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ABSTRACT

From Airwaves to Newsfeed:
Populism and Emerging Media Technologies

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As can be seen in Argentina, Cuba, and Venezuela, populists are often effective in capturing the hearts of the people of the Americas. Such leaders have shaped the histories of these countries in dynamic ways, continually highlighting the unifying power that a passionate orator can have when paired with citizens seeking social change. With this in mind, there is a clear relationship between the populist and his followers as well as an ever-present need for the populist to maintain his access to the people. Emerging technology has been relied upon for this reason. This thesis project demonstrates that populists such as Juan Perón, Fidel Castro, and Hugo Chávez have used and dominated their country's radio, television, or Internet media to control their message to the people.

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Populism and Emerging Media Technologies

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By

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Argentina, Bolivia, Organization of American States, D.C. Internship, Thesis, Graduation. This set of words spans the course of my undergraduate career at Baylor, from freshman to senior year. Amazingly, a common thread links each of these: the involvement of Dr. Supplee.

If ever there was a professor who valued and believed in her students, it is she. Dr. Supplee encouraged me to see beyond my self-doubts and pushed me to my limits so that I could become the person I am today.

Whenever I felt unqualified, she pointed out my strengths. When I felt the need for guidance, it was her office door that was always open. And when the weight of the thesis came crushing down on an exhausted senior, it was she who eased the burden with words of encouragement.

It was not until I had Dr. Supplee as a professor that I sincerely understood the saying that one teacher can make all the difference in the life of a student. Her investment in me is a blessing and I am forever grateful.

When I walk across that stage in a few short weeks to accept my diploma, my major and minor will be read. When I apply for jobs, my resume will highlight my experiences in college. But my proudest achievement will be missing from both of these pieces of paper. What is missing will never be understood except by those who have had Dr. Supplee as a professor. What is missing is truly something I can carry with me and share with others for the rest of my life. What is missing can be summed up in five words:

"I minored in Dr. S."

Thank you for everything.

To

Dad, Pater Familias and Role Model

Mom, My Emotional Lifeline and Friend

Jen, The Luigi to my Mario and Beloved Little Sister

I Love You

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

A collective sigh of relief, exhaled by countless supporters, met a single Twitter message from President Hugo Chávez Frías on February 18, 2013. The charismatic and controversial leader of Venezuela had been missing from the media spotlight for two months as he traveled to Cuba for cancer treatments and this message, announcing his return to the Venezuelan homeland, was long overdue. What was happening to him? Why had it taken him so long to reassure his Chávista followers of his status? In a world where updates are mind-numbingly constant, why had the normally media obsessed Comandante, with a staff of two hundred individuals manning his Twitter account, failed to make use of the tools at his disposal? For someone who regularly tweeted multiple times a day, his sudden and continued silence drew even more attention to his precarious health and his fitness to govern.

The use of emerging media by populist leaders such as Chávez is nothing new. From the early use of radio to the introduction of television to the Internet of today, these media have become central to the dissemination of the populist message. Consummate populists such as Juan Perón of Argentina, Fidel Castro of Cuba, and Hugo Chávez of Venezuela clearly understood the value of the media in their respective eras and engaged that media as a means to secure control. To demonstrate this contention, an analysis of populism and why it is so prevalent within the Latin American region is provided. Following this initial introduction is a series of case studies based on the three Latin American populists that details the various factors, both societal and personal, which

created the potential for their populist platforms to flourish. These three cases investigate the existing and emerging media that shaped and defined their regimes while highlighting the way in which these mediums served the populist. Finally, this thesis demonstrates that, for all three populists examined, adaptation to and control of emerging media were critical for their ascension to and maintenance of power.

To explore this argument, this work is divided into five chapters. Chapter one, the introduction, explains the outline of the thesis. In this, the terminology associated with populism and emerging media are clarified and the methodology of the work is outlined. From this, an explanation of the importance of the case study format and an overview of the sources used throughout this project are provided as a guide for the material covered in the proceeding chapters.

The next four chapters present the case studies and the conclusion. Chapter two, "NPR (National Populist Radio)," follows the rise of Perón and how radio, an established medium, came to shape his regime by facilitating access to citizens previously excluded from the political realm. This chapter also discusses Perón's use of television, the emerging medium of the 1950s. Chapter three, "PBS (Populist Broadcasting Service)," surveys Castro's progression from radio to the medium of television as a basis for revolutionary Cuba in the 1960s. In addition, this chapter covers his engagement with the Internet in the early 2000s. Chapter four, "Populism in 140 Characters or Less," explores Chávez's love-hate relationship with the established medium of television while moving into his extensive and, ultimately, unsatisfactory use of the Internet in the early years of his administration. This chapter ends with an in-depth look at Chávez's silence during his bout with cancer in 2012-2013 and stands as a central component of the conclusion.

Finally, chapter five, the conclusion, discusses the ways each populist benefitted from an understanding of and engagement with emerging media in their promotion of their populist message.

The Use of the Case Study

Case studies offer the opportunity for defined analysis of specific information on a particular subject. For this thesis, the case study approach helps center the argument on three separate populist leaders and draws conclusions that showcase the similarities and differences in the populist approach to emerging media technologies. This project is limited to three distinct Latin American populist leaders that serve as the focus of this thesis: Juan Perón, Fidel Castro, and Hugo Chávez. The reasoning for this limited selection is based on the fact that all three individuals made ample use of the established and emerging media available to them and used it to their advantage in some capacity. The arrangement of these cases is important as the three populist leaders come from three separate countries during three set time periods: Perón's use of radio and television from the 1940s to the 1970s; Castro's use of radio, television, and the Internet from the 1960s to the early 2000s; and Chávez's use of radio, television, and the Internet from the 1990s to his death in 2013. By providing an analysis of three Latin American leaders from three separate countries during three distinct time periods, this arrangement offers a comparative approach that spans across a period of over 60 years and an expansive geographical region.

Definition of Terms: Populism

In order to understand who and what populists are, the term itself must be defined. Populism is a concept that has been the subject of much debate among those trying to capture this phenomenon in a set definition, as its dynamic and adaptable nature has led to a variety of descriptions. For the purpose of this discussion, the following framework based on the work of Michael L. Conniff and Carlos De La Torre will be used to explain the essence of populist movements. Populism is a political movement that arises as a response to changes in economic, social, and political spheres and results in the inclusion of marginalized masses, a division of society into two antagonistic categories, and leadership of a charismatic figure who promises to address popular grievances and to improve overall conditions. While populist movements do incorporate additional aspects outside of this set description, this definition includes core components of the populist structures that exist in the case studies presented. A more detailed breakdown of the aforementioned definition helps to clarify the way in which populism functions.

The first feature of populist movements is that they are primarily responses to a series of changes that directly affect large segments of the population, which leave citizens open to the populist message. As a starting point, many scholars such as Luis Costa Pinto, Paul Drake, and Michael Conniff agree that urbanization plays a major role in promoting these changes as it shifts balances within the social, economic, and political spheres of a society. Urbanization brings together large concentrations of people from rural communities and creates a new large class of workers within society that finds itself on the verge of a social transition (Costa Pinto 1973, 209). In the past, Latin America's traditional social order placed power in oligarchic hands, while excluding the majority

from political involvement (De La Torre 1992, 389). In contrast, urbanization offers the working class the promise of increased civil participation in decision-making and, in time, the hope that inequalities will be addressed (Conniff 1982, 3). Urbanization also gives workers an impressive numerical advantage in areas most associated with the center of political power - the cities. However, despite their growing importance in the social and economic sphere, laborers and the middle class encounter elite resistance to challenging the traditional distribution of power and they become frustrated with the lack of access. In sum, the emergence of new social, economic, and political factors within society conflicts with the old structures (Costa Pinto 1973, 209-10). This frustration stemming from the difficulties associated with meshing modernization and tradition allows those excluded from power to be more receptive to populism and its promises of solutions.

A second feature of populist movements concerns attempts to foster inclusion of large marginalized groups by establishing clientelistic ties. Building on the first populist feature, the second consists of the realization that changes occurring within society and accompanying social tensions can be used advantageously. Populism derives political power from those who are dissatisfied with the current status quo and, in particular, those previously excluded from the policy-making environment. A background of the working class's social relationship structure is helpful to the understanding of the basis of this political attraction. Initially founded on paternalistic bonds between leaders of communities and the rural masses, these relationships re-emerged as workers attempted to adapt to their new urbanized environment by attaching themselves to labor leaders and politicians (Drake 1982, 221). This system is clientelism, defined in its most basic form

as "a relationship of exchange among unequals" (Clapham 1982, 4). Clientelism is also associated with a degree of voluntary choice rather than force and, in a sense, gives power to both parties involved (Clapham 1982, 4). By connecting with the working class and other excluded groups through the familiar and mutually beneficial system of clientelism, populist leaders gain a powerful basis of support by presenting their movements as politically worthwhile.

The third feature of populist movements is their assertions that society is divided into two opposing categories. These two groups are defined by De La Torre as *el pueblo* and *la oligarquía*:

> *El pueblo* is negatively defined as all that is not *oligarquía.* Given their suffering, *el pueblo* is the incarnation of the authentic, the good, the just, and the moral. *El pueblo* confronts the *antipueblo* or *oligarquía,* representing the inauthentic, the foreign, the evil, the unjust, and the immoral (De La Torre 1992, 401).

This concept of a nationalist struggle, used by the populist leader to focus attention of supporters on a collective enemy and the "us versus them" mindset, is carried over into the domestic sphere. Emphasis placed on the working class allows populists to portray international elements not only as detrimental to domestic industry and labor opportunities, but also as an obstacle to further overall economic development (Conniff 1999, 5). In this way, populists portray the state as the defender of the national identity and as an ally to the masses (De La Torre 1992, 387). The importance of divisive labels serves populist movements by fostering a sense of unity with a larger group, a strategy that exploits the disenfranchised masses by radicalizing the popular sentiments of the time, and by defining the state as a strong protector of the people's best interests.

The fourth and final aspect of populist movements is the emergence of a charismatic figure who argues that he can not only address the concerns of the people, but also improve the overall condition of society. The populist leader is the central, core component that allows the movement to spread throughout the culture and whose presence alone can help sustain it during times of weakness. According to Ann Ruth Willner, the populist leader has four key charismatic qualities: he is perceived by his followers to be superhuman, his statements are accepted without need for deep examination, his directives are met with unconditional compliance, and he enjoys unqualified emotional commitment from his followers (Willner 1984, 8). Each of these features profoundly links the populist to the people and allows him to be seen as a pseudo divine public benefactor.

An additional significant characteristic of the charismatic figure is the fact that he is associated with what Willner terms "the invocation of myth" (Willner 1984, 62). During transition periods, the populist leader may either purposely or inadvertently link himself with certain symbols that are viewed by the people as emotionally charged, such as "venerated historical figures" or certain heroes from their culture (Willner 1984, 63). This connection, which allows the populist leader to be seen as a contemporary personification of the cultural figure, facilitates his own personal ascension to the role of cultural hero (Willner 1984, 63). This power over meaning lets the populist shape the significance of words and symbols into new configurations which, coupled with the five principles listed above, grants him unprecedented influence over society.

The promises of the populist charismatic figure are two-fold: to mitigate popular grievances and to improve overall conditions. These are addressed through expansive

social reforms aimed at dealing with both working class concerns, such as raising the standard wage and strengthening unions; and living concerns, such as improving access to health care and creating better housing opportunities (Drake 1982, 235). While these promises are matched with varying attention and success once the populist takes office, it is this expressed concern for the needs of the people that stands as the central focal point of these assurances.

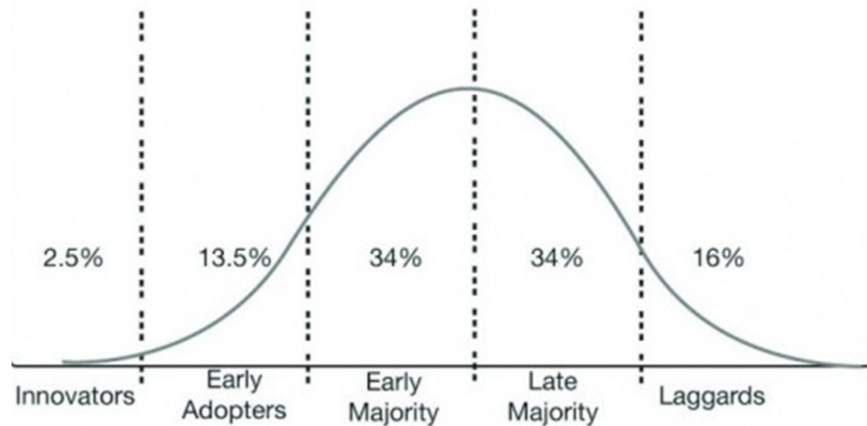
Populism is a concept that has taken various forms throughout recent history and yet the basic defining characteristics remain consistent. Through its role as a response to periods of transition, populism incorporates the working class into a unified political coalition. This force, opposes society's elite as the oppressor and maintains a strong attachment to the charismatic populist. In this way, populism serves the interests of the populist while providing a source of hope for those within society who have been left out.

Explanation of Emerging Media

For the purposes of this study, emerging media is limited to radio, television, and the Internet, each a form of broadcasting. These defined subsets of media are inter-related in that each relies on the use of audio and/or visual content distributed to a wide segment of the population while allowing for greater expansion of the populist message. Use of broadcasting media has proved to be central to the emergence of populist leaders for a variety of reasons. The first reason is based on Everett M. Roger's diffusion of innovation model introduced in 1962 in his book *Diffusion of Innovations*. This model quantifies and demonstrates the way a society adopts emerging innovations, and can be applied to emerging media. As can be seen from the Table 1.1, those who are innovators or early

adopters have the advantage of early access to the medium and can have a better understanding of the medium prior to the majority's decision to adopt. The populist thus gains an advantage by choosing to participate in this stage when it comes to emerging media. A characteristic that links Perón and Castro is that both populists can be considered early adopters of the emerging media broadcast media of their respective time periods. Only Chávez stands apart, falling under the early majority designation.

Table 1.1. Everett M. Roger's diffusion of innovation model



Source: http://www.ideacouture.com/blog/innovation-early-adopters-beyond-the-bell-curve/

A second reason why emerging media is vital to the populist is the fact that such technologies allow the populist's message access to a larger and previously unavailable audience. The populist presence is made available to anyone with a receiver or connection, while those within the immediate area are also targeted. Emerging media, with its broadcasting capabilities, holds the possibility of drawing in both individuals and groups of people. In this way it can serve the populist's goal of inclusion while placing him at the center of the process. At the same time, it highlights the strengths of the

populist: on radio, his voice and oratory skill capture the attention of listeners; on television, his gestures, expressions, and commanding presence can be displayed; and on the Internet, the ability of the populist to identify and engage with *el pueblo* through a variety of digital applications highlight his concern for the people.

