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POLITICAL CULTURE AS A SUBJECT OF VENEZUELAN STUDIES: AN APPROACH TO STATE OF THE ART

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Abstract

The Political Culture as an object of study has been developing research lines and joint work on several Venezuelan universities. Since the last two decades, the schools of Communication and Political Studies of several study houses have been strengthening professorships and research lines that allude to the main topics of this branch. The following work compiles, through a documental investigation, the major initiatives and the strongest contributions in the area of Venezuelan researchers. It covers the main currents in which their efforts can be grouped and the most significant conclusions to which they have arrived.

Keywords: Political Culture, Communication, State of the art.

LA CULTURA POLÍTICA COMO OBJETO DE ESTUDIO EN VENEZUELA: Una aproximación al estado del arte

Resumen

La Cultura Política como objeto de estudio ha ido desarrollando líneas de investigación y trabajos conjuntos en numerosas universidades venezolanas. Desde las últimas dos décadas las escuelas de Comunicación y Estudios Políticos en diversas casas de estudio han ido fortaleciendo cátedras y líneas de investigación que aluden a los principales tópicos de esta rama. El siguiente trabajo compila a través

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de una investigación documental las principales iniciativas y las más sólidas aportaciones en el área de los investigadores venezolanos. En él se describen las principales corrientes en las que se pueden agrupar sus esfuerzos y las más significativas conclusiones a las han llegado hasta el momento.

Palabras Clave: Cultura Política - Comunicación - Estado del arte.

INTRODUCTION:

Culture is one of those objects of study where the multiple looks researchers make a vertex. Understood since ancient times as "everything that man is and does" it has conquered the anxieties of multiple knowledge and has appropriated the typing of countless computers. To make an approach to culture then requires a multidisciplinary tool box that allows transversely to look at the cultural event from different perspectives.

In the specific context of a major project that intends to characterize the *Political Communication* conducted by the Meritorious University of Puebla, the University of Nuevo León in Monterrey, Mexico, the University of the Day School in Colombia and the Metropolitan University of Caracas, we set as part of the necessary process of contextualization of research, the approach to the conceptualization of the so-called Political Culture in academic productions in Venezuela.

Such review is timely, because in order to understand the implications, actors, attributes and intentions involved in the use of specific communications tools, to define how from the classrooms and various research works the so-called *Political Culture*.

The structure that the following article will have is as follows:

1. Methodological approach
2. Projects and research related to the topic.
3. Characterization of the Political Culture in Venezuela: The look of the specialists
4. Conclusions
5. Bibliography

2. METODHOLOG

2.1Methodological approach

As anticipated in the introduction, this article is carried out in the context of an international project that seeks to measure the Political Culture and its implications in three Latin American countries. In our case (Venezuela) the protocol followed to throb the intellectual production in the mentioned topic, it was in the first place, to access databases from leading universities, including: The Catholic University Andres Bello, the Central University of Venezuela, the University of Zulia and the University of Carabobo.

A first search was done, following the parameters of a traditional documentary research. The keywords Culture Policy, Trust, Reliability, political disaffection were introduced and depending on the results obtained to the documents obtained were classified. A second search was operated in this case, in the traditional search engines on the Web: <https://scholar.google.es/> and <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/>.

Google Scholar is a search engine that allows to locate academic documents like articles, theses, books and abstracts from various sources such as university publishers, professional societies, preprint repositories, universities and other academic organizations. The results are sorted considering the full text, the number of citations received, the author, the source publication, etc. and secondly: Dialnet which is one of the largest bibliographic portals in the world, whose main task is to give greater visibility to Hispanic literature.

Focused primarily on the areas of Humanities, Law and Social Sciences, Dialnet is established as a fundamental tool for finding quality information.

Dialnet is a cooperation project that integrates different **resources** and **document services**:

- **Database** of Hispanic scientific content. Today we can find in magazine articles, books and anthologies articles, conference proceedings, theses, summaries of other publications in Dialnet.
- Bibliographic alerts service that broadcasts, in an updated way, the contents of Hispanic scientific journals.
- Hispanic **Virtual Newspaper Library** of interdisciplinary character, although with a predominance of human, legal and social sciences magazines.
- Deposit or **repository** of access to Hispanic scientific literature in full text, with a clear commitment to free access to it, joining the Open Access movement.

