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**The Dissertation Committee for Caitlin Elizabeth Andrews-Lee Certifies that this is
the approved version of the following Dissertation:**

**Charisma Lives On
A Study of Peronism and Chavismo**

Committee:

Kurt Weyland, Supervisor

Raúl Madrid

Bethany Albertson

Daron Shaw

Javier Auyero

**Charisma Lives On
A Study of Peronism and Chavismo**

by

Caitlin Elizabeth Andrews-Lee

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Charisma Lives On

A Study of Peronism and Chavismo

Caitlin Elizabeth Andrews-Lee, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2019

Supervisor: Kurt Weyland

Conventional wisdom suggests that political movements founded by charismatic leaders must undergo “routinization” to survive beyond the death or disappearance of the founder. Yet charismatic movements have persisted or reemerged in countries as diverse as Argentina, Venezuela, Peru, Italy, and Thailand. Consequently, party systems in these countries remain deeply personalistic and vulnerable to authoritarian threats. Focusing on Argentine Peronism and Venezuelan Chavismo, my research investigates how such movements can survive without becoming thoroughly institutionalized.

To explore this puzzle, I first examine citizens’ deep emotional attachments to the movement. Rather than becoming depersonalized through programmatic or organizational means, citizens’ bonds can survive by sustaining their original affective nature. Moreover, subsequent politicians can strategically reactivate citizens’ attachments and garner support by (1) symbolically associating themselves with the founder and (2)

achieving bold, impressive performance to “rescue” the followers from their suffering. I illustrate the survival of charismatic attachments using public opinion data and original focus groups with Peronist and Chavista followers. To substantiate my theory of reactivation, I draw evidence from two survey experiments conducted in three distinct regions of Argentina and Venezuela.

Next, I use elite interviews and archival research to analyze the conditions under which new leaders can implement these strategies to consolidate power. Whereas successors handpicked by the founder struggle to establish independent authority, self-starters who emerge years later enjoy more leeway to step out of the founder’s shadow. If self-starters can leverage a crisis to portray themselves as heroes and adopt the founder’s personalistic style, they can inherit his mantle and return the movement to power. Yet their success is temporary: Ungrounded institutionally, their daring policies eventually tend to collapse, causing followers to feel betrayed and seek out a more convincing successor to the founder. The short-lived successes and subsequent failures of new leaders cause charismatic movements to develop in a spasmodic fashion unlike the stable, linear trajectories of more conventional parties. The results suggest that these movements can survive without forming strong institutions. But their survival compromises citizens’ democratic representation and hinders the development of stable, programmatic parties.

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PART I: THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

Chapter 1. Introduction

THE PUZZLE: THE SURPRISING RESILIENCE OF CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS

Political movements founded by charismatic leaders are widely considered to be ephemeral. Indeed, scholars argue that the direct, unmediated, and deeply emotional bonds linking charismatic leaders to their followers fade quickly after the leaders' deaths. For charismatic movements to survive, then, the existing literature claims that followers' emotional attachments must be transformed into indirect ties sustained by evaluations of policies and programs or membership in affiliated social groups (Weber 1978, 246; Madsen and Snow 1991, 24; Jowitt 1992, 107). This process of depersonalization, or "routinization," replaces the leader's personal authority with a party organization capable of coordinating voters' and politicians' complex preferences over the long term (Weber 1978, 246; Kitschelt 2000, 847).

Curiously, however, charismatic movements have proven surprisingly resilient and have retained their personalistic core in countries across the world, including Argentina, Venezuela, Peru, Italy, Poland, and Thailand. In Latin America, charismatic movements have become particularly prevalent and enduring. For instance, Argentina's Peronist movement, founded over seventy years ago by Juan and Eva Perón, has continued to attract charismatic leaders who reinforce, rather than overcome, the movement's weak institutional structure (Levitsky 2003, 17; Gervasoni 2018, 2). Though

younger than Peronism, Hugo Chávez's movement in Venezuela has sustained a surprisingly large base of loyal supporters for nearly twenty years. Even in the face of deteriorating economic and social conditions since Chávez's death in March 2013, about one third of Venezuelans continue to express deep, personalistic attachments to Chavismo (Briceño 2015; GBAO Strategies 2019). In Peru, Alberto Fujimori's paradigm-shifting movement from the 1990s has sustained a larger support base than any other party (Tanaka 2011, 80). In fact, Fujimori's daughter, Keiko, has tied herself to her father's movement in recent years to gain political support. Consequently, she received forty percent of the vote in the first round of the 2016 presidential elections—over eighteen points more than the second-place candidate (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 145). While these movements have developed some party structures, each remains characterized primarily by entrenched personalism and institutional weakness (Dargent and Muñoz 2016; Gervasoni 2018; Levitsky and Zavaleta 2016; Mainwaring 2016, 2018).

This dissertation offers a novel explanation for the surprising resilience of charismatic movements and sheds light on the resulting challenges for democracy. Rather than necessarily routinizing, I argue that charismatic movements can survive after the death or disappearance of their founders by sustaining their original personalistic nature. As chapters three and four demonstrate, survival is possible because citizens' deep, emotional attachments to charismatic leaders can transform into a resilient political identity that shapes the citizens' worldview and expectations of future politicians. Thus, new leaders who portray themselves as symbolic reincarnations of the founder can

reactivate these attachments, garner support, and restore the movement to power in their own name. Chapter five illustrates the mechanisms underlying this process of charismatic reactivation, while chapter six identifies the conditions under which new leaders are most likely to succeed in reviving the movement. Finally, chapter seven demonstrates the self-reinforcing nature of this process. The results indicate that charismatic movements can perpetually evade routinization and dominate politics after the founder's departure, repeatedly undermining the development of strong party institutions and compromising citizens' programmatic representation.

THE MAIN ARGUMENT

Scholars of routinization cannot account for the strikingly personalistic trajectory that charismatic movements have taken since the disappearance of their founders. Indeed, routinization requires both the depersonalization of followers' emotional attachments to the founder and the institutionalization of the movement. Yet Peronism and Chavismo, two of the most prominent charismatic movements in the history of Latin America, remain intensely personalistic and plagued by institutional weakness. In both cases, my research shows that followers continue to express profoundly affective attachments to the founder and to subsequent leaders of the movement. Meanwhile, the programmatic principles guiding each movement remain ambiguous at best and contradictory at worst; participation in movement-affiliated organizations remains low; and leaders routinely tie themselves to the movement's charismatic founder and exercise direct power rather than

working through institutional channels (Roberts 2008; Rossi 2013). These factors suggest that both Peronism and Chavismo have failed to routinize.

In contrast to existing literature, I therefore contend that charismatic movements can survive by sustaining, rather than discarding, their personalistic core. The reason is that followers' attachments to the founder need not transform into depersonalized partisan linkages, as scholars of routinization would suggest. Rather, these ties can endure in their original, affective state. In the years after the founder's disappearance, these attachments can make citizens long for a leader who is capable of picking up the founder's baton and single-handedly delivering them peace and prosperity. As I will demonstrate, new leaders who effectively implement two strategies—(1) tying themselves symbolically to the charismatic founder and (2) achieving bold performance to demonstrate their capacity to “rescue” society—are able to politically reactivate citizens' emotional connections to the movement and garner support as its new standard-bearers.

However, while many successors attempt to replace the founder, few are able to enact the above-mentioned strategies and consolidate power. This is because success depends on several conditions. The first condition concerns the way in which successors emerge. Successors handpicked by the founder for immediate replacement encounter formidable obstacles that prevent them from turning into effective leaders of the movement. Conversely, self-starters who rise on their own, years after the founder's death, have greater latitude to convince followers they are worthy of the founder's mantle. Yet while many self-starters attempt to rise to power, most of them also fail. To

be considered true heirs, self-starters must fulfill two additional conditions. For one, they must seek power during a crisis, during which time followers' demand for a savior intensifies. In addition to this structural condition, self-starters must exercise individual agency: namely, the willingness and ability to adopt the founder's personalistic style. Only by leveraging their own personal appeal in this fashion can self-starters take over the founder's direct, emotional bonds with the followers.

In short, the affective nature of citizens' attachments to the founder and movement remain remarkably stable over time. Yet the successful revival of the movement by new leaders depends on conditions that occur sporadically. Consequently, charismatic movements do not unfold in the linear fashion of conventional parties, gathering programmatic strength and stability over time (Converse 1969). Instead, these movements develop spasmodic trajectories that involve periods with powerful charismatic leadership as well as periods with no leader at all. This is because, similar to the founder, successful self-starters enact bold, shortsighted policies and foster symbolic ties to win the followers' loyalty. While these initiatives earn self-starters popularity at the outset, the inevitable collapse of their audacious programs eventually discredits them. Furthermore, because these personalistic leaders loathe sharing power, they hesitate to groom talented successors. Thus, in the wake of self-starters' rule, charismatic movements suffer a leadership vacuum. Sooner or later, however, the ensuing crisis causes the suffering followers to seek out a more convincing successor to take up their beloved founder's mantle, causing the cycle of charismatic leadership to repeat.

THE RELEVANCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY

My investigation of the revival of charismatic movements holds several important substantive and theoretical implications. Substantively, Peronism and Chavismo have irrevocably transformed their respective countries. From the rise of Juan Perón in the mid-1940s to the time of writing in 2019, Peronism has dominated the Argentine political system. Because only Peronist presidents have managed to complete full terms in office, the movement has been widely perceived as the only force capable of governing the country (Mora y Araujo 2011; Ollier 2015). Existing literature would suggest that Peronism owes its longevity and power to the fact that it has transformed into an organized and largely de-personalized political party (Levitsky 2003; Loxton and Levitsky 2018). Yet the movement has remained characterized by intense personalism and profound institutional weakness (Gervasoni 2018; McGuire 2014). In fact, its most successful leaders—Juan Perón, Carlos Menem, and Néstor and Cristina Kirchner—have subordinated the party (and the political system writ-large) to their individual authority, governing based on their bold, nearsighted policies and their captivating personal appeal.

In Venezuela, Chavismo has upended politics and mobilized poor citizens in an unprecedented fashion. Chávez's anointed successor, Nicolás Maduro, has doubled down on his symbolic connection to his predecessor since rising to power in 2013, widely disseminating images of Chávez in public spaces across Venezuela and even constructing a hologram of the founder to walk the streets of Caracas (@VTVcanal8 2016).

Simultaneously, Maduro has overseen a devastating crisis and has resorted to brutal authoritarian tactics to remain in power. Maduro's failed leadership has been widely

interpreted as evidence of Chavismo's inevitable death (Denis 2015; López Maya 2014). Yet my research shows that followers, many of whom disavow Maduro as the true son of Chávez, remain profoundly attached to Chavismo, proclaim devout loyalty to Chávez, and express hope that a more capable successor will emerge in the future (see also Briceño 2015; Morales 2016). Thus, like Peronism, Chavismo challenges the predominant view in the literature that routinization is the only viable path for charismatic movement survival.

This dissertation moves beyond routinization to explore a different explanation for the remarkable persistence of Peronism and Chavismo. Using an array of methodological tools that shed new light on the perspectives of followers and leaders, my research reveals a personalistic mechanism of survival that causes these movements to resume power in fits and starts. On the followers' side, I demonstrate that charismatic attachments persist in a fairly stable fashion. This is due to followers' deep, emotional identification with the movement, which they preserve through personal narratives that glorify the founder as the ultimate savior, reinforce his mission to combat the people's enemies, and promise a more prosperous future. In contrast to the stable nature of followers' attachments, new leaders restore the movement to political predominance in a temporary and intermittent manner. My analysis indicates that they can only consolidate power under favorable conditions, at which point they must exercise individual agency to portray themselves as symbolic reincarnations of the founder and heroes in their own right. Moreover, successors who effectively claim the founder's mantle can only do so temporarily, as their shortsighted policies eventually collapse and reveal their weaknesses

to the followers. Yet while these successors never fully replace the beloved founder, they play a crucial role in perpetuating the movement because they reinvigorate the political salience of followers' deep, emotional bonds, incorporate new supporters from different groups, such as from younger generations, and temporarily return the movement to power.

The spasmodic trajectory highlighted in this study indicates how movements such as Peronism and Chavismo have persisted while sustaining their original charismatic nature, despite having experienced periods without strong leadership, such as under Isabel Perón in Argentina and under Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela. Indeed, such periods of "leaderless-ness" are bound to occur when initially successful self-starters have fallen from grace and conditions have not yet aligned for a new leader to pick up the founder's baton. By illustrating how the tumultuous cycle of charismatic leadership unfolds in these movements, my theory better accounts for the ongoing personalism, institutional weakness, and frequent crises that characterize politics in both countries.

Theoretically, to my knowledge, this investigation is the first to challenge the routinization thesis and offer an alternative explanation for persistent personalism and institutional weakness in countries where charismatic movements have developed. In doing so, the study contributes to the growing literature in political science that reintroduces charisma as a concept worthy of systematic, empirically driven analysis (e.g., Madsen and Snow 1991; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009, 2011; Pappas 2012).¹ In

¹ The recent literature on charisma challenges the view expressed by some that charisma is too ambiguous, subjective, or "amorphous" to warrant serious analysis (e.g., Schlesinger 1960; Worsley 1957; Mudde 2007; van de Brug and Mughan 2007).

particular, the analysis empirically captures the relational nature of charisma by combining qualitative and experimental methods that highlight the perspectives of leaders as well as followers. This pluralistic methodological approach addresses challenges of conceptualization and measurement with which many studies of charisma have struggled.

Through its historical analysis, this study also addresses important debates regarding the roles of structure and agency in the context of charismatic politics. In particular, the study underscores the crucial importance of structural conditions, such as the presence of an acute crisis, for the revival of charismatic movements. While scholars acknowledge crisis as an important factor for the consolidation of charismatic leadership (Madsen and Snow 1991; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009; Pappas 2012; Weber 1979), I document precisely when and why crisis matters—not just for the consolidation of an individual leader's charismatic authority, but also for the perpetuation of charismatic movements.

I also acknowledge the important role of leader agency in reviving charismatic movements. Self-starters simply cannot portray themselves as heirs of the founder without their own personal appeal. Yet self-starters' agency only goes so far: the leaders are inherently constrained by the pre-existing, personalistic structure of the movement. Thus, as I will demonstrate in the case of Antonio Cafiero in Argentina, even talented self-starters cannot rely on their skill and appeal to fundamentally restructure the movement into a de-personalized, programmatic party. Indeed, a programmatic strategy, even if well executed, will fail to resonate with the followers, who are in search of a savior—not a responsible bureaucrat. Thus, while recognizing the role of agency as

important, this study paradoxically stresses structural factors as central to the perpetuation of charismatic movements.

Finally, this dissertation contributes to the growing literature on challenges to democracy and party systems by clarifying how charismatic movements undermine citizens' representation, impede party-system development, and make democratic regimes more vulnerable to authoritarian threats. For one, I demonstrate that the personalistic revival of charismatic movements dilutes the quality of citizens' substantive political representation. This is because, in their quest to appear heroic, charismatic leaders openly defy "rational, and particularly bureaucratic, authority" (Weber 1979, 244). While their policies may provide benefits at the outset, the leaders' disregard for bureaucratic rules and sustainable economic practices eventually compromises the welfare and interests of the movement's supporters. Additionally, the substantive volatility of charismatic leaders' policies generates a programmatically ambiguous party brand (Lupu 2013). Consequently, citizens cannot be certain what policies they are supporting when they vote for a charismatic leader. Peronist leaders, who are known for their dramatic policy reversals that span the left-right ideological spectrum, exemplify this programmatic volatility and uncertainty. In short, citizens' democratic representation suffers because they base their support on the personal appeal and immediate impact of each new leader rather than on the substantive consistency and coherence of the leader's policies.

Lastly, the personalistic revival of charismatic movements inhibit the development of stable, institutionalized party systems. Each successor who comes to

power must overcome institutional limitations and exercise direct authority in order to prove their capacity to fulfill the founder's heroic mission. Moreover, these leaders' audacious policies, while successful in the short term, contain the kernel of their own collapse. When this occurs, the country enters a period of crisis with no leader to guide the way. Rather than opening a path to routinization, these circumstances make followers crave a new savior to resolve the crisis, perpetuating the cycle of political and socioeconomic volatility. Thus, unlike routinization, which suggests that charismatic movements eventually transform into institutionalized parties, my theory of charismatic revival indicates that these movements can expose societies to frequent and severe crises, tenacious personalism, and persistent institutional weakness. Argentine history exemplifies these neurotic cycles.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Scholars have hesitated to parse out and examine factors that have caused political movements founded by charismatic leaders to persist. It is difficult, after all, to define, operationalize, and measure the psychological mechanisms that reinforce citizens' loyalty to such movements. To confront these challenges, I adopt a pluralistic methodological approach that incorporates quantitative, qualitative, and experimental analysis to examine the causal mechanisms involved in the perpetuation of Peronism and Chavismo from the perspectives of both followers and leaders.

Follower Support

At the level of the followers, I first draw on public opinion data to quantitatively examine the extent to which citizens' charismatic perceptions of the founder influence their initial attachments to the movement relative to competing factors rooted in evaluations of movement-affiliated programs and participation in relevant organizations. While existing literature notes the central role of charisma in generating citizens' original bonds to these movements (e.g., Madsen and Snow 1991; Hawkins 2010; Zúquete 2008), it rarely examines the influence of competing linkage mechanisms. My analysis assesses these different mechanisms and confirms that the followers' initial attachments to the movement are primarily charismatic rather than programmatic or organizational in nature. Due to limited availability of relevant public opinion data from Argentina during Perón's first two presidencies (1946-1955), this portion of the analysis focuses on the more recent Venezuelan case.

Next, I analyze the trajectory of citizens' attachments after the death of the charismatic founder. I examine these attachments at distinct junctures across the two movements: about forty years after the founder's death in Argentina (2013-2016), and fewer than five years after the founder's death in Venezuela (2014-2017). I begin with semi-structured interviews and focus groups with self-identified followers of Peronism and Chavismo. This exploratory investigation provides crucial insights regarding followers' relationship to the movement from their own perspectives. The interviews reveal detailed information about individual followers' experiences, whereas the focus groups allow for thought-provoking discussion among followers regarding their shared

understandings of their connections to the movement (Berg 2001; Hunter and Sugiyama 2013; Cyr 2016). I use these data to develop a theory explaining how followers' charismatic attachments to the movement can be reactivated in personalistic form.

In the third and final stage of follower-focused research, I conduct survey experiments with 999 followers of Peronism and Chavismo in three diverse regions of Argentina and Venezuela, respectively, to test my theory on the reactivation of charismatic attachments. In particular, I test the extent to which two strategies of new leaders—(1) the fulfillment of bold, initially impressive performance and (2) symbolic ties to the charismatic founder—strengthen followers' emotional bonds with the movement and increase political support for the successor. In the experimental setup, participants are randomly assigned to one of four conditions in which a new leader uses both of these strategies, only one of the two strategies, or neither strategy. By controlling for observable *and* unobservable factors that might otherwise confound the analysis, this random assignment allows me to parse out and directly assess the causal impact of the two (often-overlapping) strategies on followers' emotional ties (Druckman et al. 2011).

In sum, I use public opinion data, interviews, focus groups, and survey experiments with followers of Peronism and Chavismo to clarify the mechanisms through which their charismatic attachments form, endure, and become politically reactivated by new leaders.

Leader Strategies

I turn to elite interviews and archival research to trace the process through which new leaders succeeded or failed to reactivate citizens' charismatic attachments and restore the movement to power under their own authority. This method, which highlights the roles of timing and sequence (Bennett 2008; Collier 2011), permits a careful examination of the historical trajectories of Peronism and Chavismo and of the conditions that facilitated or impeded new leaders' attempts to employ strategies of reactivation and pick up the founder's mantle. Though it is difficult to obtain fresh insights from the followers' perspective on historical cases, my interviews with former leaders, campaign managers, and political strategists provide crucial information regarding the nature and effectiveness of the leaders' tactics for consolidating support, as well as the extent to which the leaders associated themselves with the charismatic founders of the movement. Archival materials including newspaper articles, campaign posters, and public opinion polls from the relevant historical periods shed additional light on the context in which successors sought power, the leadership style they adopted, and the extent to which their campaigns resonated with the public.

CASE SELECTION

I focus on two charismatic movements in Latin America that have survived and transformed politics in their respective countries: Peronism and Chavismo. I begin with a brief historical overview of the two movements and illustrate the resilient influence of the founder's charismatic legacy in each case. This section highlights the founder's establishment of charismatic attachments with supporters, his consolidation of

personalistic authority, and the sequence of leaders and events that followed his demise. Subsequently, I justify the selection of these two movements for my investigation.

Argentine Peronism

The Rise and Rule of Juan Perón

Juan Perón made his political debut in Argentina in the wake of the *Década Infame*, a ten-year period following the Great Depression of 1930 in which a repressive, authoritarian government called the *Concordancia* ruled. During this time, the country's agricultural economy collapsed, leading millions of poor citizens to flee from the countryside to overcrowded cities in search of jobs in the growing industrial sector (Page 1983, 41-43; Madsen and Snow 1991, 44). While many found employment in the Federal Capital and surrounding Province of Buenos Aires, rapid urbanization and the absence of workers' rights caused these newly urban laborers—who constituted a majority of the population—terrible suffering in the form of low wages, long hours, job insecurity, and deplorable living conditions (James 1988, 8; Kirkpatrick 1971, 30-34; Madsen and Snow 1991, 47; McGuire 1997, 47-48).

Whereas the *Concordancia* sought to subordinate and control the workers, Perón—an army colonel at the time—perceived them as “a ready reservoir of support” (Page 1983, 66). After participating in the 1943 coup that toppled the conservative regime, Perón used his new post as Minister of Labor to reach out to the neglected masses and grant them a role in politics for the first time in the country’s history. Thanks to his leadership, poor and working-class Argentines underwent a transformation from

voiceless outsiders to dignified citizens who occupied a meaningful role in society (James 1988, 17). These “*descamisados*” (shirtless ones) also gained unprecedented material benefits, including job security, increased wages, paid vacation, and new homes (Madsen and Snow 1991, 52). Grateful for their elevated status and material prosperity, these people came to worship Perón as a savior (*ibid*, 46-48).

Over the next two years, several factions of the military came to resent Perón’s rapidly increasing political influence (Page 1988, 112-119). On October 12, 1945, in an attempt to curb his power, they came together to arrest the colonel with the naïve hope that removing him from politics would dissipate his influence. Yet the military vastly misjudged the political capital Perón had gained through his working-class supporters. Thus, days later, on 17 October, millions of poor Argentines flooded the plaza in front of the presidential palace to demand his release from prison—a day that would henceforth be commemorated annually as “Loyalty Day.” A few months later, in February 1946, Perón went on to win the presidential election (James 1988, 9; Page 1983, 127).

