's economic policies insinuated that Chavez "has not

been able to deliver the prosperity and higher living standards that they [he] had promised his countrymen” (Rohter, 2002, p.A9). The *GM* acknowledges that Venezuela was “the world’s fourth-largest oil exporter with some of the worst poverty in the Americas” (Ceaser, 2002[a], p.A1). Discussion of Chavez’s economic achievements were slightly more positive in the *GM*. On April 13th, Mike Ceaser described Chavez as “a charismatic man capable not only of provocative acts but of real achievements” and suggested that Chavez had “accomplished many things that won general support” (Ceaser, 2002[a], p.A1). Unfortunately, neither Ceaser nor his colleagues found it important to ever elaborate on Chavez’s many social successes.

Despite the slight differences in coverage, there was no discussion about the need for a change in policy to reduce the poverty figures or to service the country’s poor majority. In fact, there was little mention of the country’s outrageous poverty figures. Neither paper discussed the specific nature of Chavez’s economic policies, or their positive social impact, therefore lacking the full context necessary for readers to make a meaningful evaluation. Completely absent from the coverage was how Chavez’s ‘left-leaning’ economic policies led to higher literacy and increased enrolment in schools, better access to social programs, affordable food, and health care. As Michael Parenti (2005) notes,

Before Chavez, most of the poor had never seen a doctor or dentist. Their children never went to school, since they could not afford the annual fees. The neo-liberal market “adjustments” of the 1980s and 1990s only made things worse, cutting social spending and eliminating subsidies in consumer goods. Successive administrations did nothing about the rampant corruption and nothing about the growing gap between rich and poor (p.2).

Most insidious in the media coverage was the lack of analysis about how previous free market policies promoted by the IMF and the World Bank exacerbated poverty in Venezuela long before Chavez became president.

Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones - The “Leftist” Label

In his article, *Good Things happening in Venezuela*, Michael Parenti defines a leftist as “someone who advocates a more equitable distribution of social and human services and who supports the kinds of programs that the Chavez government has put in place” (Parenti, 2005, p. 4). Huckin (2005) warns against the power of labels in his analysis of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by stating that “labels often carry unavoidable connotations” (p.8). Within mainstream media, the label “leftist” tends to be associated with negative connotations. In the media coverage of Hugo Chavez, the term ‘leftist’ is seldom defined allowing this label to remain ambiguous. In other instances, it is used in a pejorative sense “which precludes rational examination of its political content” (Parenti, 2005, p.4). According to the PM’s anticommunist filter the term ‘leftist’ generally refers to someone opposed to the neoliberal agenda and therefore will be viewed negatively by the media.

Both the *NYT* and the *GM* often mentioned Chavez’s close relationship to Fidel Castro. A *GM* article alluded to the fact that Chavez was making enemies with Washington by “cozying up to Cuba,” “making friendly visits to Iraq and Libya” and by “appearing to sympathize” with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (Ceaser, 2002[a], A1). Juan Forero of the *NYT* described Chavez’s relationship with Fidel Castro as a “close friend” and suggested that he has made an “alliance” with the FARC (2002[j], p.A.3). By highlighting Chavez’s relationship with Fidel Castro the media have attempted to draw a parallel between Chavez’s Bolivarian Revolution and communist Cuba. The insinuation seems to be that Chavez has tried to model

himself after a communist leader and has attempted to turn Venezuela into a communist state. With the fall of the Soviet Union communism has been associated with a failed economic system. Drawing a connection between Hugo Chavez's government and communism is an attempt to cast the Venezuelan political project in a negative light. In addition, the United States had identified Iraq as a 'terrorist state' prior to the US-led invasion and the FARC has been added to the list of international 'terrorist' organizations. By stating that Chavez was sympathetic to the FARC is to suggest that Chavez was willing to cooperate with 'terrorist' entities. This insinuation would have powerful implications in a country where the leader equates any opposition to the American military agenda as being part of, or sympathetic to, an 'axis of evil.' The framing of the coverage linking Chavez to communist countries and 'terrorist' organizations subtly suggests an ideological link between the two, insinuating that states that are communist are also terrorist.

“Lack” of democracy

Democracy, its definition and implementation are important themes that emerged during the initial reading of newspaper articles surrounding the coup. According to the anti-communist filter, judgements regarding whether a person is, or acts, in a democratic way are closely aligned with American foreign policy objectives. Those that are supported by the American government are by default democratic, while those opposed are labelled as 'undemocratic' or 'authoritarian.' In the post 9/11 world, this type of polarized discourse has intensified. Many will recall George W. Bush's statements to the rest of the world after the attacks on the World Trade Centre, you're either 'with us' or 'against us.' As suspected, the discussion of “democracy” and the Venezuelan coup follow this same pattern. Chavez quickly fell out of favour after his election due to his criticism of the American empire's role in world affairs and due to his role in re-establishing

OPEC quotas. Chavez and his supporters are labelled ‘undemocratic’ while his opponents are depicted as champions of ‘pro-democratic’ and ‘pro-west’ governance (Parenti, 2005).