Subsequently, based on the saturated authors, we proceeded to run a third more refined search that reviewed the production in the area of the previously determined authors. After having carried out this process we organized what was found according to two main categories: Projects and research in the area and the presentation of the judgments of experts in the field on the Political Culture in Venezuela.

3. DISSCUSSION

3.1 Projects and research

Among the various studies carried out on Political Culture, two approaches are highlighted first hand. The first defines the so-called Civic Culture and the second that adds to the equation the ideological element. The approaches that are made from both approaches tend to involve multiple theoretical and streams of multiple and sometimes distant fields of study. Political culture can then be viewed from the perspective of sociology, from anthropology, from epistemology, from linguistics and each of the mentioned sciences and disciplines will yield different reflective elements.

Chirinos S and Tortolero, E (2002: 22) Two researchers in the field say that: These two terms (Civic Culture and Ideology) represent as many approaches, or even theoretical traditions in sociology. They cannot be understood in isolation from their theoretical and methodological respective contexts. To confront them inevitably involves referring to divergences between paradigms, differences which, as we said, cross several disciplines. Thus, assuming the many meanings of the terms, we analyzed their definition.

Almond and Verba are the theoretical to which the Venezuelan researchers refer to as obligatory reference. They refer to the text of Almond, Gabriel and Verba, Sidney: *The civic culture, political attitudes and democracy in five nations. An analytic study*. Edited in 1965. The motivation of the investigation in that text comes from the breakdown of the faith in the maintenance and development of democracy in two fundamental circumstances. **The first**, World War I, the Russian Revolution and the advent of Nazi-fascism, facts that put in evidence the fragility de liberal democracies; **the second**, the political instability in countries "in development" after the fifties of the twentieth century, which showed the difficulties of the acclimatization of democracies in an underdeveloped economic and social context. However, the two authors find that communism, fascism and the Third World acquire from the West the modern technology and the bureaucratic organization of the state, while affirming their adhesion in principle to the popular will (2002: 78).

The researchers of INFASES of the University of Carabobo and one of them (Sherline Chirinos) recognized Candidate level in the Investigator Promotion Program (IPP) indicate that another antecedent of the consideration of the psychological factor in a social study, that without doubt establishes the basis for studies in Political Culture was the one stated by planteado Lasswell, who systematizes the personality traits of a democrat: an open ego, warm and welcoming stance towards his fellowmen, Ability to share common values with others, Many valued guidance instead of mono valued, faith and trust in other men and the relative absence of anxiety (2002: 78).

They also point out that Cott and Mounier propose the notion of "*civic culture*" as a component of the dominant ideology, which contributes to the maintenance y reproduction of a capitalist mode of production with its political expressions, specifically liberal democracy. They distinguish the functionalist notion that *Political Culture* links to social collaboration, resumes the aforementioned sociological tradition, que relates those values and beliefs to legal, cultural and, ultimately, physical coercion (2002: 90).

Their contributions, although incipient, are solid and constitute at this time a line of research in full swing. At the same university, a project approved in 2011 works, the RGPI Research group : Research Group of Policies and Institutions, of the University of Carabobo, attached to the "*MANUEL POCATERRA JIMENEZ*" *RESEARCH INSTITUTE (INFACES) OF THE FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SCIENCES* The aforementioned group is composed by: Maria Isabel Puerta (Coordinator), Maria Angela Flores P, Argenis Urdaneta and Victor Genaro Jansen R. Their curricular profiles range from doctors in Social and Political Sciences to Graduates in Mathematics, what gives an interdisciplinary profile to its approach. One of their lines of research focuses on political participation and electoral systems,

understanding that the political participation does not end with the elections, although it is an extremely important aspect of it. In this sense it is more important to examine the recent Venezuelan experience with the modifications undergone by the electoral system and the incorporation of the referendum in the Law of Suffrage.

The second that we find is closely linked to our object of study in this article, addresses the Political Culture, public opinion and governance. The researchers point out that for better understanding of the problems related to the development of the relationship between state and society it is necessary to study the Venezuelan Political Culture and how it affects and has affected the current behavior of social and political actors; such a study should be complemented by the analysis of public opinion and the attention to governance issues, typical of the relationship between state and society.