During two presidential terms (1946-1955), Perón deepened the emotional bonds he had cultivated with his followers by recognizing the suffering and exclusion they had endured prior to his rise to power and vowing to resolve their misery. Perón’s second wife, Eva, accentuated her husband’s appeal by portraying herself as his humble servant and quickly establishing her position as the poor’s most passionate advocate (Madsen and Snow 1991, 52; Page 1983, 79). Together, the leading couple also continued to deliver new rights and material gains to the popular sectors through labor reforms, economic growth stimulated by import substitution industrialization (ISI), and social assistance

channeled through the Eva Perón Foundation (Madsen and Snow 1991, 52). Finally, Perón crafted a cultural narrative that glorified him as a hero and “Evita” as a saint, attacked his opponents as selfish oligarchs and “defenders of class privilege,” and instilled a profound hope in Peronist followers for a more dignified and prosperous future (Page 1983, 144; James 1988, 18-21). As a result of these actions, millions of Argentines forged resilient affective connections to Perón and pledged quasi-religious devotion to him.²

Backed by this legion of followers, Perón founded a charismatic movement that would influence Argentine politics for decades. He used his personalistic authority to impose coherence on the heterogeneous factions of his movement which had little in common beyond loyalty to him. For instance, he stifled the attempts of prominent union leaders, including Cipriano Reyes of the meat packer’s union and Luis Gay of the telephone workers’ union, to establish a Labor Party autonomous from Peronism (McGuire 1997, 38-39, 59-60). He also accelerated the fragmentation of the main

² Some scholars question the extent to which the charismatic linkages that Perón cultivated with his followers were foundational to his political movement. Most notably, while acknowledging the personal appeal of Perón, James contends that the core identity of Peronism rested on the empowerment of organized labor rather than on the unmediated, emotional bonds that the rank and file formed with Perón (1988, 12-18). According to this interpretation, citizens’ enduring support for Perón and his movement grew primarily out of their connection to Peronist unions and organizations—actors that worked alongside Perón to achieve socioeconomic and political inclusion. In contrast, I argue that Perón’s deep, unmediated, and emotional attachments to his followers were—and remain—central to the movement’s ethos. In claiming this, I do not discount the importance of political recognition, feelings of dignity, and material gains that followers experienced under Perón. Rather, I argue that the intensely personalistic, top-down nature in which these rights and benefits were granted by Perón fundamentally shaped the nature of citizens’ identification with the movement and its leaders. I base this claim in part on several previous studies that identify the crucial role of Perón’s charisma for the formation of the movement (Levitsky 2003, 36; Madsen and Snow 1991, 46-51; McGuire 1997, 50). However, in this dissertation, I also move beyond existing studies to demonstrate how charisma has helped perpetuate the Peronist movement over time.

opposition party, the Radical Civic Union (UCR), by enticing some of its prominent leaders to join his movement while repressing others (McGuire 1997, 59-61).

To ensure his grip on power, Perón filled his administration with confidants who pledged unwavering devotion to him. Eva, his most faithful servant, ran many affairs until her premature death in 1952, including the Ministry of Labor and the Eva Perón Foundation (Madsen and Snow 1991, 51-52). Other than his wife, Perón entrusted few others with real influence and appointed yes-men to leadership positions in Congress and his presidential cabinet (Page 1983, 156-157).

To further minimize threats to his supreme authority, Perón overpowered several political institutions. In Congress, he relied on sycophants—who constituted 69 percent of the Chamber of Deputies and 93 percent of the Senate—to swiftly enact his policies of choice, making clear his demand for “unquestioning obedience on the part of the legislators” (Page 1983, 164). He also “Peronized” the judicial system by impeaching Supreme Court judges who challenged his authority, stacking the Court with supporters, and persecuting unfriendly judges in several provinces (*ibid*, 164-167). When economic progress began to falter in 1949, Perón intervened in the Central Bank to conceal unfavorable statistics that did not align with his narrative of miraculous growth—a tactic that his eventual successors, Néstor and Cristina Kirchner, would likewise adopt decades later (Wynia 1978, 69).

In sum, Perón founded his charismatic movement and concentrated power by establishing deep bonds with millions of followers, subjugating parties to his individual authority, and overriding political institutions that threatened to constrain him. Notably,

Perón's actions also improved the livelihood of poor Argentines, empowered workers, and even granted women the right to vote (Page 1983, 66; James 1988; 9-12). Despite these important gains, however, his charismatic style defined and limited the extent of the popular sectors' incorporation. Moreover, his charisma would play a predominant role in shaping the country's political trajectory for decades to come.

Perón's Exile and Eventual Return to Argentina

Before the completion of his second presidential term, in September 1955, a military coup—backed by the Catholic church and several opposition parties—ousted Perón, causing him to flee the country and remain in exile for eighteen years (McGuire 1997, 72-75). His eventual successor, General Pedro Aramburu, attempted to destroy his legacy by proscribing the Peronist party, banning Perón's inner circle from politics, and outlawing the use of proper names for parties. Yet these actions backfired because they victimized Perón and deepened his charismatic appeal in the eyes of his rank and file, who viewed him as single-handedly responsible for their newfound prosperity (*ibid*, 80).

Thus, while legally barred from power, Perón was able to shape Argentine politics from afar by orchestrating a “civilian resistance” to the new regime and fomenting popular demand for his return (James 1988, 81-83). As I will detail in chapter seven, he orchestrated this resistance by conspiring with union leaders and, more importantly, mobilizing his devoted rank and file to resist the regime and demand his return (*ibid*, 63-66). To ensure his personal control over the movement during this period, he also promoted infighting between different factions of his movement and undermined efforts

by some of his underlings, such as Augusto Vandor, to routinize his movement without him (McGuire 1997, 81-87, 112).

Having warded off the attempts of Peronist and opposition forces alike to rob him of his influence over the movement, Perón finally returned to Argentina in 1973. That October, he began his third presidential term with the enthusiastic backing of his otherwise deeply divided followers (James 1988, 242-243). During the next nine months—the final months of his life—he oversaw a fragile political and economic situation that would explode under his third wife, vice president, and handpicked successor, Isabel. At this juncture, the ideologically irreconcilable groups from within and across three sectors of society—Peronism, the opposition, and the military—stood on the brink of civil war. Furthermore, the economy threatened to collapse due to the failed attempts of Perón and previous administrations to achieve stabilization without slowing industrialization (Ciria 1974, 36-39). Crucially for his legacy, the founder passed away before disaster ensued. Thus, while the country collapsed in subsequent years largely due to his failed policies, his followers sustained their glorified perceptions of their beloved *Conductor*.

Immediately following Perón's death in June 1974, Isabel reluctantly inherited the presidency. As I will discuss in chapter six, she lacked the willingness and capacity to resolve the chaotic situation that her husband had left behind. Consequently, Peronist followers quickly grew disillusioned and the military staged a coup in 1976, establishing a dictatorship that would terrorize Argentina until 1983. Of all the military regimes the country experienced in its history, this dictatorship was by far the most violent (McGuire

1997, 170). While the military attempted to justify repression as a necessary evil to achieve peace and stability, the situation grew worse during its reign (*ibid*, 175). Consequently, the regime collapsed in 1983, ushering in a return to democracy.

Peronism in the Democratic Era

From 1983 to the time of writing in 2019, Peronism has continued to define Argentina's political landscape. Although three non-Peronist presidents have governed during this period, including Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989), Fernando De La Rúa (1999-2001), and Mauricio Macri (2015-present), only their Peronist counterparts—Carlos Menem (1989-1999), Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007), and Cristina Kirchner (2007-2015)—have completed full terms in office.³ Moreover, in contrast to the three non-Peronist presidents, Menem and the Kirchners have embodied a personalistic leadership style reminiscent of Perón. Although democracy has remained intact and prospects for a military coup are virtually nonexistent, these leaders have also demonstrated a similar disregard for the autonomy of political institutions (Levitsky 2003; McGuire 1997; Weyland 2002, 2013). The following section summarizes the sequence of leaders and events that have unfolded in Argentina during these years (see illustration in Figure 1), while chapter seven provides a more in-depth analysis of the historical trajectory of Peronism.

³ The current president, Mauricio Macri, is serving the final, fourth year of his first presidential term and is thus likely to be the first to break this pattern. Even so, as will be discussed in chapter seven, President Macri has suffered from low approval ratings for the past two years (Paladini 2019; Rapoza 2019).

When the military dictatorship collapsed in 1983, Argentines were desperate for a leader to relieve them of the regime's incompetence and violence. Due to the death of Perón, the virtual collapse of industry, and the military's widespread repression of Peronist politicians and activists, an ambitious and promising leader did not emerge from within the movement during this time. Instead, Raúl Alfonsín, an inspiring leader from the UCR who promised to restore "light and democracy" as well as "social justice and liberty," won the election.⁴ As president, however, Alfonsín faced several challenges, including a terrible economic crisis, a looming military that threatened to intervene once again, and obstructionist Peronist leaders who refused to negotiate. These obstacles prevented the president from stabilizing the economy and fulfilling the people's urgent needs (McGuire 1997, 185-186). Ultimately, as economic problems deepened, political fragmentation persisted, and citizens grew increasingly frustrated and disillusioned, he stepped down from office in July 1989, several months before the scheduled completion of his term (Weyland 2002, 136).

As I will explain in chapter six, Alfonsín's political demise created an opening for Carlos Menem to restore Peronism to power and serve two presidential terms (1989-1999). During his first presidency, Menem implemented drastic neoliberal reforms to combat the crisis, such as the "Convertibility Plan," which pegged the Argentine peso to the US dollar. Through this bold measure, he attacked and eventually ended hyperinflation and increased the purchasing power of ordinary Argentines (Weyland

⁴ Author interview with María Patricia Vischi, Legislator for the City of Buenos Aires, October 7, 2016; "Dijo Alfonsín: Marchamos Hacia La Argentina Honesta," 1983.

2002, 157). Capitalizing on the success of his policies, the new leader also deepened his personal influence over the political system and marginalized attempts from other leaders to institutionalize Peronism (McGuire 1997, 255-259). Key to this effort was the *Pacto de Olivos*, a pact that amended the constitution to allow for reelection and thus paved the way for Menem's reelection in 1995 (Mora y Araujo 2011).

During his second presidential term, however, the impressive performance of Menem's free-market policies faded while structural weaknesses began to surface. Most importantly, the Convertibility Plan grew strained as the real exchange rate far outpaced the artificial 1:1 ratio. Menem denied responsibility for this problem, but Argentines began to fear the prospect of a currency devaluation, which would cause their newfound wealth to evaporate (Weyland 2002, 187). Inequality and unemployment also steadily increased over the course of Menem's second presidency, disproportionately affecting his popular-sector supporters (Gantman 2012, 338-341). Thus, while he managed to sustain the loyalty of many Peronist followers during this period, the complications resulting from his shortsighted policies chipped away at his image as a powerful problem-solver.

Similar to the instability that followed Perón's rule in 1955 and in 1974, Menem's fall from power generated a period of leaderless fragmentation in which the Argentine economy and political system deteriorated. His absence, combined with the exhaustion of his Convertibility Plan, produced a leadership vacuum and unleashed a profound crisis. His unappealing, anti-Peronist successor, Fernando De La Rúa, struggled to take control of the deteriorating economic and political situation upon becoming president (Weyland 2002, 195). De La Rúa therefore resigned when the crisis reached its peak in December

2001, having served just two years of his four-year term. Meanwhile, furious Argentines revolted against the political system for failing resolve the crisis, taking to the streets and shouting, “throw all the rascals out!” (Quiroga 2005, 334).

Over the course of eleven days in December 2001, Argentina cycled through five presidents, underscoring the crippled and leaderless state of the nation’s politics. In the aftermath, Congress appointed a longtime Peronist politician and former Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires, Eduardo Duhalde, as interim president. Although not a charismatic leader himself, Duhalde established a minimal level of political stability; implemented desperately needed, though painful, economic reforms; and scheduled presidential elections for 2003 (Quiroga 2005, 334). The Peronist Justicialist Party (*Partido Justicialista*—PJ) refrained from endorsing an official candidate, underscoring the fragmented state of the party. Consequently, three leaders with Peronist affiliations ran on independent tickets: Menem; Néstor Kirchner, the governor of Santa Cruz; and Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, the governor of San Luis.

As I will detail in chapter six, Néstor Kirchner, who had earned Duhalde’s endorsement, narrowly won the presidency with just over 22 percent of the vote.⁵ Yet the scarcely known former governor from the remote Southern province of Santa Cruz quickly achieved an approval rating as high as 74 percent by July 2003 (Mora y Araujo 2011). He accomplished this through overseeing remarkable economic growth, lower unemployment, and wage hikes. Additionally, he championed poor and leftist Argentines

⁵ Menem won just over 24 percent of the vote in the first round of the election, but dropped out of the race before a second round was held out of fear that he would lose in a landslide to Kirchner.

by launching numerous social plans and bravely attacking figures associated with Menem’s neoliberal administration, from the former president himself to the International Monetary Fund (Nogueira 2015). Similar to Menem, the new president also deepened his personal control over politics and intervened in other institutions to prolong the image of his miraculous success (Capriata 2008; Gervasoni 2015; Streb 2015).

Rather than running for reelection in 2007, Néstor yielded the Peronist candidacy to his wife, Cristina, in what was widely perceived as a strategic effort to prolong their joint administration (Ollier 2015).⁶ Riding on her husband’s popularity, she won the election with 45 percent of the vote—more than twenty points over the runner-up candidate, Elisa Carrió. Over the next eight years, Cristina extended her husband’s protectionist economic programs and enacted highly popular social plans to aid the poorer sectors, such as non-contributory pensions and conditional cash transfers (Nogueira 2015). Through her interventionist programs and rhetoric attacking local elites and foreign bondholders, she also deepened the polarization between her supporters and opponents (Becerra 2015).

As Cristina’s rule progressed, however, unchecked social spending and protectionist economic policies caused inflation, rising prices, and shortages of basic goods (Damill and Frenkel 2015). She attempted to stave off these problems using personalistic tactics, such as interfering with the Census Bureau’s inflation statistics and blaming “evil” opposition actors, including international financial institutions and private

⁶ Néstor died from a heart attack in October 2010, preventing him from running for president in 2011, upon the completion of Cristina’s first term.

corporations, for the country's troubles. However, similar to the end of Menem's presidency, Cristina's looming departure from power and the exhaustion of her policies tarnished her heroic image and caused her Peronist coalition to fragment (Lupu 2016, 46-47). Thus, several Peronist candidates—including Daniel Scioli and Sergio Massa, two of the three top contenders—competed in the 2015 presidential election. The fragmentation of Peronism greatly facilitated the opposition, who coalesced around a single candidate: the center-right businessman and Governor of the Federal Capital, Mauricio Macri, who won the elections in a second round against Scioli.

At the time of writing in June 2019, Macri has governed for nearly four years and will likely become the first non-Peronist president to complete a full term in office. Nonetheless, he has struggled to resolve the crisis he inherited from his predecessor. Inflation has continued to climb while his approval has dropped (Touzón 2017). In fact, public opinion polls suggest that fewer than 30 percent of Argentines support his reelection in the October 2019 contest (Rapoza 2019). While Peronism has remained divided during this period, Macri's struggles have helped reinforce the movement's reputation as the only political force capable of governing the country (Días 2018). Thus, as the presidential election approaches this October, Peronism seems well-positioned for a return to power (Rapoza 2019).

Figure 1 (below) illustrates the four waves of Peronism that have risen and fallen over the course of Argentine history and indicates the leaders associated with each. In subsequent chapters, I will build on this brief history of Peronism and demonstrate the central role of Perón's charismatic legacy in perpetuating the movement.

Figure 1. Four Waves of Peronist Leadership

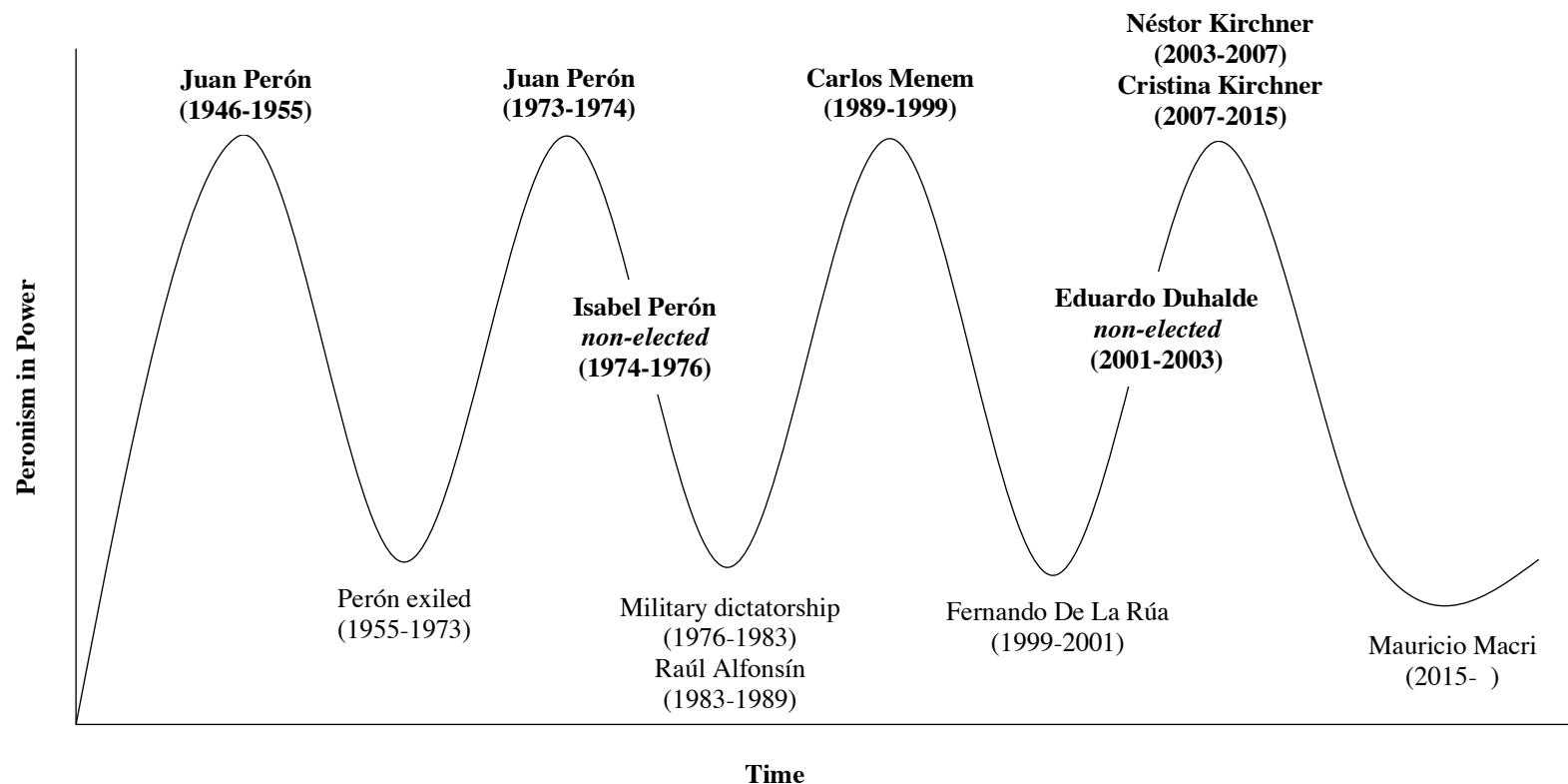


Figure 1 illustrates the four waves of Peronist leadership that have unfolded over the course of Argentine history from Juan Perón's election in 1946 to Cristina Kirchner's fall in 2015. Peronist leaders are highlighted in bold, including two non-elected presidents who ruled for short periods of time: Isabel Perón and Eduardo Duhalde. The figure is intended not to detail events with chronological precision, but rather to summarize the complex rise and fall of Peronism over time.

Venezuelan Chavismo

The Rise and Rule of Hugo Chávez

Hugo Chávez rose to power in 1998 following the collapse of the *Punto Fijo* regime. Born out of a political pact between two major, centrist political parties designed to secure democratization in 1958, the regime achieved uniquely high levels of political stability and economic growth compared to its Latin American neighbors for several decades (Weyland 2003, 826; Smilde 2011, 4).⁷ However, when the country faced a protracted economic downturn starting in the 1980s, establishment politicians from the two main parties undermined their own legitimacy in several ways. First, they enacted a series of deeply unpopular and ultimately ineffective economic reforms in an attempt to address the worsening crisis, causing citizens prolonged suffering (Weyland 2003, 826-827). Second, while ideologically distinct in name, the two parties became virtually indistinguishable due to their shared commitment to a neoliberal approach (Morgan 2007, 83-84). Finally, as establishment politicians clung to power, massive corruption scandals implicating both parties surfaced, proving to citizens that the system writ-large no longer represented their interests (Seawright 2012, 90).

A military officer, Chávez made his political debut in the midst of the Punto Fijo's unraveling. In February 1992, he led a clandestine group of officers called the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement-200 (MBR-200) in an attempted coup against

⁷ The Punto Fijo pact established a well-institutionalized, democratic, and moderate political system that consisted primarily of a center-right party (the Christian Democrats—COPEI) and a center-left party (Democratic Action—AD) (Smilde 2011, 3).

President Carlos Andrés Pérez (Smilde 2011, 487). Although the coup failed and Chávez served the next two years in prison, his defeat earned him national notoriety as an honorable young man determined to rescue Venezuelans from the grips of the selfish partyarchy (Coppedge 1994). By 1998, another failed round of neoliberal policies enacted by President Rafael Caldera sealed the fate of the Punto Fijo regime. Out of its ashes, Chávez—who promised a radical departure from the outgoing regime’s corruption and incompetence—took the country by storm, winning the presidential election with 56 percent of the vote (Weyland 2003, 828).

Over the next fourteen years, Chávez established a transformative charismatic movement in which he fostered unmediated, emotional attachments with his supporters and concentrated tremendous power. As I will detail in chapter three, his personalistic connections with his followers formed the foundation of his authority. Similar to Perón, Chávez cultivated these bonds and gained overwhelming popularity by shedding light the suffering of Venezuela’s poor masses and granting these people an unparalleled role in politics (Hawkins and Hansen 2006, 32; Smilde 2011, 8). Starting in 2003, he also took advantage of an extraordinary boom in global oil prices to expand the state’s control over the economy and redistribute wealth (Corrales and Penfold 2015, 48-50). This enabled him to deliver abundant benefits to millions of supporters and lift many of them out of poverty—at least temporarily (Ellner 2010, 90; España 2014). In addition to improving his followers’ lives, Chávez related to these people on a personal level. Thus, the marginalized masses came to view him as the divine personification of their sentiments

and dedicated themselves to his quest to transform society (Smilde 2011, 9-10; Zúquete 2008, 98).

Leveraging the “magical relationship” he established with the poor masses as well as a new, “hyper-presidential” constitution enacted in 1999, Chávez consolidated hegemonic control over politics (Corrales and Penfold 2015, 19-20; Ellner 2011, 435). Although his movement remained poorly organized at the grassroots level, he used his executive authority and unmatched popularity to impose coherence over his movement, prevent “formal collective decision-making,” and suppress “the emergence of a second-in-command” (Ellner 2011, 434). For instance, he enacted bold reforms through executive decrees and invoked popular referenda rather than relying on traditional legislation (Weyland 2013, 18). He also routinely dismissed advisers who challenged his ideas and often publicly humiliated underlings who appeared to disobey him (Carroll 2013, 64).

Additionally, Chávez eliminated threats to his power from outside of his movement. For example, when opposition citizens protested, he often responded with brutal punishment rather than openness to negotiation, as illustrated by his response to the December 2002 strike by workers from the national oil company, PDVSA (Corrales and Penfold 2015, 24-25).⁸ He also routinely marginalized and persecuted opposition judges, leaders, and parties. Furthermore, whenever his electoral victory appeared to be less than certain, he manipulated electoral laws and procedures to ensure his continued success

⁸ Another reason Chávez responded to this protest with brute force was that opposition forces had recently staged a coup against him (Corrales and Penfold 2015, 24-25).

(Weyland 2013, 24). Finally, he overpowered institutions that posed challenges to his authority by creating parallel ones that he personally controlled and vesting them with *de facto* power (*ibid*, 23).

In sum, Chávez founded a transformative charismatic movement in Venezuela and became the country's sole source of authority for fourteen years. Similar to Perón in Argentina, he accomplished this by cultivating direct, affective linkages with a massive group of supporters who came to worship him as their savior. He deepened his personalistic authority by undermining dissenting voices from within and outside of his movement and by weakening institutions that stood in his way. Like his Argentine counterpart, Chávez lifted millions of Venezuelans from the margins of society and bestowed them with unprecedented political rights and material benefits. Yet, as I will discuss below, most of these gains were limited by their unsustainable roots and wholehearted reliance on the leader's charismatic authority.

