

Transforming the Nation? The Bolivarian Education Reform in Venezuela

JARED A. ABBOTT, HILLEL DAVID SOIFER *and*
MATTHIAS VOM HAU*

Abstract. The Chávez government introduced a ‘Bolivarian’ national curriculum to promote radically different understandings of Venezuelan history and identity. We place the fate of this reform initiative within the broader study of state formation and nationalism. Scholars have long identified mass schooling as the key institution for socialising citizens and cultivating national loyalties, and many states have attempted to alter the nationalist content of schooling with these ends in mind. Venezuela constitutes an ideal case for identifying the specific conditions under which transformations of official national ideologies do and do not gain broader resonance. Using evidence derived from textbook analysis and semi-structured interviews with educational officials and teachers in Caracas, we highlight a new argument, showing that intrastate tensions between the central government and teachers, heightened by a well-established cultural machinery and by teachers’ increasing exclusion from the Chavista political coalition, explain the limited success in government efforts to implement Bolivarian nationalism through the school curriculum.

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Governments around the world have long assigned schooling a central role in creating national attachments and conveying official visions of national identity and history.¹ Seen in this light, it is not surprising that the government of

Jared A. Abbott, Harvard University. Email: jaredabbott@gh.harvard.edu. Hillel David Soifer, Temple University. Email: hsoifer@temple.edu. Matthias vom Hau, Institut Barcelona d’Estudis Internacionals (IBEI). Email: mvomhau@ibeii.org.

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¹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).

Hugo Chávez pursued an ambitious reform agenda in seeking to introduce Bolivarian nationalism into the educational sphere.² This project culminated with the distribution of more than 100 million new textbooks – the so-called *Colección Bicentenario* – which promote a radically different version of Venezuelan identity and history.³

Yet despite the Herculean efforts of the central government, the extent of ideological change remained limited. Teachers, who are the first transmission belt of textbooks, resisted the new Bolivarian curriculum and questioned the content of the new texts. Interviews conducted across different school districts in Caracas show that only a small minority of teachers regularly use the new texts in their classrooms, and even this minority report that they frequently complement the official textbooks with non-government source materials. The reasons given by teachers centre on objections to the reinterpretation of various aspects of Venezuelan history and politics; thus they are largely political rather than purely pedagogical.

How can we account for the contention over this effort at the transformation of nationalism under Chávez and for the extent of its implementation? This constitutes an ideal case for evaluating recent theoretical advances in the scholarship on nationalism and ideological change more generally that identify the specific conditions under which new official nationalisms gain wider resonance. Three existing explanatory approaches link ideological change to socio-structural and political transformations. One argues that ideologies have fixed relations with the underlying social structure; that ideological change is primarily driven by socio-structural transformations, and that ordinary people are more likely to buy into an ideology if it reflects familiar social arrangements.⁴ One version of this ‘correspondence’ view, going back to Max Weber and Karl Marx, posits a direct link between economic and ideological transformation and holds that change results from the formation of new social groupings that seek political and symbolic representation. A

² Bolivarianism is a complex, multi-layered, and often contradictory ideological project. In this article we focus only on one particular aspect of it: Bolivarian nationalism, or the understandings of national identity and history advanced by the Chávez government. Much has been written on other important facets of Bolivarianism. See for example Germán Carrera Damas, ‘The Hidden Legacy of Simón Bolívar’, in David Bushnell and Lester D. Langley (eds.), *Simón Bolívar: Essays on the Life and Legacy of the Liberator* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), chap. 9, on the cult of Simón Bolívar; and Roger Burbach and Camila Piñero, ‘Venezuela’s Participatory Socialism’, *Socialism and Democracy* 21: 3 (2007), pp. 181–200 on the rise of Bolivarian socialism.

³ The *Colección* is a series of four books, for each of grades 1–6 (primary school), developed and produced by the Ministry of Education; it follows the guidelines of the government’s Bolivarian Curriculum, rather than the 1997 curriculum.

⁴ For a critical review of a correspondence-theoretical approach to ideological change see Robert Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse. Ideology and Social Structure in the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and European Socialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

second approach focuses on the rise of civil society, arguing that a dense associational life greatly facilitates the contestation of established ideologies and the consolidation of new ideological contents.⁵ A third literature is more politically focused, linking changes in official national ideologies to shifts in power configurations and ruling coalitions.⁶ In this view, changes in state–society alliances open up new spaces for the contestation of established national discourses, and entail a new strategic agreement on shared conceptions of nationhood to enable the articulation of collective interests.

These explanations cannot account for the Venezuelan experience. First, despite political turmoil, the last two decades in Venezuela have not seen the sort of economic and social changes said to engender transformations of nationalism. The rise of middle sectors and organised labour, and their incorporation into politics, happened during the mid-twentieth century, and no analogous shift in class structure has taken place since 1999.⁷ Second, while scholars have engaged in intense arguments over whether the rise of Chavismo as a political movement represents the independent flourishing of civil society or a dramatic shift in political alliances, neither view can account for the limited consolidation of Bolivarian nationalism. If Chavismo represents, as many commentators argue, an inclusionary alliance that incorporates subaltern sectors,⁸ Bolivarian nationalism should be an increasingly hegemonic project, and we should see little contestation over these new understandings of nationhood.⁹ Yet we find serious contestation, meaning that ideological change cannot simply emanate from civil society. If

⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn (New York: Verso, 1983); Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

⁶ Philip S. Gorski, 'Nation-ization Struggles: A Bourdieusian Theory of Nationalism', in Philip S. Gorski (ed.), *Bourdieusian Theory and Historical Analysis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁷ Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

⁸ George Ciccariello-Maher, *We Created Chávez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Gabriel Hetland, 'The Crooked Line: From Populist Mobilization to Participatory Democracy in Chávez-Era Venezuela', *Qualitative Sociology*, 37: 4 (2014), pp. 373–401; David Smilde and Daniel Hellinger (eds.), *Venezuela's Bolivarian Democracy: Participation, Politics, and Culture under Chávez* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁹ This is not to neglect the probably crucial role played by the Chavista alliance with the urban poor in motivating the state's decision to adopt Bolivarian nationalism initially. In this article, however, we are primarily concerned with the *consolidation* of this new official national ideology – the extent to which Bolivarian nationalism obtained hegemonic status – rather than why the state chose this particular form of nationalism.

instead we follow scholars who take the Chavista project to be an exclusionary and polarising alliance,¹⁰ we cannot understand the *origins* of the ideological change using a civil society framework. In either reading of Chavismo, then, this framework cannot fully account for the puzzle at hand.

In response to these shortcomings of existing explanations, this article develops a novel state-centred one, which begins by conceptualising transformations of nationalism as a top-down endeavour initiated by the government to legitimate its broader political agenda, and then focuses on *intrastate* tensions, and on the ways in which state projects are resisted and subverted by elements of the state itself. Most state-centred scholarship on the limits to state projects focuses on state weakness as an obstacle to such transformations, and fails to disaggregate the state or explore tensions within it.¹¹ The reality of the Venezuelan situation casts doubt on this approach. The state the Chávez government inherited was far from a weakling; it was a functioning state rather than a vacuum of power in which order and administration needed to be reconstructed.

Thus to explain the limited transformation of nationalism, we emphasise the critical role of state infrastructure, and the breadth of political coalitions – in particular whether state agents are included in the coalition promoting ideological change. We argue that the new official national ideology embraced by Chávez did not achieve hegemonic status: the government encountered a well-established cultural machinery, with set routines for the institutionalisation of ideological products and the socialisation of local state actors. In particular, the key disseminators, classroom teachers, were already trained under the previous ideological regime, and saw the new Bolivarian curriculum as a direct threat to their professional identity while feeling increasingly excluded from the coalition underpinning the reform. Moreover, these teachers had the collective organisation and mobilising capacity to effectively resist the project of Bolivarian nationalism.

In developing this argument the article also fills a significant gap in the literature on Chavismo: we know fairly little about the ideological dimensions of the Bolivarian Revolution and its conception of nationalism. While it appears in the new name of the country and in many other elements of state discourse,

¹⁰ Allan R. Brewer-Carías, *Dismantling Democracy in Venezuela: The Chávez Authoritarian Experiment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Javier Corrales and Michael Penfold-Becerra, *Dragon in the Tropics: Hugo Chávez and the Political Economy of Revolution in Venezuela* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2011).

¹¹ On state weakness as an obstacle to transformative efforts, see Forrest D. Colburn and Dessalegn Rahmato, 'Rethinking Socialism in the Third World', *Third World Quarterly*, 13: 1 (1992), pp. 159–72 and Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State–Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). On the association between state weakness and limited nationalism in Latin America, see Miguel Ángel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

the new Bolivarian vision of Venezuela remains understudied. We know little in systematic terms about how Bolivarian nationalism differs from older understandings of Venezuelan nationhood. And we know still less about how successful the Chavista government has been in implementing its new vision of national identity and history. This article seeks to address these shortcomings by exploring the Chavista educational reform as an attempt to inculcate a transformation of official nationalism.

The remainder of the article begins with a discussion of our conceptual and methodological approach. In the second section we compare the new Chavista textbooks and curriculum guidelines to pre-1999 texts and non-government texts to analyse the contents of the new Bolivarian nationalism. In the third section we provide evidence on the extent to which this national ideology has been effectively implemented in Caracas-area schools, based largely on 55 interviews with teachers, school officials, NGO representatives and education researchers. Finding some serious limits to the success of reform, the fourth part of the article develops our explanatory argument focused on intrastate tensions. In the fifth section we show how teacher resistance to the new Bolivarian nationalism was shaped by the pre-existing state ideological infrastructure, and by the exclusion of these state agents from the governing coalition. We then explore government responses to intrastate tensions, and conclude by highlighting the implications of our account and sketching an agenda for future research in this area.