A third reason is related to the large outreach capabilities afforded by emerging media in that they can grant the populist a semi-constant presence within society. Whether his voice fills the radio airwaves, his image replays on home television screens, or his statements emerge on Twitter during a long political absence, the populist becomes nearly omnipresent. It increases his range and duration in the minds of the people and allows him the opportunity to focus them on the populist message.

A fourth and final reason why emerging media is important to the populist is its potential as a platform for opposition. As time has passed, the possibility for wider access to these mediums has grown, as has the chance for alternative viewpoints to surface. While avoiding or blocking a medium may work for a time, populists are realizing it can be more beneficial to establish a presence so as to balance oppositional voices. Ultimately, understanding and participating in emerging media serves the populist cause.

Methodology

In chapters two, three, and four a fixed framework is applied to establish coherence of argument. Each chapter begins with a history of the condition of society and the personal growth of the populist as a means of establishing the basis for the populist's rise to power. Next, a history of the established media scene is provided to emphasize the difference between the established and emerging mediums while demonstrating the ways

in which emerging media builds off of previous mediums. This framework then provides an overview of the history and arrival of the new medium to the country. Following this is an examination of how the populist used the new medium and emerging media to his advantage. Finally, each chapter offers a conclusion with summations of key points as well as comments on the populist's place within Roger's diffusion of innovation model.

The reasoning for this approach is to allow for an easily accessible comparative analysis of the histories, mediums, and uses of media by the included populists. This methodology also demonstrates the ability of each populist to fit the argument of this thesis in that each understood and engaged with the merging media of the time period. This framework is useful in that it can be applied to addition populists and emerging technologies, thus allowing for expansion outside of the limited scope of this project.

What has been done

This thesis is significant in that the majority of discussions on Perón, Castro, and Chávez tend to overlook the unifying thread of media usage that defines and connects their three regimes. Perón laid the foundation for radio and television to be a central part of populist government while Castro adopted this mindset and perfected the use of television. However, Castro's personal use contrasted with suppression of citizen access to the Internet left much to be desired. Chávez contrasted with Castro’s approach by expanding the populist platform through open Internet access.

Furthermore, while there is significant literature on the lives, politics, and legacies of these populist figures, their engagement with and understanding of emerging media has garnered less attention than deserved. The importance of emerging media in today's

world and the proper utilization of such mediums is key to the continuation of populism in the twenty-first century and will be the subject of debate for years to come. Perón, Castro, and Chávez will not remain the only populists to direct Latin America and populism's adaptability speaks to its staying power in the region.

Sources

This thesis draws on a variety of sources spanning the Western Hemisphere. It is supported by direct quotes from each populist, magazine articles, newspaper articles, television documentaries and videos, online resources, social media records, as well as a number of secondary materials from highly respected experts. The wide assortment of sources is intended to serve as a firm foundation for the argument while providing a resource guide for those seeking to learn more about these fascinating individuals.

Primary Sources

This work utilizes news articles, legislative documents, and non-governmental organizational (NGO) data so as to properly establish each regime's structure and understanding of emerging media. These sources serve as important guides, as they add a variety of firsthand opinions and facts on these controversial figures. Examples range from Freedom House and reporter's Without Borders to the documentary *Chavez: Inside the Coup (The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* which provided on-site footage of the 2002 coup against President Chávez.

Secondary Sources

Of the various secondary sources utilized throughout this work, the most useful have fit into one of three categories: those providing overviews of communication and populism in Latin America, those offering biographies on the populists themselves, and those emphasizing technical data on the emerging media in each country.

Silvio Waisbord and Elizabeth Fox's Latin Politics, Global Media provides a useful introduction to the way states of the Western Hemisphere engage with the communication media in today's world and falls into the first category. This text is valuable in that it spans the early days of Perón to the Chávez administration allowing for an introductory comparison of the two to be established in regards to their use of media. It also carries unique insights regarding the populist message in a culture trending towards increasing personalization and the catered-to-the-individual society.

Michael L., Conniff's Populism in Latin America is another example of a source falling into the first grouping. Conniff gives the reader a detailed examination of the nature and power of populism while emphasizing the central elements of a populist leader. This book, much like that of Waibord and Fox, establishes ties between Perón and Chávez while refraining from an extensive examination of media usage parallels.

The second grouping, biographies, offer both in-depth information on the individual populist while framing such knowledge within a holistic narrative that places their life within the society in which they emerged. One example is Joseph A. Page's Perón: A Biography which provides an in depth look at the populist from his days as a young military cadet to his return to power in the 1970s. Page methodically demonstrates the watershed moments of Perón's life that built him into the charismatic and omnipresent

figure that eventually captured the hearts of the Argentine people. In the same vein, Tad Szulc's Fidel: A Critical Portrait follows the young revolutionary from academia to guerrilla warfighter to leader of the Cuban nation. As is the case with all the sources united under this biographies designation, the small details attributed to Castro allow for a better understanding of his transformation into one of the most well known populists in the world today. Christina Marcano and Alberto Barrera Tyskzka's Hugo Chávez: The Definitive Biography of Venezuela's Controversial President is a masterfully written account of the rise and survival of Chávez in the face of various threats to his continued governance. This subset of the secondary sources utilized throughout this work helps to explain the background that shaped each populist's approach to the media landscape.

The final category in reference to secondary literature pertains to those sources that offer extensive technical data on emerging media in a state. Robert Howard Claxton's From Parsifal to Perón: Early Radio in Argentina, 1920-1944 and Sergio Arribá's "El perónismo y la política de radiodifusión (1946-1955)," from Mucho ruido, pocas leyes: Economía y políticas de comunicación en la Argentina (1920-2007) are two such examples relating to Perón's use of radio and telecommunications. Claxton's work builds up the history of the medium while Arribá follows up with how this initial media growth played into the hands of the General. The pairing of Michael B. Salwen's Radio and Television in Cuba: the Pre-Castro Era and Cristina Venegas' Digital Dilemmas: the State, the Individual, and Digital Media in Cuba (new Directions in International Studies) follows the same pattern, allowing for the history of past media to flow into the explanation of the new. From this, a better understanding of the current media can be acquired.

This thesis draws upon a wide assortment of sources and those listed above serve as a sample of the consulted materials. What these secondary sources lack and what this thesis seeks to add, is a comparison of emerging media based on the rise of these three significant political leaders. Blending the primary sources with the secondary materials in the case study format allows this thesis to stake a claim on new territory in the examination of populist media methodologies. With these sources, ranging from first hand accounts to interviews to personal testimonies of the populists themselves, a proper examination and discussion of the populist's utilization of emerging media can be conducted.

CHAPTER TWO

NPR (National Populist Radio)

"The radio was made for Perón and he for it."

-Crassweller, 1987

History of Perón

Juan Domingo Perón is one of the most influential populist figures to emerge in Latin America over the course of the twentieth century and easily one of the most skilled orators of the era. His legacy has remained a staple of national conversation in Argentine society over the decades and the impact he created with implementation of widespread social and political policies are still felt today. Perón's meteoric rise from a young military officer to the President of the Argentine Republic and his ability to capture the minds and spirits of so much of the country can be explained through a discussion of both the structure of Argentine society during his ascension as well as his personal background. The combination of these two factors, overlapping in a variety of ways, allowed Perón to speak not only to the people, but also for the people.

The situation facing Argentines in the period between 1930 and Perón's first presidency in 1946 is best defined by international friction and major domestic turmoil. By early 1930, the global depression affected Argentina as belt-tightening by the state's primary export partner Britain diminished accessible revenue (Crassweller 1987, 71). Foreign control of the economy caused increased hostility towards the outside world as economic troubles at home became more apparent. In fact, prior to the start of the Second World War around forty-five percent of the total Argentine economy remained under the

control of foreign interests including the railroads, public utilities, construction, and automobile industries (Page 1983, 41). With this foreign grip on the domestic economy so prominent in the minds of Argentine citizens, it is easy to see how Perón's argument for a struggle between the *oligarquía* and *el pueblo* took shape. Here it is important to note that *el pueblo* held a distinctive name in Peronist Argentina: *los descamisados*, or the shirtless ones. This personalization only further ingrained the concept of "us versus them" in the minds of the people and oriented the nation more towards the populist rhetoric of Perón.

Frustration with political fragmentation and the need to address the rising political power of the working class defined the domestic turmoil faced by Argentines during this time period. In 1930, President Hipólito Yrigoyen faced a multi-faceted attack on the political unity of his administration from both the military and the civilian population. On the one hand, political tension stemmed from the military opposition's distaste for the president's use of special favors and disregard for regulations. Society's frustration, on the other hand, emerged from economic mismanagement. Yrigoyen's Radical Party maintained support through the use of a patronage system that largely depended on diminishing export income. As export rates fell, so too did Yrigoyen's support (Crassweller 1987, 71-2). This mounting political irritation with the government on the part of both the military and civil society culminated in a civil-military coup in 1930. This event marked a time of political cynicism and skepticism with Argentina's political system characterized for the next sixteen years by indirect elections, fraud, and coups.

Not only was the political situation in turmoil, but also economic and social instability created fertile soil for the growth of a populist system. Following a trend

common in much of the world during this time, the Argentine economy shifted towards industry in the 1930s. This economic change, combined with a reduction of foreign immigration, led to massive migration from the outlying provinces into Buenos Aires as people sought stable work (Barager 1968, 24). Urbanization, in turn, led to the emergence of a new group of laborers looking for someone who could appeal to their interests and provide empowerment. As workers remonstrated for their share at the national table, traditional political leaders failed to respond to these increasingly aggressive demands. Thus, Argentina's leadership found itself out of sync with the needs of the average citizen, particularly in the years leading up to and including World War II. Failure of the traditional parties to recognize the relevance and power of the newly urbanized working class paired with general disillusionment with individual political actors, seen as either incompetent or corrupt, and led to a political vacuum. This "loss of faith in democracy and party politics, especially among the young" left many people desperate for something in which to believe (Page 1983, 41). These changes, coupled with continuing foreign intervention in the domestic market, exacerbated the situation of the masses and deepened societal divides. With key conditions in place—economic and social turmoil—the emergence of a populist system lacked only a charismatic figure who could harness the dissatisfaction of the country. The young Perón, emerging as a leader, would soon address these major concerns as he forged a new and powerful political movement.

As Argentine society struggled to re-establish its ailing political and economic structures throughout the 1930s, Perón acquired skills that helped him bring together the reeling country, and create a formidable power base. Perón's military background in particular cemented his values. By analyzing his personal growth throughout three stages

of his military career (Cadet to Captain, Captain to Colonel, and Colonel to President) one can track changes that led to his ascension to power.

The significance of Perón's Cadet years up until his promotion to Captain cannot be overstated as they shaped his basic values. His acceptance into the National Military College opened the door to a military career and a broad education. He finished in two years and upon graduation, his father gave him three books upon which Perón claimed he built his legacy. The first, *Martín Fierro*, encouraged a strong sense of cultural identity and a connection with Creole nationalism. Written by José Fernández, this epic poem details the deeds of a lone Argentine gaucho or cowboy, a quintessential figure in Argentine folk stories who is seen as the embodiment of the nation's spirit. *Martín Fierro*'s importance within the Argentine cultural tradition is comparable to *Don Quixote* in Spain. The role of nationalism portrayed in figures such as the gaucho played a role in Perón's later use of the myth-making process. The second, Plutarch's *Lives*, emphasized the role of individuals in the shaping of history's events. The third book, Lord Chesterfield's *Letters*, contained advice on how a public figure should carry oneself while in a position of leadership (Crassweller 1987, 68-9). These three works clearly underpinned how Peron structured his administration and shaped his role as leader.

During Perón's time as a Captain/Lieutenant Colonel, he refined his oratory skills as well as expanded his knowledge of the global system. The War Academy appointed him as a member of its faculty from 1926-1929 and this position helped refine his leadership and speaking abilities, two factors that became increasingly apparent to those around him. His ability to speak extemporaneously on a wide variety of subject matter with an impressive amount of background knowledge fascinated his counterparts and this

aspect of his personality served him well in the years to come (Crassweller 1987, 83). Named military attaché to Chile in 1936 and then assigned to two tours in Italy, Perón gained a wide perspective on world events and closely studied Benito Mussolini's government (Page 1983, 33). At the same time, these trips illustrate some of the international issues creating waves in Argentine domestic sphere such as the rising Fascist tide.

Perón's promotion to Colonel in 1941 tied him to both the military, through government involvement, and labor movements, by way of increased support. The military coup against President Ramón S. Castillo on June 4, 1943 restructured the government and placed Perón in positions dealing with both the workers and the military. His emphasis on committing himself to the working class is one of the key factors explaining his colossal popularity among the majority of Argentines. This gave him the path to election and demonstrated his understanding of the rising political power of labor unions. His appointment in October 1943 as the head of the National Labor Department, which under his direction became the Secretariat of Labor and Welfare, allowed him to be seen as a hero for the common worker as he arbitrated settlements in their favor while opposing the oligarchy. As support for his labor policies grew, he transformed the working class into a powerful and organized political force under the state that responded emotionally and obediently to his directives once they saw that their best interests lay at the forefront of his agenda. Perón's labor successes were reinforced through supposedly spontaneous Perónist rallies in reality orchestrated by the Secretariat of Labor (Blanksten 1953, 55). His ability to organize rallies paired perfectly with the medium of radio and was responsible for saving his political life when it was threatened in 1945.

In his effort to bring the military along, Perón first set his sights on the Ministry of War, the governmental organism that directed the army (Page 1983, 47). General Edelmiro Julián Farrell, a personal friend of Perón and fellow army officer, held the position of Minister of War and chose Perón as his chief aide in 1943 (Page 1983, 52). This friendship would serve Perón well: as Farrell moved to become the second president following the 1943 coup, he selected Perón as Minister of War in May 1944 and eventually made him vice-president in June 1944, moving him within reach of the highest office in the nation. He had near complete oversight of the army and labor forces in Argentina. In Perón's words: "'I display only three titles with pride . . . that of being a soldier, that of being considered the first Argentine worker, and that of being a patriot'" (Blanksten 1953, 56). Such claims of association tied him even closer to these groups within society and highlight his base of support on which he drew in the coming years. Although Perón's charismatic personality captured the nation's attention due to his active participation in both the labor and military spheres, these interactions also gave him a sense of legitimacy. Perón's promises to address popular grievances and improve overall conditions took on an air of validity as he improved conditions for workers and solidified his connections with the top of the military command to get his message out. Perón furthered this sense of legitimacy by acknowledging the role of media during his day and looked towards radio as the future.