Chávez's Death and Aftermath

From 2003 to 2008, Chávez's bold, state-centered policies produced impressive economic growth and improved poor Venezuelans' quality of life, thanks in large part to the oil bonanza (Corrales and Penfold 2015, 61; España 2014). Yet throughout this period, the country's productivity declined while dependence on imports steadily increased. When oil prices began to decline in mid-2008, the shortcomings of Chávez's policies began to surface, resulting in rising inflation, shortages of food and other basic goods, and stagnation of non-oil sectors (Corrales and Penfold 2015, 62-63). Despite

these declines, the vast majority of Chávez's followers remained loyal to their *Comandante* and blamed "conspiratorial enemies" for the problems that surfaced over the course of his administration, suggesting the "Teflon effect" of his charisma (Merolla and Zechmeister 2011, 30; Zúquete 2008, 92). Although Chávez also deployed increasingly authoritarian tactics to overstate his popularity and prevent the erosion of his superhuman image during his final years in office (Weyland 2013, 23; López Maya 2016, 226-231), most of his followers remained loyal not out of compulsion, but out of profound affection for him (Hawkins et al. 2011, 209).

When Chávez died of cancer in March 2013, his anointed successor, Nicolás Maduro, inherited an economy on the verge of collapse. As I will describe in chapter six, Maduro lacked his predecessor's charisma, ambition, skill, and domestic political experience. The new leader therefore leaned exclusively on Chávez's blessing, rather than on his own leadership, to shore up popular legitimacy. When this proved insufficient to retain the support necessary to stay in power, he resorted to outright authoritarianism and repression—a tragic outcome that continues to characterize Venezuela at the time of writing (Lowenthal and Smilde 2019).

Amazingly, during this tumultuous period, Chávez's followers have displayed stubborn devotion to the charismatic founder and his movement. Indeed, despite the devastation caused by Maduro's bumbling ineffectiveness and brazen commitment to the dysfunctional status quo, a 2019 poll suggests that 28 percent of the population continues to support his regime (GBAO Strategies 2019). Some may question the authenticity of citizens' support, given the repressive nature of Maduro's government. Yet other surveys

demonstrate similarly high levels of attachment to Chavismo in the years since the founder's death (Briceño 2015; Consultores 2017; Datanálisis 2016). As I will illustrate in chapter four, these followers recognize the weaknesses of Chávez's anointed successor; however, their devotion to the founder remains as deep as ever. Moreover, their connections to the founder continue to shape their political worldview and make them hopeful that a more inspiring and capable leader will resume Chávez's mission to transform their lives.

Justification of Case Selection

This dissertation focuses on Peronism and Chavismo for several reasons. First, they represent *typical* cases of charismatic movement survival (Seawright and Gerring 2008, 299). As indicated above, both movements have survived beyond the deaths of their founders and have had a dramatic and enduring impact on political behavior and party-system development. Yet the causal mechanisms underlying the resilience of the two movements remain poorly understood. Concentrating on these important instances of charismatic movement survival allows for a deep exploration of causal mechanisms involved.

Second, while examining only “positive” cases of charismatic movement survival, my examination of followers and leaders within each movement provides variation on important dimensions of the dependent variable, charismatic movement survival. At the level of the followers, I analyze variation in the strength of charismatic attachments and political support for successors. At the level of the leaders, I assess variation in

successors' attempts to revive the movement. In particular, I investigate the process through which some leaders succeeded while others failed to return the movement to power. The variation in these two dimensions—the intensity of followers' charismatic attachments and new leaders' ability to restore the movement to power—provides me with the analytic leverage to assess competing explanations rooted in routinization, on the one hand, and personalistic revival, on the other.

Third, Peronism and Chavismo have unfolded in different geographical and historical contexts, allowing for a direct analysis of charismatic movement survival at distinct junctures. Peronism emerged in Latin America's Southern Cone with Juan Perón's rise to power in the mid-1940s, whereas Chavismo came to power in the Andean region with Hugo Chávez's presidential victory in 1998, over fifty years later. Peronism has survived for over seven decades and has experienced rule under several successors, including Isabel Perón, Carlos Menem, Eduardo Duhalde, Néstor Kirchner, and Cristina Kirchner. Conversely, at the time of writing, Chavismo has survived just six years since the death of its founder and has been governed by a single successor: Nicolás Maduro. I take advantage of these differences to examine first-hand two important stages in charismatic movement survival: long-lasting (in Argentina) and still developing (in Venezuela).

KEY CONCEPTS

Political Movement

Following the literature on political parties and institutional weakness, I distinguish political *movements* from more conventional *parties* based on several characteristics. First, while they function electorally as parties, movements enjoy more flexibility and exercise less institutional discipline than parties (Levitsky 2003). Second, while parties typically hold modest objectives such as winning office and shaping policies within the confines of the existing institutional framework, movements work toward the “totalizing, all-embracing” goal of societal transformation (Cotler 1995, 323; Schlozman 2015, 4). Third, parties tend to embrace democratic pluralism, whereas movements seek “national unity” and antagonize groups that stand in the way of their transformative vision (McGuire 1995, 200). To establish the appearance of unity and achieve hegemony, movement leaders who win office also adopt majoritarian political tactics (Weyland 2001, 2013). Thus, while they form less frequently than conventional democratic parties, political movements can have a dramatic impact on party systems and undermine the survival of preexisting institutions.

Both Peronism and Chavismo are better understood as political movements than parties based on the abovementioned criteria. In fact, Juan Perón and Hugo Chávez referred to their respective political projects as “movements” rather than parties. The two movements have also demonstrated remarkable programmatic and procedural flexibility (Levitsky 2003; Ostiguy 2009; Villasmil 2005; Corrales and Penfold 2015). In addition, chief executives in both movements have adopted missionary rhetoric aimed at

fundamentally restructuring institutions, revolutionizing society, and combatting opposition forces charged with blocking their transformative goals (Zúquete 2008; Madsen and Snow 1991; Weyland 2013; McGuire 2014). Finally, these leaders have used elections to demonstrate their widespread popularity and justify bold actions. In light of these characteristics, this study refers to both Peronism and Chavismo as political movements rather than parties.

Charisma

In keeping with previous scholars, especially Weber (1979), Madsen and Snow (1991), and Merolla and Zechmeister (2011), I define charisma in relational terms, as the existence of unmediated, asymmetrical, and deeply emotional bonds between a leader and his/her followers. Thus, it is not the objective existence of charisma, but rather the followers' perception of it in the leader that matters for establishing political influence. Specifically, the ***unmediated*** nature of charisma implies that the leader communicates directly with the followers rather than using intermediary bureaucratic channels. The ***asymmetry*** of the charismatic bond implies that the leader maintains an exalted position over the followers, and therefore enjoys both unmatched power and commands unwavering loyalty from the followers. As Weber states, the qualities that followers perceive in the leader “are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary” (Weber 1979, 231). Finally, the ***emotional*** character of charismatic bonds inspires the followers to feel “intense devotion to and extraordinary reverence for the leader” (Madsen and Snow 1991, 5). The combination of these features

makes the followers feel that they have a unique and intimate relationship with the leader. It also convinces them to relinquish control over their lives to the leader, whom they perceive as their ultimate savior.

The attachments that Juan Perón and Hugo Chávez fostered with their followers reflect the three defining characteristics of charismatic bonds. First, both leaders related to their followers in a direct fashion. For example, Perón was famous for making passionate speeches to millions of admirers who became known as “the popular masses”. Chávez established a direct connection to his followers by creating his own weekly television show, *Aló Presidente*, in which he spoke directly into the camera for hours on end. In this way, both leaders “bridged the psychological and physical distance between governors and governed” (Zúquete 2008, 114-115).

Perón and Chávez also governed in a unilateral style and enjoyed unmatched superiority during their presidencies. For example, they directly granted benefits to their followers in a top-down fashion that reinforced their control rather than empowering the followers from the grassroots. Indeed, Perón issued a near-universal increase in wages and an additional bonus in an executive decree called the *Aguinaldo* during his first year in office (Madsen and Snow 1991, 51). Similarly, Chávez distributed benefits to followers through “missions to save the people” (Corrales and Penfold 2015). The two leaders also sidelined opponents from across the political spectrum to enhance their image of supreme authority (*ibid*; Page 1983). In these ways, the founders secured positions of unrivaled power over their followers.

Finally, Perón and Chávez used impassioned rhetoric and a casual, open demeanor to establish deep emotional connections with their followers (Page 1983, 54; Zúquete 2008; 100). This helped the leaders acquire an intensely devoted mass of followers who worshiped them as saints. In Argentina, the events of October 17, 1945, exemplify the passion that followers felt for Perón. As previously mentioned, on this day, hundreds of thousands of supporters flooded the *Plaza de Mayo* in front of the presidential palace in Buenos Aires to demand his release from prison, where jealous military factions had confined this rising political star. As a Times reporter notes, “the crowd felt an almost religious emotion for Colonel Perón and not satisfied with having him as president, wanted to canonize him as well” (*The Times* 1945, in Madsen and Snow 1991, 49). In Venezuela, Chávez’s followers likewise demonstrated steadfast devotion to their beloved leader, as illustrated by the extraordinary displays of public crying that took place in the streets of Caracas for several days following his death in March 2013 (Usborne 2013).

In short, this study treats Perón and Chávez (as well as some of their successors) as charismatic leaders due to the direct, asymmetrical, and emotional attachments they fostered with their followers. Importantly, it is the followers’ perception of the two leaders as heroic saviors that substantiates this charisma, rather than the objective existence of a “charismatic” personality. Accordingly, as described in subsequent chapters, I identify and measure charisma primarily from the perspective of the followers rather than using objective criteria.

OVERVIEW

The remainder of the dissertation is organized as follows. Part I (the present chapter and chapter 2) lays out the theoretical discussion. Specifically, chapter two details explanations for the survival of charismatic movements that are rooted in the logic of routinization and presents my alternative theory of charismatic movement revival.

Part II analyzes the revival of charismatic movements from the perspective of the followers by investigating the formation (chapter three), survival (chapter four), and political reactivation (chapter five) of their attachments. Chapter three identifies how these attachments form, overwhelm alternative linkage types, and contribute to the development of powerful political movements. I focus this analysis on the case of Venezuela due to the relatively fresh status of citizens' attachments to Chavismo. Combining insights from classic studies of charisma with empirical analyses of voters devoted to Chávez and his movement, I develop a compact theory on the formation of charismatic attachments. Subsequently, I use data from a 2007 survey by the Latin American Public Opinion Project to test the influence of charismatic perceptions of Chávez on citizens' attachments to the movement relative to competing factors rooted in the movement's substantive programs and grassroots organizations. The results indicate the disproportionate influence of charisma on citizens' ties to the movement.

Chapter four examines the staying power of charismatic movements by exploring the mechanisms through which followers' attachments survive after the disappearance of the founder. Focus group discussions with followers of Peronism and Chavismo reveal how the factors involved in the original formation of citizens' affective bonds—including

the leader's direct recognition of the followers, impressive performance, and symbolic narrative—facilitate the perpetuation of those ties. In particular, the focus groups illustrate how followers sustain an emotionally intense and deeply personal identification with the founder by holding onto stories and material possessions symbolizing their transformative experiences under the founder. The discussions also indicate how followers' enduring emotional attachments shape their understanding of politics and provide a pathway for new politicians who portray themselves as heroic reincarnations of the founder to win the followers' loyalty.

To complete the analysis from the followers' perspective, chapter five investigates how followers' emotional attachments to the movement can be politically reactivated to facilitate new politicians' consolidation of power. Face-to-face survey experiments conducted with movement followers in Argentina and Venezuela indicate that leaders who implement two strategies—(1) bold, initially impressive policies and (2) symbolic associations with the charismatic founder—cause citizens to express stronger emotional attachment to the movement and increased support for the new leader. The results further challenge the notion that charismatic attachments are short-lived and underscore the potential of new leaders to resurrect the political salience of those attachments.

Part III of the dissertation incorporates the perspective of new leaders to examine the conditions under which they can implement the abovementioned strategies to consolidate power as new standard-bearers of the movement. Chapter six identifies three conditions that successors must fulfill to accomplish this task: They must seek power on

their own terms, long after the founder's disappearance; rise in the midst of a crisis to portray themselves as desperately needed saviors; and adopt the founder's personalistic style to revitalize and take ownership of the followers' preexisting emotional bonds to the movement. To demonstrate the relevance of these conditions, I examine the process through which several new leaders failed while others succeeded in reviving three charismatic movements in Latin America: Peronism, Chavismo, and Fujimorismo in Peru.

Given the conditions that facilitate new leaders' successful revival of charismatic movements, Chapter seven investigates the trajectories of these movements starting from the moment when their founders disappear. Focusing on Peronism, which has survived for over forty years since the death of its founder, I trace the history of the movement from Perón's exile in 1955 until 2015, when Peronist candidate Daniel Scioli lost the presidential election to Mauricio Macri, a non-Peronist. The analysis illustrates how, by sustaining its personalistic nature, Peronism has unfolded in a spasmodic fashion that contrasts with the more stable, linear trajectories of conventional parties.

Chapter eight summarizes key empirical findings of the study, draws theoretical conclusions about the potential for charismatic movements to bypass routinization and live on in personalistic form, and reflects on the challenges these movements pose for democracy. It also extends the analysis to cases beyond Argentina and Venezuela where charismatic movements persisted or reemerged after the disappearance of their founders, including Fujimorismo in Peru, Lulismo in Brazil, Forza Italia in Italy, the Pheu Thai Party in Thailand, and Maoism in China. Finally, I explore the broader implications that

my theory of personalistic revival holds for the potential staying power and consequences of charismatic populist leaders, who are on the rise in countries across the world.

Chapter 2. A Theory of Charismatic Movement Revival

The survival of charismatic movements beyond the lifetimes of their founders is puzzling. Indeed, these movements are considered to be fundamentally unstable because they hinge on the captivating and “strictly personal” authority of their founders. Extant literature therefore concludes that charismatic movements tend to disintegrate when their founders disappear (Weber 1979, 246; Eisenstadt 1968, 21-22; Kostadinova and Levitt 2014, 500-501).

What, then, explains the surprising resilience of Peronism and Chavismo? Two theories offer potential explanations: routinization and revival in personalistic form. Routinization constitutes the predominant view in the literature (Eisenstadt 1968; Jowitt 1992; Loxton and Levitsky 2018; Madsen and Snow 1991; Shils 1965; Weber 1979). Originally proposed by Weber, this theory states that the founder’s charismatic authority must be reshaped into an institutionalized party for the movement to survive. In contrast, my theory of charismatic movement revival contends that the founder’s deep, emotional bonds with the followers can be preserved and reactivated by future politicians to restore the movement to power. In other words, these movements can survive by perpetuating a cycle that reinforces citizens’ affective attachments and subordinates political institutions to the authority of personalistic leaders.⁹

The present chapter begins with a discussion of the logic of routinization and indicates why this theory falls short of explaining the survival of Peronism and

⁹ Throughout the dissertation, I treat the following terms as synonymous: “linkage,” “attachment,” “tie,” and “bond.”

Chavismo. Specifically, I argue that routinization overstates the ephemerality of citizens' emotional ties to the charismatic founder while minimizing the immense difficulty of transforming the founder's authority into a de-personalized party organization.

Next, I propose my alternative theory of charismatic movement revival. Drawing on insights from political and social psychology, I contend that followers' charismatic bonds can turn into a resilient identity that remains deeply personalistic in nature and shapes the followers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors after the founder's disappearance. Because these attachments survive in personalistic form, I explain that new leaders who portray themselves as heirs of the founder have the potential to reactivate followers' affective identity, restore its political significance, and garner support. Subsequently, I outline the conditions under which this process of charismatic reactivation is possible. Finally, I demonstrate that charismatic movements can live through periods of poor leadership and reemerge when conditions are more favorable. Rather than establishing an institutionalized party, as routinization would predict, I argue that the revival of charismatic movements generates a cycle of political and economic volatility that perpetuates personalistic leadership and undermines party-system institutionalization. In subsequent chapters, I substantiate my theory using a wide array of evidence that focuses primarily on the Peronist and Chavista movements.

CENTRAL TENETS OF THE ROUTINIZATION THESIS

Adherents of the routinization argument claim that the survival of charismatic movements in personalistic form is impossible. First, they stress that successors cannot

take over the founder's direct, emotional bonds with the followers. Second, because they lack the founder's magnetic appeal, successors cannot exercise the concentrated, personal authority of the charismatic predecessor. For these reasons, scholars conclude that the survival of charismatic movements depends on routinization. During this process, the followers' emotional bonds with the founder transform into depersonalized partisan linkages. An organizational structure staffed with lower-level politicians and bureaucrats also develops to replace the concentrated authority of the charismatic founder. In short, charismatic movements survive by shedding their true nature and becoming institutionalized parties. In the following two sections, I outline the process of routinization at the level of the followers and the leaders who emerge in the wake of the founder's death.

The Depersonalization of Followers' Charismatic Attachments

According to Weber, attachments between charismatic leaders and their followers are “strictly personal, based on the validity and practice of [the leader's] charismatic personal qualities” (1979, 246). Scholars identify two such qualities as especially important for shaping the “leader-to-mass flow of communications and benefits” (Madsen and Snow 1991, 25). First is the leader's seemingly miraculous performance, which provides the followers with tangible benefits and demonstrates his heroic capacity to resolve their suffering.¹⁰ The second quality relates to the leader's frequent, direct

¹⁰ Charismatic leaders can be female or male. For the sake of simplicity, and because the majority of charismatic founders under study are male, I use the pronoun “his” throughout this chapter.

communication with the followers, which gives the followers the appearance of an intimate relationship with their beloved savior.

Existing studies suggest that the survival of charismatic movements depends on routinization in part because new leaders cannot replicate the founder's charismatic qualities. To begin, proving superhuman abilities would require "the constant achievement of 'miracles'" (Eatwell 2006, 141). The founder's chosen successor, typically "a functionary who is not remotely comparable with the predecessor" (Kostadinova and Levitt 2014, 500-501), would be unlikely to achieve this ambitious feat. Compounding this issue of lackluster performance, (especially by comparison with the almighty founder), the chosen successor would struggle to sustain unmediated ties with the followers (Madsen and Snow 1991, 25). Unable to tap into these intimate connections, the successor would be unable to control the masses through "symbolic manipulation" in a manner reminiscent of the founder (Jowitt 1992, 107).

Because successors cannot perform miracles or captivate the masses using magnetic appeal, they cannot uphold the founder's deep, emotional attachments with the followers. This leads scholars of routinization to conclude that the nature of followers' attachments must fundamentally change if an initially charismatic movement is to survive. In particular, the literature suggests that, because the emotional intensity of citizens' attachments to the founder irreversibly dissipates upon his disappearance, the agents of routinization must replace those attachments with alternative linkage types (Jowitt 1992, 107; Madsen and Snow 1991, 29; Shils 1965, 202; Weber 1979, 246).

Studies of partisanship suggest two alternative party-voter linkages that could replace citizens' charismatic attachments to the movement. First, programmatic attachments could emerge based on the ambitious policies enacted by the founder. These policies, validated by their initially impressive success and their association with the founder's valiant promises to rescue society, could develop into a programmatic trademark for the movement (Lupu 2013, 51-52). To sustain followers' loyalty based on this mechanism, the movement's new leadership would need to preserve the substantive content and positive performance of the founder's policies. If successful, first-generation followers who recognized and supported this set of policies would reinforce their attachment to the movement; those who disagreed or were simply unaware of the policies would become less attached after the founder's disappearance (Key 1966, 7-8).

Subsequent generations of citizens whose issue attitudes coincided with the content of the movement's programmatic trademark—due to a combination of parental socialization, preference formation occurring during young adulthood, and retrospective evaluation of the movement's past performance—would be more likely to develop strong attachments to the movement in the future (Achen 2002; Fiorina 1981; Niemi and Jennings 1991). However, if their issue preferences deviated over time or the movement's programmatic trademark became diluted, the basis for citizens' programmatic attachments would break down, resulting in the erosion of the movement's core of supporters (Lupu 2013, 52).

A second linkage that could routinize the followers' charismatic attachments rests on an organizational mechanism. Specifically, the followers could sustain their devotion to the movement based on their participation in the network of movement-affiliated

organizations, social clubs, and neighborhood associations created under the charismatic founder (Green et al. 2002; Campbell 1980; Granovetter 1973; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992). Crucially, the persistence of followers' organizational ties to the movement would depend on the followers' ongoing (informal or formal) membership in these social groups (Green et al. 2002, 4, 91). Moreover, the movement's new leaders would have to actively mobilize the movement's organizational network to remain politically relevant and win follower support (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992, 70; Samuels and Zucco 2015, pp.758-759). Subsequent generations of followers would then be socialized into the network during childhood or through their social groups during young adulthood, perpetuating the strength of the movement over time (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, 138-141; Niemi and Jennings 1991, 979-981). In contrast, the disintegration of movement-affiliated groups would weaken followers' connections to the movement and would undermine their loyalty as a result.

In sum, the routinization thesis insists that successors to the charismatic founder cannot replicate the founder's seemingly miraculous performance; moreover, these politicians struggle to maintain direct, intimate connections with the followers. Given these weaknesses, the survival of the movement requires that citizens' deep, emotional attachments to the founder transform into depersonalized linkages based on either a steady, substantively meaningful programmatic trademark or a strong network of movement-affiliated organizations that generate feelings of belonging among the followers.

The Replacement of the Leader's Charismatic Authority with a Party Organization

In addition to the transformation of the followers' profoundly affective attachments, routinization studies claim that the founder's concentrated, charismatic authority invariably dissipates. Thus, the founder's subordinates must work together to develop an organizational structure that can substitute for his authority (Madsen and Snow 1991, 29). Crucially, these intermediary agents do not *personally* inherit a dose of the founder's charismatic appeal. Rather, the founder's appeal becomes associated with the *offices* that the agents occupy and with the *rules* that govern the agents' behavior. Eventually, the institutional "roles and rules" acquire independent legitimacy rather than leaning on their (increasingly distant) association with the founder (Shils 1965, 205). In other words, a de-personalized type of authority that rests on institutions rather than on particular individuals stands in the place of the founder's charismatic authority.

To successfully replace the founder's charismatic authority in this fashion, scholars stress that the movement must develop a party structure with at least a moderate degree of organizational capacity (Jowitt 1992, 107; Kostadinova and Levitt 2014, 500-501; Madsen and Snow 1991, 25-29; Shils 1965, 202-205). In fact, the more extensive the organizational structure, the better the chances of movement survival. As Shils explains, "the more widely dispersed, unintense operation of the charismatic element in corporate bodies governed by the rational-legal type of authority," the greater the possibility of establishing a powerful, lasting, and firmly institutionalized party (Shils 1965, 202).

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE ROUTINIZATION THESIS

While routinization studies attempt to theorize the evolution of charisma after the death of the founder, they underestimate the potential of the followers' charismatic attachments to endure. Moreover, they overlook the tremendous difficulties of constructing a party organization to replace the charismatic founder's deeply entrenched authority. Consequently, these studies fail to explain the trajectory of charismatic movements such as Peronism and Chavismo, which have persisted in a strikingly personalistic manner since the deaths of their founders.

Theoretical Limitations of the Routinization Thesis

To begin, scholars of routinization suggest that followers' charismatic attachments fade away upon the founder's disappearance. Yet it seems unlikely that citizens' fervent bonds would be so fragile. During the founder's rule, these bonds are so strong that they cause a "searing reorientation" in the lives and identities of the followers (Madsen and Snow 1991, 24). The founder's promise to provide the followers with salvation inspires a deep devotion that is missionary, even Christ-like (Zúquete 2008, 107). Indeed, charismatic attachments transcend the mundane world of self-interest, inspiring the followers to "rise above, and to go beyond, mercenary concerns of contractual obligation and exchange" (Haslam et al. 2011, 31). Given the deeply emotional and quasi-religious nature of these ties, it seems unreasonable to conclude that the founder's death would cause them to disappear. To the contrary, the founder's death—an emotional and tragic event for the followers—could actually *intensify* their love for the founder and strengthen their loyalty to his movement!

A second issue overlooked by routinization studies concerns the difficulty of developing an institutional structure that can supplant the founder's charismatic authority. Scholars describe the transfer of authority from the founder to his intermediaries as an inevitable, if gradual, process. For example, Madsen and Snow explain, "The emergence of such intermediary roles...occurs gradually as the leader finds it more and more difficult to maintain frequent and direct ties with his or her following" (Madsen and Snow 1991, 25). Similarly, Shils states that charisma "flows from the central authority...[to] a multitude of others who live within a territory ruled by the central authority" (Shils 1965, 212, emphasis added).