The U.S. has attempted to portray the Chavez government as authoritarian and undemocratic despite the fact that major decisions regarding the state have been put to popular referendum reaffirming the Bolivarian agenda through electoral processes. Chavez himself has been re-elected three times during regularly scheduled national elections and won a recall referendum by a clear majority. Venezuelan elections have been subject to regular monitoring by international observers, including the Carter Centre, which has deemed elections ‘free and fair’ (James, 2006). Besides the political reform that has taken place under the new constitution, Chavez has undertaken other efforts to ensure universal access to democracy. Venezuela’s massive education initiatives have restructured learning and taught 1.5 million people to read allowing previously illiterate adults access to the political process (James, 2006). Landed immigrants who had resided in Venezuela for many years faced political and bureaucratic barriers to citizenship. Under the government campaign of naturalization these long time residents were provided proper identification cards necessary to gain access to the voting process.

There is tremendous irony in allowing the Bush Administration to set the world agenda for democracy. George Bush Jr.’s first election campaign was marred with controversy and allegations of cheating. Secondly, the United States ranks 20 out of 21 in low voter turnout among ‘established democracies’ (Quirk, 2008). Average voter turnout rates are (depending on the formula used) approximately 50-55 percent for presidential contests and lower for Congressional races (Quirk, 2008). Despite the American policy of “democracy promotion” abroad, domestically these figures have not changed in over twenty years when the

Congressional Research Service did a study on voter turnout for citizens of voting age, in presidential elections (Quirk, 2008).

There are key discursive differences in the terms used by the *NYT* to describe Hugo Chavez, the democratically elected president, and Pedro Carmona, the interim coup leader. Chavez is consistently described as “mercurial,” “a firebrand,” “autocratic” and “strong-willed” in addition to other terms denoting aggression (Banerjee, 2002[c], p.A1; Fonero, 2002[j], p.A3; 2002[d], p.A9). The term ‘mercurial’ is particularly telling as it denotes a tendency toward erratic and unpredictable changes in mood. A firebrand is defined as one that “creates unrest or strife” often in the process of aggressively promoting a cause (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2008). In many of the *NYT* pieces Chavez’s military background is highlighted, often preceding statements of his previous coup attempt, suggesting that Chavez was willing to take power by any means. The colourful descriptors used to depict President Chavez are used to a lesser degree by the *GM* reporters. The *GM* tended to have less of a focus on Chavez’s supposed character traits. In addition, the *GM*’s discussion of Chavez’s military time was somewhat more positive. In one article Chavez’s was quoted referencing himself as “the people’s soldier” (Ceaser, 2002[a], p.A1).

Conversely, the *NYT*’s portrayed Pedro Carmona as a level headed manager and a conciliator. On the day following the coup, Christopher Toothhaker of the *GM* took considerable space outlining what seemed to be Carmona’s resume. Carmona’s educational credentials, his dedication to private enterprise, and political experience as head of the Foreign Ministry’s Economic Policy Directorate are all outlined. Toothhaker used a quote from Carmona’s colleague who described him as “a balanced and intelligent man, a leader, who knows how to resolve problems” (Toothhaker, 2002, p.A11).

There are clear implications about leadership ability that underlie the antithetical descriptions of Hugo Chavez and Pedro Carmona. The message that the reader is left with, is that although the presidency changed hands via a coup, citizens were better served under a more able, reasoned leader. The potential impact of this type of coverage is to reduce international outrage toward the overthrow of a democratic government.

Democracy and Freedom of Press

Key elements of a functioning democracy are freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Media reports suggest that Chavez “outraged Venezuelans when he ordered five television stations shut down, charging that they were inciting violence by broadcasting news about the protests” (Forero, 2002[g], p.A1). Note the placement of sentences in the April 13th, 2002 article published in the *NYT*:

Thursday when armed Chavez supporters fired on peaceful strikers, killing at least 10 and injuring hundreds. Mr Chavez’s response was characteristic. He forced five private television stations off the air for showing pictures of the massacre (Hugo Chavez Departs, 2002, p.A16).

The combination and sequence of these sentences frame the discussion in a way that insinuates it was Chavez’s allies who incited the violence, which has been proven not to be the case, and that he was trying to hide that fact from being aired on television (Power, D. et al, 2002).

There was similar coverage regarding the temporary closure of the five private television stations in the *GM*. Jorge Rueda (2002) wrote that the five television stations were closed for “allegedly abusing freedom of expression by inciting opposition protests” (p.A14). Although Rueda addresses the issues of the television stations’ abuse of power the modality demonstrated by the use of the word ‘allegedly’ denotes uncertainty. Further, omitted from the coverage of

either paper was the link between the private media and the opposition. In Venezuela, private television stations are owned by wealthy families who have a financial interest in seeing Chavez's ouster (Klein, 2003). Gustavo Cisneros, owner of Venevision, one of the nation's most watched stations, played an active role in the campaign against Chavez. Cisneros is known to have been a part of the group of coup plotters who met with American officials in the months leading up to the coup. On the night before the coup, Cisneros' station hosted a key meeting of the coup plotters including Pedro Carmona (Klein, 2003). In addition, Cisneros was one of the signatories of the 'Carmona Decree'.

In the days prior to the coup all four private television stations, Venevision, RCTV, Globovision and Televen, attempted to incite chaos and violence by replacing regular programming with anti-Chavez speeches and coverage. 'Commercials', sponsored by the oil industry, were disguised as 'public service announcements' that called for viewers to take to the streets, with slogans like: "Not one step backward. Out! Leave now!" (Klein, 2003). When a U.S. affiliate station had confirmed that Chavez had not resigned, and that he had been kidnapped and jailed, the stations actively suppressed this news. Media stations intentionally blocked information regarding the overwhelming reaction of Chavez's followers and their protests for his return. When the coup had been reversed and Chavez returned to the presidential palace, private stations began a news blackout and stopped covering the events altogether. On one of the most important days of Venezuela's history, private stations chose to air American movies and cartoons.