The university also highlights the contributions of Jesús Puerta, a Dr. in Social Sciences, Professor FACES-UC, Coordinator of the PhD in Social Sciences of the UC. Lic. Com. Social. In his article "*Political Culture and Social Media*" the author attempts to describe the political editorial lines of two printed media of communication of the Carabobo state, which makes them political actors in a specific situation: the last week of the Venezuelan election campaign of 1998. The semiotic analysis of systematic comparison of discursive operators was the method used. The analysis shows the main discursive resources that are used to deliver political offers to the electorate, in a particularly critical occasion and with no antecedent in contemporary Venezuelan political history: the circumstances in which the two main modern Venezuelan parties withdrew their support for their respective presidential candidates. The idea of "journalistic objectivity" is equally demystified and the specific political action of the media within the framework of the mass mediation of public space (2000: 90) is shown.

Among its projects it is highlighted: "*The Political Culture built by the media in Venezuela*" (1989-1998) and completed and funded by the Council of Scientific and Humanistic Development of the University of Carabobo.

The next scholar to be mentioned is Hector Briceño, Research Professor of Socio-Political Development Area of the Center for Development Studies in Cendes within the Central University of Venezuela. Together with Maria Fernanda Boidi, of Vanderbilt University, they are carrying a project called the "Barometer of the Americas." The said project intends the analysis of four key dimensions of Political Culture that create a stable democracy arises: 1) the belief in democracy as the best political system; 2) the belief in the values that sustain democracies 3) the belief in the legitimacy of political institutions (trust in political institutions) and 4) interpersonal trust.

In this sense Boidi, M and Briceño, H (2010) state the structure of the research project, which highlights the starting hypothesis: "we wish to test the thesis that citizen perception about a high quality of governance increases citizen support to a stable democracy, which will lead, ultimately, to consolidated democracies" (2010: 33). It is, to identify the contribution that certain forms of governance (or governance) have for democratic consolidation, ie, how the problems are addressed (and solved), and how these solutions are perceived.

In the first approaches to the results, unfortunately, the findings are little encouraging, "when looking at the evolution of data over time it is observed how the most favorable scenarios to stable democracy have deteriorated and have increased the chances of scenarios with more instability"(2010: 135-136). The study is available through the website of Lapop (<http://barometrodelasamericas.org/>) it is inserted in the various analyzes that have been conducted on the Political Culture of Venezuela, confirming, updating and proposing new hypotheses.

The thesis to qualify for the degree of Magister Hector Briceño, also addressed topics related to the topic at hand. His thesis was entitled Turnout in the Culture of Venezuela, and was carried out in the framework of a research project funded by the National Fund for Science and Technology, registered under the code: G-1997000635, entitled: STUDY OF POLITICAL CULTURE, GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND VENEZUELAN ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR.

Our next author is Andrés Cañizalez degree in Social Communication (UCAB, 1988), with a master degree in Political Science (USB, 1997). He was director of the magazine Communication, which is published by the Gumilla Center (2000-2006) and since 2005 is researcher from the Communication Research Center of the Andrés Bello Catholic University (CIC-UCAB), where he directs the "Polítical Communication and Freedom of Expression Program ". He coordinates the Working Group "Political Communication and Media" of ALAIC.

The author reviews concepts of Political Culture, to give a look at the social and political transformations of the last two decades in Venezuela. From studies in this period, according to the author, some signs on the implications, for the Political Culture of Venezuela, who have the political and institutional changes initiated in 1999 can be read.

In his degree work to qualify for the degree of Doctor of Political Sciences, Cañizalez, A, (2011) sought to establish the relationship between the generation of public policies and a model of presidential communication has been called the Presidential Media. Through the analysis of three highlight moments for the democratic governability of President Hugo Chavez, when he was ratified or reelected in 2000, 2004 and 2006, the formulation of the plans of public policy in presidential speeches to determine if this media dimension is the largest incubation space public policies in Venezuela under the sign of the "Bolivarian Revolution". Field research had as its primary sources a set of presidential speeches in the indicated periods as well as other relevant official documents.

As tangible results of his research, we can point out the generation of the concept "presidential media" describing the intended use of political values and consequently the formation of a certain Political Culture, by President Chavez in his presidential terms.

From the same author we can point out his text: Venezuela: *Political Culture in trance?* (2010) in which he reviews concepts of Political Culture, to address a look at the social and political transformations of the last two decades in Venezuela. From studies done in this period, can read some signs on the implications, for the Political Culture of the Venezuelan, who have the political and institutional changes initiated

in 1999. In the text, the attitudes of Venezuelans towards the democratic system are reviewed.