Yet charismatic founders prioritize concentrating authority above all else, casting doubt on the notion that their authority would transfer in such a smooth and inexorable fashion. In fact, these leaders take extraordinary measures to *undermine* the development of structure in their movements and ensure that their influence cannot be easily shared during or after their lifetimes. For example, they exercise authority on a whim, relying on spontaneity and capriciousness to prevent others from sharing or challenging their power (Carroll 2013, 135). Furthermore, rather than constructing a hierarchy of officials, charismatic leaders allow and even intentionally generate feelings of jealousy and competition among their inner circle of agents in order to keep the structure of their movements weak and reduce threats to their unmatched superiority (Burns 1979, 125; Weber 1979, 243). Finally, to keep their legacies from being outshone, charismatic leaders tend to anoint weak, inexperienced, and fervently loyal successors (Lasswell 1948, 101; Weber 1979, 246).

Due to their extraordinary efforts to preserve their concentrated influence, the disappearance of charismatic founders results in a tumultuous and disorganized power vacuum in the movement's leadership. It seems unlikely that routinization would take place under these circumstances. The movement's intermediaries would struggle to develop party structures through which to disperse the founder's authority. Moreover, these mid-level agents would likely be suspicious of and hostile towards one another—a result of the founder's efforts to keep his underlings weak and divided. Thus, it would be unrealistic to expect these individuals to willingly and effectively share power amongst themselves. Indeed, the personalistic structure of the movement would incentivize new leaders to consolidate power for themselves in the style of their predecessors rather than behaving as disciplined bureaucrats committed to the task of institutionalization.

Empirical Limitations of the Routinization Thesis

The trajectories of Peronism and Chavismo reflect the shortcomings of the routinization thesis. In Argentina, the behaviors of both followers and leaders of Peronism call into question the viability of routinization. More than forty years after Perón's death, many Peronists have continued to express direct, deeply emotional attachments to the founder and his wife, Eva, as well as to subsequent leaders, including Carlos Menem, Néstor Kirchner, and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. At the same time, followers have expressed little understanding of the movement's programmatic principles and few have consistently participated in Peronist-affiliated organizations, suggesting that

followers' affective attachments have not been replaced by more conventional partisan ties (Levitsky 2003, 84-90; McGuire 1995, 201-202).

In addition to citizens' persistent emotional bonds with the movement, prominent successors of Perón have tied themselves to his charismatic legacy and have deliberately weakened institutions in order to exercise power in a direct and personalistic manner. For instance, Menem relied heavily on personal appeal to rise to the presidency in 1989 (McGuire 1997, 208; Ostiguy 2009, 13-14). During his presidential campaign, he attracted the support of millions of Peronists and thus won the presidency by emphasizing his allegiance to the charismatic foundations of Peronism, explicitly invoking the names of Juan and Eva Perón, and demonizing establishment politicians. As president, Menem enacted bold reforms via emergency decree to combat hyperinflation and portray himself as the people's savior (Weyland 2002, 134-147). Notably, the neoliberal substance of these reforms contradicted Perón's original platform of economic nationalism! Yet Menem declared that Perón would have behaved identically if he had governed during the same period (Comas 1993). As this behavior demonstrates, Menem sought to embody Perón's charismatic appeal and had little interest in developing a programmatic trademark to carry the movement forward.

While Menem's brazen economic policies ended in collapse and unleashed a severe crisis in 2001, Peronism survived and was returned to power in 2003 with the election of Néstor Kirchner. As president, Kirchner secured overwhelming popular support by implementing unilateral decrees to address the crisis and attacking rapacious foreign bondholders and human rights abusers from the 1976-1983 military dictatorship

(Gantman 2012, 345; Gervasoni 2015). Furthermore, Kirchner and his wife, Cristina—who succeeded him as president in 2007—explicitly evoked the legacies of Juan and Eva, portraying themselves as symbolic reincarnations of the charismatic couple. Moreover, to ensure their power went unquestioned, both Kirchners regularly intervened in political institutions ranging from the Supreme Court to the National Institute of Statistics and Census (Gervasoni and Peruzzotti 2015). In short, similar to Menem, the Kirchners used personalistic tactics to further concentrate their authority, declaring that they would save the Argentine people from misery and deliver their followers a better future (Ollier 2015; Wortman 2015).

In Venezuela, Chavismo has likewise endured in personalistic form, casting further doubt on the logic of routinization. Chavistas have sustained profoundly affective attachments to Chávez since his death in March 2013. Indeed, they have openly mourned their beloved founder, worshipping him at shrines constructed in homes and public spaces. Followers have also commemorated Chávez by sporting images of his face in the form of T-shirts and tattoos, listening to recordings of his speeches and television shows, and singing songs about his heroic impact. However, while continuing to revere Chávez, these individuals have grown disillusioned with the movement’s collapsing programs; furthermore, their participation in movement-affiliated organizations has remained low. These factors suggest that programmatic and social attachments to Chavismo are still underdeveloped, contrary to what routinization would predict (Aponte 2014; Machado 2009).

From the perspective of the leadership, Chávez's successor, Nicolás Maduro, has made little effort to routinize the movement. Instead, he has focused relentlessly on Chávez's mission to transform society and vanquish the movement's enemies. He has also stressed his spiritual connection to the founder to keep citizens' affective attachments alive and vicariously garner support. For example, shortly after his election in 2013, he claimed that Chávez had returned to Earth reincarnated as a bird to offer a personal blessing to Maduro (Scharfenberg 2013). In 2016, he developed a hologram of Chávez that walked the streets of Caracas to celebrate the "Day of Loyalty and Love for our Commander Hugo Chávez Frías" (@VTVcanal8 2016). By symbolically reconstructing the founder's image, Maduro has attempted to leverage citizens' personalistic bonds to defend the contemporary regime and decry all who oppose it as traitors to Chávez's legacy. Consequently, he has sustained crucial support for a remarkably long time, given the deplorable performance of his regime (Taub and Fisher 2017).

To recapitulate, citizens' deep, emotional ties to the charismatic founders of Peronism and Chavismo, respectively, have remained profoundly affective in nature. Moreover, subsequent leaders of these movements have governed using a direct, charismatic style rather than dispersing power and responsibility to intermediaries in their respective parties. These outcomes contradict the routinization thesis, which emphasizes the depersonalization of citizens' attachments and the dispersion of leaders' power as necessary conditions for the survival of charismatic movements. In light of this puzzle, I

develop an alternative theory according to which these movements can survive by sustaining their original personalistic nature.

A NEW THEORY OF CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT REVIVAL

In light of the limitations of routinization studies, I theorize an alternative pathway through which charismatic movements can persist and reemerge as powerful political forces. Starting with the perspective of the followers, I demonstrate how their affective bonds with the charismatic founder form, overpower alternative types of attachment, and lend coherence to the movement. In doing so, I highlight how both objective conditions and subjective leader traits influence the formation of charismatic attachments. Next, I illustrate the mechanism through which the followers' bonds can turn into an enduring identity that continues to shape their political perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors after the founder disappears. While the political relevance of this identity fluctuates over time, I underscore the resilience of its emotional and personalistic core. When adverse conditions cause intense suffering, it is the enduring charismatic nature of this identity that causes followers to look for a hero to rescue them. Politicians who understand this longing have the potential to strategically reactivate the followers' attachments and become the movement's new standard-bearer.

The second portion of my theory moves from the perspective of the followers to that of the leaders who seek to revive the movement and consolidate power. In particular, I specify the conditions that facilitate or undermine successors' attempts to reactivate the followers' emotional bonds and reclaim the founder's charismatic authority. As with my

study of the followers, I examine the role of objective conditions, such as the presence of a crisis, as well as subjective traits of the leader, such as personal charisma and political skill. Finally, I weave together my analyses of followers and leaders to shed light on the trajectories of charismatic movements and their detrimental impact on democratic party systems.

The Perspective of the Followers: Formation, Survival, and Reactivation of Charismatic Attachments

1. Formation

To begin, the revival of charismatic movements depends on the initial formation of the unmediated emotional attachments between the leader and his followers. I argue that the cultivation of these bonds involves three factors. First, the leader directly recognizes and appeals to citizens who have suffered feelings of exclusion, deprivation, and hopelessness. The theory of “proxy control” developed in social psychology suggests that people who have experienced these feelings are likely to seek out a savior to recognize their suffering, take control of their seemingly unmanageable situation, and combat the “evil” forces blamed for their problems (Madsen and Snow 1991, 12-15). Crucially, this relationship is asymmetrical: the leader *directly grants* recognition to the followers, such that the latter feel indebted to, rather than empowered by, the former. Objectively, a severe crisis overseen by a low-performing government motivates citizens who feel excluded to seek out a hero to rescue them (Madsen and Snow 1991, 143; Weyland 2003, 843). Using this crisis, the leader calls out the failures of the established

regime, recognizes the people's suffering and perceived exclusion, and vows to personally resolve their misery.

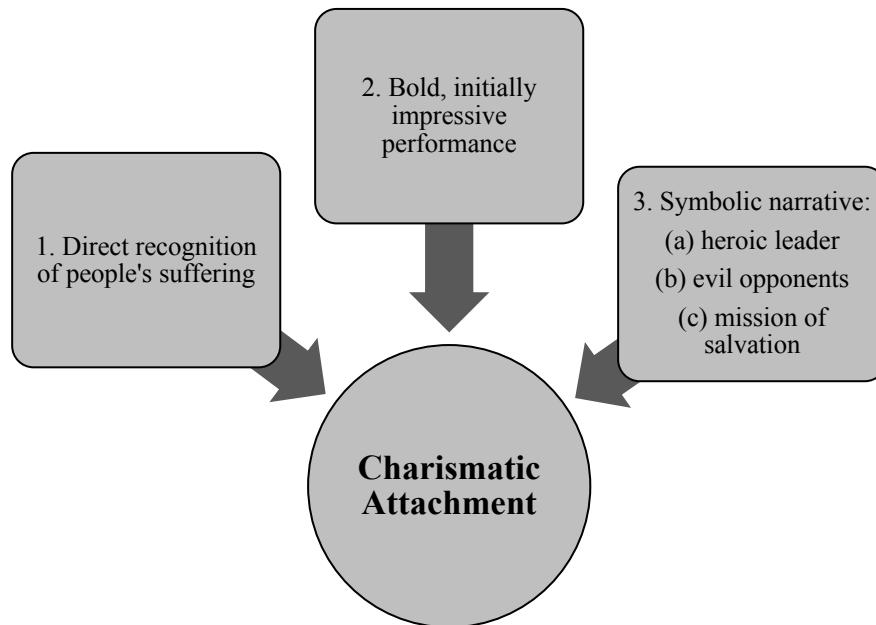
Second, to prove his extraordinary ability to "save" the people, the leader aggressively attacks the "enemies" held responsible for their misery and implements bold, *initially* successful reforms to improve their condition (Weber 1979, 242; Pappas 2012, 4-5). This impressive performance confirms the followers' exalted perceptions of their leader but lacks programmatic coherence and sustainability. Instead, the leader's early success is most likely tied to his emergence following a period of crisis or at the cusp of favorable economic conditions, such as rising oil prices or a commodity boom. Nonetheless, the swift, tangible relief initially provided by the seemingly miraculous reforms cause many voters to perceive the leader as extraordinary.

The third factor required for the cultivation of charismatic attachments is the construction of a powerful narrative that glorifies the leader alongside other historical protagonists as a hero, vilifies opponents as enemies, and stresses the leader's mission to rescue and fundamentally transform society. Discourse that frames politics as an existential struggle between good and evil is essential to convert strong popular support into an intensely personal form of "political religion" (Zúquete 2008, 91). Indeed, the narrative unites the followers against the allegedly malevolent opposition and solidifies their identification with the leader's redemptive mission. To spin a compelling narrative, the leader draws on personal appeal; achieves constant, direct contact with voters; and ties himself to "sacred figures, divine beings, or heroes" that already form part of the voters' cultural identity (Willner and Willner 1965, 82). Additionally, the leader

dominates public spaces with images, words, music, and other symbols to help reinforce the power and moral superiority of him and his movement (Plotkin 2002, 24; Zúquete 2008, 93-103).

Together, these factors consolidate citizens' perceptions of the leader's charisma and foster powerful, unmediated bonds between the leader and his followers. Direct recognition of people's exclusion and suffering makes followers feel indebted to the leader; bold, initially successful reforms deliver tangible improvements to the followers' lives and appear to substantiate the leader's exceptional capacities; and the symbolic narrative solidifies the leader's role as the ultimate savior. Figure 2 summarizes the factors involved in the initial formation of charismatic attachments.

Figure 2. The Initial Formation of Charismatic Attachments



Although various studies acknowledge the importance of one or more of the above-mentioned characteristics for the initial formation of charismatic bonds, I go a step further to identify two ways in which these factors help perpetuate the bonds when the founder disappears. First, I argue that charismatic attachments do not merely establish an emotional connection between the founder and the followers, but that they also undermine the influence of alternative types of political linkages. For one, charismatic attachments provide the leader with a “Teflon shield” that weakens linkages rooted in the substantive coherence and steady performance of the programs and policies (Merolla and Zechmeister 2009, 39). Indeed, the founder’s early, seemingly miraculous performance causes the followers to perceive him as truly heroic. Consequently, they do not “update” their preferences and withdraw their support when his unsustainable initiatives begin their inevitable decline, as would occur with programmatic attachments (Achen 1992, 2002; Downs 1957; Fiorina 1981). Instead, the followers double down on their devotion to the founder, whom they believe will resolve their suffering once again with his superhuman power.

In addition to undermining programmatic attachments, charismatic bonds undercut linkages that develop based on citizens’ participation in organizations affiliated with the movement. Though the founder may create such organizations at the outset to mobilize supporters, these clubs actually serve as centers in which to worship the founder rather than as vehicles for grassroots empowerment and citizen participation (Hawkins et al. 2011, 186-187). Furthermore, these organizations serve to generate “a strong top-down quality in the relationship between citizens and politicians” (*ibid*). This contrasts

markedly with the notion of grassroots empowerment typically engendered by participatory organizations (Ellner 2011, 430-431; Samuels and Zucco 2015, 758-759). The underdeveloped state of programmatic and organizational attachments significantly increases the difficulty of routinizing followers' charismatic bonds upon the founder's death.

Second, I claim that the symbolic narrative initially crafted by the founder plays a crucial role in establishing the followers' attachments as a stable, enduring, and inherently personalistic identification with the movement. Each component of the narrative—the sanctification of the founder, the demonization of opponents, and the cultivation of a mission of salvation—solidifies the followers' charismatic identity and shapes their worldview. In particular, the narrative's depiction of the founder as an everlasting hero sustains the followers' hope that a protégé will eventually pick up the founder's mission to rescue them, thereby reinforcing their personalistic relationship with the movement. The demonization of the movement's opponents also imbues the followers with the perception that their livelihood is perpetually under attack. This increases the movement's cohesion and deepens the cleavage between "in" and "out" groups (Huddy 2013, 44; Tajfel 1974, 66-67). Lastly, the promise of salvation outlined in the founder's mission to transform society increases feelings of solidarity among the followers and provides their righteous community with a profound sense of purpose that goes beyond a superficial connection with a popular leader. In short, by glorifying the founder, demarcating the movement's enemies, and emphasizing this mission of salvation, a quasi-religious discourse that forms the symbolic narrative offers the

followers “a comprehensive view of the world...[that] aims to shape and purify the collective consciousness, thus bringing a new society and a new humanity here on earth” (Zúquete 2008, 96).

2. Survival

The personalistic worldview shaped by the founder’s symbolic narrative provides the foundation for the perpetuation of citizens’ charismatic attachments to the movement. In fact, as I will demonstrate in chapter four, the followers sustain this perception of reality after the death of the founder by retelling cherished, intimate accounts of their life-altering experiences during his rule and by preserving cultural symbols such as portraits of the founder and material objects that commemorate his largesse. Like a religious scripture, these stories and symbols uphold the central components of the overarching symbolic narrative: the heroic status of the founder, the cleavage between the followers and their enemies, and the promise of salvation. Through this mechanism, the narrative cultivates a “strong, internalized subjective identity” that transcends “simple group membership” and profoundly shapes citizens’ understanding of the world (Huddy 2001, 149).

While the preservation of the symbolic narrative helps sustain the charismatic nature of the followers’ attachments, however, the prolonged absence of the founder can cause these ties to become depoliticized over time. Indeed, without a hero to rescue them, the followers may grow disenchanted with politics. Existing studies would interpret the waning political relevance of followers’ attachments as the first step towards the

routinization into programmatic or organizational linkages. Yet I contend that the decline in acute intensity is temporary, and therefore does not necessarily lead to the transformation of citizens' emotional bonds.

To the contrary, subsequent politicians have the potential to reactivate the followers' bonds in their original, deeply affective form. This is because, while it is difficult for leaders to change the fundamental *nature* of the followers' attachments, "it is much easier to shift [the] salience" of those bonds (Huddy 2001, 49). In particular, the followers' latent hope for a legitimate successor to replace the founder and pick up his mission to transform society remains intact even in the absence of strong leaders. This hope creates the potential for the reactivation of followers' attachments. Thus, politicians that convincingly portray themselves as genuine heirs of the founder who have come to rescue society can appeal to the followers and restore the movement to power by exercising their own personalistic authority.

3. Reactivation

Insights from political psychology support the notion that new leaders who appear as the symbolic archetype with which the followers identify—i.e., with the charismatic founder—can resurrect the political salience of the followers' attachments and take ownership of those ties (Haslam et al. 2011; Hogg 2001; Huddy 2001, 2013; Meléndez and Rovira-Kaltwasser 2017). Specifically, new leaders who "craft and shape" different components of the symbolic narrative can enhance its relevance under new circumstances and thus politically reactivate citizens' identity with the movement (Meléndez and

Rovira-Kaltwasser 2017, 3). By signaling their likeness with the founder and promising to save the community of followers from new threats, new leaders can politically reactivate the followers' charismatic attachments and mobilize support.

To achieve this ambitious task, I argue that new leaders must communicate a specific set of material and symbolic cues to the followers. The material cue substantiates successors' charismatic authority, while the symbolic cue depicts that authority as though directly reincarnated from the founder. Materially, like the founder, successors must demonstrate extraordinary abilities through impressive performance.¹¹ They achieve this performance through promising and enacting audacious policies that demonstrate their capacity to rescue the historically marginalized followers. Crucially, the policies must favor grandeur and alacrity over ideological consistency (Weber, 1979, 242). Indeed, successors must embrace opportunism through enacting policies that prioritize swift relief rather than sustainability—even if those policies contradict the substance of the founder's original programs. In addition, the policies must deliver tangible benefits to the followers to prove successors' superhuman capacities.

To be sure, this material cue should enhance voters' rational evaluations of the successors' performance. But more importantly for charismatic attachments, as Weber stresses, it should also suggest new leaders' extraordinary abilities to resolve the

¹¹ I do not consider the first condition for the *formation* of personalistic attachments—the leader's direct recognition of a historically excluded group of citizens—to be a separate condition for the *reactivation* of those attachments. Whereas the founder must establish a group of followers from scratch, this group already has a pre-existing identification with the movement when successors seek power. Additionally, the symbolic narrative incorporates the followers' sentiment of perpetual exclusion; successors' symbolic ties to the founder and associated narrative are therefore sufficient to reactivate this sentiment among the followers.

followers' urgent problems. Thus, the material cue should reinvigorate followers' enthusiasm for the movement and strengthen their *affective* attachments. Furthermore, it should cause the followers not only to increase their positive assessments of successors' performance, but also to view the successors as more *charismatic*—as noble, selfless heroes capable of transforming society and ensuring a more prosperous future for the followers (Pappas, 2012, 3).

Second, in symbolic terms, new leaders must depict themselves as reincarnations of the founder committed to resuming his mission to save the people from their misery. Specifically, successors must craft and disseminate verbal, auditory, and visual signals that associate themselves with the founder's heroic project and tap into the followers' quest for salvation (Abdelal et al. 2009; Klar 2013; Vavreck 2009). These cues serve as a form of “aesthetic politics” that revive the founder's mission in a contemporary light and mobilize followers to politically reengage with it (Haslam et al., 2011, 180). For example, successors might reference the founder's name, use a similar tone of voice, play music associated with the founder, adopt similar dress, make personal contact with the followers as the founder did, or incorporate colors associated with the founder's movement to demonstrate their likeness. These signals, spread through the successor's speech, gestures, and symbols, not only remind followers of their beloved founder, but also reenergize their enthusiasm for his redemptive mission. The cues can therefore reactivate the followers' identity as part of the founder's “moral community” (Zúquete, 2008, 104), distinguish them from their (real and imagined) enemies, and confirm the successor as the movement's new champion (Tajfel, 1974, 66-67).

In sum, a theoretical examination of charismatic attachments from the perspective of the followers underscores the impressive power of these bonds as well as their potential to endure in personalistic form. The factors involved in the initial formation of these bonds—including the founder’s direct recognition of the people’s suffering and perceived exclusion, the achievement of bold and initially impressive performance, and the cultivation of a powerful symbolic narrative—overpower programmatic and organizational linkages and provide a firm foundation on which to perpetuate charismatic politics. In particular, the symbolic narrative, which celebrates the founder, demonizes opponents, and stresses the mission of redemption, transforms the followers’ attachments into an enduring identity that shapes their worldview and expectations of future politicians. In turn, successors who replicate the founder’s heroic performance and symbolically associate themselves with the founder’s mission to transform society can politically reactivate followers’ ties and reclaim the founder’s personalistic authority. The following section examines the conditions under which successors can fulfill these conditions to return the movement to power in their own name.

The Perspective of the Leaders: Conditions for Charismatic Movement Revival

How can new leaders successfully employ the material and symbolic strategies required to reactivate followers’ emotional attachments, revive charismatic movements, and consolidate independent authority? I argue that three conditions related to both structure and agency shape successors’ ability to achieve this feat: their mode of

selection, the presence of a crisis, and the style of leadership they adopt to consolidate power.

To begin, the way in which successors emerge influences their ability to revive citizens' charismatic ties. I distinguish between two types of successors based on this criterion: anointed successors and self-starters. Anointed successors, who are often directly handpicked by the founder and immediately take over, seek legitimacy based on the founder's explicit endorsement. By contrast, self-starters, who seek power years after the founder's death or disappearance, must rely on their own resources to revive the movement and depict themselves as true heirs. The direct endorsement of the beloved founder would appear to advantage anointed successors over self-starters. However, this bequest of charisma is a "kiss of death" that virtually precludes success. Conversely, self-starter status creates the possibility for successors to revive charismatic movements under their own authority.

Anointed successors' struggles to reactivate the followers' attachments originate in the reluctance of charismatic founders to share power. Because the founders perceive themselves as unparalleled heroes, they hesitate to groom a powerful deputy and prospective successor (Weber 1979, 241-246). To guarantee their predominance and legacy of unmatched power, these leaders treat everyone else in the movement as an underling and surround themselves with sycophants who pose little threat to their "divine" authority. They also marginalize skilled politicians, who present potential threats to their unmatched superiority (Lasswell 1948, 101-103). The refusal to nourish a worthy replacement, combined with the determination to eliminate skilled competitors, helps

charismatic founders consolidate their status as supreme protectors. However, it also results in a scarcity of talented heirs. Indeed, when forced to face their mortality, the founders select their replacements based on allegiance rather than skill. Having been followers for years, anointed successors struggle to become leaders in their own right. As disciples, they demonstrate devout loyalty to the founder but lack the independent strength, self-confidence, and personal appeal to take over the founder's deep bonds with the followers.

Compounding the problem of anointed successors' inadequacy is an issue of timing. By the time these leaders come to power, the bold policies implemented by the founder to prove his heroic capacities are likely to be on the verge of collapse. The reason is that, for these policies to make a truly remarkable impact, the founder uses resources unsustainably, often draining them. Such behavior makes the founder appear extraordinary (Merolla and Zechmeister 2011, 30). Yet due to the rushed, haphazard, and weakly institutionalized nature of the founder's programs, they are prone to eventual failure. The founder delays this outcome by seeking new ways to impress the followers rather than adapting the policies to achieve more sustainable, if modest, progress. While that tactic protects the founder's image, it leaves anointed successors—who must also demonstrate extraordinary performance to appear worthy of the founder's mantle—in a precarious situation.