History of Established Media Scene (Newsprint)

Examining newsprint, the most well established media source prior to the turmoil of the 1930s, is important because it shows the ways in which this medium shaped

Argentine cultural expectations of mass communication and thus set the stage for the introduction of radio. Argentines have a long history of freedom of the press starting with the Constitution of 1853. Reacting to harsh censorship of Juan Manuel de Rosas' dictatorship, the framers of the constitution established protections for freedom of expression. The document's enforcement by subsequent governments helped lend credence to the idea that it was a "golden age for Argentine journalism" (Blanksten 1953, 201). Newsprint in particular faired well in this time period with Argentine newspapers holding the highest circulation rates in Latin America and the number of newspapers available, up to twenty-six in Buenos Aires alone, catered to all levels of society ("An Overview of the Period" 1975, 16). Along with free speech protections, the Argentine government promoted education leading to high rates of literacy among the population. This, paired with the widespread availability of newsprint, created demand for a socially inclusive mass media. Thus, a culture with a growing demand for frequent updates on general information grew from this literate population, as did the idea that mass media could be socially inclusive (Claxon 2007, 1). By the time the first radio waves passed through the air, newsprint had already established cultural expectations about how mass media should operate and helped demonstrate to the government the power held by emerging sources of information.

History of Radio and its Arrival in Argentina

While newsprint had been the primary mass media of the past, and the methods that could be used to shape its content had been explored in great depth elsewhere, radio's emergence offered uncharted possibilities. By the time Perón came to power, radio had

been around nearly twenty-five years during which time it had become an indispensible part of Argentine society. Mapping its growth in stages from the beginning of the 1920s to its position prior to the presidential elections of 1946 helps highlight the ways in which radio would be transformed to suit the needs of a populist movement such as Peronism.

The genesis and initial period of Argentine radio between 1920 and 1929 can be understood as a time when the government took its first steps towards serious regulation of the medium. The first Argentine radio program broadcast occurred in Buenos Aires on August 27, 1920 during an experimental transmission from the Teatro Coliseo. Its commercial use commenced four years later (Horvath 1986, 19-20). The first real attempt aimed at the consolidation of governmental oversight of radio occurred in 1928 when President Yrigoyen created the *División de Radiodifusión* or Division of Radio Broadcasting, effectively placing radio under the Ministry of the Interior (Horvath 1986, 20). Interestingly enough, a presidential decree the following year stated that radio should be intended to promote cultural and artistic purposes and that any dominance of political propaganda was expressly forbidden during the medium's development (Horvath 1986, 20). Succeeding governments built on such early regulations and allowed a framework of governmental control to become commonplace.

From 1930 until the coup in 1943, radio became a part of daily life for the majority of Argentines regardless of social standing while centralization of governmental control continued to develop. Radio broadcasts reached all levels of society, even those too poor to have a receiving set. Communal loudspeakers within towns, roaming vehicles with speakers announcing sales and news, and radios inside of private businesses surrounded individuals and ensured that radio's content could be enjoyed by all ("An

Overview of the Period" 1975, 17). As demand for radio grew, domestic production of radios reduced costs and more citizens soon tuned in on their own sets. The availability and growing importance of radio is evidenced by the estimated number of receivers: 25,000 in 1923 as compared to 1,200,000 in 1934 (Claxon 2007, 146). Governmental regulations also kept pace with the expanding capabilities of radio during this time including Executive Decree of September 18, 1934 that established several regulatory mechanisms referred to as "The Instructions" on radio broadcasters (Claxon 2007, 104). One important instruction required stated that radio stations needed prior approval from the government before airing political broadcasts while another gave the government the right to suspend any broadcast that violated the established rules (Claxon 2007, 121). These directives carried into the next decade and by 1943 each of the thirty-one radio stations operating within Argentina, twelve of which based in Buenos Aires, followed a strict regulatory framework (Blanksten 1953, 216). Growing access and interest in radio accompanied with stronger oversight controls marked the 1930s and early 1940s. It was against this backdrop that the military coup against President Castillo in 1943 occurred, an event with consequences that would be felt in Argentine radio as it entered into one of its darkest periods.

The final and shortest stage of radio's progression before Perón's rise to the presidency lasted from 1943 to 1946 and included a wide variety of repressive decrees following the military's ouster of President Castillo. The regime took several steps to bring broadcast media under the thumb of the government. Strict measures covered everything from the general, such as refusing to allow programs that deviated from their approved scripts, to the specific, such as ordering orchestras to favor Argentine

performers over foreigners. The government even went so far as to approve a decree in November 1943 forcing stations to air pro-Axis propaganda during the Second World War (Blanksten 1953, 216-17). Freedoms for radio broadcasters reached a new low during this short time span and state intervention in radio showcased the growing governmental understanding of the medium's power within society.

During the period between 1920 and 1946, radio had grown, developed, and been heavily regulated. However, no one had yet put it to use in such a way as to engage its extensive audience base. The military had seen radio as a threat to suppress as well as a tool for state control while, in contrast, Perón viewed it as a way to engage those citizens formerly overlooked by political society. Its classification as an emerging media in the next section is primarily in reference to its use as a tool of political engagement. Perón astutely picked up on the transformative power offered by the connection that existed between the state, the means of communication, and the people (Arribá 1999, 78). This ability to recognize radio's potential would become one of his greatest strengths during both his ascension to the presidency and his time in office.

How Perón Used Radio and Television to his Advantage

Perón was an ideal match for the medium of radio due to his personality and his understanding of the importance of oratory skill in the public sphere. His charisma and ability to instill a feeling of passion in his words synced perfectly with radio's focus on capturing the auditory side of life. As Crassweller states, "the radio was made for Perón and he for it" and this symbiotic relationship would flourish as he made his way towards the presidency (Crassweller 1987, 116). He used radio to his advantage in two major

ways: to help build a strong connection with the Argentine people and to shut off voices of opposition from potential rivals.

Perón's ability to forge an almost intimate connection with the people on a large scale came to light following a devastating earthquake in the Western province of San Juan in January 1944. The military made Perón its spokesman on national radio. He implored the Argentine nation to aid those whose lives had been ruined by the disaster (Greenup 1947, 156). This singular event was the first time that Perón's voice was broadcast across the country, but by no means the last. By his second term in 1951 Perón would be known to give as many as sixty radio addresses a month and his omnipresent radio persona was eagerly welcomed into countless Argentine homes (Cowles 1952, 199). The earthquake broadcast demonstrates a strategic tactic that he relied on as he built his political career: personalization. Perón carefully ensured that his broadcast voice accompanied his every action: "Whenever massive publicity would help . . . it was Perón's words that dominated the press. If radio was indicated, it was Perón's voice that was heard" (Crassweller 1987, 120). He understood that in order to place himself on the forefront of the minds of the people, his words must first enter through their ears.

One message that Peron repeatedly emphasized to his listeners was that he was acting on their behalf. A segment of one of Perón's lectures gives evidence of this concept: "I am going to take the trouble to inform public opinion myself, with the object of preventing the disseminators of discord from invading the land of truth, and so that good Argentines shall not be induced, with the best of intentions, to believe them" (Cowles 1952, 194). Perón even criticized a free press under the pretense of protecting the country, stating that he "opposed the 'arbitrary invocation of freedom of expression

that concealed campaigns meant to confuse and disorient public opinion'" (Page 1983, 211). By identifying himself as public benefactor, Perón further distinguished himself as a protector of *el pueblo* in the ongoing battle against *la oligarquía*.

Another way in which Perón formed a relationship with citizens through radio was by promoting a unified nationalism from behind which to rally. Radio already presented ample opportunity for unification purposes by the time Perón came to power, as he had witnessed firsthand in the San Juan relief efforts. He astutely capitalized on this aspect of radio to forge a more nationalistic society. Furthering nationalism through radio held multiple benefits for Perón: a more nation-centered culture would offer greater levels of inclusion, nationalism united *el pueblo* into a more homogeneous organism, and his connection with the state would be cemented in the minds of the people. Early radio programming gave all citizens a "common gaucho past" through over-the-air dramas and familiarity with the music of tango increased the idea of a shared cultural identity (Claxon 2007, 90). Evoking the idealized national hero, the gaucho Martín Fierro, by radio promoted the importance of shared cultural identity. While refraining from drawing personal associations with a nationalist figure of the past, Perón made ample use of the mythmaking process. Continuing in the vein of nationalism, the Perón administration's requirement that radio stations play Argentine music, including songs featuring the president and his wife, at least fifty percent of the time in the 1940s inevitably led to a more nationally and Peronist conscious population (Cowles 1952, 148). Small group cohesion grew as a result of the listening audiences' tendency to treat the medium as a social activity and radio "encouraged its listeners to think in terms of the nation or region rather than the individual province" (Claxon 2007, 90, 100). This sense of national

identity became more powerful as radio progressed during the Perón years and he used it in a textbook example of populism and the media.

Perhaps the strongest example of Perón's shrewd use of radio broadcasting, as well as a perfect example of his charisma on display for his people, can be seen in the events surrounding his ouster from his positions as Vice President, Secretary of Labor and Welfare, and Minister of War in October 1945. Concerned with Perón's mounting power within the government, the military in cooperation with elements of the civil government staged a coup on October 9, 1945 forcing Perón to resign. President Farrell followed up by authorizing Perón's arrest on October 12th at which time the Colonel was moved to a gunboat as a way to eliminate him from the political spotlight. Perón managed to out maneuver his political enemies by claiming that he needed hospital treatment. He returned to Buenos Aires on October 17th to a wave of demonstrations protesting his incarceration (Crassweller 1953, 60-1). Pressured by massive demonstrations encircling the Casa Rosada organized in part by labor leaders, the government released him. Freed, he then asked for a final favor from then-President Farrell (Page 1983, 117). This favor hinged on making a radio-broadcast speech to the workers on whose behalf he had worked for so tirelessly over his past few years in office. Perhaps not realizing the fact that the Colonel's "political strength rested on *two* legs," that of the military and of the labor movement, President Farrell consented (Blanksten 1953, 61). This provided Perón with a powerful weapon to use against his enemies.

When the government allowed Perón to speak to the people on October 17, 1945, he took full advantage of the opportunity to rally his base of support. Broadcasting from the balcony of the Casa Rosada, the presidential seat of power, Perón addressed the

workers in the plaza and the country. He declared his commitment to the people and framed his speech in such a way that when he said "'I ask for order . . . but if it is necessary, some day I will ask for war'" and concluded by saying "'I am not going to say good-by . . . because from now on I will be among you, closer than ever,'" it was clear that this was not a farewell speech, but a promise of things to come (Crassweller 1987, 161-2). Considered to be one of his strongest performances, this message would solidify popular support for Perón and set the stage for the Colonel's final step towards the presidency.

Cutting off the opposition's ability to reach the public through radio was another way that Perón used the medium to his advantage. During the 1946 election, there had been complete freedom of access and equal time allotments given for every political party, but this quickly became illegal by the time the 1951 elections took place (Blanksten 1953, 217). The European experiences of Perón, who had toured both Italy and Germany under highly repressive regimes, allowed him to see that a monopoly on radio broadcasting could severely cripple opposition. As a result, once in power Perón moved to restrict access to this all-important medium. Ever cautious to frame politically delicate actions as beneficial for the people, the Perónist administration promoted greater government oversight under the guise of "promoting national defense and the spiritual needs of the country" (Page 1983, 210). The good of *el pueblo* again stood as the reasoning behind Perónist action. While civil society might have objected to and helped impede this process, the use of a nationalistic appeal appeased most objections. One such argument compared regulation of radio to regulation of newsprint. Radio's nature seemed, unlike newsprint, to require regulation as it had only a limited number of frequencies

available for use and radio stations could only broadcast within a narrow time frame. This meant that limitations imposed on material could be seen as necessary (Claxon 2007, 103). As political parties lost access to radio, Perón's followers, now a majority, clearly supported the government's regulatory actions. In this way, plurality of opinion on the airwaves ceased to be a common experience for Argentines and the voice of Perón, and his interpretation of events, became the norm for radio listeners.

Perón's trajectory gives an excellent account of the rise of populist leadership within Argentine society. Perón's ascension within the military and political structures between the 1930s until his balcony speech on October 17, 1945 coincided with growing economic and political tension as well as deepening frustration on the part of the marginalized working class. From the societal perspective, significant political responses appeared to be nonexistent as export revenue dried up and foreign intervention increased its debilitating grip on the Argentine economy. In addition, the growing number of laborers, expecting the provision of better political and economic opportunities, instead encountered a disjointed administration unable to address the rise of this new political force.

From this situation of nation-wide turmoil and dissatisfaction emerged Perón, a figure offering himself as a solution to the varied issues confronting the people. He stood as a timely alternative, with a message of national unity specially tailored towards the inclusion of the disgruntled working class. His invocation of a national destiny, paired with his charismatic leadership on behalf of *el pueblo*, stood in stark contrast to the general pessimism felt by the country. The fact that October 17th is still celebrated by Peronists as "Loyalty Day" speaks to the power of will that Perón imparted on his

listeners and stands as a critical turning point, a moment that future populist leaders' movements would also experience. With domination of the radio waves, Perón's populist movement took flight, freed from the limits imposed by geography and landed into the minds of hearts of those who would see him elected.

Aside from the medium of radio, Perón found himself in the midst of the rise of television. In 1950, during his first presidency, Perón sent Jaime Yankelevich, a Peronist supporter and pioneer in the field of Argentine radio, to the United States to buy equipment necessary for television production in the country. Yankelevich returned with six cameras and in 1951, Perón became instrumental in the introduction of television to the Argentine people. Even though there existed a single television station at the time prior to Perón’s ouster in 1955, the number of television sets began to rise, with an initial 7,000 sets reaching over 40,000 in 1953 (Bethell 1995, 535). Following Perón's absence from office, rates continued to escalate with over 850,000 television receivers existing by 1960. With Perón's return to the presidency in 1973, a new chapter in Argentine television began. In 1958, the military government had doled out broadcasting licenses to the television stations in Argentina with a fifteen-year lifespan. Perón, rather than renew these documents when he returned to power, nationalized the television industry as a whole. Referring to television as "a vital element for Argentine culture and for the spiritual values of the nation," Perón's decision cemented the Peronist presence in the broadcasting sphere (Bethell 1995, 536). By the time of his death in 1974, Perón had come to control the voice and image of Argentine broadcasting, fully embracing the emerging media of his time.