An academic who is worthy to mention is FRIEDRICH Welsch. Professor Emeritus, of the University Simon Bolivar, that although a German national, from his trench on USB, has turned into a mentor of the research processes and shaping of curriculum silhouettes of many researchers previously cited in this paper. His many publications can be downloaded from:

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Friedrich_Welsch2/publications

Regarding Political Culture he points out (1994) that facing the long-term processes and the recent dramatic developments, the most crucial question in the study of the Venezuelan Political Culture is whether citizens continue trusting their political system or if it shows signs of erosion of the democratic beliefs, in other words, if the Political Culture is a factor of consolidation or desconsolidation of the system. A sure answer to this question requires the longitudinal analysis of series of comparable data on public opinion on Cultural Policy.

Now it is the turn of Hugo Antonio Pérez. In 1995, he defends his degree work entitled: Democratic Action and Change of Political Culture in Venezuela: 1941-1948. His mentor was the renowned psychologist Luis Pedro España. In the aforementioned article, the author discusses long-windedly the concepts of Political Culture, Political Culture in Venezuela and also adds the categorization of what he calls: Democratic Political Culture.

Meanwhile, Arturo Ramirez Jose Figueredo in 2015, published a text entitled: **UNIVERSITY CULTURE AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN VENEZUELA: ENCOUNTERS AND DISENCOUNTERS**. Licentiate in Sociology, Magister Scientiarum in Higher Education Sciences, PhD in Sociology from the University of Granada-Spain, PhD in Science of Higher Education in the University Fermin Toro. Associated Professor with Exclusive Dedication at the "Ezequiel Zamora" National Experimental University of the Western Plains in Barinas-Venezuela.

In the aforementioned article states that in the UNELLEZ as other Venezuelan universities, institutional and curriculum evaluation although born with the zeal of domestic concerns he is fortified, is nurtured and, in many cases obeys the dynamics that the set of changes that occurred and to occur in the system and the Venezuelan political thought. In this reflection the author has tried to contextualize that complex bundle of dialectical relations with the aim of put on the table the political-ideological directionality that the Venezuelan universities would be taking, once they impregnate with the aroma of the so-called political revolution in the country. The interesting points, lies in the different responses that can cause this situation in the university actors under the assumption that the diversity of them and their indisputable critical view would prevent them to remain isolated from the process. (2015: 59)

It is pertinent to make the excuse that these repositories may not contain the information of what is currently being produced in the field of Political Culture in our country, however this documentary study is an approach to the major initiatives around the mentioned object of study.

3.2 Characterization of the Political Culture in Venezuela: The Look of specialists

We found a publication entitled: *Political Sociology of Culture (1999)*. Its author, Luis E. Madueño does an approach to the definition of Political Culture and describes its dimensions. He claims that Venezuelan Political Culture is based on the strategies of political action imbricated between: individuals and collective actors.

He points out that we need that the actions related to the Political Culture are regularized and institutionalized to define once and for all, the degree of collective awareness. He states that the Political Culture is inevitably related to political participation and that in a country with such notable failures in the reliability and credibility of institutions guaranteeing such participation, in Venezuela the conscious development and committed Political Culture is very complicated.

Modes of representation, traditional ways of doing politics, emptying the contents of the politics as a tool for action, the negative revaluation of the political regime, the approach to the heroic, fanatic and messianic ways, the need for new leadership, the redefinition of ways to make government and the role to be played by the institutions, are some of the strong reflections posed by the author.

Finally, we will review the text: *Political culture, governance and democracy in Venezuela (2008)*. Its coordinator, Maria Fernanda Boidi, of the Vanderbilt University, build a specialized team of researchers who will stop rigorously in the following aspects:

- The context of democratic development in Venezuela
- Corruption and its impact on the support for democracy
- The impact of crime on the support for democracy
- The impact of the performance of local governments and civil society
- The impact of public perception
- Political Legitimacy
- Electoral Behavior
- Perceptions of democracy in Venezuela

The report consists of seven chapters Venezuela. In the first five chapters the theoretical sections provided by LAPOP Central are included and the analysis of data at a comparative and national level is done, according to the indications provided by LAPOP Central. The final two chapters have been developed by the author, solely for this national report.