On the one hand, the initial benefits generated by the founder's actions constitute a crucial foundation for the followers' loyalty to the movement. Thus, any attempt by anointed successors to change these policies would appear to betray the founder. On the

other hand, the programs' early success has long waned by the time these successors take power. Because these leaders have not demonstrated their independent abilities, followers are quick to blame them, rather than the beloved founder, for these failures. Moreover, anointed successors have no scapegoat to target for the resulting problems (Loxton and Levitsky 2018, 120). They cannot blame the founder, who represents the sole source of their legitimacy and the object of the followers' adoration. Yet by directly succeeding the founder, they have no alternative target to convincingly accuse. Consequently, anointed successors struggle to demonstrate promising potential. In fact, their loyalty to the founder constitutes their *only* redeeming quality in the eyes of the followers.

Scholars of routinization agree that anointed successors face almost-certain failure (Kostadinova and Levitt 2014, 500-501; Madsen and Snow 1991, 25-28). However, this fact leads the scholars to conclude that the followers' charismatic attachments inevitably disintegrate. In contrast, I contend that the disappointing leadership of anointed successors has a minimal effect on the profound, affective nature of the followers' bonds with the founder—a point that I will highlight in the case of Venezuela in chapter four. Moreover, due to this resilience, I argue that it is possible for subsequent leaders to reactivate the attachments, revive the founder's transformative mission, and consolidate independent authority.

Self-starters have the potential to revive charismatic movements because they avoid two key problems impeding anointed successors. Crucially, self-starters do not inherit the founder's unsustainable policies. Instead, these leaders rise in later years, allowing policy implosions and the associated image of inadequacy to fall on someone

else.¹² Furthermore, self-starters are more likely to exercise the individual agency necessary to adopt a personalistic style reminiscent of the founder. By rising on their own and harnessing independent ambition, skill, and personal charisma, they emerge not as subservient followers, but as leaders in their own right who demonstrate their personal talents and attract the movement's supporters.

Even so, the success of self-starters is anything but guaranteed. In fact, most of these leaders fall short of establishing themselves as powerful heirs. Two additional conditions must be in place for self-starters to successfully revive the movement and become its preeminent leader. First, reactivating citizens' charismatic attachments depends on an exogenous condition: the eruption of an acute crisis. Under such circumstances, which are similar to those in which the charismatic founder sought power, many people lose their sense of self-efficacy—citizens feel they are unable to control their lives (Madsen and Snow 1991, 14-19; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009, 27-28; Weyland 2003, 825-826). This is especially true of the followers who, as traditionally marginalized people, are likely to suffer disproportionately. A crisis places these individuals—who are adherents of the founder with great faith in his mission of salvation—in a desperate situation that, once again, causes them to look for a leader capable of rescuing them. Moreover, because a crisis can threaten the livelihood of the followers, it can intensify their identification with the movement and foster group cohesion (Huddy 2013, 761; Tajfel 1974, 66-67). The renewed salience of this identity,

¹² Self-starters typically emerge about 10 to 25 years after the founder's disappearance, during which time the generation of followers who personally experienced the founder's rule, and who sustain a powerful identity with the movement, remain alive.

combined with feelings of low self-efficacy, makes the followers yearn for a new hero to save them in a manner reminiscent of the founder. This condition provides a crucial opportunity for successors to enact the *material* cue necessary for reactivating the followers' charismatic attachments: achieving bold performance to demonstrate heroic capacities.

By itself, however, the existence of a crisis is insufficient to reactivate citizens' charismatic attachments. To become the movement's new leader, self-starters must also fulfill a second, more subjective condition that depends on their individual agency: they must use their own skill, ambition, and charisma to "perform" as the people's savior by adopting and embodying the founder's personalistic leadership style (Moffitt 2015, 190). In contrast to organization-building and programmatic development—leadership skills associated with routinization—this strategy better corresponds to the movement's pre-existing nature and fulfills most followers' hopes for a new savior. Because it showcases self-starters' charismatic appeal, it resonates deeply with supporters, who desire a new leader to fill the void left by their beloved founder.

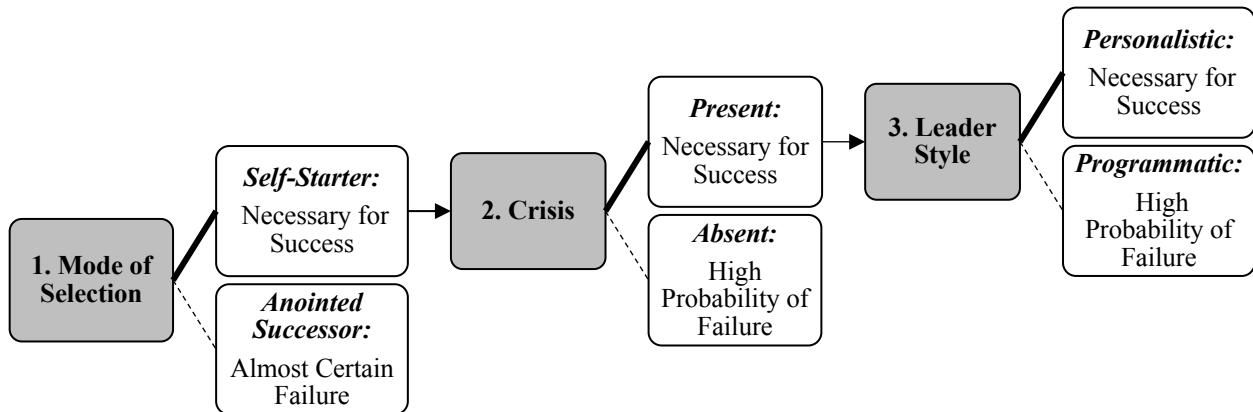
To foster their own affectionate bonds with the followers, self-starters draw on supreme communication skills to bypass intermediary institutions and establish frequent, direct contact with the followers (Burns 1979, 20). These politicians also incorporate symbols associated with the founder into their speech, dress, and gestures to appear as genuine heirs (Haslam et al. 2011, 137). Finally, they frame their actions as crucial steps for fulfilling the founder's mission of transformation. By adopting a personalistic

leadership style reminiscent of the founder, self-starters can effectively implement the second, *symbolic* cue required for reactivating followers' attachments.

In combination with the impressive, material impact of their daring performance amidst crisis conditions, self-starters' symbolic gestures cause followers to view self-starters as contemporary heroes of the movement. The material and symbolic accomplishments also attract new followers (e.g. from newly marginalized groups or younger generations), expanding self-starters' support base and consolidating their image as truly paradigm-shifting leaders—veritable reincarnations of the charismatic founder.

In sum, charismatic movements can be revived by new leaders who fulfill three conditions: coming to power as self-starters rather than as anointed successors; taking advantage of a crisis, which primes citizens to look for a savior; and tapping into the followers' attachments by using their own skill and charisma to adopt the founder's personalistic leadership style. Only then can successors enact daring policies to "prove" their superhuman potential while co-opting the founder's legacy to reinvigorate the movement and consolidate follower support. Figure 3 illustrates these three conditions.

Figure 3. Flow Chart: Conditions for Successful Revival of Charismatic Movements



Integrating Perspectives: The Spasmodic Trajectories of Charismatic Movements

Existing studies suggest that the personalistic nature of charismatic movements has little enduring impact on political systems. In many cases, charismatic leaders arise during extraordinary crises, accumulate impressive but short-lived power, and disappear just as quickly, as society returns to its former routine (Eisenstadt 1968, 22). Even if a charismatic movement survives, the routinization thesis indicates that the original leader's charisma has little influence on the movement's subsequent trajectory, as his magnetic appeal transforms into a depersonalized form of authority. If anything, routinized movements are thought to have a *stabilizing* impact on political systems, as the movements discard their charismatic nature and become institutionalized parties,

gradually accumulating programmatic strength over time (Converse 1969; Madsen and Snow 1991, 25-29). In this sense, while charisma acts as a “fulcrum” that facilitates the transition to a new institutionalized system, the system soon becomes autonomous (Tucker 1968, 734).

My theory challenges both of these arguments, contending instead that charismatic movements can dramatically shape the political system for decades after the founder disappears. Integrating the perspectives of followers and leaders, I demonstrate that these movements establish a tumultuous cycle of politics in which periods of intense personalistic leadership alternate with periods of leaderless fragmentation. Thus, unlike routinized parties, which strengthen party institutions over time, I show that charismatic movements repeatedly *undermine* those institutions.

From the perspective of the followers, affective attachments lay the foundation for the fitful trajectories of charismatic movements. Because these attachments develop into a resilient political identity, they provide subsequent leaders with the opportunity to win a stable base of support. This base may not constitute a majority of voters (often, it constitutes about one-third of the population), but it sustains the movement during “dormant” periods in which the political environment is not receptive to strong, charismatic leadership (Taylor 1989, 761). Then, when conditions become more conducive to charismatic revival, this reservoir of support provides an important “reserve

army” waiting to be mobilized by self-starters who associate themselves with the movement in their quest for power.¹³

In addition to the resilience of charismatic attachments, their deeply emotional nature, which remains intact over time (Huddy 2001, 49), entices self-starters to adopt personalistic, rather than programmatic or organizational, strategies in order to secure the followers’ loyalty. Thus, whereas extant studies argue that the “rootedness” of citizens’ loyalty facilitates the development of an institutionalized party (Levitsky 2003; Loxton and Levitsky 2018; Panebianco 1988; Madsen and Snow 1991, 24), I argue precisely the opposite: paradoxically, citizens’ resilient attachments serve to perpetuate the charismatic and volatile character of the movement.

This is because, while citizens’ attachments to the movement persevere, leaders who succeed the founder can only revive charismatic movements in an intermittent and temporary manner. Similar to the founder, successors must seek power under conditions that occur sporadically. For example, they must emerge after the eruption of serious crises, when the followers feel desperate for a hero to pick up the founder’s baton. These leaders must also take advantage of favorable political and socioeconomic circumstances to enact bold, initially impressive reforms that “prove” their worthiness to the followers. Since such conditions do not occur regularly, charismatic movements cannot unfold in the stable, linear manner of routinized parties.

¹³ I am grateful to Kurt Weyland for suggesting this term.

Furthermore, while the bold performance of self-starters secures their place as charismatic heirs of the founder, it also plants the seeds for their eventual collapse. Symbolically, while portraying themselves as saviors initially resonates with the followers, these leaders struggle to maintain their heroic image for long—especially as the crisis they valiantly promise to resolve begins to subside, along with the followers' acute desire to be rescued (Madsen and Snow, p 22-23; Weyland 2002, 44). More importantly, the successors' seemingly extraordinary “reform packages,” though crucial for proving the leaders’ charismatic power at the outset, undermine the institutions responsible for ensuring that the policies are enforced over time (Bersch 2016, 207; Levitsky and Murillo 2013, 100). In short, the same strategies that enable self-starters to revive the movement also bring about their political demise.

In sum, the followers’ enduring affective loyalty, combined with the dramatic but unsustainable rise of new leaders, causes charismatic movements to develop spasmodic trajectories. Thus, whereas existing studies view charismatic leadership as a temporary disruption of “politics as usual,” I argue that the volatility caused by charismatic movements is self-reinforcing. When the founder dies, the followers’ personalistic attachments solidify into a powerful and enduring political identity. While anointed successors who immediately replace the founder cannot fill his shoes, their poor leadership generates a crisis that causes the followers to search for another savior—a charismatic self-starter—to revive the founder’s mission of salvation and provide them with much-needed relief. Under these conditions, self-starters fulfill the followers’

expectations by embodying the founder's charismatic authority and implementing audacious policies.

Initially, the policies proposed and implemented by self-starters appear to obliterate the crisis. This reinvigorates citizens' profound reverence for the movement—deepening the stability of their attachments—and bestows a charismatic sheen on the new leader. Yet, because these policies trade long-term sustainability for early success, they are eventually doomed to fail and bring the self-starter down with them. Under these circumstances, the movement recedes and the political system experiences a power vacuum with no leader to guide the way. Yet citizens' quasi-religious devotion to the charismatic founder and his transformative mission persists. Moreover, the crisis generated by each new successor's decline generates suffering among the followers that, once again, compels them to look for a (new and more convincing) replacement to embody the founder's heroic leadership. This process generates a cycle of deeply entrenched political and economic volatility. The final section of this chapter analyzes the threats that this cycle poses for the democratic representation of citizens and the development of institutionalized party systems.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT REVIVAL FOR DEMOCRACY

Scholars of routinization suggest that the survival of charismatic movements can strengthen democracy in two respects. First, at the individual level, the transformation of charismatic attachments into programmatic or organizational linkages can improve citizens' political representation. Programmatic linkages induce politicians to respond to

and advocate for citizens' substantive policy preferences; in turn, citizens hold their politicians accountable based on the leaders' performance with respect to those policies (Kitschelt 2000, 846). Organizational linkages also enhance citizens' representation by mobilizing voters to participate in the political process, become more politically informed, and feel empowered to defend their interests and preferences (Huckfeldt 2009, 425; López Maya and Lander 2011, 59-60).

Second, routinization improves democracy by replacing the founder's concentrated authority with a depersonalized party organization. Scholars have long argued that institutionalized parties strengthen democracy (Aldrich 1995; Fiorina 1981; Campbell 1980; Converse 1969; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Mainwaring 2018; Schattschneider 1942; Ware 1996). For one, parties aggregate and represent voters' complex interests more effectively than a domineering leader (Aldrich 1995, 18; Kitschelt 2000, 847-848). Furthermore, whereas charismatic leaders enact sweeping reforms that attack the status quo, parties embrace a gradual style of reform that better copes with the complexity of social problems and works within the existing institutional framework (Aldrich 1995, 18-27; Bersch 2016, 209-211). This "problem-solving" approach results in more prudent, sustainable policies that reflect constituents' long-term interests (Bersch 2016, 207). Finally, unlike charismatic movements, parties' entrenched institutional roots and their incremental approach to policymaking enhance the stability of the political system, limit the outbreak of severe political and socioeconomic crises, and minimize the likelihood that a hegemonic leader will return to power (Levitsky and Murillo 2013, 99).

In contrast to the routinization thesis, I argue that charismatic movements pose grave threats to democracy due to their fitful trajectories. At the individual level, the episodic appearance of strong, personalistic leaders reinforces, rather than weakens, the charismatic nature of followers' attachments. In particular, the impressive but short-lived and irresponsible policies of charismatic successors reinvigorate popular enthusiasm for the movement and cause followers to view the successors as true heirs of the founder. Even though the successors' policies eventually collapse, this initial, favorable impact sticks with the followers and deepens their personalistic relationship with the movement. As a Peronist follower declared to me in Argentina, "I am Peronist because Perón gave my grandfather his first home, Menem gave my father his first car, and [Néstor] Kirchner gave me my first job." Notably, this individual said nothing of the crises that ultimately unfolded due to each of these leader's actions. Instead, he stressed that the leaders single-handedly provided him and his loved ones with unprecedented benefits—a perception that underscores the unmediated and personalistic nature of the attachments between charismatic leaders and their followers.

The resilient, charismatic nature of citizens' attachments to the movement undermines their representation in several ways. Similar to the initial formation of the attachments under the charismatic founder, their perpetuation under subsequent leaders continually inhibits the development of programmatic and organizational linkages. On the programmatic dimension, because successors are judged based on the immediate, tangible impact of their policies, they implement shortsighted reforms without concern for substantive consistency or sustainability. This opportunistic approach weakens the

movement's trademark and makes it difficult for citizens to support politicians based on programmatic criteria (Lupu 2014, 568). As I will detail in subsequent chapters, Carlos Menem's popularity among Peronist followers despite extreme policy reversals exemplifies this problem. In addition to the slippery nature of policies implemented by successors, their inevitable implosion unleashes frequent crises, compelling followers to look for new saviors who can implement similarly audacious reforms to provide some relief. Not only does this recurrent suffering and desperation deepen the cycle of charismatic leadership, but it also undermines the potential for organizational ties to develop among the followers. Specifically, it prevents voters from feeling empowered to defend their own interests by participating in the political process and/or electing public servants who will slowly but surely restructure and stabilize the government.

At the system level, charismatic movements perpetuate institutional weakness and generate tremendous political and economic volatility. Much literature has recognized problems of institutional weakness and volatility as common in developing democracies in Latin America and throughout the world (e.g., Bersch 2016; Levitsky and Murillo 2013; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Mainwaring 2018; O'Donnell 1996; Riedl 2014). In countries where charismatic movements have emerged, scholars have even acknowledged the notable pattern of institutional weakness and volatility, referring to the “serial replacement” of institutions (Levitsky and Murillo 2013, 95), the “bipolar” character of society (Mora y Araujo 2011), and the “vicious cycle” of bold and irresponsible policymaking (Bersch 2016, 215).

My theory of charismatic movement revival provides a novel explanation for the episodic cycle described by these authors. To begin, the recurrent emergence of personalistic successors perpetuates institutional instability. To establish a heroic image and ensure their personal grip on power, these leaders manipulate rules and procedures that threaten their authority, declare states of emergency, and rule by decree whenever they can. Successors also strangle voices of dissent by appointing family members and friends as key advisors, marginalizing experienced public servants, and stacking courts and other political institutions with sycophants. Finally, to revive the founder's mission of profound transformation, successors antagonize actors who question their extreme policy agendas, establishing a political climate of high polarization and low tolerance.

Because charismatic movements are revived in this irresponsible fashion, they hinder institutional development in several ways. First, successive leaders wipe out organizational party structures to ensure programmatic flexibility and secure their personal predominance. Thus, while charismatic movements become all-powerful with the rise of each new leader, their fragile structures decay precipitously when the leader meets her inevitable downfall. Second, successors' compulsion to declare states of emergency, rule by decree, overpower institutions, and eliminate opposing voices weakens horizontal accountability by undermining the independent power of the legislative and judicial branches of government. These actions, as well as the construction of loyal ruling coalitions, also cause corruption, inefficiency, and disorganization to proliferate across government agencies.

In addition to widespread and persistent institutional weakness, charismatic movements establish enduring political and economic volatility. During each wave of charismatic leadership, a successor rises and implements irresponsible policies that are not designed to last. When these sweeping policies reach exhaustion, there is no infrastructure or institutional foundation on which to rebuild. In combination with disastrous policies, the absence of a strong institutional base unleashes political and economic collapse. The fragile structure propping up the leader's party deteriorates, the movement retreats into a state of leaderless fragmentation, and society is left to suffer the consequences. Crucially, while followers may become disenchanted with particular successors when these crises expose the unsustainability of the successors' actions, this disappointment targets the individual leader rather than the overarching movement. In fact, because conditions of crisis intensify the followers' thirst for a savior, the failures of one successor open up the possibility for future self-starters to rise. Over time, the recurrent pattern of personalism and crisis amplifies the damage to citizens' representation, democratic institutions, and societal stability. It is this self-reinforcing nature of charismatic movements that makes them so pernicious.

In conclusion, this dissertation challenges the conventional wisdom that charismatic movements must routinize in order to survive. Instead, I argue that charismatic movements can persist by sustaining their original, personalistic core. However, they do so in a spasmodic fashion that damages the quality of citizens' substantive representation, undermines the development of strong and enduring democratic institutions, and exposes societies to frequent and serious crises. In the

chapters that follow, I illustrate how the revival of charismatic movements unfolds by focusing on the prominent cases of Peronism and Chavismo.

PART II: CHARISMA FROM THE FOLLOWERS' PERSPECTIVE

Chapter 3. The Formation of Charismatic Attachments

This chapter examines the process through which charismatic attachments between leaders and followers develop in the first place. The process deserves careful investigation because it influences how charismatic leaders establish a loyal following and consolidate paradigm-shifting political movements. Moreover, it lays the foundation for the trajectories of charismatic movements after the deaths of their founders. As I will demonstrate, the factors involved in the creation of charismatic attachments undermine the mechanisms required for the depersonalization of those bonds while setting up the possibility for their reactivation in personalistic form.

The analysis in this chapter focuses on the Venezuelan case due to the relatively recent emergence of Chavismo. Whereas Perón first governed Argentina over sixty years ago, from 1946 until 1955, Chávez ruled Venezuela from 1999 until 2013, just six years before the time of writing. I leverage the contemporary nature of the Venezuelan case to investigate first-hand the conditions under which charismatic attachments form and illustrate the mechanisms at work. This analysis provides two key advantages over existing studies, which tend to examine the charismatic bonds in a strictly theoretical or historical context (e.g., Eatwell 2006; Eisenstadt 1968; Jowitt 1992; Madsen and Snow 1991; Pappas 2012; Weber 1979). First, it reveals fresh insights from a diverse range of voters and elites tied to the regime who remember their personal experiences during the founder's rule. Second, it provides access to relevant, high-quality public opinion data as

well as ample primary sources from the period under examination, which are crucial for discerning between the relative influence of programmatic, organizational, and personalistic influences on citizens' relationship to the founder and his movement.

The chapter begins with a review of the three characteristics involved in the cultivation of deep, unmediated, and emotional ties between the charismatic leaders and their followers. I then illustrate how Chávez took advantage of objective circumstances and his own alluring traits to fulfill these conditions and establish powerful, resilient bonds with his supporters. Next, I contrast the charismatic mechanism of attachment with programmatic and organizational mechanisms, indicating how the former overpowered the latter two to shape citizens' attachments to Chavismo. To carry out this analysis, I rely on secondary research as well as information from elite interviews, direct observation, and archival research that I conducted during a combined four months of fieldwork in Caracas, Venezuela in 2014 and 2015.

I complement this qualitative examination with a quantitative analysis of the competing factors involved in citizens' attachments to the movement. Using an important survey conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) in 2007, at the height of Chávez's rule, I demonstrate the overwhelming influence of personalistic, rather than programmatic or organizational, factors on citizens' ties to the movement. Building on these findings, chapter five uses evidence from focus groups I conducted with followers to assess why they remained loyal to the movement *after* the death of the founder. This analysis sheds light on how the followers' charismatic attachments

developed into a resilient identity rather than transforming into routinized political linkages.

ESTABLISHING CHARISMATIC ATTACHMENTS

How do leaders foster direct, deeply affective attachments with voters to generate loyalty to their movements? As outlined in the previous chapter, I argue that leaders achieve this by fulfilling three conditions. For each condition, contextual factors interact with subjective leader traits to shape citizens' attraction to the leader and cultivate fervent ties to his movement. While citizens' initial attraction to the leader helps form these ties, I argue that it is the latter outcome—the process of bonding with the leader's *movement*—that is especially important for shaping the trajectory of the movement and its impact on democratic development.

To begin, I argue that the leader must reach out directly to citizens who feel that mainstream society has forgotten them. Due to feelings of suffering and perceived exclusion, these individuals become convinced that the political establishment has no interest in them. Thus, they look for a distinct and impressive political outsider who appears willing and able to address their long-neglected needs (Madsen and Snow 1991, 12-15). A crisis that causes disproportionate misery can accentuate these citizens' desperation for a savior; a cunning leader, in turn, can take advantage of this opportunity to portray himself as the hero that people crave (Weyland 2003, 843).

Importantly, to cultivate charismatic attachments, the leader does not merely recognize and promise to resolve the people's suffering. Rather, he must fulfill a second

condition: he must demonstrate his ability to recognize and resolve their misery as well as defend them against the “evil” forces blamed for their distress. To do so, the leader must enact bold policies that quickly produce tangible, impressive results (Weber 1979, 242; Pappas 2012, 4-5). Whereas direct recognition provides marginalized citizens with hope for a more dignified life, the leader’s daring performance convinces them that he is capable of delivering on this promise.

Finally, the leader cements his charismatic image and consolidates a loyal following by crafting a narrative that reinforces his superhuman power, intrepid quest to vanquish the people’s enemies, and commitment to transforming society. To ensure that the narrative resonates with his followers, the leader ties it to relevant cultural figures and symbols (Willner and Willner 1965, 82). He also ensures widespread dissemination of the narrative by infusing public spaces with the movement’s symbols and reinforcing key components of the narrative via frequent, unmediated interactions with his followers (Plotkin 2002, 24; Zúquete 2008, 93-103). Together, these actions help the leader establish direct, deeply emotional connections with his followers.