By comparison, one must wonder if the situation were reversed, what type of legal action would be faced by American television stations that broadcast 'public service announcements' which called for citizens to overthrow the democratically elected government. Having

knowledge of the private media's inflammatory role in attempting to incite a coup is essential to understanding Chavez's reasons for ordering them off the air. Without this knowledge and contextualization Chavez's actions seem to be an abuse of presidential power and an assault on the freedom of the press.

Change of leadership—not a coup?

A *NYT* article published on April 13th, illustrates the way in which articles were framed to background the democratic processes of the state in order to justify a change in leadership. The article includes the statement that Carmona “was installed today as president of an interim government that succeeded President Hugo Chavez” (Forero, 2002[e], p.A9). The terms ‘interim’ and ‘succeeded’ help to background the fact that Carmona took over in a coup against a democratically elected government. The *NYT* reporter begins the article with the sentence “In one day, the man in charge of the presidential palace went from a strong-willed populist known for his rambling speeches to a mild-mannered businessman who chooses every word carefully” (Forero, 2002[e], p.A9). Carmona was cited as promising “freedom, pluralism and respect for the state of law” (Forero, 2002[e], p.A9). Carmona's links to the Venezuelan country's rich colonial elite were downplayed and he was described as a self-made-businessman. The article credits Carmona as having the potential to mend the gulf between the rich and the poor.

The *GM* quotes Army General Efraim Vasquez, who says, “It wasn't a coup. It wasn't insubordination [by the military]. It was an act of solidarity with the Venezuelan people” (Toothhaker, 2002, p.A11). There seems a real hesitancy by the media to use the term ‘coup’ in its proper context. The *GM* did report that Carmona's appointment was challenged by “Venezuela's Attorney-General as unconstitutional and several Latin American nations condemned Mr. Chavez's ouster” (Ceaser, 2002[a], p.A1). Additionally, the prospect of

Carmona's leadership was presented in less glowing terms than what was reported in the *NYT*. Although Carmona's business credentials were discussed, the *GM* reported that Carmona was a "political novice" (Ceasar, 2002[a], p.A1).

The *NYT* presents Carmona as the person who can restore order and democracy, yet, this is a complete contradiction to the actual events that were taking place at the time. Carmona signed an act of transitional government on April 12th, known as the 'Carmona Decree,' which was not reported in that day's *NYT*. This act dissolved the National Assembly and the Supreme Court, while suspending the Attorney General, Controller General, governors and mayors elected during the Chavez administration. In addition, the 'Carmona Decree' was responsible for undoing many of the laws passed under Chavez; of particular interest was Carmona's intention to defy OPEC quotas. In the span of one day, Carmona effectively disbanded the structure of the country's political framework. The 'Carmona Decree' and its potential impacts were not reported in the *NYT* until well after the coup had been reversed and Chavez was back in power. Despite the fact that 'Carmona Decree' was discussed on April 13th in the *GM*, the consequences of such an aggressive act were not highlighted. Instead the reporter stated that "Venezuela will return to a bicameral legislature under the previous constitution" (Toothhaker, 2002, p.A11). Abrogating the constitution and other important state bodies was an unnecessary and an extreme act, especially coming from someone presumably interested in cooperation and reconciliation. Once the coup was reversed, it was the *GM* that was the most critical of Carmona's actions. Paul Knox's article of April 17th stated that "In less than 48 hours as 'president' of Venezuela, Pedro Carmona Estanga made the eccentric Hugo Chavez Frias look like a paragon of constitutional democracy" (Knox, 2002[c], p.A19). Later in the article, he chastised Carmona for suspending the constitution calling it an "act so contemptuous of democratic continuity that even Mr. Chavez

had never dared to carry them out” (Knox, 2002[c], p.A19). Although these statements are a backhanded compliment to Chavez at least they addressed Carmona’s undemocratic actions.

Chavez took over the presidency of the country in a democratic election in 1998. The description of Chavez as an ‘undemocratic’ leader runs counter to the fact that his political agenda has been reaffirmed on numerous occasions via various democratic processes. Chavez encouraged popular participation in the Bolivarian agenda advocating for a popular, democratic socialism. Shortly after his election, Chavez initiated the process to write a new constitution. A vote as to whether or not a constitutional assembly should be struck was put to the people. An election to determine the delegates who would be responsible for this task followed. An open and participatory process was used to write the new constitution whereby individuals and social groups were encouraged to submit articles for consideration. Once the new constitution was written it was ratified by popular vote of the country’s citizens. These facts are absent in the coverage by the *NYT* and are only mentioned briefly in one *GM* article. An autocratic or anti-democratic leader would not have allowed for such an important process to be decided by the people.

The constitution itself contains provisions for citizens participation in the affairs of the country. In regards to democratizing the economy, Chavez has promoted a ‘social economy’ which encompasses five closely interrelated programs of wealth redistribution (via land reform programs and social policies), promotion of cooperatives, creation of indigenous development, industrial co-management, and social production enterprises (Wilper, 2007). Although there have been critiques of the constitution regarding the renewed powers of the president, previously discussed in chapter 1, we can see that procedurally Chavez has followed the principles of a free, open and democratic society.