Transformations of Nationalism: Conceptual and Methodological Considerations

This study draws on scholarship that conceives of nationalism as an ideology – a shared mental framework that supplies ways to imagine community, identify fundamental patterns of sameness and difference among people, make political claims, and organise social relations.¹² Seen in this light, the basic underpinning of nationalism is the idea that the world is divided into nations, each an authentic entity with its peculiar history and culture; that political loyalty is primarily structured around nations; and that nations are or ought to be self-governed.¹³ In this article we specifically focus on official nationalism as an adaptable but explicit ideology advanced by states with the aim to legitimate their authority and achieve social control.¹⁴ Our main interest is in tracing and explaining the transformation of official national ideologies over

¹² Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

¹³ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983); Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

¹⁴ It bears emphasis that social movements and other civil society actors may employ *counter-state* nationalism in order to mobilise political support and challenge state authority. See Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*.

time. As the case of Venezuela under Chávez illustrates, the *contents* of state-sponsored conceptions of national identity and history, of who is considered part of the national community, might change. Yet, even more importantly for the purposes of this article, the *resonance* of official nationalism is not a given. States might attempt to impose a new national ideology, but the extent to which this official mode of identification gains acceptance among ordinary citizens and thus achieves hegemony might vary dramatically.¹⁵

Our conceptual approach has important methodological implications. Shared mental frameworks such as nationalism require social resources (e.g., financial means, administrative capacities, mass literacy, communication networks) in order to be created and maintained, and are therefore best studied not at the individual level, as subjective beliefs, but at the meso-level, as *embedded in particular organisational settings*.¹⁶ Thus we suggest that in order to gain hegemonic status, official national ideologies have to become regular products of state organisations.

In particular, our research strategy follows the classical works on nationalism and focuses on *schooling* as a key institution for the national socialisation of citizens. School textbooks and teachers are especially critical in this regard. It is well-established that textbooks reveal the contents of state-sponsored national discourses, and that states employ considerable efforts and resources to shape them. Recent research also shows that teachers play a central role in the dissemination of textbook contents.¹⁷ Their worldviews and teaching practices shape how state-sponsored ideologies are received in the classroom. Teachers thus are crucial for the extent to which a new national ideology gains wider resonance.

Our analytical strategy follows from this methodological approach. We review the primary school textbooks for social science and history newly introduced by the Chávez government and compare them to pre-1999 texts.¹⁸ This contrast allows us to trace changes in official nationalism. We also compare the

¹⁵ Rogers Brubaker, Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox and Liana Grancea, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

¹⁶ Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse*.

¹⁷ Gonzalo Portocarrero and Patricia Oliart, *El Perú desde la escuela* (Lima: Instituto de Apoyo Agrario, 1989); Matthias vom Hau, 'Unpacking the School: Textbooks, Teachers, and the Construction of Nationhood in Mexico, Argentina, and Peru', *Latin American Research Review*, 44: 1 (2009), pp. 127–54; Silvina Gvirtz, *El discurso escolar a través de los cuadernos de clase, Argentina 1930–1970* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1999).

¹⁸ Our methodological approach draws on Matthias vom Hau, 'Transformations of Nationalism: State Power and Ideological Change in Latin America', which uses textbooks to analyse nationalism in early- and mid-twentieth-century Latin America. Specifically, we trace similarities and differences in textbook contents along the following four dimensions: (a) normative judgments of major historical epochs, such as recent history but also the colonial period; (b) the identity of the main actors driving national history; (c) representations of major national heroes and the reasons given to celebrate them; and (d) conceptions of the

new textbooks to non-government texts published after the onset of the Bolivarian Revolution to establish that the differences between pre- and post-1999 textbooks were not driven simply by time-dependent factors like pedagogical fashions or global changes of nationalism.

To explore the understandings of national identity and history held by teachers and their textbook usage in the classroom we draw on 55 semi-structured interviews (conducted during the months of June–August 2012) with teachers, school officials, NGO representatives, and education researchers, while also drawing on the relevant secondary literature. Specifically, we conducted interviews with 26 primary school teachers in Caracas representing 18 different schools: 13 public, including three Bolivarian schools, and five private, in order to trace how the new Bolivarian textbook contents are received and negotiated in the classroom.¹⁹ To triangulate findings from teacher interviews we also consulted with six primary school principals and nine administrators from the municipal and national school systems.²⁰ The interviews with the administrators, complemented by interviews with two representatives from the national Ministry of Education, including Maigualida Pinto, a Vice-minister for Education in 2012, also provided us with evidence on the actual unfolding of the Chavista reform initiative. Interviews with an editor from a major private publishing company specialising in textbooks and three representatives from leading NGOs working on education in Venezuela put the political struggles surrounding the reforms into sharp relief. Finally, we consulted with eight education specialists from prominent Venezuelan universities (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello [UCAB], Universidad Simón Bolívar [USB], and Universidad Central de Venezuela [UCV]) to discuss our findings and argument in light of their own work and insights into the Chavista educational reforms.

As shown in the [Appendix](#), we interviewed teachers from vastly different neighbourhoods in the city, including Chacao, where the anti-Chavista opposition got 82 per cent of the vote, to Antímano, where Nicolás Maduro got over 70 per cent of the vote in the 2013 elections. These politically diverse neighbourhoods can serve as a microcosm for the country as a whole, or at least for

main threats faced by the nation and ideas about hierarchies found within the national community.

¹⁹ These data are listed in the [Appendix](#). All school types are mandated to use the *Colección Bicentenario* and receive free copies of those texts (though not all schools, particularly private schools, had actually received the texts in the year of our study), yet private schools usually have the highest degree of autonomy in the choice of the textbooks they use. Bolivarian schools, newly established under Chávez, stand at the other end of the spectrum, with little or no autonomy to choose their teaching materials, while ordinary national and municipal schools fall in between.

²⁰ Different levels of administration in Venezuela operate distinct school systems.

its urban areas, where one might expect educational efforts to be focused. We analyse textbooks and teacher interviews according to several major themes. In each of these sources we explore representations of central historical figures and events, as well as ideas about national inclusion and historical agency.

Textbooks, Curriculum Guidelines and the Contents of Ideological Change

Official understandings of national identity and history have changed significantly since the Bolivarian era began in 1999, as reflected in the content of textbooks and school curricula. Most prominently, in 2007 the government introduced a new Bolivarian educational curriculum to replace the pre-Chavista one from 1997. The Bolivarian Curriculum explicitly dismisses its predecessor on the grounds that the latter's primary function is the creation of a society based on the values of individualism, egoism, intolerance and consumerism. The Bolivarian Curriculum seeks to construct a new conception of national identity through the development of a 'new citizen' for Venezuela, grounded in the principles of liberty, cooperation, social equality, unity and Latin American integration and solidarity.²¹ While this curriculum was implemented in many schools, particularly Bolivarian schools, it was not officially established as the national educational curriculum, as this would require the passage of new enabling legislation for education. (Although a new enabling law for education was passed by the National Assembly in 2009, which closely reflected the ideology of Bolivarian nationalism and sought to provide the 2007 Bolivarian Curriculum with the necessary legal basis, no special education law has been developed to date that would officially codify the 2007 curriculum as the national curriculum.)²² As we discuss below, opponents of the government's education reforms within the Venezuelan teacher corps cite the legal ambiguity of the 2007 curriculum as a justification for not following it in their classrooms. Two years later, in 2011, the government distributed 12 million copies of its new *Colección Bicentenario* free of charge to primary school students throughout Venezuela. After the death of Chávez in 2013 the government of Nicolás Maduro has remained committed to the Bolivarian nationalism of its predecessor, as powerfully indicated by the continued dissemination of the *Colección*. By 2015, more than 100 million copies of these texts had been distributed to Venezuelan students.²³

²¹ *Curriculo bolivariano nacional: diseño curricular del sistema educativo bolivariano* (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, 2007).

²² James Suggett, 'Venezuelan Education Law: Socialist Indoctrination or Liberatory Education?', *Venezuelanalysis.com*, 21 Aug. 2009. Available at <http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/4734> (last access 22 Jan. 2017).

²³ '100 millones de libros de la Colección Bicentenario ha entregado la Revolución', *vtv.gob.ve*, 26 Sept. 2016, available at <http://vtv.gob.ve/100-millones-de-libros-de-la-coleccion-bicentenario-ha-entregado-la-revolucion/> (last access 22 Jan. 2017).

Textbook Representations of Key Historical Figures and Events

As shown in Table 1, the pre-1999 texts and the non-government texts published after 1999 stand in sharp contrast to the Colección Bicentenario embraced by Chávez. The two most prominent differences – their representations of Simón Bolívar, and of Venezuelan history from 1958 to 1999 – are indicative of a shift from elitist to more popular understandings of national identity and history. They also illustrate the equation of the Chavista movement with the national community.