Conclusion

Perón masterfully used emerging media as a means to advance his populist platform to the heights of Argentine power. Radio, already an established presence by the time Perón's voice reverberated across the airwaves, proved to be an ideal match for the oratory talent of the populist. Its ability to reach across geographical divides, draw in diverse sectors of society such as the marginalized, and create an analog persona capable of roaming throughout the homes of radio listeners perfectly aligned with the needs of Perón. In turn, Perón's willingness to view radio as a practical political tool helped him place the medium directly in the service of his cause as it reinforced his charisma and let him control the national narrative. His use of radio also helped support his brand of clientelism, as *el pueblo* grew accustomed to associating the voice on the radio with the politician who informed them that he was working to forge a better life for his people. Perón's eager engagement with radio led directly to his adoption of the emerging medium of television. Based on Roger's diffusion of innovation model, Perón's use of radio places him after the majority stages whereby a medium has been accepted by over eighty percent of society. In this sense, Perón was not an innovator. However, radio had never before been utilized to the extent evident in Perón's administration and for this reason this title can be attributed to the President of Argentina. On the subject of television, Perón clearly falls into the innovator category, standing as one of the first proponents of the medium's implementation. Perón thus strategically used radio and television to his advantage and these media strengthened his rise to power.

CHAPTER THREE

PBS (Populist Broadcasting Service)

It was, in its way, a religious faith which came pouring over the radio waves and through the television screens in the words and presence of Fidel Castro . . . the world was amused; Cubans listened enthralled.

-Matthews, 1975

History of Castro

In Cuba, the spirit of populism found image to match its voice and the combination of these two elements worked hand in hand with the physical intensity exhibited by Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz. Castro's revolutionary brand of populism added a broadcasting visual to the radio messages pioneered by Perón. Television proved to be the ideal medium for Castro's message of revolution and allowed Cubans to see his zeal on full display in striking black and white clarity. Castro, much like Perón, recognized and embraced the existing as well as emerging media technologies of the time as he built Cuba into a state distinct from its imposing neighbor that hovered a short ninety miles to its north. As is the case with Perón, Castro's populist characteristics took root in Cuba due to a combination of the political and economic situation leading to the 1959 Revolution as well as the future president's distinctive personal background.

Foreign intervention, corruption, and violence stood as the primary issues facing Cuban society prior to the 1959 Revolution and the general dissatisfaction with these challenges helped shape a receptive audience for Castro's transformative rhetoric. Long

before the Castro era, the United States had considered Cuba under the umbrella of its national interest. Due to Cuba's strategic position within the Caribbean region, the United States established a formal presence as early as 1898 when it intervened during Cuba's war for independence against Spain. Unknown at the time, this intervention set the stage for an on-going "historical grievance" that would carry into the culture of 1959 revolutionary Cuba. The U.S., by choosing to involve itself in Cuba's struggle for independence fostered the idea of a "Yankee assumption of responsibility" for its island neighbor. This intervention failed to take into account the blow such an action would have on the Cuban identity, as did the period following the war (Rabkin 1991, 13). As Rabkin notes, the United States' involvement in the post-war reconstruction came across as usurping the state's legitimate role in restructuring of society (Rabkin 1991, 13). This precedent of foreign intervention continued into the early part of the century as United States' Marines arrived in 1906, 1910, and 1917 to maintain order while Cubans grew more frustrated with their inability to gain true independence. This physical imposition shifted to a more intangible, yet no less dominating, economic and political presence in the coming years.

The Platt Amendment of 1902 gave the United States the ability to shape Cuban foreign policy and gave itself the right to intercede during tumultuous political situations. The third resolve of the Amendment showed how the United States managed to hide national interests under the guise of protecting Cuban ideals:

> That the government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the preservation of life, property, and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the Treaty of Paris on the United States, now

> to be assumed and undertaken by the government of Cuba ("Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Cuba").

The psychological impact of this Amendment is best described by Tad Szulc as a "Platt mentality inferiority complex," whereby North American approval was thought to be necessary if Cubans wished to do anything within their own country (Szulc 1986, 133). The Amendment remained in effect until 1934 and ensured U.S. involvement in the domestic and foreign affairs of Cuba.

Foreign dominance extended into the economic realm as well. As relations between the two countries intertwined, a new mass market opened for both parties. On the one hand, Cuban raw materials and agricultural products flooded into U.S. markets. On the other, the United States became the "chief supplier of goods essential to the Cuban economy - machinery, spare parts, railroad harbor equipment, communications technology, and consumer goods" (Leonard 1999, 4-5). Additionally, Cuba stood as an epicenter for U.S. businesses such as the powerful United Fruit Company and "American companies dominated every aspect of Cuba's economic life" (Leonard 1999, 5). This growth of U.S. influence in the economy created a massive dependence, acutely evident in dealings with Cuba's central export: sugar. Cuba stood as the world's number one producer and exporter of sugar by 1959 and this vital export formed over eighty percent of its overall export GNP (Mesa-Lago 1981, 8). For this reason, Cuba found itself highly reliant on the United States as even minor fluctuations in the superpower's sugar price and quota rates could affect the livelihood of Cuban citizens dependent on this resource (Rabkin 1991, 23). Economically, as well as politically, Cuban society found itself forced to live according to the directives of the United States.

The stranglehold imposed on Cuba's political and economic systems by foreign intervention stirred anger and frustration on the part of the Cubans, a feature that helped form a central basis for Castro's revolution. This long running resentment found an outlet in the figure of Fidel Castro and his promise of a truly independent Cuba. Escalating corruption and violence that slowly overtook Cuba in the years preceding Castro's rise to power paralleled this disillusionment with foreign intervention.

The long-standing issues of violence and corruption plagued Cuban society and created a distrust of political leaders prior to Castro's ascension to the presidency. Three presidential administrations in particular stood out as prime examples of these challenges: Ramón Grau San Martín (1944-1948), Carlos Prío Socarrás (1948-1952), and Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar (1952-1959). Political assassinations became a fact of life under Grau with a record sixty-four taking place within his four years in office (Quirk 1993, 22-3). Prío's administration added mismanagement and corruption to the list of disagreeable aspects of the Cuban political realm. Perhaps his most infamous contribution to the corrupt system was the "Gangs Pact," an agreement made between the political gangs that terrorized Havana during Castro's university days. To stem the violence, Prío divided political positions among the leaders of the various organizations and promised that none of the gangsters would be charged with a crime (Szulc 1986, 189). Additionally, he echoed his predecessor by slowly building a private fortune while in office. Through political maneuvers, Prío managed to exchange favors for large property holdings (Martin 1978, 86). Finally, Batista's administration contributed graft to the mix in the form of political favoritism as new development banks granted large loans to Batista government supporters while waving away requests from nonpartisans (Pérez-Stable 1999, 54). Those

opposed to Batista also put forward claims that the regime siphoned funds from the national lottery: "Every government activity was milked -- the lottery, the school lunch program, drivers' licenses, parking meters, teachers' certificates. The police routinely extorted millions in protection money from Havana merchants" (Padula 1974, 66). Each of these administrations frustrated Cuban citizens and established a chasm of mistrust between the people and their government. Castro's call for a more equitable system thus found its place in receptive minds.

Castro's path to populist leadership stemmed from educational and political involvement rather than on a militaristic rise from the rank and file of the military. As Cuba roiled from foreign intervention and dissatisfaction with their government, Castro's experiences at the University of Havana Law School paralleled this societal discontentment and oriented the young law student towards finding revolutionary solutions for the country. The growth of Castro from his university days up until the success of his 26th of July Movement in 1959 can be demonstrated in three stages: his educational background from 1945-1950, his attempt to pursue legal entrance into politics from 1950-1952, and his transition to rebellion following the March 10 coup d'état in 1952. These three segments of Castro's life allowed him to take power when the opportunity presented itself while at the same time it laid the foundation for his populist message.

Castro's years at the University of Havana from 1945 to 1950 provided an education and, equally important to the future leader, involvement in the politics of Cuba. The setup of the university system in Cuba highlights reasons why politics stood as a central component of Castro's educational experience. As was the case in many Latin

American universities, educational reforms swept across the region in the 1930s and had shaped the University of Havana into an autonomous entity free from interference from governmental forces, including the military and police. As bastions of free thought and autonomy, the universities and their students often found themselves in conflict with the regime of the time, which in turn led to heated discussions on political matters. Students found one's identity depended on involvement in this political discussion and political groups welded immense power on campus (Leonard 2004, 9). The young Castro was not immune to these pressures.

His involvement with student political groups led to a variety of opportunities that helped build his presence as a leader and shaped his populist tendencies. On a domestic level, he quickly caught the attention of Havana newspapers by publicly denouncing President Grau on November 27, 1947 and routinely making a name for himself as a critic of the inadequate leadership structure in Cuba (Leonard 2004, 10-11). On an international scale, he participated in two events that shaped his future revolutionary activities, both of which due to his involvement with student political groups. The first involved a plot to overthrow Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina, dictator of the Dominican Republic, in September 1947. Castro's motives, he claimed, grew from his will to fight for a noble cause and repay a debt of honor to the Dominican people from the 1898 war of independence (Quirk 1995, 23-4). In addition, he acted out of a personal concern for social justice, a cause that would surface again in the years to come. Whereas Castro espoused such high lofty motivations, Herbert Matthews offered a more realistic explanation: Castro likely joined due to his afflation with the *Unión Insurreccional Revolucionaria* (UIR—Revolutionary Insurrectionist Union), a student political group, as

well as his interest in going on an adventure (Matthews 1975, 45). Although the operation was cancelled due to U.S. pressure, the experience gave Castro an introduction to insurgency while also laying the groundwork for a populist platform based on social reforms and a focus on those marginalized by their government.

The second event, taking place in Bogotá, Colombia, further engrained populist sentiments into the fabric of Castro's political persona. In April 1948, Colombia hosted the ninth Inner-American Conference, during which time the Organization of American States (OAS), a regional body focused on addressing issues pertaining to the Western Hemisphere, was created. The Argentine government under Perón wished to establish itself as a hegemonic force within the region and saw this conference as a perfect opportunity to capture the attention of its hemispheric neighbors. Seeking ways to boost their image, the Peronist administration realized that Bogotá, in addition to hosting the Conference, was also hosting the Latin American Student Congress, an event attracting politically oriented students from throughout the Hemisphere. Hoping that a strong student backing would boost their image, the Peronists became highly supportive of the Congress and sent agents to Havana in an attempt to encourage greater student participation (Martin 1978, 55). Castro, eager to continue his involvement in political affairs, responded to the Argentine call and made the significant journey to Bogotá following a Peronist offer to defray travel expenses. The adventure ahead focused his attention on the role of leadership in the midst of disorder and gave him a better understanding of the power of a crowd.

For Castro, the trip to Bogotá provided additional lessons in leadership. The trip ended following the assassination of a Colombian party leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán

Ayala, a highly regarded political figure who was going to meet with Castro and other members of the Student Congress. The murder prompted a series of riots and the ensuing chaos led to Castro's return to Cuba after seeking safety in the Cuban embassy. Castro later claimed that this event gave him an understanding of two things: the necessity of educating Cubans towards a revolution and the importance of stability following its success (Leonard 2004, 12-3). The event, according to Castro, "was a spontaneous reaction on our part, as young people with Martí-an, anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist and pro-democratic ideas" (Ramonet and Castro 2009, 98). These events, encapsulated in his time at university, defined his views on leadership and revolution in ways that would become apparent as he moved towards the presidency.

Having graduated with a Doctorate of Law in September 1950, Castro embarked on a new stage of life for the next two years. The pressing domestic problems faced by Cuba led him deeper into his role as champion of a revolutionary state as, over the next few years, he fully involved himself in engaging the people. As a prominent member of the Orthodox Party, active since 1947, Castro set out to write articles, give speeches both in person and over the radio, and visit the poorest areas of Cuba to further his political influence (Leonard 2004, 14-5). By 1952, he had set his sights on a congressional position within the Cuban government with the full intention of promoting change through legal means. Buoyed by supporters from the poor districts, his nomination and campaign managed to get off the ground. However, a military coup d'état by Fulgencio Batista, a former president of Cuba, on March 10, 1952 quickly derailed Castro's plans. He at first attempted to challenge legally Batista's actions in court, but when this failed he, much like the rest of Cuban society, realized that the system would only change

through force (DePalma 2007, 28). This period of Castro's life predating his revolutionary days, short yet significant, showcased his ability to campaign for the causes for the sake of the people and for the country at large. The coup only seems to have instilled in Castro the belief that a new approach should be taken to move Cuba towards a healthy future.

The Batista coup ignited a guerrilla movement that lasted from 1952 until Batista's eventual escape to the Dominican Republic in 1959. With corruption and the disarray of Cuba's political system on display and a U.S.-backed military dictator returning to power in 1952, a frustrated Castro turned towards a grassroots revolutionary solution. His first public move against the regime was the infamous Moncada Barracks attack orchestrated on July 26th, 1953. Although the takeover was a failure and ended with the capture of Castro and his forces, He wrote one of his greatest speeches in prison following his trial, presenting it on October 16,1953. The powerful line "*la historia me absolverá*," or history will absolve me, showcased Castro's belief in his cause. In the speech he made two calculated points. On the one hand, he carefully distinguished the Moncada soldiers from the regime they served (Quirk 1995, 59). In doing so, he indicated that his fight was not with the troops, but with the usurping dictator. On the other hand and in the same vein, Castro also built up the idea of *el pueblo* in his explanation:

> It was never our intention to engage the soldiers of the regiment in combat. We wanted to seize control of them and their weapons in a surprise attack, arouse the people and call the soldiers to abandon the odious flag of the tyranny and to embrace the banner of freedom; to defend the supreme interests of the nation and not the petty interests of a small clique; to turn their guns around and fire on the people's enemies and not on the people, among whom are their own sons and fathers; to unite with the people as the brothers that they are instead of opposing the people as the enemies the government tries to make of them . . . (McIntire and Burns 2009, 414).

In this, Castro made it clear that national unity of *el pueblo* was vital in the fight against the challenges faced by Cuban society.

It was Castro's time in the Sierra Maestra mountains that solidified his connection with rural elements of *el pueblo*. Castro and his Moncada compatriots were released from prison on May 15, 1955 and he soon found himself barred from speaking on the radio or at public meetings following a continuation of his rhetoric opposing the Batista regime. Muted by the government and watched by the police, he decided to leave for Mexico on July 7th of that same year. There he hoped to organize a resistance movement that would liberate the Cuban people from their oppression (Matthews 1975, 67). Within seventeen months, he had raised funds and support, met the revolutionary Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, and returned to Cuba onboard the yacht Granma for the next leg of his revolution. This period of time, defined by skirmishes and jungle living, brought Castro's forces into constant contact with the peasants in the Sierra Maestra. In Guevara's words, "We began to feel in our bones the need for a definitive change in the life of the people . . . the guerrilla group and the peasantry began to merge into one single mass" (Guevara 2006, 68). Paired with Castro's previous experiences, his time spent in the rural Sierra Maestra fostered his belief in the need for social justice on behalf of those marginalized by the current regime. Such interactions with the people and the continuous pressure exerted by Castro's men on the Batista regime finally helped usher in a change of government in 1959.