We can see the influence of the anti-communist filter in the definition of what does and what does not constitute a coup d'état. A coup is not 'technically' a coup if it is against an ideological enemy of the neoliberal agenda or the U.S. state. In this case, a coup was described as a change in leadership that was justified. The coup against Chavez was presented as his fault due to his commitment to populist policies. Pedro Carmona, who represents business interests, was presented as the person who could mediate the chaotic political situation. It seems that the message was that only a return to a business agenda could restore peace and security.

U.S. involvement -Who supported the coup?

Articles published during the coup insinuated that Carmona and his 'interim' government acted autonomously with support from the military due to internal unrest within Venezuela. The *NYT* did not uncover evidence of U.S. interference until days after the coup was reversed. Statements that were reported took on various degrees of certainty as to the role played by the American government. Instead of doing some hard investigative journalism, the media repeated positions given by unnamed American administrators. The *NYT* reported that an unnamed Defence Department official stated "We were not discouraging people, we were sending informal, subtle signals that we don't like this guy. We didn't say, NO, don't you dare, and we didn't advocate saying Here's some arms; we'll help you overthrow this guy. We were not doing that" (Marquis, 2002, p.A10). Absent from this discussion were questions as to whether the United States had the legitimate right to interfere in the political landscape of a sovereign country. The dominance of the American empire and their right to maintain world order is presupposed in the discussion.

The Canadian coverage, in the *GM*, addressed some important points in regards to American interference in Latin America. However, this came in the form of a column written by

Rick Salutin who suggested that “it’s all standard, like U.S.-backed coups in Guatemala (1954) or Chile (1973)—down to the pot-banging street protests and U.S.-allied labour leaders. They all come from the same coup cookie-cutter” (Salutin, 2002, p.A17). Salutin’s article questioned whether American officials were involved or had knowledge of the coup. His statement that “The Pentagon spokesperson said she was ‘not aware’ if the U.S. gave military support to the coup” expressed his disbelief (Salutin, 2002, p.A17).

The framing of the coverage left the reader unclear as to the extent of American involvement in the coup plot. Except for the comments made regarding previous American-led coups, there was a lack of historical discussion presented concerning America’s imperialist role in other Latin American countries. Investigative journalism would have uncovered hard and fast facts besides clandestine meetings, such as direct funding via the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Eva Gollinger (2008) sums this up in her book *Bush vs. Chavez* by concluding,

Venezuela’s turmoil has been created in large part by the work of the NED and USAID and their overseers. Similar to its role in Chile, Nicaragua, Haiti, Panama, and the Philippines, among other nations, the United States has applied its successful model of ‘democracy intervention,’ which has involved the filtering of funds into opposition groups and political parties and the essential political training that enables its counterparts to successfully obtain their objective (p. 22).

As previously discussed, the American government gave substantial amounts of money to anti-Chavez groups through the NED and its branch organizations. Aid was given to groups in all sectors of the Venezuelan political landscape, from unions to groups proposing to ‘promote democracy.’ The amount of money that the NED allocated for Venezuela skyrocketed in the

years immediately preceding the coup attempt from \$200,000 in 2000 to about \$4 million in 2002 (James, 2006). Besides direct NED funding, NED subsidiaries saw their Venezuelan budgets increase. One example is the Republican arm of the NED, the IRI, which had a budget of \$50,000 in 2000, which mushroomed to \$340,000 after George Bush's election in 2000 (James, 2006). The funds were allocated for training new or existing political parties on party structure, management and coalition building (James, 2006). One must ask, why is the American government funding opposition political parties in a sovereign foreign country? The pattern of funding and its distribution to opposition groups illustrates a calculated attempt to undermine the democratically elected government of Hugo Chavez.

There are also credible reports of American direct military involvement in the coup. "A STRATFOR intelligence brief claims, from unnamed sources, that the CIA and the State Department were both involved offering direct support to coup-plotters" (Broderick, 2002, p. 2). According to National Security Agency (NSA) officers, U.S. army units were present in Venezuela and provided communications intelligence to U.S. military and national command authorities on the progress of the coup (Broderick, 2002). The fact that there was direct military involvement preceding the coup rebuts the American government claims that they did not know of an impending coup and did not have any direct participation.

Events occurring during the coup

Violence by Chavez's supporters is cited as the incident that caused the military to seize control of country and restore order. A *NYT* article reported that television broadcasts during the coup showed "several men in plain clothes firing semiautomatic handguns from a bridge over a busy street in downtown Caracas. Among the crowd of assailants were people in red berets and T-shirts bearing the name of Mr. Chavez's movement" (Forero, 2002[d], p.A9). The *GM*

recounts the situation with less certainty, stating that there were shooting deaths that occurred outside the presidential palace “apparently by snipers loyal to Mr. Chavez” (Cesaer, 2002 [a], p.A1). The use of the word ‘apparently’ illustrates a different use of modality than the coverage of the *NYT*. However, the documentary film *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* contains controversial footage of Chavez's supporters being the ones shot at by the rooftop snipers. Private media channels captured the Chavistas returning fire from the ground level and used this snapshot of film in an attempt to mislead the public into believing Chavez’s supporters were inciting violence. The film’s footage suggests that the snipers were agent provocateurs who shot into the crowd in an attempt to discredit Chavez’s supporters, show that Chavez had lost control of the country and create the chaos necessary to justify a coup d’etat.