Table 1. *Textbook Representations of National Identity and History*

Issue	Pre-1999 Texts	Non-Government Texts	Colección Bicentenario
<i>Simón Bolívar</i>	Liberal	Liberal	Socialist/anti-imperialist
<i>Recent history (1958–99)</i>	Period of democracy	Period of democracy	Period of false democracy
<i>National identity</i>	Liberal-elitist	Liberal-elitist	Subordinate sectors
<i>Historical agency</i>	Benevolent leaders	Benevolent leaders	Social movements/popular resistance

Given the centrality of Simón Bolívar in Venezuela's national mythology,²⁴ it is not surprising that he figures prominently in all textbooks, regardless of publication date and political orientation.²⁵ Yet the Colección represents Bolívar very differently. In the pre-1999 textbooks and the more recent non-government texts, Bolívar is portrayed primarily as an advocate of Latin American freedom from Spain, an opponent of federalism, and a liberal champion of separated powers. He is also treated as a symbol of the unity and glory of the Venezuelan people.²⁶ By contrast, in the Colección, Bolívar's life and thought are framed as the philosophical and historical foundation of a range of Chavista political views.²⁷ Bolívar is portrayed as an anti-imperialist whose preoccupation with Latin American integration is the foundation of

²⁴ Carrera Damas, 'The Hidden Legacy of Simón Bolívar'; John Chasteen, 'Simón Bolívar: Man and Myth', in Samuel Brunk and Ben Fallow (eds.), *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2006) pp. 21–39.

²⁵ For a discussion of the centrality of Bolívar in non-government textbooks, see Carmen G. Arteaga Mora, 'Mito fundacional y héroes nacionales en libros de texto de primaria venezolanos', *Revista Politeia*, 45: 1 (2010), pp. 50–3. For illustrations of Bolívar's importance in the Chavista understanding of history, see the government's social science textbook for grade 5: América Bracho Arcila and María Helena León de Hurtado, *Venezuela y su gente: ciencias sociales, quinto grado* (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, 2011), pp. 62–101, 125, 158.

²⁶ *Enlace con ciencias sociales, quinto grado* (Caracas: Fundación Editorial Santillana, 2010), pp. 174–6. See also *Ciencias sociales 5* (Caracas: S.A. Educación y Cultura Religiosa, 2001); Héctor Zamora, *Estudios sociales quinto grado* (Caracas: Co-Bo, 2000); *Arco iris básico: ciencias sociales 6* (Caracas: Librería Editorial Salesiana, S. A., 1988).

²⁷ América Bracho Arcila and María Helena León de Hurtado, *Venezuela y su gente: ciencias sociales, sexto grado* (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, 2011),

current Latin American projects to distance the region from the influence of the United States and US-backed international institutions. For instance, Bolívar's pan-Latin American dream of turning Latin America into 'the biggest nation in the world' is equated in a single paragraph with the goal of contemporary leftist governments in Latin America 'to give a new impetus to Latin American integration with the aim of defending the region against globalisation'.²⁸ Bolívar is also referred to as a socialist thinker who provides the intellectual framework for the 'socialist ethics' the government seeks to cultivate in Venezuelan society.²⁹

Representations of Venezuelan history from 1958 to 1999 are also strikingly divergent. The pre-1999 texts and the non-government texts tend to view this period as the era of Venezuelan democracy, and to describe the Pact of Punto Fijo as a necessary measure in 'guaranteeing [Venezuela's] ... nascent democracy'.³⁰ Little mention is made of the armed insurgency of the 1960s or of the exclusion of the Venezuelan Communist Party from the Pact. The 1989 Caracazo is mainly discussed as a series of popular protests or riots where the masses destroyed businesses, leading to over a thousand deaths and the massive destruction of private property.³¹ Finally, little or no mention is made of the negative consequences of neoliberal economic policies undertaken by Venezuelan governments of the 1980s. Instead, the focus is on their intended effects.³²

In sharp contrast, the Colección is highly critical of the Punto Fijo era (1958–98), characterising this as a period of 'bipartidismo'³³ that brought about the exclusion of ordinary Venezuelans from political participation and social welfare. It goes on to argue that the 'representative' democracy of this period had 'grave problems' from the beginning, leading eventually to the government's period of 'savage neoliberalism'³⁴ in the 1980s which in turn gave rise to the 'popular rebellion ... against inflation' known as the Caracazo. This narrative culminates in what it characterises as the 'new style of governance' of Hugo Chávez bringing about subordinate political and socioeconomic inclusion.³⁵

p. 63. See also *Currículo nacional bolivariano: diseño curricular del sistema educativo bolivariano* (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, 2007).

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Hugo Chávez Frías, *Tercer motor: Moral y Luces, educación con valores socialistas: juramentación del Consejo Presidencial Moral y Luces, Sala Ríos Reyna – Teatro Teresa Carreño* (Caracas: República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2007), p. 20.

³⁰ *Libro integral: mundo tricolor 6* (Caracas: Fondo Editorial La Cadena Tricolor), p. 246; *Mi mundo 6* (Caracas: SUSAETA, 1992), p. 52; *Ciencias sociales 6* (Caracas: Co-Bo, 2000), p. 153.

³¹ *Mundo tricolor 6*, p. 251.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 249, 251. A more critical reading can be found in Omar Galíndez, *Civilización 5: ciencias sociales educación básica* (Caracas: Editorial Excelencia C. A., 2000), pp. 117–18.

³³ *Venezuela y su gente, sexto grado*, p. 100.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 121–3.

Boundaries of National Inclusion and Historical Agency

Textbook representations of race, ethnicity, gender and class also shed light on shifts in dominant understandings of nationhood. One difference related to race is how the texts depict African slavery in Venezuela. All the non-government textbooks and pre-1999 texts examined use the word ‘*esclavos*’ (slaves) to refer to enslaved peoples,³⁶ whereas the Colección Bicentenario instead uses ‘*esclavizados*’ (enslaved persons),³⁷ presumably with the intention of avoiding the perception that people can be intrinsically suited to slavery. The Colección also places a greater emphasis on the resistance struggles of both African slaves³⁸ and indigenous people³⁹ against colonial rule, and depicts these struggles as crucial precursors to Venezuelan independence, illustrative of a greater emphasis on subordinate sectors as ‘true’ Venezuelans.⁴⁰ The slave rebellion of José Leonardo Chirino (1795) and the failed multiracial uprising at La Guaira (1792) appear as key precursors of the independence movements of Miranda and Bolívar.

With its focus on indigenous and slave resistance, on the history of social movements during the Punto Fijo era,⁴¹ and on what it portrays as the necessary protagonist role played by subordinate sectors in Venezuelan democracy,⁴² it is clear that the Colección has a very different conception of historical agency from most other textbooks in Venezuela, which are much more elite-centred in their understanding of historical change. The Colección’s representation of class also diverges from non-government texts in its conception of social cleavages, both domestic and global. The domestic social landscape is characterised as divided between the rich and the poor or between the opposition and pro-government actors,⁴³ and the international social landscape is characterised as a simple opposition between the Global North and the Global South,⁴⁴ or between dependent and developed capitalist states.⁴⁵

³⁶ *Estudios ciencias sociales 4*, p. 160; *Arco iris básico: estudios sociales 5* (Caracas: Librería Editorial Salesiana, S. A., 1988), p. 40; *Enlace con ciencias sociales quinto grado*, p. 154.

³⁷ América Bracho Arcila and María Helena León de Hurtado, *Venezuela y su gente, ciencias sociales, cuarto grado* (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, 2011), pp. 97, 111; *Venezuela y su gente, quinto grado*, p. 80.

³⁸ *Venezuela y su gente, quinto grado*, pp. 98, 117–18.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 81–2, 92.

⁴⁰ Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (UCAB), Escuela de Educación, Coordinación de Ciencias Sociales, ‘Consideraciones sobre los libros de Ciencias Sociales de la Colección Bicentenario’ (Caracas: UCAB, 2011), p. 3.

⁴¹ *Venezuela y su gente, sexto grado*, pp. 103, 106–12, 124.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 128, 131.

⁴⁴ *Venezuela y su gente, cuarto grado*, p. 48.

⁴⁵ *Venezuela y su gente, sexto grado*, p. 46.

Teachers and the Transmission of Ideological Change

Having highlighted the dramatic changes in the content of official nationalism through a comparative analysis of school textbooks, we now turn to assessing the extent to which this ideological change has been effectively inculcated in Caracas-area schools. In so doing, we maintain our focus on schooling and draw on interviews with primary school teachers and education officials to trace the implementation of the new official national ideology.

Our findings suggest that the Chavista government has not been very successful in establishing the *Colección Bicentenario* as a means of disseminating its Bolivarian nationalism. Of the 26 classroom teachers interviewed (see the [Appendix](#)), 15 reported using the *Colección* books at least to some extent, but only three reported using *Colección* texts as their class's primary texts. Furthermore, in most of the cases where teachers did report using the texts, they specified that they rarely used the social science series (the most politically-charged series of texts). Teachers who reported using the *Colección* in their classrooms used them as supplements to other, non-government, source materials to ensure what they described as a balanced portrait of Venezuelan history.

These findings were corroborated in interviews with school administrators, education researchers and representatives of education NGOs. In one municipality, for instance, the director of curriculum for the department of education reported that only a small minority of teachers did use the texts (observing that this tended to track with the political leanings of each teacher). A researcher from the UCAB, who worked closely with a number of nationally-run schools in the Antímáno neighbourhood of western Caracas, also reported wide variation in the usage of the government's texts among teachers in the area.