CHARISMATIC ATTACHMENTS IN CHÁVEZ’S VENEZUELA

Direct Recognition of Marginalized Citizens

Chávez’s leadership in Venezuela embodied all three components of the charismatic mechanism, suggesting that it formed the foundation for citizens’ loyalty to his movement. First, he directly recognized and politically incorporated masses of impoverished citizens. During the 1980s and 1990s, just prior to Chávez’s rise to power,

Venezuelans endured widespread suffering due to numerous social and economic problems, including a sustained economic decline after the oil boom of the mid-1970s (Mainwaring 2012, 956). Even more important than objective conditions of crisis, many scholars indicate that the parties and politicians of the day, which belonged collectively to the Punto Fijo regime, adopted increasingly unpopular policies and became mired in public corruption scandals (Lupu 2014; Maingon 2004; Mainwaring 2014; Morgan 2011; Seawright 2012; Weyland 2003). Consequently, voters came to feel unrepresented and thoroughly neglected by virtually all establishment parties and politicians. This was especially true of poor voters, who suffered disproportionately during the crisis (Smilde 2011, 5).

In the years leading up to his first presidential candidacy in 1998, Chávez recognized Venezuelans' widespread feelings of exclusion and suffering presented an important political opportunity. Unlike politicians from across the ideological spectrum who came to support widely unpopular neoliberal policies in order to resolve the crisis, Chávez—who made his political debut through an attempted coup in 1992—publicly empathized with the people's intense frustration and misery (Roberts 2013, 1434-1440). As a result, poor citizens came to see Chávez as the *only* leader capable of understanding and resolving their suffering. A Chavista activist illustrated this sentiment in an interview with the author. Unlike politicians from the Punto Fijo regime, who remained preoccupied with their “elite intellectualism...Chávez made the poor and invisible people

visible.”¹⁴ Similarly, a prominent opposition politician stated that Chávez’s open recognition of people’s feelings of suffering and marginalization resonated deeply with them. The politician said, “Chávez understood the people’s accumulated frustration. The people didn’t feel valued [by other politicians]; Chávez made them feel recognized.”¹⁵

Throughout his presidency, Chávez publicly identified his followers’ suffering and reinforced his role as their savior. A speech by the founder on January 10, 2003 illustrates how he claimed personal responsibility for poor and excluded groups:

...Make no mistake about Hugo Chávez...in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic and my powers as Chief of State and my responsibilities as President of the Republic, I cannot permit that people die of hunger; I cannot permit that children die because there isn’t medicine or there isn’t milk; I cannot permit that the people drown of hunger and death. Above all things it is my responsibility in front of God and the flag to defend the Venezuelan people, above all things and as dictated by the Bolivarian Constitution! (Chávez 2003).

By promising to single-handedly protect his people from hunger, disease, and death—maladies they suffered at the hand of his predecessors—Chávez illustrated how he sought to personally acknowledge and incorporate excluded sectors of the population into the center of political life. This recognition proved tremendously successful in laying the

¹⁴ Author interview with a Chavista activist and journalist, October 24, 2015. Due to the dangerous political climate in Venezuela, all interviews conducted in the country have been anonymized to protect the interviewees.

¹⁵ Author interview with a National Deputy and member of the political party *Voluntad Popular*, September 25, 2015.

foundation for many poor citizens' devotion to Chávez. Indeed, it consolidated their "powerful belief in the ability of the leader to provide transcendence and moral-political renewal" (Hawkins et al. 2011, 187).

Approbation of Heroic Powers through Bold Reforms

To substantiate his claim to rescue the people from their misery, Chávez implemented a series of daring reforms that promised to sweep away the malevolent "political class" and bring peace and prosperity to the masses. He established what would become the cornerstone for all of these reforms—a new constitution—immediately after assuming the presidency. During his 1998 presidential campaign, Chávez vowed to enact this constitution to break away from the corrupt Punto Fijo regime, protect Venezuelans' socioeconomic rights, and enhance their direct participation in politics. After his victory, in his inaugural speech in February 1999, the new president declared what would become a celebrated refrain among his followers: "I swear before God, before the Country, before my people that over this moribund Constitution, I will enact the democratic transformations necessary for the Republic to have a Magna Carta that fits with the new times. I swear" (Chávez 1999). On December 15, 1999, the referendum on the new constitution passed with 72 percent support.

The swiftness and thoroughness with which Chávez oversaw the construction of a new, far-reaching, and dramatically popular constitution made him appear truly heroic in the eyes his supporters. Several prior leaders, including Jaime Lusinchi (1984-1989) and Rafael Caldera (1994-1999), who had promised similar constitutional reforms, had failed

to follow through (López Maya and Lander 2011, 58). In contrast, Chávez made good on his vow by installing a new and transformative Magna Carta immediately after assuming office.

The new constitution outlined a series of ambitious and unprecedented objectives, further demonstrating Chávez's extraordinary capacities to provide the suffering followers with material prosperity and spiritual transcendence (Hawkins 2010, 35). For instance, in addition to representative democratic institutions, it created new participatory institutions, including electoral and civil branches to be overseen by the National Electoral Council and the Defender of the People, respectively. The constitution also moved beyond basic political and civil rights to proclaim economic and social inclusion for all citizens. To achieve this vision of inclusion and equality, Chávez endeavored not only to redistribute wealth, but also to fundamentally "reestablish the human condition" (López Maya and Lander 2011, 63). By ratifying his new constitution in the first year of his presidency, Chávez boldly signaled his intention to fundamentally transform Venezuela.

Inspired by the success of his new constitution, Chávez implemented several programs that achieved impressive initial success and thus further demonstrated his extraordinary capacities to his supporters. For example, starting in November 2001, the leader enacted an unprecedented program of land reform through the Law of Land and Agricultural Development and Decree 1.666. This program established a series of Rural and Urban Land Committees through which poor citizens could "exercise their right of property" and thus achieve socioeconomic inclusion, as envisioned by the new

constitution (López Maya and Lander 2011, 65). By 2005, 6,000 Urban Land Committees incorporating nearly one quarter of poor Venezuelans had been established (*ibid*, 66).

Despite the early success of the new constitution and the policies it inspired, however, several problems emerged that went unaddressed. Consequently, the striking initial impact of these reforms began to deteriorate just a few years after their implementation. For example, the new participatory institutions, purportedly designed to empower ordinary citizens, leaned heavily on Chávez's personal leadership and thus served to concentrate his executive authority rather than providing ordinary citizens with a direct, independent role in the political process (Ellner 2011, 431-32; López Maya and Lander 2011, 60). Similarly, the land reform policies lacked mechanisms of regulation and enforcement, resulting in violent conflict between landowners and peasants after the establishment of Rural Land Committees (*ibid*, 65-66). Additionally, Urban Land Committees, while initially successful in mobilizing the urban poor, became increasingly dependent on the Chávez regime for resources, strengthening a hierarchical structure while undermining the autonomy of local committee members (*ibid*, 67).

As these examples indicate, though Chávez's constitution made sweeping promises to promote participatory democracy and social justice, the programs allegedly designed to achieve these objectives fell short and even contradicted values of political participation and social inclusion. Yet rather than acknowledging these shortcomings, Chávez continually papered over them with new, equally bold and unrealistic measures, which he delivered through spontaneous executive decrees and "organic laws" rushed through the National Assembly (López Maya 2016, 211). The audacity and seemingly

direct delivery of these gestures only reinforced Chávez's valiant image in the eyes of his supporters. As a policy coordinator from the Central Bank of Venezuela described, "Chávez was a magician who created the illusion of progress."¹⁶ While unrealistic and irresponsible, the initial, tangible effects of his daring policies—embodied by his ambitious new constitution—"proved" his extraordinariness in the eyes of the followers and made him worthy of their devotion.

Construction of a Symbolic Narrative

To solidify his charismatic bonds with the people and consolidate the transformative power of his movement, Chávez cultivated a vivid narrative with three key characteristics. First, the narrative employed "missionary" rhetoric that glorified Chávez's image and tied him to classic heroes embedded in Venezuelan culture, including Simón Bolívar, Venezuela's nineteenth-century liberator, Ezequiel Zamora, the hero of Venezuela's Federal War, and even Christ (Zúquete 2008, 97). The comparison with familiar, beloved heroes cast a saintly glow on Chávez's figure and imbued his mission with profound historical importance. In fact, the very labeling of his movement as "Bolivarian" suggested to his followers that Chávez did not merely seek to improve their lives, but that he also sought to "reclaim the dignity of the people, of the country, and of the supposedly better past, the mystical, glorious and heroic path that Venezuela always associated with the figure of Bolívar" (Martínez Meucci and De Lustgarten 2014, 23). This association with Venezuela's long-celebrated hero caused Chávez's followers

¹⁶ Author interview with an economic policy coordinator from the Central Bank of Venezuela, October 22, 2015.

to worship him like a deity. As a Professor of Social and Cultural Studies at the Bolivarian University of Venezuela passionately proclaimed two years after the leader's death, "Chávez is on the altar with the saints!"¹⁷

Second, while cultivating his image as a hero of historic proportions, Chávez's narrative also demonized his opponents. In contrast with his followers, whom he affectionately called "patriots" and "soldiers," Chávez referred to his adversaries as "enemies," "coup-plotters," "imperialists," and agents of the "extreme right." For example, he declared in a speech in 2003, "this is not about the pro-Chávez against the anti-Chávez...but...the patriots against the enemies of the homeland" (Zúquete 2008, 105). This establishment of an all-out war against a "clear-cut enemy" helped promote cohesion among Chávez's followers by convincing them that their beloved leader's critics posed a grave, even existential, threat (Huddy 2001, 150). As explained by the Bolivarian University professor, "Under threats from the extreme right, Chávez would unify the people, so there was not dispersion." In addition to strengthening cohesion among his followers, this strategy made Chávez appear even more charismatic and provided him with a convenient scapegoat to blame for drops in performance.

Third, Chávez's narrative generated a mission that promised not only to vanquish evil opponents, but also to emancipate the followers from their suffering by bringing

¹⁷ Author interview with a professor of social and cultural studies at the Bolivarian University of Venezuela, October 14, 2015. Chávez established this university by decree in 2003 as part of the Sucre mission (D'Elía and Maingon 2009, 5). Although its stated mission is to provide free, post-secondary education to Venezuelan citizens, Chávez founded the university to deepen his charismatic attachments with his followers. Since his death, the university has devoted itself to commemorating his charismatic legacy.

about a holistic transformation of society. In contrast to “small, pragmatic changes to an already existing political system,” the mission envisioned a “rebirth” of Venezuela (Zúquete 2008, 112). The urgency of this all-encompassing agenda left no time or space for questions from hesitant observers. Rather, Chávez emphasized that successful transformation demanded the absolute faith of his followers; those who failed to demonstrate this commitment would suffer dire consequences. As Zúquete states, “To stress this need for a radical transformation of the country, Chávez’s discourse gain[ed] an apocalyptic dimension in which the survival of the country and even the world seem[ed] to be in question.” A Chavista activist and journalist further stressed, “the transformation cannot happen without the followers; we need their faith in Chávez.”¹⁸

To build his symbolic narrative, Chávez established constant, direct communication with his followers through speeches and other performances that dominated media outlets. As the journalist explained, Chávez was a “communicational genius who started a revolution through the media.” The star of his own weekly television show, “Aló Presidente,” he spoke directly into the camera for hours, giving his followers the impression of having an intimate conversation with their president (Capriles 2012, 60; Carroll 2013, 15-18; Zúquete 2008, 100). Moreover, he frequently interrupted radio and television programs to make “emergency” announcements (*cadenas*) and reinforce the perception of his omnipresence in Venezuelans’ lives (Carroll 2013, 24). As a palace historian and archivist for Chávez described, the founder also traveled tirelessly

¹⁸ Author interview with Chavista activist, journalist at Venezolana de Televisión, and former communications official at the Ministry of Tourism, October 2, 2015.

around the country to personally connect with his followers, both during and between electoral campaigns.¹⁹

In addition to ensuring frequent and direct communication with his followers, Chávez strengthened his narrative by tightening his control over the media and saturating public spaces with symbols that glorified him and his movement. For example, Chávez's government purchased or intimidated opposing news outlets by cutting funding, revoking licenses, and constricting the availability of material supplies (Weyland 2013, 19, 23-4). This left the movement with unencumbered space to project the narrative through media platforms ranging from television to radio to print. The leader also took literal and symbolic ownership of traditional Venezuelan literature, art, and music. His regime sponsored literature, film, art, and music festivals and enjoyed the support of authors, musicians, and artists who fervently dedicated their work to the *Comandante*. Lastly, the movement filled physical spaces with Bolivarian symbols in the form of posters, murals, statues, buildings, colors, and songs that glorified the founder and his heroic predecessors. For example, Figure 4 displays a mural depicting Chávez with Bolívar and Christ (Ramirez 2014). When combined with his recognition of previously excluded citizens and his implementation of bold reforms, the omnipresence of Chávez's narrative transformed Chavismo into "a charismatic form of political religion" to which his followers became deeply attached (Zúquete 2008, 92).

¹⁹ Author interview with palace archivist and historian for Chávez, October 17, 2015.

In sum, Chávez formed steadfast charismatic bonds with his followers by fulfilling three conditions. First, he directly recognized the suffering of marginalized citizens and promised to rescue them from their misery. Second, he proved his ability to follow through on this promise by implementing bold reforms that made an impressive initial impact on followers' lives, such as a radical new constitution. Third, he established a compelling narrative that tied his heroic leadership to Venezuelan culture, underscored the dangerous threat posed by his opponents, and reinforced his mission to provide transcendence by bringing about a profound transformation of society.

Figure 4. Mural of Chávez, Christ, and Bolívar



Source: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2014-03-05/5-myths-about-venezuela-crisis>. Photo by Leo Ramirez.

ASSESSING THE RELEVANCE OF ALTERNATIVE LINKAGE TYPES

The preceding section outlined the conditions under which personalistic attachments form and demonstrated the role of these ties in Chávez's Bolivarian movement. Yet evaluating the impact of personalism also requires analysis of competing linkage types. The present section assesses the extent to which followers developed alternative forms of attachment to Chavismo rooted in programmatic and organizational mechanisms and demonstrates how charismatic bonds overwhelmed these more conventional linkage types.

Programmatic Attachments

The programmatic mechanism suggests that citizens' attachments rest on the substantive coherence of the leader's policies. Grounded in long-standing studies of issue preferences, retrospective and prospective economic voting, and partisanship, most scholars assume that this mechanism forms the natural and proper core of party and electoral politics (e.g., Achen 2002; Downs 1957; Fiorina 1981; Key 1996). To develop programmatic ties, citizens must have well-formed issue preferences that align with the leader's policies (Key 1966, 7-8). In addition, the leader must *consistently* and *successfully* carry out these policies to earn voters' approval and establish a clear programmatic trademark that is distinct from that of other parties (Fiorina 1981, 66). In contrast to bold, shortsighted reforms, whose initially impressive performance casts the individual leader in a heroic light, the programmatic trademark rests on the substantive content and steady functioning of social and economic policies. Citizens "periodically update" their attachment to the movement based on the leader's adherence to this

trademark (Kitschelt 2000, 846). If the leader fails to implement distinctive and effective policies that are consistent with this trademark, citizens punish him and reduce their attachment to the movement (Achen 2002, 151; Lupu 2013, 52).

Several scholars claim that Chávez developed a programmatic trademark that emphasized state-centered economics and redistributive social programs called missions. To begin, Chávez attempted to increase the state's role in the economy. For instance, he tightened government control over the state-run oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), by ratifying the New Organic Hydrocarbon Law in 2001 (Parker 2005, 44). Shortly thereafter, he nationalized dozens of non-oil companies and implemented a sweeping Land Reform Law. He also eventually imposed strict currency exchange and price controls to counteract inflation and keep consumer goods affordable (Corrales and Penfold 2015, 64).

However, Chávez did not stake out a clear position on economic policy until late 2001, well after he had consolidated widespread popular support. Upon taking office, he confirmed his center-right predecessor's minister of finance, Maritza Izaguirre, and appeased the International Monetary Fund by cutting the state's budget by 7 percent and strengthening the Investment Fund for Macroeconomic Stabilization (Corrales and Penfold 2015p 48-55). Despite these economically liberal policies, which contrasted sharply with his later turn to "socialism of the 21st century," Chávez's movement cultivated impressive popular support: in 1999 and 2000, between 38 and 41 percent of Venezuelans claimed to identify with the movement, and 75 to 84 percent approved of Chávez's performance (Consultores 21, 2014).

By late 2001, Chávez began to advertise and implement state-centered policies that were inspired by his new constitution. While many of these programs achieved impressive results at the outset, their performance soon dropped, providing little foundation for programmatic support. For example, though booming oil prices from late 2003 to 2008 facilitated substantial economic growth, Chávez's protectionist economic policies failed to stimulate investment and instead invited rampant corruption (Ellner 2010, 88-91; Corrales and Penfold 2015, 70). Thus, production in non-oil sectors declined, leading to sharp rises in imported goods; investment in infrastructure lagged, generating electricity and water shortages; and price and exchange controls caused increasing inflation, a rising black-market exchange rate, consumer goods shortages, and capital flight. The economy contracted by 3.3 percent of GDP when oil prices fell in 2009, and in 2010, Chávez was forced to devalue the local currency sharply (Corrales and Penfold 2015, 63-70). The ultimate failure of these policies and the resulting inflation and shortages disproportionately affected low-income citizens, many of whom were strong supporters of Chavismo.

Rather than blaming Chávez for these policy failures, however, his followers tended to blame opposition actors whom his narrative labeled as enemies of his revolution, including “imperial powers” like the United States and local agents of the “extreme right” (Zúquete 2008, 104-107). This underscores the power of Chávez’s symbolic narrative, which glorified his leadership and demonized his opponents. Moreover, it suggests that citizens’ loyalty to his movement was not rooted in the substantive content and consistent performance of his economic programs.

In addition to state-centered economics, the Chávez implemented dozens of redistributive social “missions.” Beginning with their launch in 2003, Chávez poured billions of petro-dollars into these programs in areas ranging from health care to information technology (Maingon 2016, 20). The most prominent missions sought to reduce poverty and inequality through better provision of food, health care, education, and housing. Through these programs, Chávez appeared to prioritize objectives of equality and social justice showcased in his new constitution.

Yet like his economic policies, Chávez’s social missions suffered from serious problems. The missions sprang up via presidential decree in a rapid, improvisational, and politicized manner that undercut their sustainability. Consequently, they failed to perform favorably after their first few years of operation. While poverty declined from 2003 to 2006, the trend stagnated from 2007 to 2012 and began to reverse thereafter (Ellner 2011, 433-438; Aponte 2014, 153; Maingon 2016, 119-120). By 2014, poverty had risen to 48.4 percent, surpassing 1998 levels by over 3 percentage points (España 2014, 4). Finally, despite the missions’ rapid initial growth, a 2014 survey indicates that a mere 10 percent of citizens report having benefitted from them, suggesting a failure to sustainably reduce poverty and protect Venezuelans’ socioeconomic rights (Aponte 2014 168; España 2014, 8). Thus, it is more likely that followers’ fervent approval of Chávez’s programs throughout this period arose from “lingering beliefs in [his] charisma” than from the substantive integrity of his policies (Merolla and Zechmeister 2011, 29).

In short, the superficial nature and volatile performance of Chávez’s economic and social policies indicates his preference for dramatic reform over programmatic

development. Though he promised to establish economic and social inclusion in Venezuela, his policies' delayed implementation and ultimately negative performance made for a weak programmatic trademark. Most importantly, the bold, hasty application and short-lived success of these policies prioritized the establishment of Chávez's savior-like image at the expense of medium- and long-term effectiveness. Consequently, while deepening followers' affective ties to Chávez, these policies held little appeal for programmatically principled voters. Moreover, the delayed application of Chávez's policies cannot account for the movement's widespread support during his first three years in office. These factors demonstrate how personalism infused Chávez's policy agenda and compromised the development of programmatic linkages.

Organizational Attachments

The organizational mechanism suggests that political attachments rest on the ties people cultivate with each other through local involvement in movement-affiliated activities and groups. Through these ties, citizens foster an enduring group identity that is maintained via involvement in the movement's social clubs, neighborhood associations, and political organizations (Granovetter 1973; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Building this type of bond requires the followers' *widespread* and *regular* participation. The movement's organizations must also be sustained and strengthened over time and must maintain a "horizontal" rather than hierarchical character to inspire group members' feelings of efficacy (Ellner 2011, 430-431; Rhodes-Purdy 2015, 423-424). Unlike charismatic attachments, in which followers' sense of belonging comes directly from the

leader, the organizational mechanism suggests that the followers ease their feelings of exclusion in a bottom-up fashion by interacting with each other.

Chávez promoted the organizational dynamic of his movement and even enshrined citizen participation in the 1999 constitution as a necessary condition for democracy (García-Guadilla 2012, 220). Early in his presidency, he launched several community-based organizations aimed at placing governance into the hands of the people, including Urban Land Committees, Health Committees, Technical Roundtables for Water, and Bolivarian Circles (Aponte 2014; López Maya and Lander 2011). In 2006, he appeared to strengthen this initiative by establishing the Communal Councils (CCs). Officially registered, neighborhood-level groups consisting of 200 to 400 families, the CCs were intended to be self-governing: they would elect representatives, run their own meetings, and solicit funds directly from the government to resolve problems (Aponte 2014, 264).

In practice, however, this network failed to cultivate genuine organizational ties to the movement. First, citizen participation in the CCs was neither widespread nor regular. A 2005-2007 survey of poor Venezuelans by Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (UCAB) suggests that only 29 percent had ever participated in a community event, while only 7 percent had participated in a CC (Aponte 2014, 260). Among the few citizens who participated in CCs, a 2008 survey by Centro Gumilla indicates that less than 50 percent regularly attended meetings (Machado 2009, 48-49). Second, the poor infrastructure of these groups compromised followers' ability to develop a strong grassroots network. Chávez's sluggish and haphazard institutionalization of the CCs reflects this weakness:

he did not legally recognize them through the Law of Communal Councils until 2006, and he neglected to establish a government ministry to oversee them until 2010 (Aponte 2014, 264). By 2012, in a famous speech titled “Changing Course” (*Golpe de Timón*), Chávez angrily acknowledged the weakness of his movement’s grassroots spirit (Chávez 2012). Third, much evidence indicates that the CCs functioned in a hierarchical fashion. In many CCs, a mere handful of members remained active, and leaders often served as party bosses rather than local representatives, usurping control over projects and funds at the expense of other residents (García-Guadilla 2012, 227-235). Perhaps as a result, a 2009 survey by Centro Gumilla suggests 76 percent of Venezuelans perceived CCs as corrupt, while 77 percent agreed that CCs did not involve most members of their community (Machado 2009, 37; Aponte 2014, 271).

Ultimately, the evidence suggests the CCs did not foster genuine grassroots empowerment. While Chávez extolled the virtues of participatory democracy and made dramatic (if irregular) efforts to establish community organizations, these groups suffered low participation rates and severe institutional weaknesses. Outspoken leaders dominated many CCs and bred distrust rather than a genuine participatory spirit. Moreover, citizens’ feelings of recognition and inclusion depended more on their devotion to Chávez than their involvement in community affairs. Indeed, while followers praised Chávez for giving them a voice in politics, they did not exercise that voice in practice through involvement in the movement’s participatory organizations. It is therefore unlikely that swaths of followers developed strong attachments to Chavismo based on an organizational mechanism. The following section marshals quantitative evidence to

demonstrate the disproportionate impact of charisma on citizens' lasting commitment to the movement relative to programmatic and organizational factors.