In both the *NYT* and the *GM*, Chavez’s supporters are consistently labelled as ‘the poorest classes,’ “protestors” and “militants.” The use of these descriptive terms have a particular connotation which marginalized Chavez’s supporters. Journalists did not choose to use words like ‘citizens,’ the ‘public’ or the ‘people’ which would express the Chavistas majority status. The media coverage rarely acknowledged that the “poorest classes” made up 80 percent of the population and therefore that Chavez had the support of a great number of citizens.

The voices of Chavez’s supporters were all but totally absent in the newspaper coverage of the coup. There were virtually no direct quotes from ordinary citizens that expressed their opinions of the political events. The discussions of economic policy did not contain any reactions from ordinary citizens who were most affected by Chavez’s initiatives. Furthermore, there was no evidence that any of the reporters attempted to find out what the will of the people was during the coup. The majority of quoted statements came from government officials or the business class. Not only did this foreground the concerns of the elites, it also forced the reader to

understand the perspective of Chavez's supporters as interpreted through reporters. In the case of the *NYT*, it was not until the reversal of the coup that Chavez's supporters were finally quoted verbatim and in that instance they were shouting slogans of support, i.e. "the people are with Chavez!" (Thompson, 2002, p.A10; Forero, 2002[i], p.A3).

Chavez Reinstated- An Apologetic Tone

Of all the press coverage that took place at the time of the coup, the *NYT* articles surrounding Chavez's return to power were the most insidious. The Venezuelan people with the aid of the military, were able to reverse the coup in less than 48 hours. This may have been the first time in history that a coup was reversed. One would expect that the media coverage would take on a more celebratory tone and that the coup reversal would vindicate the elected leader. Instead, what I found was that the coverage was framed to place Chavez in an apologetic position, insinuating his policies or actions were responsible for the coup. The *NYT* went to great lengths to describe the ways that Chavez was prepared to appease the business community. Chavez was described as a "changed man" who "showed none of the combative, demagogic style that brought thousands of Venezuelans into the streets" (Venezuela's political, 2002, p.A26). Portraying Chavez as a remorseful man insinuated that he had initially made a mistake in pursuing 'leftist' social policies despite the resistance of the business community. The fact that Chavez made it clear that he continued to "be in charge and that he was not prepared to alter the course of his populist revolution" although briefly mentioned was essentially backgrounded in the discussion (Forero, 2002[b]), p.A10).

Overall, the *GM* coverage also took a conciliatory tone, with the difference being that direct quotes selected focused on peace and unity over alleged misguided policies. Reporter James Anderson quoted Chavez as saying "I call upon Venezuelans, all Venezuelans, to reunite,

to reflect. I want to hear from opposition leaders” (Anderson, 2002, p.A14). In general, articles in the *GM* gave the sense that Chavez was ready to cooperate but there was little mention of the fact that he did not plan to substantially change his political and economic agenda.

An article published May 3rd, 2002 was the first one to discuss Venezuela in relation to Canadian foreign policy. The reporter questioned whether Canada should support a coup d’etat and, more specifically, mildly challenged the American’s stance toward Chavez. Columnist Paul Knox asked the question “Do we only support democratic rule when it’s convenient?” (Knox, 2002[a], p.A13). He criticized the position of Angel Rabasa, an analyst for the private Rand Corporation think tank, who believed supporting the Carmona government would be a “rapid return to real democracy” (Knox, 2002[a], p.A13). According to Knox, if Canada was to support this position it would be a “180 degree about face” from the adoption of the agreement among nations of the Americas to “stand against illegal regimes” (Knox, 2002[a], p.A13). Both Canada and the U.S. were signatories to the agreement. The article insinuated that having signed such an agreement it would be ludicrous to then “wink at a military takeover if we happen to like the result” (Knox, 2002[a], p.A13).

While discussing the coup’s impact on oil prices, Nellea Banerjee, a reporter for the *NYT* described Chavez’s return as “continuing political instability” (2002[a], p.A8). Chavez was blamed for the polarization of the country’s social classes, rich and poor. Statements like “Chavez must change his confrontational style and inflammatory rhetoric, which encouraged class polarization,” illustrated this point (McCoy, 2002, p.A27). In fact, it was not Chavez’s speeches that caused the polarization of the classes. This was a pre-existing condition in a country where 80 percent of the citizens lived in poverty. A piece published on April 16th, indicated that “the only hope for Chavez and Venezuela is for him to step back from his

confrontational agenda” (Venezuela’s political, 2002, p.A26). This type of argumentation suggested that the only thing that would bring stability to Venezuela was if Chavez became less aggressive in battling poverty and restored things to a status quo benefiting elites.

By April 17th, the *NYT* was already predicting another coup and highlighting elite criticisms of Chavez. Anti-Chavez forces had begun to call for more street protests to force the president to resign. There was a sole quote from a Chavez supporter who claimed that they (Chavez’s opponents), insisted on “conspiring” to take out President Chavez and establish “their own government.” The supporter added that the people “would not permit a government without Chavez” (Marquis, 2002, p.A10). Instead of focusing on the plans that Chavez had to restore the country to order, the media highlighted the potential for instability. *NYT* reporter, Juan Forero, insinuated that “the military remain deeply divided and perhaps prone to participating in a popular uprising like the one last Thursday that temporarily removed Mr. Chavez” (Forero, 2002[a], p.A8). It may have been the case that the military was divided, but it was also the military that helped to restore Chavez to the presidency.