The government's limited success in implementing its ideological project is seen even more clearly in assessing teachers' use of the government's Bolivarian Curriculum. Only three teachers interviewed reported that the Bolivarian Curriculum was used in their schools, and one school principal who reported employing parts of it in his school mentioned that he was careful to ignore those aspects of the curriculum he found politically unpalatable: 'We only use the parts that we find useful', he said.⁴⁶ Many of the teachers interviewed avoided using the curriculum altogether on the grounds that the pre-Chávez curriculum from 1997 was still the official curriculum – since the 2009 education law mandated a special education law that had yet to be written. Even teachers who praised the Bolivarian Curriculum admitted that implementation was a problem in their schools. Finally, several teachers and administrators also commented that they would strongly resist any attempts by the national government to impose the Bolivarian curriculum in the future. The preceding

⁴⁶ Interview with a (national) primary school principal in El Recreo parish, Caracas, August 2012.

findings thus suggest that a considerable gap exists between the rhetoric and the reality of the government's education reforms.⁴⁷ Manuel Anselmi, in a comparable study in Lara, arrives at a similar conclusion, writing that the limit of the Bolivarian nationalist project in shaping the minds of Venezuelan school children is directly 'a consequence of their teachers' tendency to ... resist the more openly political aspects of Bolivarianism'.⁴⁸

Taken together, then, the evidence presented in this section has shown that even in strongly Chavista neighbourhoods, resistance by teachers has stymied the implementation of the new official nationalism. And teacher reticence is crucial, since they are the actors charged with disseminating the Bolivarian nationalist project, not only through the textbooks they use, but also through their actions in the classroom.

Explaining Patterns of Ideological Change: The Analytical Framework

Having shown that Bolivarian nationalism has (at least to date) not achieved wider resonance, the remainder of this article seeks to explain that finding. In this section we develop an explanatory framework.⁴⁹ By contrast to scholarship that traces limited transformations of nationalism to socioeconomic conditions, the strength of civil society, political alliances, or state weakness, our account focuses on *intrastate tensions*; between the central authority and its radiating actors charged with implementing projects at the local level, such as school teachers. We highlight the irony that when rising political coalitions inherit a functional state cultural machinery upon taking power, it is the pre-existing *strength* of the state, rather than its weakness, that limits the ability of state leaders to easily transform visions of nationhood.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ A few caveats, however, are in order. First, the Colección Bicentenario had only been in schools for one academic year at the time of these interviews. Further systematic research is certainly warranted on how teacher responses to the Colección evolved over time, yet informal conversations with teachers and administrators (during more recent stays in Venezuela for other research projects) indicate that their perceptions of those texts and their ways of using them in the classroom have not changed much since 2012. Second, several teachers and administrators interviewed reported that non-government textbooks have been increasingly influenced by Bolivarian nationalism, which suggests that focusing on the government's texts alone might understate the government's success in implementing its education agenda. These questions need to be addressed in further research.

⁴⁸ Manuel Anselmi, *Chávez's Children: Ideology, Education, and Society in Latin America* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), p. 146.

⁴⁹ It bears emphasis that our analysis is solely focused on the attempt of the government to impose a new national ideology – Bolivarian nationalism – on ordinary citizens. Assessing the successes and failures of the wider political and ideological project associated with Chavismo is beyond the scope of this article.

⁵⁰ This analytical lens raises the important question of why states choose to transform the content of their national ideologies. We do not address this issue since our focus is firmly on the ability of states to implement these ideological projects when they emerge.

Explaining the implementation of ideological change thus requires close attention to the specific resources and relationships constitutive of state power. We see state power as being based on the logistical techniques and organisational resources at the disposal of the centre, and a supportive relationship between the central and the local.⁵¹ The state's power, then, is infrastructural and relational. Of particular interest for our purposes is the relationship between the centre of command and the local actors embedded in state 'radiating institutions'. Even if the state cultural machinery⁵² can rely on a strong financial basis and maintains a significant presence across national territory, the implementation of new ideological contents depends on the active collaboration of the actors situated within state institutions. Strained relationships undermine the ability to institutionalise newly adopted national ideologies. For our purposes, we focus on explaining when and why public school teachers may oppose the ideological outlook of the official curriculum and subvert its implementation.

To explain the existence of these tensions between the centre and radiating actors we emphasise the presence of an already established ideological infrastructure, and the breadth of ruling coalitions. In an already established state infrastructure, ideological production is deeply routinised and professionalised.⁵³ The inculcation of citizens and the promotion of particular ideological contents is embedded in organisational routines and often carried out by professional cadres that enjoy substantial autonomy from the centre. In other words, where a new ruling coalition inherits an existing state apparatus, tensions between central state authorities and radiating actors are more likely to occur.

Several mechanisms underlie this regularity. One relates to professional socialisation. When organisational routines are already well-established and local state actors have been trained under the previous ideological regime, this alone can generate motivation to oppose efforts to transform nationalism. Research in the sociology of professions shows that initial training and work experiences have long-lasting impacts on the worldviews and self-understandings held by members of a particular profession, whether teachers,

⁵¹ Thus we approach the state as composed of differentiated networks of institutions and personnel that reach outwards from the centre to control their realm. See Michael Mann, 'The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms, and Results', *European Journal of Sociology*, 25: 2 (Nov. 1984), pp. 185–213; Hillel David Soifer, 'State Infrastructural Power: Approaches to Conceptualization and Measurement', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 43: 3–4 (2008), pp. 231–51.

⁵² The state cultural machinery includes the organisational facilities directly dedicated to ideological production and dissemination.

⁵³ For the domain of education, this routinisation is indicated by a public school system that is able to administer and oversee a (nationally) binding curriculum and make schooling accessible to students across the national territory.

archaeologists, or radio broadcasters.⁵⁴ Second, the rank and file of an established cultural machinery tends to have vested interests in the reproduction of the ideological status quo. Their inclination to resist ideological change is especially likely when they perceive a newly introduced national ideology as a threat to their professional status and future career paths. Third, an established ideological infrastructure also facilitates the collective organisation of local state actors. The presence of vocational schools, training institutes and universities, professional bodies, workplace regulations, and typical career patterns usually contribute to a strong sense of professional identity and the formation of intra-professional networks, thereby enhancing the capacity of local state actors to resist the centre.

The severity of these tensions also depends on the breadth of the new ruling coalition, and specifically on whether the rank and file of the state cultural machinery such as teachers are included within it. If coalitions include these actors and their collective organisation, they are more likely to support the institutionalisation of a new ideology. By contrast, if ruling coalitions are narrow and exclude radiating actors within the state, they are less likely to support the ideological change mandated by the centre. Scholars of socialism have highlighted the role of sabotage by remnants of the old order as a key factor explaining the failure of post-revolutionary efforts to ‘transition to socialism’.⁵⁵ These claims of ‘foot-dragging’ are common in accounts of the difficulty of ideological change more generally. Our argument offers a better-specified account of resistance to reform by identifying the individuals and groups most likely to participate in such activity and their reasons for doing so. But what is most novel about our argument is that it focuses not on the social remnants of the old order, but on its *institutional* remnants; its presence within the state.

Intrastate Tensions and Limited Ideological Change in Venezuela

If our argument is correct, then intrastate tensions constitute a crucial obstacle to the transformation of nationalism in Venezuela. We have already shown that teachers serve as the linchpin of efforts to consolidate an official national ideology, and that there is a lack of uptake among teachers in Caracas-area schools of the new vision of national identity promoted by the Chávez government. Teachers do not use the Colección Bicentenario nearly as extensively as the government would prefer. In this section we turn to evidence for the

⁵⁴ Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Paul DiMaggio, ‘Constructing an Organizational Field as a Professional Project: U.S. Art Museums, 1920–1940’, in Walter W. Powell and Paul DiMaggio (eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 267–92.

⁵⁵ Colburn and Rahmato, ‘Rethinking Socialism’.

explanatory account we have just developed; we will account for *why* teachers resist using these texts and implementing the new curriculum, and trace their resistance to an already well-institutionalised state cultural machinery and to an increasingly exclusionary ruling coalition. We show that teachers were inculcated with previously dominant conceptions of nationalism, perceive the Chavista national project as a threat to their middle-class status and professional autonomy, are well-organised enough to make their opposition heard, and have been steadily isolated from the Chavista ruling coalition in the course of contention over educational reforms.

Teachers' Political Justifications of their Resistance

In our interviews, we found two types of explanations – pedagogical and political – for non-use of official texts. The pedagogical reasons given by teachers for not using the Colección Bicentenario were either that the texts were of inferior quality compared with other textbooks because the Colección lacked pictures and graphics, or they were too abstract, or did not supply enough follow-up activities for students.

Yet the reasons given by teachers for not using the government's textbooks were not just pedagogical and practical. In fact, their motivation for resistance was usually highly political. The most adamant opponents of the texts reported that they either did not use them, or used them only minimally (especially the social science texts), because they objected to what they saw as the texts' dramatic reinterpretations of various aspects of Venezuelan history and politics. For instance, a teacher in a national school bluntly explained that she did not care for the government's new textbooks because 'my political perspective is totally different from that presented in the Colección', and because in her view 'the texts use the exact same language that the government uses!'⁵⁶ Yet even several teachers trained at the Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela (UBV) – founded by the Chávez government with the intent to provide free higher education to formerly excluded sectors of the Venezuelan population – complained that in their view the texts were overly critical of the Punto Fijo era, which they argued was a period of genuine democracy in Venezuela, not an inferior form of representative democracy in need of replacement by a more profound form of participatory democracy (as suggested by the Colección).⁵⁷ Other teachers argued that the new texts presented a one-sided picture of the colonial period that unfairly demonised Europeans: 'The books [the Colección] present the Conquistadors in a negative light ... they came to loot, to rape, to take ... and this has some truth, but we also have

⁵⁶ Interview with teacher 11, Aug. 2012 (see [Appendix](#) for list of teachers interviewed).

⁵⁷ Interviews with teachers 6, 18, 21, Aug. 2012.

much to thank the Spanish for. They gave us a lot. Much of our culture comes from them.’⁵⁸

Teachers also gave a legalistic, but nevertheless politically motivated, reason for not using the texts, arguing that the contents of the books were not consistent with the national curriculum from 1997. Given the absence of a new one that would reflect the 2009 education law, the 1997 curriculum was still the legally binding one in their view, and they therefore had to rely on other texts to teach their students all the content mandated by it. Since teachers who used this argument were invariably critical of the Colección and the Bolivarian Curriculum, and expressed deep frustration about the current direction of education reform in Venezuela and concern about what they saw as the increasing politicisation of education in Venezuela, it is safe to say they saw the 1997 curriculum as a bulwark against the imposition of Bolivarian nationalism upon education.