Keeping in mind the definition of the populist, it is important to mention that throughout these events, Castro continually fostered a sense of inclusion by unifying the

revolution and the people of Cuba around José Martí. A central part of Castro's populist message involves the emulation of and association with Martí, one of the principal historical figures of Cuban history. Martí's near mythical status, born out of his continuous struggle in support of a Cuba independent from Spain, and his imprisonment, life of exile, and return to Cuba by boat to continue anti-government activities carries over into the mythmaking component of Castro's populism. Castro has taken strides to associate himself with Martí, citing him in speeches and recalling his memory as a means to assimilate Castro into the minds and emotions of *el pueblo* (Willner 1984, 72). By attaching himself to Martí, "he is seen as the contemporary personification of one . . . of the pantheon of dominant culture heroes and in turn he becomes a culture hero" (Willner 1984, 63). From his assertions that Martí stood as the intellectual author of the Moncada attack to the institutionalization of the ideals of Martí in Cuba's 1976 Constitution, Castro ensured that the Cuban hero, and Castro in turn, is forever on the forefront of *el pueblo's* mind.

History of Established Media Scene (Radio)

Prior to the introduction of television, Cubans enjoyed widespread usage of radio, largely due to a strong infrastructural foundation developed by the United States. Beginning with the first broadcast in the early 1920s, radio maintained a strong presence in society and shaped the media landscape for future technological advances. Ultimately, Cuban radio moved from a healthy provider of news and entertainment that served as a beacon for the Americas to a docile medium under the jurisdiction of a watchful Batista government.

On October 10, 1922, the first radio broadcast in Cuba reverberated across the airwaves and signaled a moment of immense change for the island. Although radio took many years to refine its voice, the inaugural message of President Alfredo Zayas Alfonzo set the stage for a young man born four years later to be brought up in an age where one's thoughts could reach countless listeners. This radio broadcast from Cuban radio station PXW, owned by the Cuban Telephone Company, promoted a growing interest in the new medium (Salwen 1994, 3). Interestingly, radio's initial growth was greatly influenced by Cuba's sugar industry and U.S. investment in this vital resource. Because of Cuba's central role in this sector, investors sought ways to develop infrastructure that would facilitate the transmission of information across the island (Venegas 2010, 37). Cuba's broadcasting industry also grew stronger because the United States treated Cuba as "an offshore site where technological innovations and products were often tested before broader distribution in Latin America" (Venegas 2010, 38). As such, Cuba benefited from its early exposure to a variety of media technologies. While serving as a testing ground for radio, Cuba faced one critical problem: it had little to no control or involvement in the early development of its own broadcasting industries (Salwen 1994, 168). Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the U.S. national interest and protections afforded to domestic companies determined development of Cuba's media networks, while affording the Cuban state or its citizens no input.

The Cuban state soon imposed itself when radio broadcasted views counter to the government. Under the Grau and Prío administrations, radio enjoyed widespread freedom and openness, with opposition groups such as the Orthodox Party free to voice their critiques of the state's leadership (Salwen 2010, 94). This period of media liberty quickly

lost ground and never truly recovered after Fernando Batista's coup on March 10, 1952. Batista enforced a period of censorship by barring radio broadcasters from allowing private individuals to speak over the air and holding broadcasters liable for every opinion that was shared over the air regardless of its adherence to the views of the station regarding the coup ("Broadcasters Summoned" 1952, 1 and " Minister Denies" 1952, 1). Those stations that decided to allow opposition opinions to be expressed soon saw their stations occupied with government troops, as was the case for *Radio Cadena Havava* on March 14, 1952 (Salwen 1994, 95). Throughout the 1950s, Cuba continued to surpass the rest of Latin America in the field of radio broadcasting, as demonstrated in Table 3.1, although with ample repression shaping the media landscape.

Table 3.1. Radio receivers in selected Latin American nations

Country	Receiver Units	Per 1,000 Population	Year
Argentina	2,900,000	158	1953
Bolivia	200,000	62	1956
Brazil	3,500,000	61	1954
Chile	650,000	99	1954
Costa Rica	50,000	55	1954
CUBA	**1,100,000**	**176**	**1956**
Ecuador	100,000	26	1956
El Salvador	24,000	11	1956
Guatemala	36,030	11	1954
Haiti	19,000	6	1956
Honduras	30,000	18	1956
Mexico	2,500,000	84	1955
Nicaragua	30,000	25	1954
Panama	95,000	110	1953
Paraguay	80,000	53	1953
Puerto Rico	200,000	88	1956
Uruguay	500,000	189	1956
Venezuela	230,000	39	1956

Source: (Salwen 1994, 70) as abstracted from George A. Codding Jr., *Broadcasting Without Barriers* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1959), 148.

The importance of examining radio cannot be overstated as it was instrumental in providing Castro with background knowledge on the necessity of directing emerging

media technologies, while his experience with radio helped prepare him for his use of television as a political tool. As Venegas states: "the revolutionaries thus inherited a strong media infrastructure, and they demonstrated a keen awareness of the utility of media in their quick redirection of the transmission capacity toward the public interest" (Venegas 2010, 90). The best example of this took the form of *Radio Rebelde*, a radio station set up in the mountains at Castro's military base of operations in La Plata (Matthews 1975, 100). His background in radio, stemming from his participation in the Orthodox Party, granted him an appreciation for the unifying power of radio broadcasting and its usefulness as an informational tool. *Radio Rebelde* updated the people on the progress of the revolutionary force and helped organize grassroots support for the overarching cause of the July 26th Movement (Venegas 2010, 81). New provincial radio stations went up as Castro swept across Cuba and witnessed the power of radio (Matthews 1975, 100). This network gave Castro an understanding of the power of broadcast media and the usefulness of being able to bypass Cuba's censored media systems (Salwen 1994, xiii). By the time Cubans embraced the Revolution, Castro had already recognized the value of broadcasting media. With this in mind, the move to television was a logical, and achievable, next step. In addition, Castro's use of television greatly benefitted from lessons learned from the previous administration's move from acceptance to repression of broadcasting media.

History of Television and Its Arrival in Cuba

The emergence of television parallels the way in which radio came to dominate the airwaves of Cuba and owes its advancement again to U.S. involvement. The first

television broadcast accessible to Cuban viewers occurred on October 14, 1950 and television's audience quickly expanded (Salwen 1994, 39-40). By 1953, there were an estimated seven transmitting stations, growing to ten in 1954, and jumping to 23 by 1955 (UN Statistical Yearbook 1955, 601 and UN Statistical Yearbook 1956, 614). Flush with disposable income after World War II, Cubans invested in amenities and novelties such as television sets. The expansion of Cuban TV receivers went hand in hand with the availability of U.S. programs populated by entertainers well known by many Cuban residents (Salwen 1994, 34). Those involved in the U.S. television industry, particularly the advertising sector, eagerly addressed this newfound demand and happily embraced the new market (Salwen 1994, 34). The promise of a stronger bottom line and an expansive market made Cuba a major focus for U.S. programmers prior to Castro's Revolution. In fact, the strengthening of Cuban technological infrastructure depended on the interest expressed by United States media companies such as National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) (Venegas 2010, 39). Once more, a Cuban broadcasting medium owed its expansion to the U.S. interest and investment.

Television quickly became the dominating medium of the communication industry as funding and talent moved towards visual broadcasting. In 1954, television finally overtook radio as Cuba's principal broadcasting medium (Salwen 1994, 62). Table 3.2 demonstrates the decline beginning in 1952 with the last column highlighting the overall rates of change over this time span.

Table 3.2. Radio listening (ratings) in Cuba, 1949-1953

Hours	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	Change 1949–1953
9–10 a.m.	9.30	9.90	12.03	11.87	10.02	+0.72
10–11	13.79	13.24	19.26	15.98	15.20	+1.41
11–Noon	23.81	21.44	26.30	22.18	22.16	−1.65
Noon–1 p.m.	33.26	28.36	32.12	29.48	24.81	−8.45
1–2	30.93	32.27	31.11	33.33	25.26	−5.67
2–3	18.51	19.50	26.16	25.31	20.40	+1.89
3–4	20.78	15.97	20.37	19.99	17.60	−3.18
4–5	14.71	12.16	19.31	18.54	15.54	+0.83
6–7	22.84	19.47	21.20	19.45	17.74	−5.10
7–8	37.50	33.83	38.06	33.24	27.14	−10.36
9–10	34.81	36.71	39.22	29.62	23.05	−11.76
Total	24.92	22.74	26.17	23.39	19.82	−5.10

Source: (Salwen 1994, 63) as abstracted from "Estado Comparativo de Audiencia Potencial (1) de la Radio," *Bohemia*, March 29, 1953, 44.

Interest in television skyrocketed as new broadcasting stations sprung up to cater to wider audiences. By 1959, there were twenty-seven television stations in Cuba, including seven independent local stations and three major national networks (Venegas 2010, 40). Television's rapid growth and acceptance as the central broadcasting media by the end of the 1950s had not escaped the notice of Fidel Castro. The stage was set for Castro's message of revolution to be heard by and shown to a nationwide audience.

How Castro Used TV and the Internet To His Advantage:

Castro relied heavily on television to define his revolution and restore order after Batista's ouster in January 1959. However, new challenges awaited Castro as he found himself in need of order following the chaos left in the wake of his struggles with the Batista regime. He used television to accomplish three central goals: achieve stabilization and consolidation of power, promote greater inclusion of *el pueblo cubano*, and ensure that his omnipresence reached across the island. Castro broadcasted his message into every TV set in Cuba and established the foundation for one of the most unique regimes in modern history while continuing the legacy of populist involvement in established and emerging media technologies.

Castro first utilized the medium to stabilize and consolidate his power. During the made-for-TV drama surrounding Batista's ouster, commercial television provided information while serving as a stabilizing agent, with broadcasters keen to prevent chaos from erupting in the streets (Salwen 1994, 123). While these broadcasters acted on their own accord during those chaotic days of transition, Castro recognized the importance of television in both maintaining order and providing a means to combat falsehoods that could undermine civic tranquility. Television thus helped fill the vacuum created by the removal of the Batista administration. Castro's 26th of July Movement faced another revolutionary group called the Revolutionary Directorate (DR) which also had been attempting to overthrow the government through guerrilla activities. Castro broadcast his successful arrival in Havana on January 8, 1959 thereby legitimizing his role as leader of post-Batista Cuba, but realized the need to address the DR's activities. On national television, he concentrated on a recent DR theft of weapons from a Cuban military

installation that posed a threat to his new regime. He appealed directly to the DR: "Arms for what? Is there a dictatorship here? {Shouts of: NO!} . . . Will they fight against a free government that respects the peoples' rights? [Shouts of: NO!]" (Szulc 1986, 469). The image on the screen had a profound effect on Cuban politics. The DR returned the weapons to Castro's forces without further incident (Szulc 1986, 469). Through the television screen, Castro made it clear that his leadership would bring stability, now legitimized for all to see.

Castro also united the Cuban people around the revolution by broadcasting inclusive messages. His revolutionary state required a new consciousness to be adopted by the people and television stood as the vehicle for educating the masses (Venegas 2010, 41). As early as January 3, 1959, Castro ensured that his face graced the screens of millions of viewers. For the entirety of the five-day journey to Havana, live television covered the advancement of Castro's forces, allowing *el pueblo cubano* to feel as though they too were part of the celebration (Szulc 1986, 465). This attempt to connect the people with the events shaping their country's future is paralleled in the way Castro presented new developments. His proposals relied on an element of discussion occurring between the leader and *el pueblo*. Rather than directly presenting the final outcome to the country, Castro capitalized on the emotion of the audience to make it seem as though he was asking for advice. Having already made a decision, he nevertheless consulted Cubans on their opinions to encourage them to think they had a voice in topics that affected them (Szulc 1962, 200). By "including" the masses in events and decision-making through the medium of television, Castro gave the people a sense of belonging and of ownership of

their own destiny, of participatory democracy, something that had never existed in Cuba's history.

One of the most prominent and memorable television moments showcasing Castro's clever use of the medium as a tool of social inclusion took place following the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion staged by a group of Cuban dissidents (Brigade 2506) with United States support. Stranded by the invasion's failure, 1,189 members of the Brigade were taken prisoner by Castro's forces. They were soon to be part of a series of television appearances that would capture the attention of the country (Wyden 1979, 301). Brigade members were taken to Havana's *Palacio de los Deportes*, or Sports Palace, and soon became objects for Castro's propaganda performance (Triay 2001, 131). The first act consisted of prisoners being paraded before television cameras, interrogated and shown as embarrassments to their Cuban *pueblo* (Triay 2001, 148). A select few, chosen for their social standing and relation to "enemies of the revolution," appeared before a televised interview panel to demean and ridicule the Brigade's goals (Johnson 1964, 206). Over a period of four nights, thirty-seven pre-screened prisoners sat before the ten-person panel and responded to questions relating to their involvement in the failed invasion. With a sign hanging above the interviewees declaring: "FATHERLAND OR DEATH. WE WON," the thirty-seven either repented of their actions or remained steadfast in their commitment to a truly free Cuba (Johnson 1964, 207-8). *El pueblo cubano* watched with eager anticipation as the drama continued.

The second act of the Bay of Pigs show revolved around Castro's inclusion of all Cubans in the victory celebration over the "imperialist forces." On April 23, 1961, Castro appeared on the television program *Popular University* for what would turn into a four-

hour educational lesson on the successful defense of the country by revolutionary forces. With diagrams, maps, captured documents, and pointer in hand, Castro gave detailed accounts of all aspects of the operation while extoling the health of the Revolution (Szulc 1986, 555). Castro also participated in the questioning of prisoners as he wandered among the group with a microphone, engaging them in debate on a variety of issues pertaining to the Revolution while mocking their reasons for opposing it. He even went so far as to remind his captive audience that only in Cuba could prisoners be given the opportunity to speak directly with a head of state (Leonard 2004, 62). While the botched Bay of Pigs boosted Castro's image in the eyes of his soldiers, television allowed this moment of triumph to be shared by the viewing public across the island. The powers of the Cuban populist were on full display as the charismatic new leader of Cuba hyped the ability of *el pueblo* to persevere in the face of foreign pressure while espousing the importance of the nationalist struggle. Television gave Castro a powerful tool for transmitting the official version of events and served as the perfect platform for presenting the regime's new policies and goals to the people (Venegas 2010, 82). In this way, the education of Cuba on the ideological elements of the revolution in a uniform and inclusive manner was assured.