Brief Overview of Findings

The articles surrounding the actual coup appear to be in line with American foreign policy toward Venezuela, particularly those published in the *NYT*. Coverage of the coup in the *GM* mirrored the *NYT* with few significant differences. The *GM* was slightly more critical of opposition forces and gave Chavez some credit for economic policy changes that benefited the poor. Overall, both papers fell in line with what the PM theorizes would be found in mainstream media coverage of international events.

Structurally, I have found that the *GM* focused their reports on actual events as they unfolded and contained less political commentary. That said, the *GM* followed closely the

register that one would expect to find in a corporate newspaper's discussion of foreign affairs. The *NYT* published articles that were longer and presented a more subjective and detailed account of the situation, containing a larger degree of political opinion and interpretation by reporters. It should be noted that Canadian coverage tended to rely on private news providers or 'news wires.' The majority of articles published in the *GM* were derived from the Associated Press, Reuter News Agency, Bloomberg Business News, and the Dow Jones Service. Conversely, the *NYT* did not seem to rely as much on news wire services.

Regarding the content of the published articles, my analysis has found that contextualization and framing of the events occurring during the coup and of Chavez's actions favoured elite interpretation. The polarized socio-economic condition of the country was not discussed in a way that emphasized the need for change. It seems ludicrous that a country rich in oil resources should continue to follow policies that have resulted in 80 percent of the people living in poverty. Underling the discussion of economic policy is the need to embrace the free market system. Chavez's economic policies are an alternative to the neoliberal agenda and therefore tended to be discredited in the media coverage. Furthermore, it was Chavez's initiatives which were blamed for polarizing the society and creating divisions amongst the classes.

Most glaring in both papers was the omission of any relevant details that may have implicated the U.S. in supporting the coup. There is strong evidence that the U.S. sponsored the coup financially, via the NED, and offered political assistance, evident in the numerous meetings with coup plotters. This is an overarching political detail that was not mentioned to any significant degree in the *GM* or *NYT* print coverage.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

I don't care what the facts are'. What a perfect maxim for the New American Empire. Perhaps a slight variation on the theme would be more apposite: 'The facts can be whatever we want them to be. (Roy, A, 2003, para7).

This study used both critical discourse analysis (CDA) and the propaganda model (PM) to systematically analyze print media coverage concerning the April 2002 coup against Hugo Chavez. The PM proposes that "propaganda campaigns can only occur when they are consistent with the interests of those controlling and managing the filters" (Herman, 2003, p. 2). The model predicts that the mainstream media will frame the news and restrict debate to parameters that fall within the framework of acceptable elite perspectives (Herman, 2003). Furthermore, according to the propaganda model, the media will tend to "serve elite interests uncompromisingly" when elites are unified on an issue that common citizens are either unaware of or have become inundated with elite perspectives (Herman, 2003, p.2).

Herman and Chomsky propose that news items pass through certain filters resulting in a sanitized version of the news that is suitable for public consumption. Due to increased corporatization and concentration of the media we can see that the PM filters of ownership and advertising have become more important when analyzing the media. The establishment of public relations firms and the dominance of right-wing think tanks have added to the credibility of the third and fourth filters, namely flak and sourcing. However, one of the most powerful media filters in regards to changing people's thinking and indoctrinating them with neo-liberal values, via the media, is the fifth filter. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, I focused mainly on the fifth filter in relation to media coverage of the 2002 coup in Venezuela.

With the end of the cold war, one might conclude that anti-communism, would be less influential as a filter. However, if we expand our understanding of what has come to constitute the anti-communist filter, arguably that is not the case. Following Herman (2003), I have attempted to demonstrate that while there are still –in some instances – overt references to the evils of “communism” in some media coverage of Hugo Chavez, the filter has undergone significant changes insofar as anyone or any nation that dares to defy neoliberalism and the “Washington consensus” is often characterized as “anti-democratic.” The expanded fifth filter as explained by Herman (2003) has come to represent the “ideological force of the belief in the ‘miracle of the market’” (p. 8).

As capitalism has progressed to dominance on the stage of world politics, we can see the relevance of the expanded fifth filter. The ideological and profit driven goals of capitalism have been ‘globalized’ by American imperialism and American foreign policy. Arhundhati Roy (2004) describes the “New Imperialist’ world order by stating that

for the first time in history, a single empire with an arsenal of weapons that could obliterate the world in an afternoon has complete, unipolar, economic and military hegemony. It uses different weapons to break open different markets. There isn’t a country on God’s earth that is not caught in the cross-hairs of the American cruise missile and the IMF [International Monetary Fund] checkbook (para 3).

In so-called democratic and free countries one would assume that the people drive and inspire the nation’s agenda and foreign policy objectives. We would expect a nation, like the United States, which heralds itself as a beacon of “democracy,” “freedom” and “human rights” would aspire to spread ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’ to all the world’s peoples. However, when we peek behind the curtain, we find that “democracy” has too often been conflated with

American-led “capitalism” and that the wizard controlling the levers of American foreign policy (and indeed media coverage of it) represents corporate interests rather than democratic imperatives.