Finally, it is important to note that even among teachers who reported using the government’s textbooks in the classroom, nine out of 15 were highly critical of the texts, and implied that the only reason they used them was because they were obligated to do so. For example, one teacher who used the texts at her public school job reported that she never used them at the private school where she also worked, since there she had more liberty to choose her own teaching material: ‘The climate in private schools is more open than in public schools. Teachers have more liberty to develop their own materials ... In private schools teachers can speak with more freedom than in public schools.’⁵⁹ Furthermore, several public school teachers who reported using the texts claimed that their students’ families could not afford to purchase textbooks, and since the government’s texts were better than nothing these teachers decided to use them. These findings suggest that even teachers who use the Colección Bicentenario are likely to resist teaching the more politically charged elements of the books. Thus while some resistance to the texts is not politically motivated, it is clear that to a large extent teacher non-use of the texts reflects conscious opposition to the government’s education reform and its new conception of nationalism.

Pre-Existing State Strength and Teachers’ Inclination to Resist

Teachers’ politicised views of the new texts and their opposition to the new Bolivarian Curriculum need to be analysed within the context of state institutional development in Venezuela and the political alliance structures underpinning Chavismo. When the Chávez government ascended to power, it encountered a state apparatus that was marked by inefficiency and limited in its distributive capacity owing to fluctuations in oil income. Yet it was

⁵⁸ Interview with teacher 10, Aug. 2012.

⁵⁹ Interview with teacher 5, Aug. 2012.

quite capable of performing basic state functions across national territory.⁶⁰ More relevant for our purposes, in 1999 the Venezuelan state had a reasonably well-established cultural machinery, as indicated by a robust and well-developed public education system that was able to provide schooling throughout the country (though not without a certain degree of urban and class bias), and to systematise its provision across the country's schools.⁶¹

In crude numerical terms, this development can be seen in terms of the rate of school enrolment; on this indicator, the evidence shows that the Venezuelan state had significant capacity for decades before the rise of Chavismo.⁶² Average years of schooling doubled between 1960 and 1980, growing faster not only than the Latin American average but also faster than most countries in East Asia. Moreover, the wage premium for an additional year of schooling was significant, suggesting that educational quality was robust in terms of its labour market returns.⁶³ By the 1970s, secondary school enrolment was already at 44 per cent, ranking the country fourth among 18 Latin American countries.⁶⁴ Enrolment continued to increase substantially

⁶⁰ Crucially, our argument centres on the capacity of the *state* and not political institutions. The latter, of course, underwent a major crisis in the years prior to the initial election of Hugo Chávez, with the collapse of the country's major political parties. Even as Venezuela was gripped by a crisis of political institutions, and an economic crisis, many dimensions of its state remained effective. For two of many accounts of the political crisis of the 1990s that do not diagnose a crisis in state capacity, see Gustavo Flores-Macías, *After Neoliberalism? The Left and Economic Reforms in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), ch. 4, and Margarita López Maya, 'Venezuela: Hugo Chávez and the Populist Left', in Steven Levitsky and Kenneth M. Roberts (eds.), *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), ch. 9. Venezuela's performance on various indicators of state capacity placed it at or above average for South America. See Hillel David Soifer, *State Building in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 11–15. For a longer historical perspective on the infrastructural power of the Venezuelan state see Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991) and Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁶¹ According to data collected by Fernando Reimers, Venezuela's per capita education spending was by far the highest in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s. Though austerity and adjustment measures did lead to some declines in public school provision and quality, and to increased urban and class bias in the educational system, these effects were quite muted in regional perspective. See Fernando Reimers, 'The Impact of Economic Stabilization and Adjustment on Education in Latin America', *Comparative Education Review*, 35: 2 (May 1991), pp. 319–53.

⁶² We focus on secondary school enrolment because it varies more across time and country in contemporary Latin America than primary school enrolment.

⁶³ Daniel Ortega and Lant Pritchett, 'Much Higher Schooling, Much Lower Wages: Human Capital and Economic Collapse in Venezuela', in Ricardo Hausmann and Francisco Rodríguez (eds.), *Venezuela before Chávez: Anatomy of an Economic Collapse* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), ch. 6.

⁶⁴ These figures are decade averages of data drawn from the World Development Indicators, available at <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators> (last access 22 Jan. 2017).

thereafter, reaching 56.4 per cent for the decade of the 1990s that immediately preceded the initial election of Hugo Chávez. Though Fernando Reimers shows that school provision and enrolment were higher in urban areas and for the non-poor, the extent of these biases was small in regional perspective.⁶⁵

The centralisation of the school curriculum under national oversight and regulation also reveals state institutional development. On this dimension, too, the Venezuelan education system demonstrated high capacity. The primary school system (which comprises grades 1–6) has two sectors, public and private, with around 83 per cent of Venezuelan primary school students attending public schools and around 17 per cent attending private schools.⁶⁶ Within the public sector, there are three different, nominally independent systems, corresponding to the municipal, state and federal levels of government. This means that in municipalities or states that are governed by opposition governors or mayors, school administrators have at least some level of autonomy from national authorities. Yet the oversight capacity of the federal government is revealed by closer inspection. Federally run schools (schools directly under the administration of the national Ministry of Education) comprise the vast majority (around 70 per cent) of all public schools, with state-run schools consisting of around 26 per cent of public schools and the remaining few per cent of public schools being run by municipalities.⁶⁷ Moreover, the Ministry of Education sets the curriculum for all Venezuelan primary schools, and its administrative sub-units known as Zonas Educativas have oversight authority over *all* schools in a given area, both public and private.⁶⁸ Consequently, despite their greater autonomy from the Ministry of Education than that of public schools, even private schools are subject to central government supervision and control, as are municipal and state schools.⁶⁹ Thus it is reasonable to think of the public education system as having the capacity to implement a nationally binding curriculum, and as having had this capacity before the Bolivarian project began in 1999.

The development of public education can also be seen in the size and training of the teaching corps. As of 1970, Venezuela already had over 51,000 primary school teachers and 23,000 secondary school teachers, or about seven teachers for every 1,000 residents. Again, though the number of teachers has grown sharply, especially in the last decade, and far faster than the rate of

⁶⁵ Reimers, 'The Impact of Economic Stabilization and Adjustment on Education in Latin America'.

⁶⁶ Nacarid Rodríguez and Mildred Meza, 'La dirección escolar en Venezuela', *Revista Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación*, 4: 4 (2006), pp. 1–22.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Since 2003 Venezuela has seen the emergence of two key educational initiatives: the missions and the Bolivarian schools. We address both in detail below.

⁶⁸ UNESCO, *Datos mundiales de educación*, 7th edn (Caracas: República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2010); Mariano Herrera, 'El sistema educativo venezolano' (Caracas: CICE, 2010).

⁶⁹ Rodríguez and Meza, 'La dirección escolar'.

population growth, the sheer size of the teachers' corps in the Punto Fijo era shows that the state's power in this realm predates Chavismo.

Teachers were not only numerous, they were also trained and socialised by previously established state institutions. Though Venezuela's first normal school (teacher training academy) emerged only in 1936, by 1951 a sizable network of normal schools existed to train primary school teachers in a three- or four-year curriculum. Emphasis on training grew sharply after democratisation in 1958, and by 1962 about 88 per cent of teachers in primary schools had *títulos* (degrees) from normal schools. A 1969 reform shifted the emphasis of primary schooling from expansion to professionalisation, and created a special track in secondary education for teacher training which led to the title of *Bachiller Docente* (Bachelor of Education). This was complemented in 1980 with the creation of education tracks at major national universities, in which teachers could receive a professional degree.⁷⁰ The 1991 *Reglamento del Ejercicio de la Profesión Docente* (Rules for the Teaching Profession) established merit-based criteria for hiring.⁷¹

Our interviews with teachers provide evidence that their professional socialisation and status concerns played an important role in motivating opposition to the Bolivarian Curriculum and its new nationalist contents. Teachers, regardless of whether they taught at public or private schools, understood the representations of national history found in pre-1999 textbooks as apolitical, non-ideological and thus 'true', in contrast to their perception of the *Colección Bicentenario* as politicised, ideological and ultimately 'false' depictions of Venezuelan history. In the words of a teacher in a national school, 'it's like they [the texts] want to erase Venezuelans' memory and create a new history discovered by the politicians'.⁷² And even some teachers who taught at the new Bolivarian schools had complaints about what they saw as the new texts' inaccurate (and politically motivated) representations of historical figures such as Bolívar to make them conform to Chavista ideology. One of them, for instance, explained that in her view 'they [the texts] want to associate Bolívar with socialism ... but Bolívar never spoke of socialism, he spoke of the importance of democracy and he emphasised the importance of the right to private property'.⁷³ Another teacher pointed to representations of early twentieth-century Venezuelan President Cipriano Castro to show how the

⁷⁰ This discussion is based on Nacarid Rodríguez Trujillo, 'La formación de los docentes de Venezuela de 1951 a 2001', in Guillermo Luque (ed.), *Venezuela: Medio siglo de historia educativa 1951-2001* (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación Universitaria, 2011), pp. 479-97.