The report states unequivocally that Venezuela does not excel in any of the dimensions that make this analysis of conditions for a stable democracy. The support for the idea of a Churchillian democracy is relatively highest in the country: 83.8 points on a scale of 0 to 100, giving Venezuela the fourth place behind Canada, Argentina and Uruguay. In other dimensions, the country is located "in the middle of the table" if the sports metaphor is allowed. Venezuela ranks tenth in the support to the right of participation with 70 points on a scale of 0 to 100, and ninth in political tolerance (54.6 points in 100). Regarding interpersonal trust, Venezuela occupies the eight position in all countries of the continent, with 60.5 points on a scale of 0 to 100 (2008: 20)

Regarding corruption and its impact they say that their surveys measure individual experience with corruption in several aspects of everyday life, from which a rate of victimization by corruption with comparable data by country is generated. Venezuela is one of the countries with the lowest corruption victimization with a report of 10.6% of respondents that reported having been victims of the corruption over the past year. However, it is one of the countries in which citizens believe that corruption is more widespread. The surveys of the America's Barometer also measure citizens' perceptions about how widespread the corruption of public officers is, and in this respect Venezuelans are among the most critical of the continent. With 79,9 points on a scale of zero to 100, Venezuela is the fourth country in which citizens believe that corruption is more widespread, behind Jamaica, Argentina and Guatemala (2008: 21)

In the paragraph about the impact of crime on support for democracy they assert that 21.4% of the citizens of Venezuela has been a victim of crime in the last twelve months. This is one of the highest values of the region, although the highest value of victimization corresponds to Argentina (27.5%); the lowest value of crime victimization corresponds to Jamaica (8.3%). Similarly, the perception of insecurity is relatively widespread in the country. Insecurity on a scale of zero to 100, Venezuela reaches 46.7 points. It is the fifth country of the region with greater perception of insecurity, behind Argentina, Peru, Chile and Bolivia.

In the same vein they point out, (2008: 25) that the poorest citizens are most likely to be victims of crime. This is explained, in part, because those with more economic resources have more media to defend themselves from the crime, and consequently they are less vulnerable to this. On the other part, people with more education are more likely to be victims of crime, although these results may be influenced by the fact that the more educated are more sensible to the subject and may be more willing to report crime facts. The perceptions of insecurity have a more pronounced impact that victimization itself.

With regard to the credibility of local governments they assert that because of its proximity and greater accessibility, municipal governments have the potential for receiving greater confidence of citizens than they receive from national governments. However, this is not the case in Venezuela, where both governmental levels receive the same level of confidence. On a scale of zero to 100, the trust received by the municipality is 46.3, this value does not differ in terms of statistical significance of that obtained by the national government. The level of satisfaction with the municipal government, meanwhile, is far from optimal levels. On a scale of zero to 100, satisfaction with local services reaches 48 points, placing Venezuela in the fifteenth place on the continent. This is not a minor data, since satisfaction with the services provided by the municipality is positive and significantly associated with the legitimacy conferred to political institutions and the interpersonal trust (2008: 27).

For culminating, in relation to political participation at the local level Venezuela is not known for its magnitude. In fact, the values of participation of Venezuelans are relatively low in compared perspective. Thus, on a scale of zero to 100, participation in meetings of religious associations reaches 41 points, participation in parent meetings or educational institutions reaches 35.6 points, and the lowest of all,

participation in groups de women (considered only for the female population) is 9.9 points. The highest levels of participation locally among Venezuelans are given on committees or boards of community improvements (38.3 points). The analyses reveal that civic participation at local level is positively associated with political tolerance, the legitimacy conferred on political institutions, and interpersonal trust (2008: 35)

4. Conclusions

After making this documentary study, we can make some statements with base. There is still a large number of houses of study that do not devote sufficient efforts to study issues related to Political Culture. It is necessary and urgent the linking of initiatives originated in areas other disciplines than political studies, such as linguistics, discourse analysis, studies of Political Marketing, etc.

The entrepreneurship of more transdisciplinary research projects is required in which the phenomenon of Political Culture receive the rigorous look of multiple specialists, to systematize and visualize the results obtained.

It is also worthwhile to perform the proper categorization of studies already undertaken so starting from there, categorize and characterize in a structured way the studies in the area of the Political Culture.

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