The corporate media have not only supported the neo-liberal agenda, they have become part of the neo-liberal project (Roy, 2004). Political Scientist Joseph Nye originally coined the term ‘soft power’ to describe the ability to influence “without any explicit threat or exchange” to “persuade [one] to go along with your purposes” or to “engender cooperation” (Nye, 2004, para 12). ‘Soft power’ influence is gained not through force or monetary incentive but through “attraction to shared values, and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values” (Nye, 2004, para 12). Traditionally, ‘soft power’ stood for diplomatic efforts made toward foreign countries, such as food aid, broadcasts, cultural exchanges or other government sponsored programs (Bruno, 2008). Domestically, the corporate media have become a part of the ‘soft power’ strategy that is used by the state to influence public opinion. This ‘weapon of mass deception’ is used against both foreign and domestic citizens to manipulate them into being receptive to the political goals of the American empire.

James Petras (2008) theorizes that the attacks against Chavez by “imperial academic advisors, media experts and ideologues” are a form of “ideological-political warfare” (Petras, 2008, US Venezuela Relations, para 6). He describes the type of propaganda and social organizing that has taken place as a ‘soft power’ strategy which is meant to create the optimal conditions for the use of ‘hard power’ a combination of “military intervention, coup d’etat, terror, sabotage, or regional war” (Petras, 2008, US Venezuela Relations, para 7). It is under the heading of ‘soft power’ that the media campaign against Chavez falls and must be analyzed. The Bush administration through its actions and the comments of government officials, has supported

and encouraged certain myths about Chavez's Venezuela. The media coverage of the Venezuelan coup reflects these myths which can be summarized under three main categories: (i) Venezuela as an undemocratic country ruled by a tyrant; (ii) Chavez as sympathizer of terrorists and the conflation of terrorism with socialism; (iii) Chavez's economic policies as "antidemocratic" because they challenge neoliberalism. An updated and expanded conceptualization of the fifth filter predicts how the mainstream media will discuss these issues from a position that privileges neoliberal ideology and corporate interests.

'Soft Power' Myths Operating in Venezuela

Democracy, the modern world's holy cow, is in crisis. And the crisis is a profound one. Every kind of outrage is being committed in the name of democracy. It has become little more than a hollow word, a pretty shell, emptied of all content or meaning. It can be whatever you want it to be. Democracy is the Free World's whore, willing to dress up, dress down, willing to satisfy a whole range of taste, available to be used and abused at will (Roy, 2003, para 40).

The Bush administration has attempted to portray Chavez as an undemocratic and authoritarian leader and this label has been generally reflected in the mainstream media. When we analyze the media coverage, what we find is a manipulation of the term "democracy". As Roy (2003) suggests, "democracy has become Empire's euphemism for neo-liberal capitalism" (para 45). The definition of democracy is heavily influenced by market driven ideologies and, in many cases, has become confused with one's ability to consume, the availability of goods and having multiple consumer choices. In addition, democratic processes have been measured against Western and predominantly American standards. While even authoritarian regimes have, in the past, been called "democratic" if they have allied with Western and American interests,

this has become even more predominant in the post-9/11 world. For the Bush administration, any leader (such as Chavez) who challenges American imperial foreign policy and questions the efficacy of unfettered neoliberal economic policies is deemed “undemocratic” and by definition “pro-terrorist.” The Bush administration pretends to be concerned with democracy and human rights in Venezuela, when in fact its real concern is the possible erosion of the free market system currently in place in Latin America.

An analysis of the Venezuelan political landscape reveals a functioning democracy which has taken structural and cultural steps toward becoming a ‘participatory democracy.’ When compared to other Latin American nations, Venezuelans are more likely than citizens of the other 18 Latin American nations polled, to describe their government as “totally democratic” (James, 2006). Venezuelans have the second highest level of satisfaction with their country’s democratic system rating it on average a 7.6 out of 10, substantially higher than the regional average of 5.5 (James, 2006). Of course, public sentiments in countries such as Venezuela do not factor into the characterizations made by the Bush administration nor do they typically register in the media coverage of events in that country. Instead, “countries that receive the democratic stamp of approval correlate highly with those that agree with U.S. foreign policy goals in the region, particularly the promotion of the neo-liberal economic model and military cooperation” (James, 2006, Venezuela is a dictatorship para 16).

The mainstream media attempted to present the coup against Chavez as a mere change of leadership rather than what it was – the overthrow of a democratically elected official. In other words, a coup is not a coup when it results in the removal of a leader that is not friendly to North American corporate and political interests. In the case of Chavez, the coup was simply a ‘transfer of power’ to a more able, level-headed leader due to “widespread public unrest.” The

fact that the “unrest” was fomented, at least in part, by groups (i.e. the NED) funded by the American government and Venezuelan “elites” rather than the majority of the population was conveniently ignored.

Based on my research, I have found that a propagandistic portrayal of Chavez and the Bolivarian initiative does exist. In general, the media coverage in the *NYT* particularly, and to a slightly lesser extent in the *GM*, serves American foreign policy initiatives. The media attempted to align themselves with American foreign policy through their descriptions of Carmona versus Chavez, their discussion of Chavez’s friendship with Fidel Castro and through their presentation of the military’s concerns about the government. The definition of democracy also affected how civil democracy and workers’ rights were reported. Although employers in the oil industry actually locked out their workers, it was described by the mainstream media as a strike. In this case, the employer’s interests were in line with the American agenda to remove Chavez from office. Portraying the workers as supporting the oil executives and willing to go on strike was an attempt to undermine Chavez’s policies to nationalize the state oil company.