⁷¹ Tulio Ramírez, 'Los educadores: una agenda para la valorización de nuestros educadores', in Luis Ugalde (ed.), *Educación para transformar el país* (Caracas: Foro CERPE, 2012), pp. 111-29; Nacarid Rodríguez Trujillo, *Historia de la educación venezolana: 6 ensayos* (Caracas: UCAB, 2011), pp. 320-1.

⁷² Interview with teacher 8, Aug. 2012.

⁷³ Interview with teacher 2, Aug. 2012.

Colección's perspective was politically motivated: 'in his day he was a negative leader for the democratic process, but from today's point of view [that of the Colección] Cipriano Castro was a great revolutionary'.⁷⁴ As these examples show, teachers generally do not question the ideological nature and political instrumentality of the textbooks published before 1999. In fact, pre-Chavista understandings of nationhood appeared to enjoy largely hegemonic status among most of the teachers we interviewed.

In sum, then, various types of evidence point to the presence of a firmly consolidated education system at the onset of Chavismo. In 1999, the vast majority of school-age Venezuelan children were already taught under a well-institutionalised and nationally binding curriculum, while teaching involved significant professional socialisation. These factors underpinned substantial opposition to the new Chavista nationalist project from these local state actors.

Teacher Collective Organisation and the Capacity to Resist

Venezuelan teachers also had the organisational capacity to resist the consolidation of the new national ideology embraced by the Chávez government. Their history of formal collective organisation predates Chavismo, dating back to the 1980 Ley Orgánica de Educación (Enabling Law for Education) that allowed teachers to unionise and participate in collective bargaining.⁷⁵ Teachers never formed a single encompassing union, retaining instead affiliations with both of the major parties of the Punto Fijo era. Yet this division did not reduce their level of unionisation, which in fact increased owing to the competition among unions affiliated with multiple parties, as 13 unions competed for membership during the period of the Carlos Andrés Pérez government. Unable to coordinate negotiation with the state, and competing amongst themselves, Venezuela's teachers' unions carried out more than 30 strikes between 1989 and 1993.⁷⁶

While the fragmented nature of unions in the educational sector prevented teachers from unifying to oppose or negotiate with the government,⁷⁷ it did not prevent them from mounting significant and often effective resistance to a range of government education policies. From 1999 teachers' unions

⁷⁴ Interview with teacher 16, Aug. 2012.

⁷⁵ Julián Gindin, 'Sindicalismo docente en América Latina: una contribución al debate', *El Cotidiano* (July–Aug. 2011), pp. 109–14, 111. Rodríguez Trujillo, *Historia de la educación venezolana*, p. 274, discusses the 1969 primary school teachers' strike as a moment of professional identity formation among teachers.

⁷⁶ M. Victoria Murillo, 'From Populism to Neoliberalism: Labor Unions and Market Reforms in Latin America', *World Politics*, 52 (Jan. 2000), pp. 135–74; here p.156 and Appendix.

⁷⁷ Julián Gindin, 'Sur, neoliberalismo ... ¿Y después? Los sindicatos docentes en Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Uruguay y Ecuador', paper presented at the Confederación de Educadores Americanos y STEI-Intersindical (Montevideo, 2009).

repeatedly mobilised against government efforts to introduce a new national ideology into the educational sphere through curricular changes and a new education law. Most prominently, in 2001 many teachers vigorously opposed the radical Chavista- and government-supported Proyecto Educativo Nacional (National Education Project, PEN), and instead pushed for a more moderate compromise, the Proyecto de Ley Orgánica de Educación (Education Enabling Law Project, PLOE), a bipartisan effort to reform the education system that was backed both by prominent opposition groups such as the Asamblea de Educación (Assembly for Education) and the Education Commission of the National Assembly.⁷⁸ The enabling law was passed unanimously in the National Assembly, yet President Chávez refused to sign the PLOE into law. At least some of the teachers' unions were also involved in anti-government mobilisation in April 2002 and participated in strikes during 2003,⁷⁹ and continued to oppose subsequent attempts by Chávez, and later his successor Maduro, to pass a new education law and implement the new curriculum. The extent of teacher opposition supports our argument that resistance to the Bolivarian national project clearly emanated from within the state, and thus also supports our claim that the failure to date of nationalist transformation in Venezuela is not a consequence of state weakness.

Teacher Exclusion from the Reform Coalition

Teacher resistance to the Bolivarian educational reform was further heightened by the steady narrowing of the coalition that underpinned this reform initiative. During the first years of the Chávez presidency there was initial support among the teaching corps for an educational reform. Yet after Chávez struck down the PLOE, teachers and their organisations approached subsequent stages of education reform with great suspicion. They viewed further attempts in 2004 and 2005 to reintroduce the education law into the National Assembly for a second vote as a blatant attempt by the government to push through the ideologically orthodox PEN as the legal basis for a radical Chavista reform project.

In light of widespread protest by teachers (in alliance with other civil society and opposition actors), Chávez changed his approach. In 2007 the government introduced a new Bolivarian Curriculum that had been developed by the Ministry of Education without much consultation with teachers. The government sought to establish a legal basis for this new curriculum through a sweeping constitutional reform package that included an amendment (to article 103 of the

⁷⁸ Luis Bravo Jáuregui, *Legislación educativa en Venezuela. Iniciativas y controversia pública en torno a los ajustes normativo-políticos que demanda la Constitución de 1999* (Caracas: Memoria Educativa Venezolana, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 2009), p. 8.

⁷⁹ Much of the discussion in this section is based on Ramírez, 'Los educadores', especially pp. 113–16.

constitution) that would have mandated education to be based on the ‘humanistic principles of Bolivarian socialism’. The constitutional referendum provoked massive protests by teachers’ unions and related education NGOs and ultimately failed. In response the Chávez government returned to seeking legislative approval for its educational reform project. This culminated in the passage of a new education law in 2009, which was strongly criticised by a range of teachers’ unions,⁸⁰ some of whom openly suggested that they would use civil disobedience tactics to resist the law, and that since a new special law for basic education was not yet written, the 1997 curriculum in fact remained in effect.⁸¹

Thus, despite the structural limitations imposed by the fragmented nature of collective organisation in the education sector, teachers have played an important role in resisting Chavista education reforms. This makes teacher opposition to the implementation of the *Colección Bicentenario* consistent with a long-standing pattern of teacher resistance that is, as we have shown, closely related to an already well-institutionalised educational apparatus and the increasingly exclusionary nature of the education reform process.

Government Responses to Intrastate Resistance and their Limitations

The Chávez government, and more recently that of Maduro, have pursued a variety of measures to overcome intrastate opposition by teachers and their organisations and still be able to implement its new Bolivarian national ideology. The most direct initiatives were a series of challenges to the professional autonomy of educators. Decree no. 1011 of 2001 established a system of education supervisors with the power to suspend teachers and keep them out of the classroom while administrative appeals were pursued.⁸² Chavista governments also pursued a variety of more gradual strategies to break resistance among the teaching corps. Most prominently, the Education Ministry moved away from purely merit-based criteria and introduced political priorities into the hiring of new teachers.⁸³ Another strategy has been a shift to greater reliance on *interinos* as opposed to *titulares* in the education corps, with the attendant reduction in job security.⁸⁴ Finally, the Chávez government

⁸⁰ Gindin, ‘Sur, neoliberalismo ... ¿Y después?’, p. 36.

⁸¹ Suggett, ‘Venezuelan Education Law’.

⁸² ‘Venezuela: Education Reforms Trigger Chavez Protest’, Oxford Analytica Daily Brief (16 April 2001).

⁸³ A preference was shown to graduates of the *Misión Sucre* over those of the *Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador* who had undergone formal pedagogical training. See the section below headed ‘Circumventing Tensions through Parallel Institutions’ for more on the ‘missions’.

⁸⁴ *Interinos* are teachers hired on a temporary basis, while *titulares* have a permanent contract: Josefina Bruni Celli, Olga Ramos and Milko González, ‘Los maestros en Venezuela: carreras e incentivos’ (Washington, DC: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, Red de Centros de Investigación, 2001), pp. 9, 17.

sought to establish a parallel teacher union, the SINAFUM, and gave it official recognition for collective bargaining.

Two additional lines of response merit more extended discussion. One strategy has involved attempts to create new institutions to circumvent resistance from within the established state educational infrastructure through the creation of education ‘missions’, and the introduction of a ‘Bolivarian’ school system. Another line of response has focused on teacher monitoring, training workshops, and limits on private-sector textbook production as more direct attempts to overcome these intrastate tensions.⁸⁵

Circumventing Tensions through Parallel Institutions

In 2003 the government established three education ‘missions’ to provide educational services to Venezuelans who had been excluded from traditional public and private education.⁸⁶ The missions are funded by direct transfers from the state oil company, PDVSA, which frees them from congressional oversight and effectively creates a parallel education system in the country.⁸⁷ Each mission tackles a different area of education, with Mission Robinson providing literacy and grade-school equivalency degrees, Mission Ribas providing high-school equivalency degrees, and Mission Sucre providing – through a network of ‘Bolivarian Universities’ – a college education. While the missions have dramatically expanded educational enrolment (especially at the higher-education level), they have been widely criticised for succumbing to patronage and cronyism (many participants in the missions receive monthly scholarships), establishing substandard education, and for taking funds away from traditional educational institutions.⁸⁸ Yet what makes the missions particularly appealing to the Chávez and Maduro governments is that they allow it to employ a Bolivarian curriculum without resistance from its instructional corps.