Not only did Castro focus on promotion of wider social inclusion via television, but he also used it to become omnipresent in the daily lives of Cuba's residents. Aside from coverage of major televised events such as those mentioned above, Castro's minor activities filled the airwaves on a regular basis. Cuban viewers saw their leader multiple times a day either during live broadcasts or on taped segments. In fact, nearly every move made by the guerrilla leader was beamed into Cuban homes (Szulc 1962, 198). This was

one of the central strengths of Castro: the ability to occupy and maintain a foundation in individual and private realms (Venegas 2010, 83). A constant presence reinforced Castro's leadership, an achievement that attests to the medium's prudent utilization by the Cuban populist.

It is thanks to his use of television as a means to provide stabilization, inclusion, and omnipresence over Cuba that Castro can be seen as a successful handler of emerging media technology. His use of television disseminated an ideological mindset that defined revolutionary Cuba and set the country on a path far removed from its past. By using television to his advantage, Castro guided Cuba's entrance into a new era of history while laying the foundation for his administration.

One of the longest lasting battles waged by Castro in the realm of emerging media deals with Radio and TV Martí. Radio Martí, established in 1985 by the Reagan administration, broadcasts from Miami, Florida and seeks to provide quality and "spin-free" information to the people of Cuba. In essence, Radio Martí's mandate as an alternative voice attests the success of Castro's use of the media to establish omnipresence within society's mediums of communication. The station is primarily backed by exiles of revolutionary Cuba and has remained a staple of Cuban-American policy since its inception. In 1990, TV Martí emerged to complement its radio counterpart and has been a source of ongoing debate for years. Attempts to broadcast to the island have been met with jamming on the part of the Castro administration while the United States has relied on everything from $3 million dollar "Fat Albert" blimps to satellites to overcome such restrictions ("Storm Damaged Blimps" 2005). The persistence and success of Cuban jamming have even promoted the United States to fly EC-130E/J

Commando Solo (C-130) aircraft outfitted with broadcasting equipment to beam Radio and TV Martí's signals into the island from above (Harr 2006, paragraph 18). Continued U.S. support of the Radio and TV Martí programs have given Castro the opportunity to emphasize once again the interference in Cuban society by a foreign power, continuing the populist rhetoric based on *el pueblo* versus *la oligarquía* intent on working against the people's best interests.

Castro's treatment of the Internet builds off of the revolutionary history of total media control following his ascension to the presidency. The Internet, introduced to the island in 1996, has been severely restricted under Castro's regime and has not made much headway during its existence. The state maintains a presence online and several official Cuban webpages offer links to *Reflexiones de Fidel*, where an online audience may find writings, thoughts, and directives of Castro. The fact that Fidel's thoughts are readily accessible to those technologically connected individuals in Cuba while dissident voices are silenced brings the role of charismatic omnipresence once more into focus. One example of the state's digital footprint is cubadebate.cu, whose subtitle "*Contra el Terrorismo Mediático*" (Against Media Terrorism) reinforces its stated goal of providing an alternative mode of informing Cuban citizens about U.S. defamation attempts against the Cuban state. The government's digital existence, in this respect, is evident of an effort to engage a new medium while retaining complete control of its use.

Examples of this control have been reported by Freedom House, which stated in its annual Freedom of the Press assessment that, in 2002 "the government prohibited the sale of personal computers to the general public in order to prevent the emergence of independent publications and to keep the Internet age further at bay" (“Freedom of the

Press 2003"). While highly critical of Cuba's repression regarding Internet access, sources such as Freedom House have acknowledged growth in the percentage of the population with Internet connectivity during the 2000s. In its 2012 report, it is estimated that twenty-three percent of the Cuban population accessed the Internet in 2011, although there is no information available as to whether connectivity was limited to the restrictive Cuban intranet or the World Wide Web international network ("Freedom of the Press 2012"). One example of the Internet's suppression is seen in the plight of Yoani Sanchez, whose blog, *Generación Y*, has been met with various censorship attempts by the government. In 2007, gaining Internet access required Sanchez to enter a Havana hotel, one of the few places with access to a large portion of the World Wide Web, under the guise of a German tourist (Estaban 2007, paragraph 1-2). 2008 produced greater challenges as the government installed an information filter that blocked *Generación Y's* availability to Cuban Internet users until 2011 (Sanchez 2013, paragraph 6). While Fidel Castro might no longer be at the reigns of Cuban government, it is clear that his legacy of media control has proven to be difficult to remove.

Conclusion

Castro's use of emerging media has been key in the perpetuation of his revolutionary model for Cuba. Beginning with the established medium of radio in the 1950s, he skillfully transferred, expanded, and perfected his command of broadcast media through television. Television allowed him greater access to the people, served as an educational tool for the spread of his ideological message, and helped consolidate his power.

In reference to Roger's model, Castro's use of radio classified him as part of the majority due to its prevalent diffusion throughout society. His adoption of television, on the other hand, placed him fully within the early adopters stage. The medium proved to be a perfect match for the bearded guerrilla turned President and his eager embrace of television was hugely successful in organizing post-revolutionary Cuba. His early acceptance also helped him deal with the threats posed by external broadcasts such as TV Martí. As for the Internet, Castro once more fit into the early adopter category. His early involvement helped him achieve complete oversight over the medium, with the effects still being felt today. Emerging media worked in tandem with Castro's populist characteristics and helped define his unique regime.

CHAPTER FOUR

Populism in 140 Characters or Less

"I am a bit obsessed with our communications strategy . . ."

-Hugo Chávez, 2002

History of Chávez

Hugo Chávez Frías was one of the most dynamic and controversial populist figures to emerge at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Energetic, passionate, and intent on delivering rhetoric centered on nationalistic destiny, Chávez's drive placed Venezuela at the forefront of discussions on Latin American leadership. Exhibiting perfect tendencies of the populist, his use of media technologies demonstrated the modern day application of such practices as a means to retain power and connection with society. While drawing on familiar practices evident in the approach to media utilized by Perón and Castro, Chávez placed his personal touch on emerging media and strove to better understand of the importance of broadcast technologies. However, in contrast with his two predecessors, Chávez failed in two areas: he resistance to emerging media for a time led to his classification within the early majority category of Roger's model and his prolonged absence in 2012-2013 failed to make use of emerging media as a tool of political power. Following the examples set by the previous two populists, a relevant discussion on Chávez is based on the condition of Venezuelan society and on the personal background of the persistent leader.

Like the emergence of both Perón and Castro, Chávez's rise to power was framed by escalating class inequality, corruption, and growing dissatisfaction with the policies enacted by the government. Venezuela experienced an oil boom in the 1970s and 1980s,

creating a multitude of benefits for the poorest elements of society. Free universal education, free health care, and public works projects allowed every citizen to enjoy the prosperity that emerged from the discovery of this precious resource. Problems emerged when oil revenues dwindled following the economic decline in the late 1980s, as the middle class overtook provisions intended to aid the lower class. Adding to this tension, these formerly accessible benefits transformed into for-profit institutions and fewer poor benefitted (Wilpert 2007, 106-7). Urbanization also played a role as census data demonstrates that the percentage of the population living in urban areas in 1950, 53 percent, grew to over 82 percent by 1975 and 85 percent by the late 1980s (Haggerty 1993, 53). When advances for the lower class were erased by the economic changes, discontent escalated against the government.

Venezuela, as in any state with exceedingly high oil revenues, faced consistent accusations of corruption prior to Chávez's rise, but it was the impeachment of President Carlos Andrés Pérez Rodríguez in 1993 that placed the issue in the spotlight. By the 1980s, the country had grown accustomed to an influx of oil income, with $150 billion flowing in from 1973 to 1983 (Jones 2007, 77). However, much of this money failed to reach its intended destination and the evident corruption only served to aggravate society. Not even President Pérez was immune to the corruption issue, as the Supreme Court indicted him in June 1996 on the misuse of $17.2 million in government funds (Jones 2007, 221). Corruption continued to be a central concern of Venezuelan citizens and Chávez never hesitated to bring the issue up in his pursuit of power.

Growing frustration with government policies also contributed to the overall atmosphere of societal dissatisfaction that set the stage for the coming era of Chávez. The

best example of this came from the adoption of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural readjustment program in February 16, 1989. This austerity policy, intended to stabilize the struggling Venezuelan economy, led to inflation rates of 80.7 percent, a 40 percent drop in real salaries, and a 14 percent unemployment rate (Harnecker and Chávez Frías 2005, 16). The riots that overtook Caracas in response to IMF measures "demonstrated that many of the urban poor deeply resented the sociopolitical system" (Haggerty 1993, 62). This resentment spilled over into the electoral process, as direct elections for mayors and governors in December 1989 met with a 60 percent abstention rate at the polls (Harnecker and Chávez Frías 2005, 16). Clearly, society was primed for a change and weary of the traditional path of politicians.

As was the case in Argentina and Cuba, many Venezuelans saw an opportunity for true reform in the emergence of the charismatic Chávez. Echoing Perón and Castro, Chávez's ability to address the Venezuelan people's concerns stemmed from his personal engagement with issues presented by previous administrations as well as his belief that a new political direction was vital to the country's health. In contrast with Castro's revolution, that attempted to promote change through legal means and then progressed into a militaristic solution, Chávez's movement took the opposite path. This movement moved from conspiratorial roots to electoral victory through Venezuela's democratic system, a route much more in line with Perón. Thus, Chávez followed in Peron's footsteps: his military career laid the groundwork for power while his election legitimized his regime. This mixture of military and civil involvement framed Chávez's rise to power, a rise that can be demonstrated in three stages: his time in the military academy from 1971 to the end of his early military career in 1981, his later military career in 1982 to the

failed coup attempt in 1992, and his incarceration in 1992 until his rise to President in 1999. The shaping of Chávez as a populist occurred over this span of time and positioned him as the only solution to the frustrations exhibited by *el pueblo*.

Chávez's association with the military, beginning with his time as a student in the Venezuelan Academy of Military Sciences in 1971, is one of the principal reasons why he won over the hearts of the Venezuelan people as well as built up a foundation of supportive connections within the army. While his study in the basics of military strategy constituted an important component of his coursework, Chávez's class also found itself encouraged to engage in a more holistic approach to their education. Nationalistic restructuring of the school, referred to as the Andrés Bello Plan, incorporated a more humanistic foundation for student curriculum rather than the strict military sciences focus found most commonly in the past (Jones 2007, 38). This allowed Chávez the chance to explore a variety of concepts normally left out of a military education and gave him ample time to study the political thoughts of his hero, Simón Bolívar.

A major event in the timeline of Chávez took place in his last year at the Academy in 1974 when he visited Lima to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Ayacucho, the date associated with the independence of Peru (Marcano and Tyskzka 2007, 36). There, he got the chance to meet General Juan Velasco Alvarado who, in 1968, led a nationalist revolution called Plan Inca. This encounter had a profound impact on Chávez and certain attributes of Alvarado's approach to revolution clearly stuck with him. First, Alvarado's uprising based on growing anger with the corruption and ineptitude of the regime in power resonated with the young soldier. Second, the fact that Alvarado ousted a civilian regime and stabilized the country through the military and through the

nationalization of industries indicated that such a method of rule had merit. Third, the Peruvian revolutionaries had a deep understanding and concern for the marginalized, a concern largely due to their experiences fighting guerrillas in the rural areas of the country (Jones 2007, 51). Plan Inca's success and seeming functionality demonstrated that a revolutionary vision could be practically applied, an observation that was not lost on Chávez.

Following graduation from the Academy, Chávez developed another skill that would serve him well on his path to power. He received a position in Los Llanos as head of a communications unit and built his familiarity with broadcasting (Marcano and Tyskzka 2007, 38). With a large amount of time on his hands, he became involved in military recruitment at local high schools and spoke over the airwaves at *Radio Barinas* for greater distribution of his message. While given a pre-approved script for these radio sessions, Chávez often spoke of his own accord as he told biographer Bart Jones: "I never told them they would have a sure salary, but rather I spoke to them about Bolívar and what [Cuban independence hero José] Martí said about him'" (Jones 2007, 59). He thus found time to build his association with the people while increasing his familiarity with broadcasting. His populist characteristics, from his charisma, evident in his personal interactions, to his growing desire to connect with the marginalized of society, found ample opportunity to develop from this period of personal growth. The next and finally stage would further define Chávez's populist tendencies and shape him into a resilient political candidate.

Chávez's history from 1982 until the coup in 1992 highlights a period of conspiracy and reliance on military tactics as he continued his quest for revolutionary

change. During this time period Chávez and a group of co-conspirators created what was to become the Bolívarian Revolutionary Movement 200 (MBR-200) in 1982 in response to their growing frustration with the direction of the country and military. He also furthered his integration into the military structure as an instructor at the Academy. As Chávez noted, "during most of the eighties we were working in the military Academy and in the barracks, developing that generation [the class of 1980-83] those Bolívarian nuclei" (Harnecker and Chávez Frías 2005, 26). The military inadvertently placed Chávez in a position of influence, one in which the populist's ideas could disseminate throughout the armed forces.

A key break in the democratic order in 1989 further propelled Chávez. The military soon found itself in direct confrontation with angry demonstrators in February 27, 1989, during an event dubbed *el caracazo*. The IMF neoliberal economic reforms implemented by the Pérez administration brought about a rise in gas prices, which met with a civil backlash (Harnecker and Chávez Frías 2005, 16). Riots erupted on the streets and President Pérez's order for the military to restore peace ended with hundreds of civilian deaths. *El caracazo* had a profound effect on Chávez, who stated:

> "[the MBR-200] realized we had passed the point of no return and we had to take up arms. We could not continue to defend a murderous regime . . . We discussed how to break free from the past, how to move beyond the kind of democracy that only responded to the interest of the oligarchy, how to stop the corruption" (Harnecker and Chávez Frías 2005, 32).

Clearly MBR-200 saw the need for a new regime and the group quickly began to pick up speed during the next three years.