A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF COMPETING ATTACHMENT MECHANISMS

I draw from a nationally representative survey conducted in 2007 by the Latin American Public Opinion Project to quantitatively investigate the impact of charisma on citizens' attachments to Chavismo relative to programmatic and organizational factors. The survey contains relevant questions for all aspects of my analysis, including attachment to the movement (dependent variable); evaluation of economic and social policies (programmatic independent variables); participation in the Bolivarian CCs (organizational independent variable); and perceptions of Chávez's charisma (personalistic independent variable). In addition, the survey was fielded in August and September of 2007, shortly after Chávez's second reelection. By that time, voters had several years to experience and evaluate both programmatic and grassroots components of Chávez's movement, including the social missions and CCs. The survey thus allows for an important analysis of the personalistic mechanism's relative strength at a crucial point during Chávez's rule.

The Dependent Variable

I construct the dependent variable—attachment to Chavismo—using a question on respondents' party identification. Political scientists have long understood party identification as a genuine expression of membership in or attachment to a political group (Campbell 1980; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Lupu 2013). Venezuelans'

identification with Chavista-affiliated parties therefore captures their self-perceived political ties more adequately than vote choice, which can result from a range of factors extending beyond attachment to the movement. I create a dichotomous measure of attachment where citizens who identify with one of three party labels connected to Chávez's movement—Movement of the Fifth Republic (MVR), Fatherland for All (PPT), or the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV)—are considered “attached” while citizens who do not are considered “not attached.”²⁰ 23 percent of all respondents express attachment to these parties, while just fewer than nine percent identify with non-Chavista parties. Due to the weakly institutionalized nature of Chavismo, measuring identification with associated parties likely underestimates the number of Venezuelans attached to the broader movement. Nevertheless, I use this measure because the survey does not ask about attachment to the movement per se—and I assume that citizens who identify with affiliated parties have genuine attachments to the movement as well.²¹

The Independent Variables

I select several survey items as independent variables to represent the three attachment mechanisms. For the charismatic mechanism, I incorporate a five-question battery on perceptions of Chávez's charisma developed by Merolla and Zechmeister (2011).²² This focus on citizens' perceptions of the leader, rather than “objective”

²⁰ The Fatherland for All party was not explicitly part of Chavismo, but was allied with the movement during Chávez's rule.

²¹ See Merolla and Zechmeister (2011, 40) for a similar coding strategy.

²² Merolla and Zechmeister (2011) developed the charisma battery based on a larger set of questions from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire—5X Long Form, which was first introduced in the United States, and have used the battery to assess citizens' perceptions of charisma in Mexico and Venezuela.

personality traits, captures the subjective dynamic of charismatic authority (Weber 1979, 242). As shown previously in this chapter, the factors underlying the charismatic mechanism—direct recognition, bold reforms, and the symbolic narrative—also serve to increase perceptions of the leader’s charisma, suggesting the validity of the measure. Though many successful leaders are perceived as charismatic, scholars have stressed that, relative to other Latin American presidents, perceptions of Chávez’s charisma were uniquely high throughout his tenure (Weyland 2003, 822; Zúquete 2008, 91; Hawkins 2010, 37-8; Merolla and Zechmeister 2011, 37-8). Furthermore, while related to party attachment, leader approval, and vote choice, charismatic perceptions remain a theoretically and empirically distinct concept.²³

The questions in the LAPOP charisma battery ask respondents to report on a four-point scale the extent to which they agree about five statements: (1) Chávez articulates a compelling vision of the future, (2) Chávez instills pride in being associated with him, (3) Chávez’s actions build my respect for him, (4) Chávez considers the moral and ethical consequences of his decisions, and (5) Chávez goes beyond his own self-interest for the good of the group (Merolla and Zechmeister 2011, 37). I add and rescale these items to

²³ To validate charisma’s conceptual distinctiveness, Merolla and Zechmeister use the 2007 LAPOP survey to predict presidential approval with charisma, party identification, ideology, and performance evaluations (2011, 51). Though charisma has a strong, significant effect on presidential approval, “these effects do not drown out the influence of other key factors.” Moreover, while the correlation between charisma, presidential approval, and vote choice are moderately high, they are “far from perfect,” indicating the empirical distinctiveness of the charisma battery.

create a continuous score of Chávez's charisma ranging from zero (not at all charismatic) to one (very charismatic).²⁴

For the programmatic mechanism, I first include survey items that gauge respondents' perceptions of Chávez's economic performance. Following Merolla and Zechmeister (2011), I combine four questions—on current and retrospective evaluations of the economy at the national and personal levels—into a single variable using factor analysis, then rescale the variable to range from zero (bad) to one (good). It is important to note that this indicator does not exclusively reflect the programmatic mechanism. Indeed, citizens could give positive evaluations because they approve of the regime's economic programs *or* because they perceive Chávez as a savior who makes good on his promise to rescue the people. As Merolla and Zechmeister suggest, “individuals who perceive Chávez as highly charismatic see Venezuela’s economy...through rose-colored glasses” (2011, 31). In other words, charismatic perceptions of Chávez may cause respondents to evaluate the economy more favorably. To examine this possibility, I run one set of models in which economic evaluations and charismatic perceptions are independent and a second set of models in which they are interacted. The interaction term will shed light on whether and how charismatic perceptions impact the effect of economic evaluations on citizens’ attachments to Chavismo.

²⁴ 84 percent of respondents answered all five questions in the battery while 11 percent only answered some of the questions. To include these respondents, I impute the mean of the items in the battery they answered onto the items they did not answer. The five items are highly correlated (Cronbach's alpha = 0.953), and the imputation does not produce significant differences in the mean charisma score for the entire sample (mean = .57, SE = .37 before imputation; mean = .55, SE = .36 after imputation).

In addition to economic performance, I incorporate two questions on respondents' assessments of Chávez's two largest social missions to measure the strength of the programmatic mechanism—the health mission (*Barrio Adentro*) and the food mission (*Mercal*). I add these evaluations and rescale the sum to range from zero (bad) to one (good). Incorporating these variables cuts the sample size by over half (N=641) because only about 50 and 70 percent of respondents report having used the health and food missions, respectively. To address this issue, one set of models examines whether respondents accessed these missions in the first place, while a second set explores the subsample of respondents who report having used both missions. Whereas the former variable measures access to the missions, which tends to be restricted based on partisanship (Hawkins, Rosas, and Johnson 2011), the latter more closely reflects citizens' substantive evaluation of those programs.

To measure the influence of participation in movement-affiliated organizations on attachment to Chavismo, I incorporate a question about respondents' involvement in the Communal Councils. Because the CCs represent the movement's central network of participatory organizations, respondents with organizational ties should report extensive involvement in these groups. I rescale a four-point scale in which one is "never" and four is "every week" to range from zero (low) to one (high).

Finally, I incorporate four control variables thought to influence citizens' identification with Chavismo: socioeconomic status, education, age, and gender.²⁵ Table

²⁵ I construct a weighted index of household assets to measure socioeconomic status to reduce the non-response bias associated with questions on respondents' income (Córdova 2009).

1 displays descriptive statistics for the key dependent and independent variables for both surveys. Additional information on the survey can be found in the online appendix.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables

Variable	Scale	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Attachment to Chavismo*	0-1	1510	0.23	0.42
Charismatic Perceptions	0-1	1438	0.55	0.36
Economic Evaluations	0-1	1474	0.50	0.22
Mission Recipient	0-1	1510	0.60	0.39
Evaluation of Missions	0-1	641	0.84	0.21
Communal Council Participation	0-1	1495	0.25	0.36
Socioeconomic Status	0-1	1510	0.58	0.24
Education (years)	0-20	1509	10.50	4.45
Age	18-89	1510	36.27	14.06
Female*	0-1	1510	0.50	0.50
Urban*	0-1	1510	0.95	0.21

*The proportion rather than the mean is given for dichotomous variables.

In total, I analyze four binary logistic regression models. Models A and C include the variable on access to the missions and thus include most respondents (N=1326). Models B and D replace this variable with one on substantive evaluation of the missions among those who accessed them (N=579). Finally, Models A and B treat charismatic perceptions and economic evaluations independently, whereas Models C and D interact the two variables. The next section discusses the results based on these four models.

Results

The results (see Table 2) suggest the uniquely strong influence of charisma on citizens' attachments to Chavismo. Models A and B suggest that charismatic perceptions have a statistically significant and substantively large impact on citizens' ties to the movement. In the unrestricted sample (Model A), respondents who perceive Chávez as extremely charismatic (score of one) are 47 percentage points more likely to express attachment than those who find Chávez extremely uncharismatic (score of zero), holding the remaining independent variables constant at their means. Among mission users (Model B), this figure rises to 58 percentage points (see Figure 5).

In contrast, the programmatic and organizational variables are only weakly associated with attachments to the movement. Models A and B suggest that economic performance does not have a significant, independent impact on Bolivarian attachment. Models C and D examine the potential interactive effect of charismatic perceptions and economic evaluations on attachment. Interpreting this effect requires visual examination of predicted probabilities (see Figure 6), as the statistical significance of interactions in nonlinear regression does not necessarily indicate a substantively meaningful effect (Brambor, Roberts, and Golder 2006, 73-4). Model C suggests there is no meaningful interactive effect: at different levels of charismatic perceptions, the influence of economic performance evaluations on attachment does not change significantly. However, Model D suggests that the interactive effect may have a small, negative effect among mission users: as charismatic perceptions of Chávez increase, the effect of performance evaluations on Bolivarian attachment decreases slightly. While this interaction appears

significant, its negative sign suggests that higher charismatic perceptions dampen the influence of performance evaluations, further indicating the power of charisma on citizens' attachments to the movement.

Table 2. Binary Logistic Regression Results

	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
Charismatic Perceptions	4.06*** (0.36)	3.74*** (0.49)	6.32*** (1.04)	6.65*** (1.51)
Economic Evaluations	0.79 (0.41)	0.52 (0.52)	4.26** (1.50)	4.85* (2.11)
Charismatic Perceptions *	--	--	-4.32* (1.77)	-5.30* (2.49)
Econ. Evaluations				
Mission Recipient	1.26*** (0.23)	--	1.25*** (0.23)	--
Evaluation of Missions	--	0.48 (0.53)	--	0.42 (0.53)
CC Participation	0.17 (0.20)	0.29 (0.25)	0.20 (0.20)	0.32 (0.25)
Socioeconomic Status	0.18 (0.33)	0.02 (0.43)	0.20 (0.33)	0.04 (0.43)
Education	0.05** (0.02)	0.07** (0.03)	0.05** (0.02)	0.07** (0.03)
Age	0.02** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)
Female	-0.19 (0.15)	-0.20 (0.19)	-0.19 (0.15)	-0.20 (0.19)
Urban	0.22 (0.35)	0.59 (0.47)	0.24 (0.35)	0.63 (0.47)
Intercept	-6.65*** (0.55)	-6.11*** (0.84)	-8.52*** (0.99)	-7.92*** (1.38)
N	1390	607	1390	607
Pseudo-r2	0.29	0.20	0.29	0.20

Standard errors shown in parentheses.

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Figure 5. Predicted Probability of Attachment at Different Levels of Charismatic Perceptions (95-percent confidence intervals shown).

Model A. All Respondents

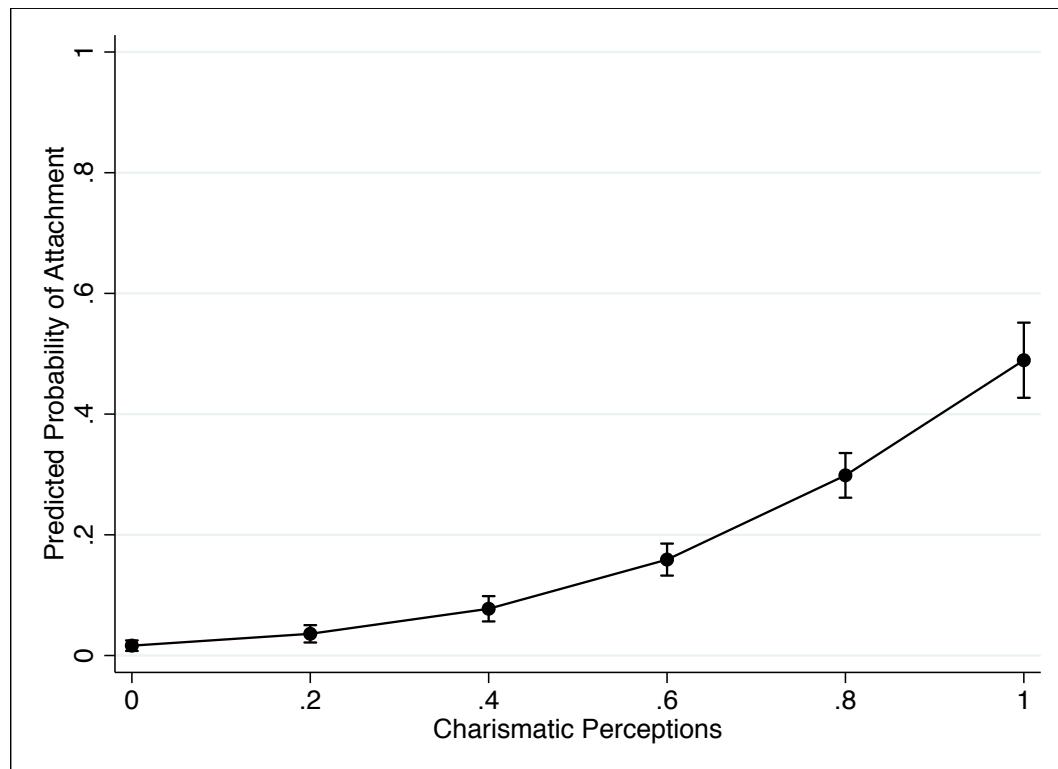


Figure 5, cont.

Model B. Mission Users

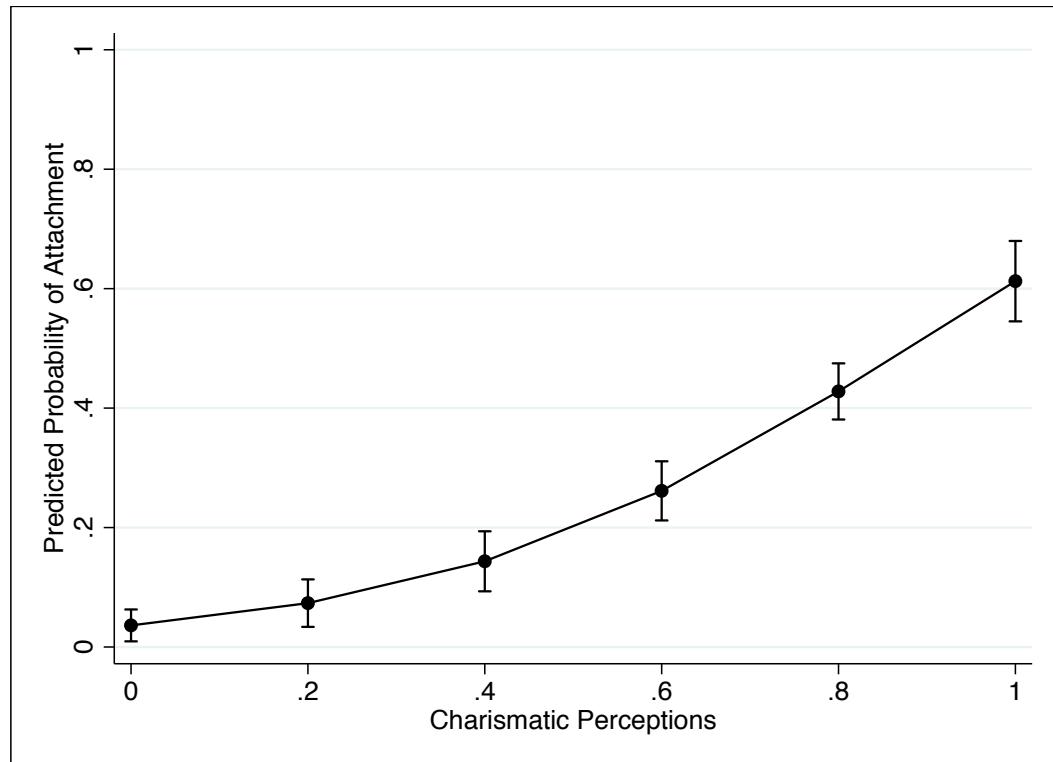


Figure 6. Effect of Economic Evaluations on Probability of Attachment at Different Levels of Charismatic Perceptions: Interactive Models (95-percent confidence intervals shown).

Model C. All Respondents

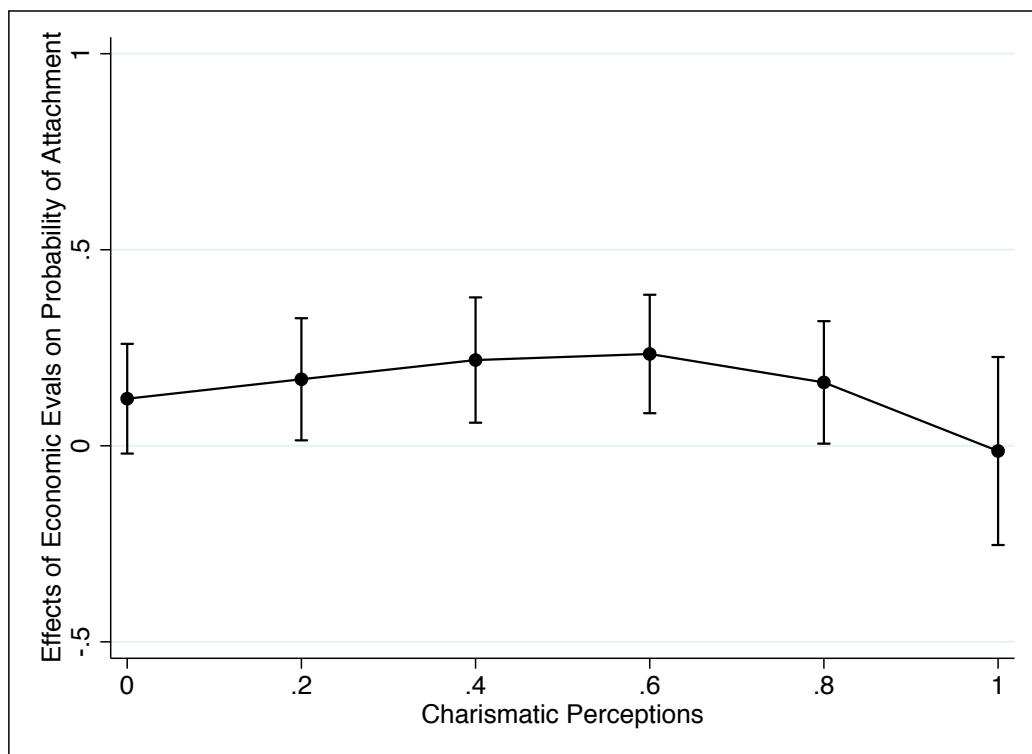
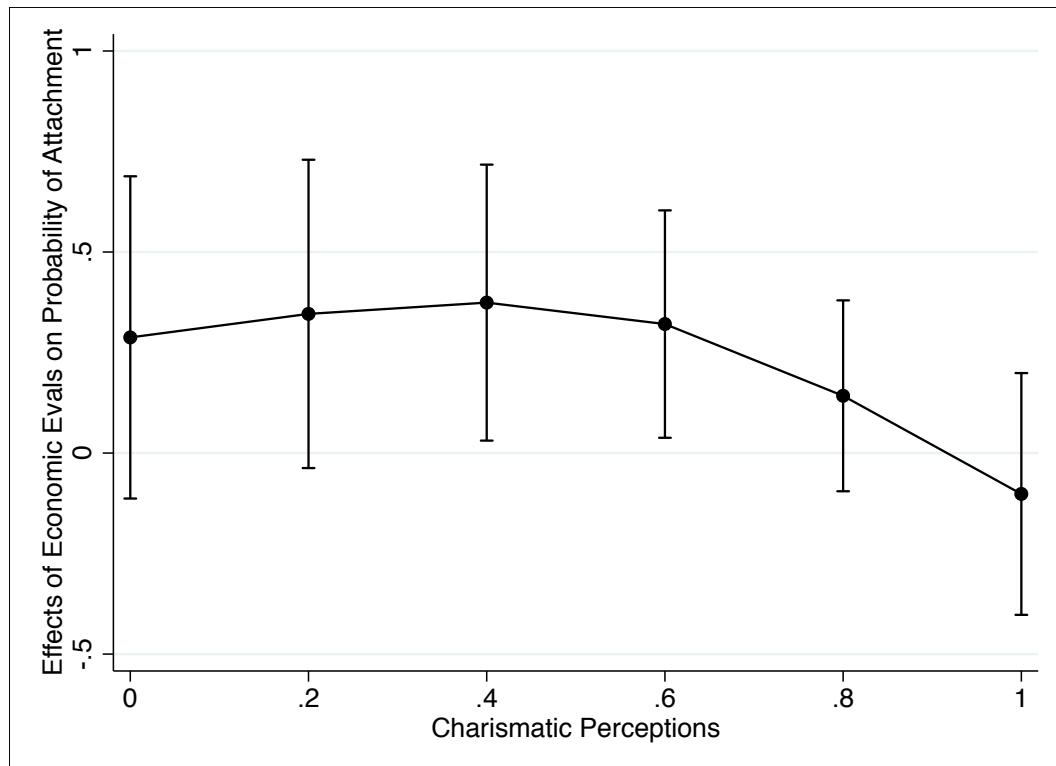


Figure 6, cont.

Model D. Mission Users



In terms of social programs, accessing benefits from one or both missions significantly increases the probability of expressing attachment to the movement. However, as discussed above, this does not necessarily suggest that the programmatic mechanism is at work. In fact, among mission users (Model B), substantive assessments of the missions have no significant effect, suggesting that the quality of these programs does not influence respondents' attachments. Finally, across all four models, participation

in the CCs has no significant association with attachment. These data indicate the relative weakness of the programmatic and grassroots mechanisms while further highlighting the strong effects of personalism on loyalty to the movement. Taken together, the four models suggest the relative insignificance of programmatic and organizational factors on Bolivarian attachments while highlighting the disproportionate influence of charismatic perceptions of Chávez.

To ensure the validity of the results, I explore two alternative explanations for the underwhelming effects of programmatic and organizational factors. First, in the additive models (A and B), multicollinearity between charismatic perceptions and the other independent variables could artificially inflate the significance of the former and depress that of the latter. However, the variance inflation factor (VIF) for charisma for both models is low (1.66 and 1.48, respectively), suggesting that multicollinearity does not account for the results.²⁶ Second, preference falsification may explain the insignificance of these variables. Specifically, respondents could feel pressured to evaluate Chávez's charisma more highly than they otherwise might. Yet citizens generally do not hesitate to express dissatisfaction with Chávez's regime. In fact, 17 percent of respondents perceive Chávez as completely uncharismatic and 56 percent rate his performance as mediocre, poor, or very poor. One would expect substantially higher approval ratings if preference falsification were at play. The remaining explanation suggests that citizens' intense

²⁶ Scholars suggest multicollinearity issues emerge when the VIF ranges from 2.5 (conservative) to 10 (lenient) (Allison 2012).

perceptions of Chávez's charisma are intimately linked with their attachment to his movement, while programmatic and organizational factors have notably weaker effects.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has investigated the mechanisms through which charismatic attachments form and overpower alternative forms of citizen-politician linkages. Recognition of historically marginalized citizens, daring yet short-lived policies, and a captivating symbolic narrative of redemption cause citizens to perceive the leader as intensely charismatic and solidify their deep, emotional attachments to the leader's movement. Moreover, the formation of such quasi-religious attachments undermine the development of programmatic and grassroots linkages. Charismatic leaders' need to demonstrate impressive performance compromises the effectiveness and sustainability of their policies, which weakens the programmatic mechanism of attachment. Additionally, the leaders' unmediated, top-down recognition of excluded sectors concentrates their personalistic authority and therefore undermines genuine grassroots participation.