Another parallel education initiative, the Bolivarian school system, introduced very early in the Chávez presidency, has grown with the availability

⁸⁵ In other contexts where ideological change has been attempted, government-owned media have been used to disseminate the new official nationalism. Though critics of the Chávez government often point to community media as another mouthpiece of the state, scholars of Venezuelan community radio and television show that they should not be seen as part of the state ideological apparatus. See Sujatha Fernandes, *Who Can Stop the Drums? Urban Social Movements in Chávez's Venezuela* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Naomi Schiller, ‘Catia Sees You: Community Television, Clientelism, and the State in the Chávez Era’, in Smilde and Hellinger (eds.), *Venezuela's Bolivarian Democracy*, pp. 104–30.

⁸⁶ Kirk A. Hawkins, Guillermo Rosas and Michael E. Johnson, ‘The Misiones of the Chávez Government’, in *ibid.*, p. 192.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*; Steve Ellner, *Rethinking Venezuelan Politics: Class, Conflict and the Chávez Phenomenon* (Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008), p. 133.

of money from oil revenues.⁸⁹ This programme expanded rapidly from an initial 559 schools in 1999 to over 9,000 schools in 2012.⁹⁰ Like the missions, the purpose of the Bolivarian schools is to incorporate marginalised Venezuelans into the education system, in this case by increasing the length of the school day to provide additional cultural and sporting activities for students, and by providing students with daily meals and with preventative health services. Like the missions, Bolivarian schools are widely considered to push Bolivarian ideological beliefs onto faculty and students.⁹¹

Both the missions and the Bolivarian schools represent an attempt to circumvent intrastate resistance to ideological transformation through the construction of new vehicles for its inculcation. Yet, their actual impact as parallel institutions should not be overstated. First, none of the missions serves primary-school-age students and thus they are not a likely venue for inculcating young students with a new conception of nationalism. While around 40 per cent of all Venezuelan primary school students go to schools associated with the Bolivarian system,⁹² this figure is surpassed by the number of primary students attending private or non-national public schools (i.e. state or municipal schools), where the ideological pressure on teachers to conform to Bolivarian ideology is likely not as strong.⁹³ This suggests that even if the government has more success disseminating its conception of nationalism in Bolivarian schools, there are limits to the extent to which this mechanism can be employed. Furthermore, several of the teachers in Bolivarian schools interviewed for this study reported no experience of ideological pressuring either of themselves or of colleagues, so it is not clear that these schools are necessarily more effective in assuring compliance with the government's ideological agenda than other schools.

Overcoming Resistance through Micro-Management

The education bureaucracy has also sought to overcome teacher resistance through teacher monitoring, workshops to train teachers in the use of the Colección Bicentenario, and limits on private-sector textbook production. Here again our preliminary evidence suggests that the government has

⁸⁹ Anselmi, *Chávez's Children*, p. 58.

⁹⁰ Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, *Memoria y cuenta 2013*, p. 1575.

⁹¹ Although several teachers interviewed for this study reported no experience of ideological pressuring from colleagues or administrators in Bolivarian schools, in several cases teachers in these schools reported experiencing a culture of ideological dogmatism and expressed fear of losing their jobs if their oppositional political views became known.

⁹² Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, *Memoria y cuenta 2013*, p. 1575.

⁹³ Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 'Matrícula de educación primaria por dependencia', available via the 'Primaria' tab at www.ine.gov.ve/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=64&Itemid=6 (last access 30 Jan. 2017).

struggled in implementing these measures. With respect to teacher monitoring, only six teachers interviewed reported having been visited by a government supervisor, and only eight out of 26 reported feeling any pressure to adopt the Bolivarian Curriculum or to use the Colección as their classes' primary textbooks. Several teachers did report feeling substantial pressure to conform to the government's education agenda, complaining that they felt limited by political constraints on what they could teach, a number of teachers reported seeing Chávez campaign posters hanging in their schools, and several expressed concern about even speaking with us out of fear of political reprisal.

Overall, however, the extent of real and perceived teacher monitoring appeared to be relatively low. School administrators and education experts we interviewed agreed with Maigualida Pinto in accounting for this relatively low level of government supervision by explaining that the government has only a small corps of school inspectors at its disposal, that the ideological commitment of many inspectors to the government is questionable, and that resistance to the government's reforms among school administrators and teachers limits the extent of self-monitoring that occurs. These last two factors, in particular, resonate quite clearly with our argument.⁹⁴

Nor have teacher-training workshops been broadly implemented. Though school officials reported that many workshops had already taken place and that many more were being planned, none of the teachers we interviewed reported having attended a government-run workshop on the Colección Bicentenario. In fact several reported receiving no instruction whatsoever in the use of the textbooks. Thus the ultimate success of teacher-training workshops in increasing usage of the government's textbooks is unclear.

Finally, there is evidence that the government has had some success by crowding out private textbook producers. Not only did many teachers report being told that they were no longer allowed to request that students buy any textbooks, but the Ministry of Education issued a circular in October 2011 that expressly forbade the use of any textbooks other than the Colección Bicentenario in public schools.⁹⁵ These actions led to a decrease in one publishing house's primary-school textbooks sales of over 25 per cent in 2011, and an anticipated drop of 60 per cent in 2012. However, while these figures suggest that lack of access to alternative texts could force teachers to rely more heavily on the government's textbooks in the future, the ineffective enforcement mechanisms coupled with the continued availability of alternative texts seems thus far to have limited the government's attempts to micro-manage textbook use in schools.

⁹⁴ Anselmi, *Chávez's Children*, pp. 120ff finds evidence of weekly meetings of school coordinators at a regional level, and weekly rounds of school inspections by district officials. There, in other words, the 'ideological management' of education is intense.

⁹⁵ La Zona Educativa de Miranda, Circular No. MDZ-2011-06, 13 Oct. 2011.

Conclusion

In this article we have explored nationalism and ideological change in Venezuela through the analytical lens of schooling. On taking power, the Chávez government sought to transform dominant understandings of nationhood, placing educational reform at the centre of this ideological project. The development and implementation of a new Bolivarian school curriculum have the intention, and the potential, to transform Venezuelan national identity in fundamental ways. Indeed, the conceptions of nationhood mandated for Venezuelan schools have undergone significant changes since Chávez was elected in 1999. Yet the transmission of the new Bolivarian nationalism has been constrained. We argue that this is because teachers, as key disseminators of state-sponsored ideological content, have opposed the new ideological content.

To account for this limited transformation of nationalism we have developed an explanatory argument focused on intrastate tensions. We argue that these tensions are shaped by the presence of an already well-established state ideological infrastructure and by whether or not local state agents and their collective interest representations have a place in the governing coalition. More concretely, we argue that tensions between the Chávez and Maduro governments and teachers undermined the implementation of the new Bolivarian curriculum. A well-established education system prior to Chávez's election led to a well-organised teaching corps that was socialised under the previous ideological regime and that has had the motivation and capacity to resist the Chavista ideological project, while an increasingly exclusionary reform coalition further enhanced teacher resistance against the Bolivarian educational reform and its nationalist contents.

This analytical focus allows us to deepen our understanding of the Venezuelan state and address lacunae in the existing literature. Here, one strand of scholarship reifies the Venezuelan state as standing astride society, but detached and disengaged from it because of its access to income from resources.⁹⁶ A second, more recent, literature, directly critical of this first strand and largely focused on the Chavista period, de-centres the state, exploring instead the agency of societal actors, and in particular subaltern ones formerly excluded during the Punto Fijo era, in shaping contemporary Venezuelan political discourse.⁹⁷ While the first approach overstates the unitary and monolithic nature of the state, and its capacity to exert its will, the second moves too quickly to discard state initiatives and state agency in exploring contemporary ideological change.

⁹⁶ Karl, *Paradox of Plenty*; Coronil, *The Magical State*.

⁹⁷ Smilde and Hellinger (eds.), *Venezuela's Bolivarian Democracy*; Ciccariello-Maher, *We Created Chávez*.

By contrast, our article moves beyond both of these views to develop a nuanced and complex picture of the state while continuing to see it as a central (and indeed *the* central) force in the political arena. The educational reform and its aim to create new Bolivarian citizens is clearly a top-down initiative, yet it is crucially mediated and reworked by actors situated with the state cultural machinery, most prominently teachers. Thus our findings caution against the portrayal of the state under Chávez as an all-powerful leviathan, while simultaneously maintaining the analytical focus on the national state, rather than following recent trends of privileging the study of local, community-based ideological infrastructure.⁹⁸

Our argument also sheds new light on debates around the missions introduced under Chávez. Much of the existing literature on the subject treats missions as political vehicles, primarily created to generate support for the Chavista government via clientelist ties and cronyism.⁹⁹ We find that other motives may underlie their creation: at least in the context of education, one motive for the introduction of the missions was to circumvent the already established public schooling system. Missions serve as parallel state infrastructure, and not just as machines for generating political support.

The findings of this article also place contemporary Venezuela within a broader comparative context. The limited transformation of nationalism under Chávez is not unique. More than 60 years ago, the rise of Peronism marked a dramatic social and political rupture in Argentina, with major implications for nationalism.¹⁰⁰ After his 1946 election, Perón sought to redefine official conceptions of Argentine identity and history in light of the popular and at the same time highly personalistic movement he was leading. Educational reform constituted the central backbone of this ideological project too.¹⁰¹ The storyline is surprisingly familiar: Perón confronted substantial and well-organised resistance from within the state. In an already established educational system, teachers were socialised under the previous ideological regime; their professional status placed them squarely within the middle class, and outside the Peronist ruling coalition.¹⁰² Similarly limited transformations of nationalism can also be found in Peru under the military government of Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968–75), and, beyond Latin America, in Turkey under the rule of the DP (Democrat Party) during the

⁹⁸ Smilde and Hellinger (eds.), *Venezuela's Bolivarian Democracy*.

⁹⁹ Kirk Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), ch. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Juan Carlos Torre, *La vieja guardia sindical y Perón* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1990).