The period between 1989 and 1992 was marked by an expansion of MBR-200's member base as well as a nearly fatal encounter with the government. According to

Chávez, the immediate effect of *el caracazo* was a jump in membership. Over the next three years MBR-200 grew in number with a range of officers, from lieutenant colonels to majors, eventually coming together under the leadership of Chávez by the end of 1991. While helpful to MBR-200's cause, this early expansion triggered warnings in the halls of Venezuela's government. With knowledge of a rising coup threat and a supposed plan that included the assassination of the President, Chávez and several of his fellow allies were arrested in December 1989 and interrogated by General Carlos Peñaloza, a nemesis of the young Major Chávez. Chávez and his officers were released after the investigation failed to present a convincing case with many believing in Chávez's innocence, including President Pérez who, according to Peñaloza "said don't talk with me again about the topic" (Jones 2007, 129). Chávez used the next two years to take classes, eventually earning a command over a unit of paratroopers in 1991, and convincing fellow MBR-200 members to wait until the opportune time to strike (Jones 2007, 129). As the suffering of society and the support for MBR-200'S cause grew, the decision to act led to a unique chance for Chávez to introduce himself to *el pueblo.*

The coup of February 4, 1992 thrust Chávez into the limelight and gave him the opportunity to greatly expand his following. By 1992, now holding the title of Lieutenant Colonel following his continual advancement in the Venezuelan army, he believed that he had found the opportune time for his group to initiate an uprising against the government composed of civil society and disgruntled military personal. The plan revolved around the capture of President Pérez and installation of a military-civilian junta leadership structure until new elections could be called and a new constitution put into place. Key to this bold coup was a televised broadcast of the detained president so as to

highlight the change of government (Jones 2007, 135). While theoretically feasible, the plan fell apart from the start due to a variety of minor mishaps. Television's role was tremendously important as will be shown in the following section. While the plan failed, it caused a stir within society and demonstrated that a voice of opposition existed, one that claimed to be pursuing the interests of the people.

The final stage that prepared Chávez's ascension to power occurred from 1992 to 1998. Imprisoned in the Cuartel San Carlos for his role in the coup, Chávez found himself the subject of attention from a wide range of Venezuelan citizenry. The ineptitude and corruption of the government had reached a boiling point for many Venezuelans and "the traditional Venezuelan view of the military as a bastion of order and effectiveness" caught the attention of many (Marcano and Tyskzka 2007, 92). Among this group of regular citizens were social, political, and intellectual leaders interested in the Lt. Colonel’s ideas (Marcano and Tyskzka 2007, 91). During this time that Chávez realized that a legal approach to the transformation of society could be possible. Following a presidential release in 1994, Chávez spent time travelling around the country, focusing on engaging rural areas and building his political capital. He came to the discovery that: "a considerable portion of our nation was not interested in violent movements but was in fact expecting us to organize a structured political movement . . . From that point on, we decided to take the electoral path" (Harnecker 2002, 44). For the next four years, Chávez continued to roam the country visiting the people while also building support abroad through publicized visits. Of the various travel destinations, Argentina and Cuba were obvious choices for the rising populist and it was Chávez's initial visit to the island state of Cuba that his warm friendship with Castro took shape.

The growth and political support garnered during these years paid off. Thanks to his willingness to engage the people and base his populist platform on addressing the needs of *el pueblo*, Chávez was democratically elected as president and assumed the role in 1999.

Chavez proved even stronger in the myth-making realm than either Perón or Castro. Like Castro, Chávez relied on his association with a beloved historical figure, Simón Bolívar, to further engrain his populist message into the hearts of the Venezuelan people. Following his failed coup attempt, he wove his personal narrative and plan for Venezuela together with Bolívar, an action that carried over into countless speeches and proposals. Chávez's push upon assuming the presidency to shape the 1999 Constitution around the ideals imparted by Bolívar, as well as his addition of "Bolivarian" to the official name of the country showcase his perceived mandate of reviving the lost hero of Venezuela (Marcano and Tyskzka 2007, 94). In one interview, Chávez stated that the infusion of Bolívarian principles into the Constitution helped "to plant the Bolívarian concept into the soul of the people to such an extent that the oligarchy that used to call itself Bolívarian no longer wants to be associated with Bolívar. They had hijacked Bolívar and now he is back with the people" (Harnecker and Chávez Frías 2005, 106). By tying himself to Bolívar, Chávez instilled his message into the public while claiming his actions stemmed from his deep connection with the historical leader. The political scene awaited and Chávez, already emphasizing the need for the stability and leadership of the past to be brought into the present, would soon take the primary role.

History of Established Media Scene (TV)

Venezuela has a well-established history with television. As this medium grew, public interest paralleled its development and much of the country found itself connected to the political pulse of Venezuela through some form of broadcast media. In addition to the importance of this medium is the role it played in the 1992 failed coup against the Pérez regime and the 2002 coup against President Chávez. These events highlight the vital role broadcasting media played in Venezuela. In addition, these two moments in time demonstrate some of the reasons why the Chávez administration took such a hard line against the media, particularly television, broadcasters and their involvement in political activities.

Venezuelan television made its initial broadcast in 1952 and the country stood as the ninth country in the world to enjoy the medium (Mancini 1996, 240). Television proved to be popular with citizens, as demonstrated by the growth rate of Venezuelan homes with television sets through the next thirty years: by 1963, the rate was 25 percent, by 1969 this number had shot to 45 percent, and by 1982 television enjoyed an 85 percent overall penetration rate (Mancini 1996, 240). These figures remained steady throughout the remainder of the century. By the 1990s, Venezuela had sixty television stations under the umbrella of five networks, only two of which were owned by the government (Haggerty 1993, 167). By the time of Chávez's actions against the government in 1992, television stood as a well-established medium that reached the majority of the Venezuelan people.

The power of the medium came into sharp focus beginning with the 1992 military-civilian coup attempt. As previously mentioned, Chávez's plan during the coup

was to arrest President Pérez and establish a presence of control through broadcast media. The use of media intended to spur the civilian population to rise up and join the takeover as it unfolded. To accomplish this, a video created by Chávez would be broadcast from captured television stations encouraging *el pueblo* to rise up and take part in the process. A technical glitch prevented this message from airing and a different face appeared on television screens across the country, that of President Pérez. Within hours of the coup's initiation, Pérez realized that a televised appearance on behalf of the leader of the country was vital for reestablishment of control and rushed to the studios of one of Venezuela's major networks, *Venevisión*. In his broadcast, he assured the country that the coup had failed, a message that the networks repeated for hours on end as the coup members accepted their defeat. This incident is a prime example of the power of broadcasting media. By appearing on television and giving the impression of stability, even as fighting continued, Pérez retained control of the situation (Jones 2007, 148). Failure of the coup members to gain access to and utilize the Venezuelan broadcasting system played a major role in the eventual outcome, a fact not lost on Chávez and a mistake certainly not to be repeated. Ironically, the frazzled government would be the ones to place the microphone and cameras in front of the populist and allow his message to take flight.

While television worked against Chávez during his participation in the coup, the government gave him a perfect chance to use the medium to his advantage soon after. Fearful of continual disorder and seeking a means to reestablish governability, the decision was made to put Chávez on the air for a short period of time so that he could convince the rest of the coup participants to stand down. This rushed and fateful decision, approved by the defense minister after discussing the issue with various officials

including President Pérez, who logically opposed a live broadcast, primarily aimed to quell the conflict as quickly as possible. Chávez's brief speech over national television was aired live and unedited (Marcano and Tyskzka 2007, 73-4). Chávez stood before the cameras and gave a brief speech that would solidify his image in the minds of countless Venezuelan citizens:

> First of all, I want to say good morning to all of the Venezuelan people. This Boliviarian message is directed to the courageous soldiers who are in the paratrooper regiment in Aragua and the tank regiment in Valencia. Comrades: Unfortunately, for now, the objectives we had set for ourselves were not achieved in the capital city. That is, those of us here in Caracas did not seize power. Where you are, you performed very well, but now is the time to reflect. New opportunities will arise and the country has to head definitively toward a better future. So listen to what I have to say, listen to the Comandante Chávez, who is sending you this message. Please, reflect and put down your arms, because in truth, the objectives that we set for ourselves at a national level are not within our grasp. Comrades, listen to this message of solidarity. I am grateful for your loyalty, for your courage, for your selfless generosity. Before the country and before you, I accept responsibility for this Bolivarian military movement. Thank you very much (Jones 2007, 157).

Key elements of this speech include the assertion that the battle was over "for now" and Chávez's willingness to claim responsibility for the uprising. This message, broadcast repeatedly, served as a strong propaganda tool that introduced the country to Chávez and established his presence on the political as well as national stage (Marcano and Tyskzka 2007, 75). None would be able to attribute this push for a 'better future' to anyone but the red-bereted Comandante.

Following his imprisonment for the coup and subsequent decision to run for office, Chávez continually courted the media. In an attempt to soften his public image while maintaining his aura of accessibility, he appeared on TV talk shows and participated in various interviews (Jones 2007, 219). Opposition to his platform also gave

him the chance to showcase his charismatic charm and wit to viewers. When Chávez's popularity in the polls grew, the United States decided to weigh in on the candidate by stating that Chávez would not be issued a visa to the country. Chávez's response, given during the airing of a popular TV comedy show, was that it was of no importance to him as he already had a visa. Opening his wallet, he removed a Visa credit card and posed for the camera (Jones 2007, 217). The media proved to be a way for Chávez to argue for his political goals while building on his already powerful populist abilities of citizen engagement. Within a decade, a new challenge arose that would require the populist to apply the lessons learned in the 1992 coup and build his involvement with the medium.

The coup of 2002 differed from that of 1992 in that Chávez was the one put on the defensive and the broadcasting media played a major role in actively shaping the events that unfolded. The foundation for the coup emerged as early as 1999 when Chávez won the presidency and announced a new constitution. Approved later that same year, this constitution restructured the bureaucratic structures of the government. This process removed the traditional elite from the seats of power and, paired with the private media sector, allowed tensions to rise (Wilpert 2007, 5). Over the next few years, a split formed between supporters of Chávez, Chávistas, and those opposed to his ever-expanding programs, calling themselves anti-Chávistas. On April 11th, a confrontation finally took place in Venezuela. Hundreds of anti-Chávistas took to the streets and Chávez was ousted from office as a new transition regime came to power. However, within forty-eight hours, Chávez returned to the presidency and resumed control.

The most important aspect of this coup was the television media's role in fostering the chaos that followed. On April 10th, several of the largest privately owned and

operated television stations including *Venevisión, RCTV, Globovisión* and *Televen* broadcast anti-Chávez programming while also calling for a civilian response (Golinger 2004, paragraph 33). The next day Anti-Chavistas, opponents of the regime, rallied at the state run oil company offices as part of a massive demonstration. The protest's participant count reached staggering levels, with most sources placing the number at over 200,000. As the march slowly began to make its way towards the presidential palace in Caracas, the President's Chávista supporters gathered in front of the palace gates as tensions rose. As the Anti-Chavistas approached, sniper gunshots rang out from the surrounding buildings and chaos descended upon the city. Television crews were on hand, providing live coverage of the brutality and, as the documentary *Chavez: Inside the Coup (The Revolution Will Not Be Televised)* asserted, the footage was purposely edited to show Chávistas as the instigators. In one of the most shocking moments caught on film, the media showed a crouching Chávista on an overpass empting his pistol into the opposition crowd below. The problem was that the footage had been manipulated and the Chávista gunman, who turned out to be municipal councilman Richard Penalver, had been firing at the snipers (Jones 2007, 327). The media had declared war on the Chávez administration and had no reservations when it came to the distribution of false information to the viewing public.

Chávez's next few hours would continue to focus on control of television images. As the fighting escalated, Chávez, following the lead of President Pérez in 1992, took to the airwaves in one of his *cadenas*, a legislatively enforced takeover of broadcasting allowing presidential messages to supersede regular programing. This power, granted in Article 192 of the Organic Law of Telecommunications adopted in June 2000, authorized

airtime to be allotted to the government as a counterbalance (Golinger 2004, paragraph 33). While forced to cede to this provision, the stations decided to split the screen in half: on one side a President assuring the country of stability, while the other showing coverage of the city-wide confrontations (Marcano and Tyskzka 2007,173). This oppositional stance taken by the private television networks aided the installation of a junta that forced out Chavez. It did not last. By April 13th the coup had fallen apart and Chávez reassumed his role as President. His triumphant return, surrounded by the people and beaming with his charismatic smile, was captured on camera and played repeatedly following the reestablishment of normal media activities. Chávez triumphed over the private stations, and he would take his revenge in time. He quietly began pursing a legal framework aimed at curbing the power of the media.

Chávez and his administration used legislation to undermine the medium's presence. Private television broadcasters had failed in their role as providers of truthful information to *el pueblo* and the people's protector stepped in to defend them against the oligarchical media. One of the most controversial pieces of adopted legislation was the 2004 Law of Social Responsibility in Radio and Television, which stipulates in Article 29 that programming intending to "promote, defend, or incite breaches of public order" and is "contrary to the security of the nation" can be met with up to 72 hours of suspended transmission ("Ley de Responsabilidad Social"). Defamation laws also came into force, allowing greater control over attempts to speak ill of government officials or the state. Both of these actions promoted widespread concern from human rights groups and journalist watchdog organizations such as the Committee to Protect Journalists who, in an open letter to President Chávez requested he refrain from enacting such measures

(Cooper 2004). He did not heed them. Instead he used television and its participation in the coups to his advantage, allowing the medium to exist while limiting its content through provisions promoted as beneficial to the health of the nation.

Due to these two coup experiences, Chávez had a great appreciation for dealing with broadcasting media. "I am a bit obsessed with our communications strategy," remarked the President in a 2002 interview and, considering his insistence that the revolutionary process depends on an organized people, understanding his focus on television in particular is vital to a holistic study of Chávez's success story (Chávez and Harnecker 2002, 144 and 12). One final feature of Venezuelan television involves one of its most watched programs, *Aló Presidente*.

Aló Presidente is one of the most identifiable aspects of the post-1999 Venezuelan media landscape. Initially developed as a way to strengthen communication with the people, it grew into a populist's ideal form of direct engagement in the technological age and a means to educate the public on the goals of the revolution. In early 1999, the program consisted of two radio broadcasts on Thursday and Sunday focused on answering phone calls from the Venezuelan public. Beginning at 9am, Chávez was heard across the airwaves as he fielded questions and responded to occasional criticisms (Harnecker and Chávez Frías 2005, 148). In essence, his show became an educational as well as a political platform.

A vital component of the program consisted of "the hour of lead," a time devoted to heatedly addressing the opposition, the media, and other elements working against the Chávez administration (Harnecker and Chávez Frías 2005, 148-9). Originally broadcast from Radio of Venezuela's headquarters in the middle class section of Caracas, the

program eventually changed locations to Miraflores, the presidential residence, before taking on a TV roadshow motif. As Chávez states, "[the studio] was too isolated from the people, so it occurred to me that we should start doing it from different places all over the country" (Harnecker and Chávez Frías 2005, 149). The program allowed Chávez to continue his rhetoric while providing constant access to the people.