In his article “The Propaganda Model: A Retrospective,” Herman (2003) predicts that “the global power of market institutions makes non-market options seem utopian” (p.8). In most of the media coverage I examined, Chavez’s policies were presented as populist, left leaning, extreme, and, of course, “anti-democratic.” Readers were led to believe that anything that did not correspond to free market imperatives or neoliberal ideological assumptions was “radical,” unattainable and impractical. In short, the coverage conformed to the mantra so beloved by free market, capitalist ideologues – “There is No Alternative” (TINA).

One could reasonably argue that all national economic strategies should be populist, insofar as they would benefit the majority of “the people.” Yet, that very idea is presented as

extreme and undesirable and it appears as though the capitalist agenda defines and determines whether an economic strategy is viewed as favourable or unfavourable. By the same token, if a policy benefits big business or elite interests, it is not only presented as positive but as viable and necessary.

Based on my observations, I have concluded that the PM is still a valid and useful framework for understanding and analyzing mainstream media coverage. While it is certainly the case that the global political landscape has changed given the fall of state communism, it is also the case that the anti-communist filter is still operative- albeit in a slightly modified fashion. As I noted above, one can still find examples of blatant anti-communism in dominant media and political discourse; however, the category of anti-communism has been transformed. The evil empire may be long gone and the “threat” of communism a bygone memory, but those who challenge American military and corporate hegemony – particularly in the post 9/11 era – are now swathed in labels such as “anti-democratic” or “pro-terrorist.” As the PM suggests, the societal purpose of the mainstream media is to “inculcate and defend the economic, social and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988 cited in Sparks, 2007, p.75). In the case of Venezuela, where large oil reserves are concerned, it is in the interests of the elites to have a president that is subservient to U.S. market and energy interests. Hugo Chavez has proven he is capable of challenging the neo-liberal agenda and the American government. Due to Chavez’s political positions, it was not surprising to find corporate media coverage that was critical of the Venezuelan political project and supportive of the coup against a democratically elected leader.

The corporate media coverage has helped to buoy up myths that have been created in Washington, to justify US actions against Venezuela. Particularly blatant was the media’s lack

of coverage regarding America's interference in Venezuela. As suggested above, the role played by the NED in supporting and financing the coup, was only marginally mentioned and that was well after the coup had been reversed. To my knowledge, the exact nature of NED activities, or the amounts of money funneled towards undermining Chavez's presidency, has never been completely revealed in the mainstream media. This, in and of itself, would suggest that the PM still has enormous potential as a conceptual framework for future research on related issues.

Recommendations For Further Study

As a student of critical media studies, I have attempted to add to the body of work that investigates the reporting of international events in Canadian and American daily newspapers. The scope of my research was limited to two mainstream daily newspapers, the *NYT* and the *GM*. Further study of this topic could build on my research by examining other instances where Venezuela and/or Chavez figured prominently in the North American media such as when Chavez appeared before the United Nations in September 2006 and railed against the Bush administration and its imperialist foreign policy. One could, presumably, also examine how other nations and/or leaders that have sought to challenge neoliberal economic policies have been portrayed in the mainstream media.

Implications for Students in the Field of Social Justice

I am certain that when enough of us become aware of how we are exploited by the economic engine that creates an insatiable appetite for the world's resources, and results in systems that foster slavery, we will no longer tolerate it. We will reassess our role in a world where a few swim in riches and the majority drown in poverty, pollution and violence. We will commit ourselves to navigating a course toward compassion, democracy and social justice for all. (Perkins, 2004, p. xiii)

For students interested in international politics, the political situation in Venezuela is an exciting example of one nation's pursuit of social and economic justice. For progressives looking beyond the horizon of what neoliberal capitalism has to offer, it is important to offer support and encouragement to the Venezuelan people, while at the same time learning from the initiatives – both those that have been positive and others that may be problematical – that have been undertaken in that nation for they may provide valuable lessons as we struggle for the establishment of genuinely democratic institutions in our own corner of the world. Moreover, if we believe that “democracy” should be something more than the “Empire’s euphemism for neoliberal capitalism” as Roy (2004[b], p. 56) has so aptly put it, we must draw attention to the “terror” unleashed by the “market” (Galeano, 2003) and to the role played by American militarism in enforcing a “neoliberal agenda that wreaks havoc with any semblance of democracy both at home and abroad” (Scatamburlo-D’Annibale, Suoranta, and McLaren, 2007, p. 112).

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VITA AUCTORIS

Lisa Bastien graduated from the Faculty of Human Kinetics, University of Windsor, in 1998. She worked full time for the Ford Motor Company, at the Windsor Casting Plant (Old Iron Foundry) from 1998 until the facility's closure in 2007. Her time in the workforce has afforded her the opportunity to develop a critical class perspective and to express her social conscience. Lisa was a facilitator for the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), Paid Education Leave Program (PEL) from 2001 until 2008. Lisa has been actively involved in social justice causes and has served as the chairperson of the Human Rights Committee at CAW Local 200. As chairperson, she has assisted in the organizing and planning of Human Rights forums ranging from the political situations in Columbia and Venezuela; to racial profiling; globalizations impacts on working people; sweatshops; and Native Canadian Issues.

After completing her M.A. in Communication and Social Justice, she joined the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor where she is a teacher candidate.