¹⁰¹ Mariano Plotkin, *Mañana es San Perón: A Cultural History of Peron's Argentina* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002).

¹⁰² Matthias vom Hau, 'State Infrastructural Power and Nationalism: Comparative Lessons from Mexico and Argentina', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 43: 3–4 (2008), pp. 334–54; 'Unpacking the School'.

1950s.¹⁰³ In all these cases, a focus on state infrastructural development and intrastate tensions offers a plausible account of limited ideological change. The explanatory power of this analytical framework is further reinforced by cases in which a hegemonic transformation of nationalism succeeded, most prominently in post-revolutionary Mexico under Lázaro Cárdenas or the 'Estado Novo' under Getúlio Vargas in Brazil, where the strength of the existing state cultural machinery was different.¹⁰⁴

More generally, Venezuela firmly shows that it is difficult to establish a direct link between socioeconomic change on the one hand, and the extent or limits of the transformation of nationalism on the other. The Venezuelan case also demonstrates the shortcomings of explanations that centre on state weakness to account for limited ideological change. The analysis presented in this article, by contrast, encourages future research to remain attuned to state infrastructure and intrastate relations to account for whether transformations of official nationalism become hegemonic or remain limited – in Venezuela and beyond.

Appendix: Texts Consulted and Teachers Interviewed

Non-Government Texts

Arco iris básico: estudios sociales 5 (Caracas: Librería Editorial Salesiana, S. A., 1988).

Arco iris básico: estudios sociales 6 (Caracas: Librería Editorial Salesiana, S. A., 1988).

Arco iris básico: ciencias sociales 6 (Caracas: Fundación Editorial Salesiana, 2000).

Arco iris básico: estudios sociales 5 (Caracas: Librería Editorial Salesiana, S. A., 1988).

Ciencias sociales 5 (Caracas: Co-Bo, 2000).

Ciencias sociales 5 (Caracas: S. A. Educación y Cultura Religiosa, 2001).

Ciencias sociales 6 (Caracas: Co-Bo, 2000).

Enlace con ciencias sociales quinto grado (Caracas: Fundación Editorial Santillana, 2010).

Enlace con ciencias sociales sexto grado (Caracas: Fundación Editorial Santillana, 2010).

¹⁰³ Kemal H. Karpat, *Social Change and Politics in Turkey: A Structural-Historical Analysis* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

¹⁰⁴ Vom Hau, 'State Infrastructural Power and Nationalism'.

Galíndez, Omar, *Civilización 5: ciencias sociales educación básica* (Caracas: Editorial Excelencia C. A., 2000).

Libro integral: mundo tricolor 4 (Caracas: Fondo Editorial La Cadena Tricolor, 2005).

Libro integral: mundo tricolor 5 (Caracas: Fondo Editorial La Cadena Tricolor, 2005).

Libro integral: mundo tricolor 6 (Caracas: Fondo Editorial La Cadena Tricolor, 2005).

Libro integral: saber cuarto grado (Caracas: Editorial Cadena Capriles, 2010).

Libro integral: saber quinto grado (Caracas: Editorial Cadena Capriles, 2010).

Libro integral: saber sexto grado (Caracas: Editorial Cadena Capriles, 2010).

Mi mundo 6 (Caracas: SUSAETA, 1992).

Quintero, Marlene Arteaga, *Arco iris venezolano 6: Libro integral para sexto grado de educación básica* (Caracas: Fundación Editorial Salesiana, 2005).

Zamora, Héctor, *Estudios sociales cuarto grado* (Caracas: Co-Bo, 2000).

Zamora, Héctor, *Estudios sociales quinto grado* (Caracas: Co-Bo, 2000).

Zamora, Héctor, *Estudios sociales sexto grado* (Caracas: Co-Bo, 2000).

Colección Bicentenario

Bracho Arcila, América and León de Hurtado, María Helena, *Venezuela y su gente: ciencias sociales, cuarto grado* (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, 2011).

Bracho Arcila, América and León de Hurtado, María Helena, *Venezuela y su gente: ciencias sociales, quinto grado* (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, 2011).

Bracho Arcila, América and León de Hurtado, María Helena, *Venezuela y su gente: ciencias sociales, sexto grado* (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, 2011).

Curricula/Government Documents

Asamblea Nacional de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Ley orgánica de educación* (Caracas: 2009).

Chávez Frías, Hugo, *Decreto no. 303, Reglamento general de la ley orgánica de educación, Gaceta oficial no. 36.787 de fecha 15 de septiembre de 1999* (Caracas: República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 1999).

Chávez Frías, Hugo, *Tercer motor: Moral y Luces, educación con valores socialistas: juramentación del Consejo Presidencial Moral y Luces, Sala Ríos Reyna – Teatro Teresa Carreño* (Caracas: República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2007).

Congreso de la República de Venezuela, *Ley orgánica de educación* (Caracas: 1980).
Currículo básico nacional: nivel de educación básica (Caracas: Ministro de Educación, 1997).

Currículo nacional bolivariano: diseño curricular del sistema educativo bolivariano (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, 2007).

Teachers Interviewed

No.	School Type	Parish	Education*	Age Range	Grades Taught	Gender
1	Bolivarian	La Vega	UCV	20s	6th	M
2	Bolivarian	Petare	UCV	40s	5th and 6th	F
3	Bolivarian	El Recreo	UCV	40s	5th	F
4	Bolivarian	Petare	UCV	30s	4th	F
5	National	El Paraíso	UPEL	50s	4th	F
6	National	Alttagracia	UPEL	30s	5th	F
7	National	La Vega	UBV	30s	6th	F
8	National	La Candelaria		50s	6th	M
9	National	La Candelaria		40s	4th	M
10	National	El Paraíso	UPEL	60s	6th	F
11	National	El Paraíso	UPEL	40s	5th	F
12	National	La Candelaria	UCV	30s	3rd and 4th	F
13	National	Antimano	UBV	20s	4th	F
14	National	Antimano	UBV	30s	5th	F
15	Municipal	Chacao	UPEL	30s	5th	F
16	Municipal	Chacao	UPEL	30s	5th	F
17	Municipal	Chacao	UPEL	60s	6th	F
18	Municipal	Petare		30s	4th	F
19	Municipal	Petare		30s	6th	F
20	Municipal	Petare		40s	6th	F
21	Municipal	Petare		30s	6th	F
22	Private	La Candelaria	UCV	40s	4th	F
23	Private	Chacao	UCV	40s	4th	F
24	Private	Chacao	UCAB	40s	5th	F
25	Private	Chacao	Metropolitana	30s	5th	F
26	Private	El Recreo	UCV	50s	6th	M

* All of the interviewees who reported where they received their pedagogical training had attended one of five institutions: most common were the Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV) (the country's flagship public university), the Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador (UPEL) (Venezuela's principal teachers' college), and the Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela (UBV) (a relatively new university system established as part of the 'Misión Sucre' in 2003). The latter institution, unlike its more established counterparts, is widely viewed as promoting an ideological perspective consistent with that of the Chávez (and later Maduro) government. One teacher each reported attending the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (UCAB) (a prestigious Catholic university with its central campus in Caracas) and the Universidad Metropolitana (a prestigious private university in northern Caracas).

Spanish and Portuguese abstracts

Spanish abstract. El gobierno de Chávez introdujo un currículum nacional ‘bolivariano’ para promover un entendimiento radicalmente diferente de la historia e identidad de Venezuela. Ubicamos esta iniciativa de reforma al interior del análisis más amplio de la formación estatal y del nacionalismo. Estudios académicos han identificado desde hace mucho a la escolarización de masas como la institución clave para socializar a los ciudadanos y cultivar lealtades nacionales, por lo que muchos estados han intentado alterar el contenido nacionalista de la enseñanza teniendo esto en mente. Venezuela constituye un caso ideal para identificar las condiciones específicas bajo las cuales las transformaciones oficiales de ideologías nacionales ganan, o no, una mayor resonancia. Utilizando evidencias a partir del análisis de libros de texto y entrevistas semiestructuradas con funcionarios de la educación y maestros en Caracas, mostramos que las tensiones intraestatales entre el gobierno central y los maestros (que se refuerzan por una maquinaria cultural bien establecida y por la creciente exclusión de profesores de la coalición política chavista), explican el limitado éxito de los esfuerzos gubernamentales por implementar el nacionalismo bolivariano a través del currículum escolar.

Spanish keywords: Venezuela, educación, nacionalismo, chavismo

Portuguese abstract. O governo de Hugo Chávez introduziu um currículo nacional ‘bolivariano’ visando promover uma compreensão radicalmente diferente da história e identidade venezuelanas. Nós analisamos essa iniciativa de reforma no contexto mais amplo do estudo de formação do Estado e do nacionalismo. Estudiosos já identificaram há tempo que a educação de massas é a instituição-chave para a socialização de cidadãos e a promoção de lealdades nacionais. Deste modo, muitos Estados têm buscado alterar o conteúdo nacionalista da educação escolar com estes fins em mente. A Venezuela representa um caso ideal para a identificação das condições específicas sob as quais as transformações de ideologias nacionais oficiais ganham ou não maior ressonância. A partir de evidências obtidas em análises de livros didáticos e entrevistas semiestructuradas com funcionários públicos da educação e professores de Caracas, levantamos um novo argumento que mostra que tensões dentro do Estado entre o governo central e professores, aumentadas por uma máquina cultural bem estabelecida e pela crescente exclusão dos professores da coalizão política chavista, explicam o sucesso limitado dos esforços do governo em implementar um nacionalismo bolivariano através do currículo escolar.

Portuguese keywords: Venezuela, educação, nacionalismo, chavismo