Aló Presidente eventually moved to a televised format and the travelling theme remained a staple of the show's appeal. With its record set at a reported eight-hour broadcast and a regular length hovering around five hours, the show allowed Chávez consistent access to Venezuelan homes, echoing the near omnipresence of Castro. A quote from Chávez's daughter demonstrates this: "I got up, I took my bath listening to you, I went shopping with a few friends and there you were on the TV. And then we came back in the car and turned on the radio, and there you were; I got home and took another bath, and you were still going" (Harnecker and Chávez Frías 2005, 150). Television continued to serve the interests of the Chávez administration and allowed the populist leader direct access to *el pueblo*.

History of the Internet and Its Arrival in Venezuela

The Internet's emergence in Venezuela ushered in a new age for communication technology and the medium grew along with the Chávez administration. Internet made its debut in the country in 1992, although it was not until 1996 that widespread adoption began in earnest ("Freedom of the Net 2012"). The earliest statistics available for Internet connectivity in Venezuela are provided by *Comisión Nacional de Telecomunicaciones* (CONTEL), a Venezuelan state entity tasked with consolidation and distribution of

information regarding telecommunications. CONTEL's records begin in 1998, a year when Internet had penetration rate of only 1.38 percent of the population. While percentages remained low, with rates hovering in the single digits until 2005, they quickly picked up, reaching 40.43 percent by 2011 (“Servicio de Internet Indicatores"). The government has adopted various legislative measures in response to the rise of the Internet, including an addition to the previously mentioned 2004 Law of Social Responsibility in Radio and Television, which placed greater oversight on all radio and television broadcasts. The Internet, while initially viewed with trepidation by the Chávez administration soon became yet another medium the populist frequently utilized.

How Chávez Used the Internet To His Advantage

Initially, Chávez painted the Internet as a threat, seeing it as yet another medium that could be turned into a voice of opposition. "The internet is a battle trench because it is bringing a current of conspiracy," argued Chávez in March 2010 (Carroll 2010, paragraph 13). However, as the Council on Hemispheric Affairs reports, the strategy Chávez used regarding "Internet media is very different from the one he has used for traditional media outlets and much less harsh" (Hass and Steinberger 2010, paragraph 19). His approach to the Internet developed into an understanding that it offered the opportunity to strengthen his populist ties to the community while offering a counterbalance to the charges of the opposition.

Chávez's creation of a Twitter account in April 2010 showcased his ability to adopt new media technologies to remain abreast of the culture's interest in social media. Choosing the Twitter handle @chávezcandanga, candanga directly translating to devil

although in Venezuela it "refers to someone with a strong character and devilishly combative personality" (Ghitis 2010, paragraph 5), Chávez used the medium to continue his promotion of revolutionary ideals. His following grew over the years, from 50,000 within 24 hours, 500,000 in the first month, to its last count of over four million by February 2013 (Morozov 2012, 114). These four million saw Chávez's 140 character Tweets that provided live coverage of the exhumation of Chávez's dear Bolívar in 2010, " My God, my God ... my Christ, our Christ ... I confess we have cried, we have sworn. I tell them: this glorious skeleton must be Bolívar because you can feel his presence. My God" (Rondon 2010, paragraph 5). He also tweeted his thoughts paired with links to additional media sources such as the message from July 12, 2012 below which reads: "Watch this video!! Chávez is a people!! Chávez we are millions!! You also are Chávez!!" The link sends the viewer to a YouTube video extolling the unity of Chávistas and their collective participation as *el pueblo*.

Twitter's word limit imposed some challenges for the President who, on a usual airing of *Aló Presidente,* speaks nearly 54,000 words, or 333,000 characters (Carroll 2010, paragraph 7). The move to brevity is a unique challenge posed by this new form of communication, but Chávez eagerly adapted.

Chávez also took the opportunity to expand the successful model developed by *Aló Presidente* through Twitter. Due to the massive amount of messages the Chávez Twitter account generated from the public, Chávez announced in May 2010 that a special mission would be created to meet the needs of the people. Mission Chavez Candanga is

staffed by 200 individuals, draws from a fund set up to provide for the work of the mission, and has the stated purpose of addressing 'areas of priority like healthcare or housing' (Pearson 2010, paragraph 2-3). The fact that the state can draw upon the vast resources of the country in support of such initiatives demonstrates one major reason why this Twitter program has been so well received and provides a perfect example of direct clientelistic ties. One example of Chávez's ability to meld social media with social provision made headlines in June 2012 when nineteen year old Natalia Valdivieso received a free home for becoming Chávez's three millionth Twitter follower. Chávez congratulated the young woman in the message below, which translates: "Hi my dear Natalia! You have become the three millionth follower of ChávezCandanga! Thank you and congratulations!"

In this way, Chávez brilliantly used Twitter to foster the populist message and its application within society. However, there is one area in which his use of the medium was subpar.

Where Chavez failed to utilize Twitter to its full advantage occurred during his fight against cancer. While Twitter offers a populist the opportunity to "take time off without going away" (Ghitis 2011, paragraph 2), it also offers the chance for voices of opposition to focus on a leader's absence. Chavez's bout with cancer from 2011 to 2013 resulted in extended periods of inactivity following continuous use and had a clear impact

on an administration intent on controlling the message. When Chávez's normally active Twitter feed went silent for two weeks following his initial surgery in June 2011, rumors of failing health began to circulate. A single phone interview in the midst of this period did reassure Chávistas, but major news sources pointed to the lack of tweets from the populist as a sign that all was not well in the Bolivarian Republic. The populist reestablished his social media presence following his return from Cuba in June 2011, but his feed once more darkened in November 2012. From November 1, 2012 to February 18, 2013, all social media activity ceased as Chávez disappeared from public view (Payne and Castillo 2013, paragraph 5). His reemergence on February 18th on the site promoted both elation and suspicion. A Reuter's report quoted Vice President Nicolás Maduro Moros during a televised address as saying "It was 4:30, 5 am [on the day of Chávez's return to Venezuela]. He got to his room and surprised everyone: rat-tat-tat, he sent three or four messages, and at that moment fireworks began to go off around the country" (Wallis 2013, paragraph 7). The response of international media was more accusatorial, questioning the capability of Chavez to serve as president after two months incommunicado.

Conclusion

Emerging media proved invaluable to Chávez and amplified his populist approach to governance. From his 1992 plan to announce the success of his coup via television to his *Aló Presidente* programing, television remained an indispensable tool in governing. Much to the distain of his opponents, television's role in the 1992 and 2002 coups strengthened Chávez's political authority.

Chávez remains the outlier in the discussion of Roger's diffusion of innovation model regarding the three populist leaders covered in this thesis. Much like Perón and Castro, Chávez came to power in the midst of a developed medium and made ample use of the technology available. However, in contrast to his fellow populists, the Comandante waited to embrace the emerging media of his time. While his administration incorporated the Internet into various legislative measures early on, Chávez's personal involvement with the World Wide Web took time. For this reason, Chávez fits into the early majority category. Granted, Chávez jumped in with both feet once his acceptance of the medium became evident, but because he was early majority, he was not given the chance to fully understand the Internet and the implications of going dark.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

> ***In the long view, populists were the most characteristic leaders of the last century. From the earliest years in the La Plata region until the end of the 1990s, populists proved amazingly successful at gaining high office, holding onto power, maintaining their followings, and renewing their careers. Their imprint will continue for decades to come.***
>
> ***-Michael L. Conniff, 1999***

This thesis began by defining two terms that serve as the focal point of this work: populism and emerging media. Populism - a political movement arising from social, economic, or politically-based changes offering inclusion of marginalized segments of society, an "us versus them" societal mindset, and a charismatic figure - stands as a common feature of each of the three Latin American leaders. Emerging media, limited to broadcasting communication technology that allows for wider expansion of the populist message, composes the second foundational definition utilized throughout the work.

From this definitional framework, the link between populism and emerging media was established in four distinct categories: Roger's diffusion of innovation model, greater audience accessibility, expanded populist presence (omnipresence), and oppositional opportunity. The goal of these links was to underscore how emerging media played a key role in the spread and longevity of the populist platform. Once this had been established,

the thesis moved into a series of case studies whereby this framework could be systematically applied.

Chapter one's concentration on Perón's use of radio in the 1940s demonstrated that, thanks in part to this medium, an entirely new segment of society found itself introduced to populist sentiments. Inclusion became an immediate result of populism's discovery of its voice. Castro's embrace of television in the 1960s continued this trend towards greater accessibility for all sectors of society. Television gave populism an expressive face and a stronger identity. Speeches now had a visual element that captured the attention of all within range of the flickering screen. In its latest stage, populism, thanks to Chávez, has come to roam the Internet. No longer limited by geographical or frequency-based barriers, populism now stands at the threshold of an entirely new era. Populism's possible audience grows by the hour as countless new citizens gain access to the World Wide Web. Based on the case studies presented and the evidence gathered in this section, it is clear that each populist adhered to the framework mentioned above, albeit with various approaches.

Summation of Populist Use of Emerging Media

Perón's response to emerging media was straightforward as he chose to embrace the possibilities such innovations offered to his administration. Radio provided engagement with the working class and greater access to communal regions of society while his background with the medium later aided in his repression of dissident voices. Television also had great potential and likely would have continued its development under Perón had he not been ousted from office in 1955. His understanding of radio's

importance and active engagement with the medium solidified his control and proved to be instrumental over the course of his regime.

Castro's rebel days and reliance on radio for societal support helped guide his understanding of the power of emerging media. For this reason, his transition to television built on an appreciation for the value of the medium as well as on his belief that it would enhance his revolution. His approach to the Internet differed starkly, likely due to the vast possibilities for oppositional voices to arise and out of concern for foreign disturbance of revolutionary ideology. While Castro did chose to cordon off the Internet, it is worth noting that he nevertheless chose to engage the medium.

Chávez's dealings with television and the Internet highlight the ability of the populist to adapt to the challenges presented by society. Television proved to both an enemy and a friend of the President, although the media involvement and drama surrounding the 2002 coup attempt severely reduced the opposition's legitimacy in the sphere of television broadcasting. Chávez's late entrance into the realm of the Internet demonstrates his slow realization that personal involvement with this emerging technology was a worthy pursuit. In contrast with Castro, the myriad possibilities, both beneficial and damaging, offered by the development of the Internet proved reason enough to allow open access to the medium. This stance served Chavez well and ultimately expanded the reach of his populist programs.

Closing Thoughts

Throughout this series of case studies, various observations based on the source material beg to be addressed. Of the range of topics stemming from this project, three

things stand out: the ideal place in the Roger's model for populist success, the failure of Chávez and his administration to utilize fully the emerging medium of the Internet during his time away from Venezuela for cancer treatments, and the difference in approaches taken by Castro and Chávez in reference to the Internet.

Throughout this paper, each populist has been categorized using the Roger's diffusion of innovation model. Based on the information gathered, it is suggested that populists should strive to fall within the innovator to early adopter categories: an expected conclusion. Perón and Castro both gained an advanced understanding of emerging media by being on the forefront of their adoption by society. Chávez's late entry into the realm of the Internet had no real negative effects, but it is clear that the Internet proved to be a great arena for the expansion of his form of populism. Had he thrown himself into cyberspace sooner, it is not beyond reason to hypothesize he could have developed a more thorough populist presence on the web.

Chávez and his failure to utilize emerging media to its full extent provides an interesting contrast to Perón and Castro. Re-elected for a fourth presidential term in October 2012, Chávez's trip to Cuba for cancer treatment in December seemed normal. However, when it became evident that he would miss his inauguration ceremony in January due to ongoing treatment, suspicion set in. Throughout this time, Chávista supporters anxiously checked their Twitter accounts awaiting word from the Comandante, but met nothing but static. For the next two months, all social media communication stopped. As the weeks dragged on, his mysterious absence from the spotlight promoted a media frenzy with many calling on the government to produce proof of life. Upon his return on February 18, 2013, questions as to why he avoided providing

assurances through Twitter abounded. Why had a Chávez failed to appoint a subordinate or a family member to man his Twitter account? Why had none of the emerging media technologies, perfectly suited for absences such as these, been utilized by the normally media-savvy populist? While the extent of his cancer accounts for his personal lack of media usage, the fact that updates never emerged highlighted a lack of forethought on behalf of the Chávez camp.

The close election in Venezuela's most recent elections also says volumes about this failure to capitalize on this medium to anoint a clear successor. The margin of victory for Chávez's replacement, Nicolás Maduro, proved pitiable, standing at little more than one percent as compared with the substantial ten percent margin obtained by the ailing Chávez in the October 2012 elections ("Maduro declared Venezuela's president" 2013, paragraphs 2 and 8). Chávez could have used his media connectivity to set up Maduro, his hand picked successor, and rally his base of support. Instead, Maduro was left to his own devices for politicking while attempting to consolidate the backing of the Chávista camp. Future populists would be wise to learn from this seemingly minor failure, as it demonstrates how absence no longer implies social media silence.

Castro and Chávez both had the opportunity to use the Internet and yet they took drastically different approaches in addressing its rise within society. Castro's decision to create an enclosed system that severely limited citizen access to the web's content held both positives and negatives for the populist. One positive is that Castro, by preventing a potential avenue for oppositional expression, kept the medium's voice entirely one-sided. His thoughts reached out into cyberspace while he kept Cuba on a tight leash. On the other hand, his censorship promoted claims of abuse and authoritarianism, claims that

have continued to plague Cuba's government. The consequences of his complete refusal to develop citizen access to the Internet have yet to be seen and will emerge in time should the Cuban government continue to grant greater leniency as it seeks to establish an identity without Fidel Castro at the helm.

Much like Castro, Chávez's decision to allow open-ended Internet access did have positives and negatives. From the government's perspective, unfettered access allowed anti-government forces to continue their battle against the populist's regime and the chance for false information to circulate (both of which are apparent today through a casual Google search). However, the positives far outweighed these negatives as Chávez soon discovered. While human rights organizations and journalists continued to warily eye Chávez's oversight of the web, he managed to demonstrate a willingness to refrain from repression. As demonstrated, his ability to tie populist-based social programs to Twitter gives a perfect example of the ways in which emerging media can serve as a tool for the populist. This comparison is significant in that it highlights the aforementioned adaptability of populist usage of emerging media. Both leaders understood the Internet had to be engaged with in some form and each took the path he deemed most suitable for the perpetuation of control over the country.

New media will continue to challenge populism to adapt and grow from its experiences with new forms of broadcasting technology. Perón, Castro, and Chávez attest to the fortitude of populism and will serve as the foundation for the populists of the twenty-first century. The interaction between emerging media and populist leadership will play an important role in the future of populism within the Americas.

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