I illustrate this argument focusing on the formation of citizens' attachments to Chavismo in Venezuela. Drawing on qualitative insights from secondary research and three months of fieldwork that I conducted in 2015, I demonstrate that Chávez expertly fulfilled the three conditions necessary for cultivating strong, charismatic attachments with his followers. Subsequently, using data from the 2007 LAPOP survey, I show that voters' perceptions of Chávez's charisma provided a stronger, more consistent foundation for their attachment to his movement than factors based on programmatic evaluation and

participation in Chavista organizations. Though Chávez proclaimed state-centered economics, redistributive social programs, and grassroots organizations as central to his movement, the results suggest his personal appeal eclipsed these factors. Indeed, most programmatic and organizational elements of Chavismo had no significant relationship with attachment to the movement; by contrast, citizens' perceptions of Chávez's charisma were strongly associated with their loyalty to the movement.

I contend that the process through which citizens' charismatic attachments form is crucial for understanding the resilience of those ties. The three conditions that help form those attachments do not only serve to establish the leader's initial popularity, but they also make it difficult for subsequent politicians to depersonalize those attachments when the founder disappears. The subsequent chapter draws on focus groups conducted with followers of Peronism and Chavismo to investigate how charismatic attachments, once formed, can develop into a resilient political identity that undermines efforts at routinization while setting the stage for the revival of the movement in personalistic form.

Chapter 4. The Survival of Charismatic Attachments

The previous chapter demonstrated the process through which the founder of a charismatic movement fosters powerful, direct, and emotional attachments with his followers. To do so, I indicated that the leader fulfills three conditions: he directly recognizes the people's suffering, implements bold policies to demonstrate his ability to resolve it, and crafts a symbolic narrative that praises his leadership as heroic, portrays opponents as malevolent, and proclaims his mission to transform society as sacred.

Existing studies of charisma confirm the importance of these conditions for the initial cultivation of charismatic attachments (e.g., Eisenstadt 1968; Madsen and Snow 1991; Pappas 2012; Shils 1965; Weber 1979; Willner and Willner 1965). Yet, in line with the routinization thesis, these studies claim that the *survival* of the attachments depends on the physical presence of the leader. Consequently, when charismatic leaders die, the literature concludes that citizens' attachments fade away. Studies of Peronism and Chavismo reflect this assumption. In Argentina, many scholars and strategists from across the political spectrum that citizens' affective attachments to Peronism have long since passed away.²⁷ In Venezuela, though Chávez died much more recently than Juan Perón, scholars—citing the disastrous performance of Chávez's handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro—have concluded citizens' deep, emotional ties to Chavismo are fading (López Maya 2014, 2016; Denis 2015).²⁸

²⁷ Several academics and political advisers voiced this opinion in interviews with the author, including three advisers from the Cristina Kirchner administration, two Peronist analysts unaffiliated with Kirchner, and one adviser from the Mauricio Macri administration.

²⁸ See Cyr 2013 for an important exception.

In contrast, this chapter argues that citizens' charismatic attachments can outlive the founder by *sustaining*, rather than discarding, their affective nature. The reason is that the symbolic narrative underlying charismatic bonds causes followers to develop a resilient political identity that shapes their worldview, perpetuates the cleavage between followers and their opponents, and reaffirms the followers' faith in the founder's mission of transcendence. When the leader dies and can no longer physically maintain his personal connection with the followers, this narrative serves as a scripture which, like the New Testament for many Christians, upholds the followers' identification with the movement. Whereas routinization scholars would suggest that the emotional power of this narrative grows weaker over time, I contend that the followers keep the narrative alive by recounting their cherished, personal experiences living under the founder's rule, passing those stories to younger generations, and preserving symbols that commemorate the founder's valiant leadership.

The followers' stories and symbols safeguard their emotional connections to the movement and its righteous community of followers by reinforcing the key elements of the founder's narrative: a worldview that worships the founder as their ultimate savior, a stark pro/anti-movement cleavage, and a profound faith in the founder's mission of salvation. Consequently, the movement can persist in a leaderless state for a strikingly long period of time without undergoing routinization. Moreover, because the personalistic nature of the followers' identity shapes their expectations of future politicians, it incentivizes future leaders to portray themselves as new saviors capable of picking up the founder's baton and resuming his mission to rescue society. As I will

demonstrate in chapters 5 and 6, leaders who respond to these incentives when conditions are favorable can reactivate citizens' attachments and restore the movement to power under their own charismatic authority.

The present chapter investigates the survival of charismatic attachments in two stages. I begin by analyzing how the founder's narrative helps the attachments develop into an enduring political identity. Next, I explore the mechanism through which the followers perpetuate this identity after the death of the founder. I illustrate this process using evidence from focus groups conducted with followers of Peronism and Chavismo after the deaths of Juan Perón and Hugo Chávez, respectively.²⁹ In both cases, the findings reveal that followers' deeply personal, affective identification with the movement and its founder persist. Furthermore, the focus group discussions illustrate how the preservation of cherished stories and symbols at the level of the individual follower has sustained the narrative and, by extension, the followers' personalistic attachments to the movement. These results underscore the resilience and centrality of the followers' identity for upholding the charismatic nature of the movement after the founder's death.

²⁹ Internal Review Board Approval was obtained from the University of Texas at Austin to conduct these focus groups (IRB 2013-03-0046).

A THEORY OF CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT SURVIVAL

The Symbolic Narrative and the Establishment of a Resilient Political Identity

I claim that followers' charismatic attachments help perpetuate the movement by cultivating an enduring political identity. This identity is important because, as suggested by political psychologists, it influences citizens' attitudes, behaviors, and sense of purpose in several ways. For one, it provides citizens with a "lens to interpret their world" (Cramer 2016, 6, 20). This "worldview" shapes identifiers' understanding of their surroundings, including the mundane activities of daily life, major events, and the motives and behaviors of other people. Second, the identity causes the followers, who are members of the "in-group," to distinguish themselves from non-identifiers, the "out-group." This division is important because in-group members often struggle to sympathize with and can even alienate their out-group counterparts, who maintain a fundamentally different worldview (Tajfel 1974). Third, while generating antipathy between in- and out-groups, the identity increases cohesion among fellow in-group members by providing them with a shared sense of meaning in their lives and faith in a common purpose (Huddy 2013, 18; Zúquete 2013, 266-7). In short, citizens' identity can influence politics by shaping their worldview, antagonizing outsiders, and infusing the followers with a shared sense of purpose.

The charismatic founder's symbolic narrative plays a crucial role in the construction of followers' identification with the movement because it reinforces each the above-mentioned elements. First, the narrative's glorification of the founder forms the basis of the followers' worldview. More than merely remembering the founder as an

inspirational leader, the narrative endows him with “quasi-divine status,” such that followers feel his symbolic presence in their daily lives (Zúquete 2008, 107). The followers continue to praise the founder in a Christ-like fashion and even search for manifestations of the founder’s spirit in their world. This ongoing hero-worship impacts the followers’ understanding of politics. In particular, it sustains their collective faith in the leader’s mission to provide the followers with salvation. Moreover, the followers come to believe that the mission cannot succeed without a heroic leader at the helm. This, in turn, shapes their expectations of future politicians: Who, they ask, will embody the spirit of the founder and revive his quest to rescue the people?

In addition to anchoring the followers’ understanding of the world in the immortal vision of the founder, the narrative’s portrayal of opponents as threats to the people’s wellbeing strengthens the followers’ identity. For one, the perception that followers are constantly under attack generates feelings of fear and anxiety, which bolsters “in-group unity” while “inflaming out-group hostilities” (Huddy 2013, 44). Additionally, the narrative causes supporters to feel resentful towards those who oppose the movement. This makes reconciliation between the two groups more difficult when the founder dies and incentivizes subsequent leaders to deepen, rather than soften, the divide for political gain (Cramer 2016, 14-15).

Third, the narrative helps turn charismatic attachments into a resilient identity by upholding the founder’s mission of societal transformation and spiritual transcendence. Whereas the attacks on opponents distinguish followers from their “enemies,” this mission provides the followers with a *positive* reason for belonging to the group: the

promise of salvation (Zúquete 2013, 267). Even after the death of the founder, their continued faith in his mission strengthens feelings of warmth, pride, and closeness with one another, as it reaffirms their sense of purpose and provides “a sense of symbolic common fate” (Huddy 2013, 24).

Together, the three above-mentioned elements contribute to the persistence of the followers’ identity by strengthening its “simultaneously individual and social” nature (Huddy 2001, 146). At the individual level, the followers perceive themselves as having unmediated, personal connections to the founder. This perception holds tremendous emotional significance for the followers and impacts their attitudes and behaviors. At the group level, the followers’ shared belief in and commitment to the founder’s mission to transform society makes them part of a “moral community,” which transcends the individual level by providing the followers with the powerful feeling that they belong to the group (Zúquete 2013, 263-4). This collective dimension of the followers’ identity gives them a common purpose and holds the movement together over time, lending it coherence despite ideological heterogeneity, programmatic volatility, and factionalism.

In sum, the charismatic founder’s symbolic narrative plays a crucial role in constructing a stable, deeply personalistic identity among the followers that has strong individual and collective dimensions. First, the narrative’s sanctification of the founder perpetuates his symbolic influence in the followers’ lives and establishes an enduring worldview. Second, the portrayal of opponents as enemies strengthens the identity by deepening the cleavage between the founder’s disciples and promoting cohesion among the followers. Third, faith in the founder’s mission of holistic transformation provides the

followers with positive affirmation and a deep sense of purpose that transcends the self. Together, these aspects of the symbolic narrative turn citizens' initial connections to the leader into a profound, quasi-spiritual identity that cannot be easily transformed when the founder disappears.

The Perpetuation of the Charismatic Identity after the Death of the Founder

As described above, the cultivation of a charismatic identity helps solidify citizens' attachments to the founder during his lifetime. Even so, his death generates a crisis because he can no longer personally sustain his deep, emotional connections to the followers. To recover from this situation, the routinization thesis indicates that, similar to more conventional parties, the movement must develop an organizational network through which to reach supporters and maintain their loyalty (Madsen and Snow 1991). Samuels and Zucco's important study of the Workers' Party in Brazil illustrates this mechanism of creating and sustaining attachments. As the authors state, the party mobilizes "pre-existing organizational networks" and sets up local offices to "cultivate extensive and lasting affective partisan attachments" (Samuels and Zucco 2015, 755).

In contrast, I argue that, in charismatic movements, it is the followers' personal preservation of their identity, rather than the mobilization of an organizational network, that sustains the movement in the wake of the founder's death. The followers, who are distraught due to their founder's departure, cling to his symbolic narrative to preserve their sense of identity and reassure themselves of his ongoing spiritual presence. This

sentiment carries the movement forward until a new leader rises and assumes the founder's mantle.

During such leaderless periods, I claim that the followers engage in two activities to sustain the founder's narrative and, by extension, their affective identification with the movement. First, the followers preserve and recount cherished memories of their personal experiences, or their loved ones' personal experiences, during the founder's rule. These stories describe the followers' interactions with the founder and depict how he single-handedly improved the lives of the followers and their loved ones. The focus of these stories on the relationship between individual followers and the founder, as well as on the leader's heroic gestures, reflect and sustain the unmediated emotional nature of the followers' relationship to the movement. Moreover, as parents and grandparents regale these stories to their children, younger generations of followers develop their own affective attachments to the movement, even without personally experience the founder's rule. The retelling of these stories thus establishes a pattern of "continuous ritualization and symbolism" that helps preserve the identity over time (Zúquete 2013, 267).

In addition to these stories, identifiers save physical objects and other symbols that memorialize the founder and his mission of transcendence. For example, some followers keep items such as clothing, flags, and "gifts" from the founder ranging from marbles to books to sewing machines. They also bequeath these sacred objects to their children, helping perpetuate the identity over time. Other supporters change their physical appearance, donning tattoos of the founder's face or changing their hairstyle to mimic the founder's (Auyero 2001, 120). These symbols maintain followers' sentimental

connections to the movement because, as suggested by political psychologists, they evoke overwhelming, positive emotions among members of the group (Citrin and Sears 2009, 162; Huddy 2013, 19; Sears 2001, 14). The symbols also provide physical markers that differentiate members of the group from outsiders, reinforcing the cleavage between followers and their opponents (Sears 2001, 15). Finally, similar to the crucifix in Christianity, the symbols remind the followers of the reason they belong to the movement: namely, their belief in the founder's mission of salvation (*ibid*, 16).

Charismatic Movements “In Abeyance”³⁰

To recapitulate, the symbolic narrative is crucial for the survival of citizens' charismatic attachments to the movement after the death of the founder. Followers sustain the narrative through individual-level stories and symbols, which solidify their personalistic identification with the movement. Importantly, the personalistic nature of this identity becomes remarkably stable (Huddy 2001, 131; Meléndez and Rovira-Kaltwasser 2017, 3). Thus, even as the political relevance of the identity rises and falls over time, its charismatic core resists change (Huddy 2001, 149).

This deeply entrenched identity forms the foundation for the survival of charismatic movements. Its role is especially important when the movement finds itself in leaderless situations. During such junctures, the symbolic image of the founder and his promise to deliver salvation maintain the followers' feelings of hope and loyalty which, in turn, preserve the movement “in abeyance,” helping it cohere for a significant period

³⁰ This phrase is adopted from Taylor's article, “Social movement continuity: the women's movement in abeyance” (1989). I am grateful to Cathy Schneider for suggesting this reference.

of time (Taylor 1989).³¹ Although the absence of a strong leader during these stretches of time can cause citizens to become politically disengaged, the personalistic nature of their identity sustains their sense of belonging to the founder's righteous community and provides them with hope that a new leader will eventually rise and take the founder's place. Thus, when conditions become more favorable, a new leader can politically reactivate the followers' identity and restore the movement to power (Cramer 2016, 15; Huddy 2001, 148; Huddy 2013, 12; Klar 2013, 1108; Meléndez and Rovira-Kaltwasser 2017, 3). The next section turns to focus groups with followers of Peronism and Chavismo to illustrate the process through which citizens' charismatic attachments to the founder develop into a resilient identity that sustains the movement after the founder's death.

RESILIENT IDENTITIES AND THE SURVIVAL OF CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS: EVIDENCE FROM FOCUS GROUPS

Research Design

To investigate the survival of charismatic movements from the followers' perspective, I conducted thirteen focus groups—six in Venezuela and seven in Argentina—with self-identified followers of Chavismo and Peronism, respectively.³² In both countries, the focus groups took place in 2016—three years after the death of Hugo

³¹ Specifically, a charismatic movement can survive in the absence of a leader as long as the generations of followers who personally experienced the founder's rule, and who sustain a powerful identity with the movement, remain alive. This time period ranges from about ten to twenty-five years.

³² Because my study focuses on the survival of followers' pre-existing attachments to the movement, I narrowed the scope of this analysis to self-identified followers of the movement rather than recruiting subjects from the general population.

Chávez and 42 years after the death of Juan Perón. This timing allowed me to assess the extent to which followers have maintained charismatic attachments during two important junctures after the disappearance of the founders: in the direct aftermath of the founder's death, in Venezuela, and decades later, in Argentina. In both cases, the results demonstrate that the founder and his narrative remain central to followers' loyalty to the movement. In addition, the Argentine case reveals how followers can update and even strengthen their personalistic identity based on positive experiences under subsequent movement leaders, whom the followers view as genuine heirs of the founder.

I designed the focus groups with two objectives in mind. First, I sought to probe the nature of followers' identification with the movement. Participants therefore discussed why they considered themselves to be "Chavista" or "Peronist," what, if anything, continued to inspire them about the movement's founder; and what characteristics they looked for in political leaders generally. Considering the collective and subjectively understood nature of identities, this portion of the analysis focused on the *group* as the unit of analysis (Cyr 2016, 234-5; Huddy 2001, 131). Unlike in-depth interviews or surveys, which investigate individual perspectives, the social environment of focus groups enabled participants to collectively contemplate the nature of their shared identity. This approach also revealed key insights about how participants "piece the world together for themselves," considering not only *what* constitutes their identity, but also *why* the identity matters to them (Cramer 2016, 20). A third advantage of the focus group method was that it encouraged participants to reflect on the complex and nuanced nature of "thick" concept of identity in a relaxed setting, with the help of fellow group

members and the guidance of an expert moderator, rather than undertaking this cognitively difficult task alone (Cyr 2016, 235).

My second purpose for conducting focus groups was to explore how followers sustain their identity to the movement in the absence of the founder. I therefore gathered participants' accounts of their experiences under the founder as well as under subsequent leaders. I also listened to participants describe the symbols they had preserved over the years to commemorate the movement's leaders and mission of transcendence. This portion of the study focused on the *individual* followers as the unit of analysis rather than the group. As Cyr indicates, focus groups can be useful for gathering "rapid, individual-level feedback" from a relatively large number of individuals—a larger number than can be achieved through in-depth interviews (Cyr 2016, 234). By capturing group dynamics as well as participants' individual perspectives, I was able to assess both the individual and collective aspects of followers' identification with the movement (Huddy 2001, 146).

To carry out the focus groups, I recruited self-identified followers of the movement from the lower and lower-middle classes in both countries. I selected these citizens as participants because my theory suggests that, having experienced greater socioeconomic marginalization, these individuals constitute the most crucial and consistent support base for both movements.³³ To obtain a range of perspectives, the focus groups were divided between followers who do/do not support the most recent

³³ Because I focus on the survival of pre-existing attachments to the movement, only self-identified followers—as opposed to non-identifiers or opponents of the movement—were recruited as participants. In both countries, public opinion specialists estimate that self-identified followers constituted about one-third of the population at the time the focus groups were conducted, in 2016.

leader of the movement (Cristina Kirchner in Argentina and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela). To the extent possible, focus groups were also divided by age to explore how different generations of followers perceive their attachments to the movement, its founder(s), and subsequent successor(s). All groups were balanced in terms of gender.

I partnered with professional public opinion firms in each country to conduct the focus groups. Trained staff members recruited participants using a quota sampling method and contact lists from each firm's database. Participants were included who met the criteria for age, gender, socioeconomic status, movement identification, and geographical location.³⁴ The latter criterion required that participants come from a range of neighborhoods in each city where the focus groups were held (see more detailed information in the country-specific descriptions below). In selecting participants, the staff ensured that the subjects did not know each other prior to participating in the focus group. Given the non-random method of recruiting participants, the sample cannot be considered as representative of the broader population of followers in either country. Nevertheless, the focus groups revealed valuable information from the perspective of the followers regarding the nature of their identity with the movement, their personal experiences as movement followers, and their impressions of the founder and subsequent leaders.

Experienced, local moderators led all focus group discussions. Participants were served light refreshments and received modest monetary compensation for their time. The moderator reassured participants of the confidentiality of the session, encouraged them to

³⁴ Per the suggestions of public opinion specialists in both countries, education was used as a proxy for socioeconomic status. The highest education level for all participants was less than a college degree.

express their honest opinions, and guided conversation based on a pre-designed script. The scripts for both countries asked participants to reflect on and share why they identify with the movement; specific experiences that drew them towards the movement; positive and negative feelings toward the movement and its different leaders, both past and present; thoughts and feelings about the movement’s future; and what activities, objects, or events, if any, have made them feel closer to the movement since the founder’s death (sample questions from each script are listed in the appendix).³⁵

In Venezuela, six focus groups with eight to ten participants each were conducted in partnership with Consultores 21, a renowned, local public opinion firm with ample experience. Due to logistical limitations, participants in all groups were recruited from the capital city of Caracas and its outskirts. Two groups were conducted with adults aged 18 to 25, two groups were conducted with adults aged 26 to 40, and two groups were conducted with adults aged 41 to 55. Participants in three groups (one from each age range) were supportive of Chávez’s current successor, Nicolás Maduro, while participants in the three remaining groups were opposed to Maduro.

In Argentina, seven focus groups with seven to ten participants each were conducted in partnership with trespuntozero, a local public opinion firm that specializes in political campaigns throughout the country. The focus groups were conducted in three different provinces to obtain a more geographically diverse sample of followers than if the focus groups had been conducted exclusively in the Federal Capital of Buenos Aires.

³⁵ All focus groups were conducted in Spanish. I analyzed and translated excerpts from the focus group discussions into English using audio and video recordings and transcripts. Original wording in Spanish is available upon request.

Three groups were held in the Federal Capital, incorporating participants from the city and its outskirts, where many popular-sector Peronists reside; two groups were held in Córdoba, the country's second-largest city and a traditionally anti-Peronist stronghold; and two groups were held in La Rioja, a rural, traditionally Peronist region and Menem's home base, which shares a border with Chile. Six of the seven groups were conducted with adults aged 25 to 55, while one (the third held in Buenos Aires) was conducted with young adults aged 18 to 24).³⁶ Four groups (one per region plus the young adult group in Buenos Aires) were sympathetic to the current Peronist leader, Cristina Kirchner, while three groups (one per region) were opposed to Kirchner.

Results: The Establishment of a Resilient Charismatic Identity

Venezuela

Glorification of the Founder

The focus group discussions in Venezuela underscored the central role of the symbolic narrative in solidifying citizens' charismatic identification with the movement. First, consistent with the narrative, participants praised Chávez not as a past leader, but as an immortal hero whose spirit continues to watch over them and offer protection. One participant stated, "What we have is an affective connection. What other leaders could have done will stay in the past. But with Chávez the connection will live on in each person." A second proclaimed:

³⁶ The seventh group was conducted with youth in Argentina to explore how the Peronist identity transfers to new generations decades after the disappearance of the founder. This seventh group was excluded from the design in Venezuela due to the recent nature of Hugo Chávez's death.

For me, Chávez was, and will always be, my hero. Not because he fought for one person, but because he fought for an entire nation. He was the hero of all those who needed him and even those who didn't, because for him there was no distinction. He didn't see who was rich and who was poor, he helped everyone...for me he was a hero, everything about him. He gave all of himself to the country, he died for the country. Because even in his sickness he continued to fight for us. For me, that's what a hero is.

A third stated, "I am Chavista because I believe in Chávez. Because I believe in what he says...that's the way it is and the way it will be. I believe in him and that's why I'm Chavista." A fourth participant noted, "I am Chavista because I am committed to the revolution, Chávez and Bolívar." Speaking about the future, another participant said, "I am Chavista because I am convinced that, in every way, we are going to move forward." Another replied, "I am with the future, and it's with Chavismo that we're going to get it." As illustrated by these statements, participants demonstrated an understanding of the world that revolved around Chávez. Their perception of the founder as an everlasting savior also indicates that he remains the central protagonist of the movement, even in death. The participants' use of the present and future tenses to describe Chávez further attest to his ongoing influence on their worldview and suggest the potential of their personalistic identity to survive in the future.

Interestingly, participants shielded Chávez's sanctified image from the regime's poor performance under his handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro. For example, participants critical of Maduro isolated the successor from Chávez's heroic reputation. As one stated, "When you heard [Chávez] speak, at least when he gave announcements, you always stopped everything to watch his announcement. Maduro, in contrast...I don't agree with him, it's a shame that he's the one that represents Chavismo now." Another

participant sadly expressed, “Maduro hasn’t followed Chávez’s legacy, he hasn’t been able to.” Additionally, while praising Chávez as a beloved hero, participants did not hesitate to disparage Maduro with titles such as “donkey,” “rag doll,” and “puppet.”³⁷

Crucially, these participants clarified that their disappointment in Maduro did not compromise their commitment to the movement or their faith in the founder. One said, “Like I told you, I am Chavista, I was Chavista, and I will continue being Chavista but I am not with Maduro.” Two participants further explained, “Maduro is a bad Chavista;” “we are more Chavista than Maduro is.” Participants across the three anti-Maduro focus groups agreed with this phrasing, as reflected in the following exchange:

Moderator: Just so I can understand, let me be the devil’s advocate.
Maduro is Chavista. Is he a bad Chavista?

All: He’s a bad Chavista.

Moderator: He is the son of Chávez, I recall. Didn’t Chávez say that?

Participant 1: All of us are children of Chávez. Here, we are all children of Chávez.

While claiming ongoing connections to Chávez, these participants denied that Maduro held a special place as Chávez’s successor.

In contrast to anti-Maduro participants, their pro-Maduro counterparts did not openly decry the successor’s performance. Nevertheless, participants supportive of Maduro acknowledged his weaknesses and admitted he was incapable of replacing the founder. For example, when the moderator asked what participants thought about the

³⁷ Several participants called the successor “Maburro,” which is an insult commonly used by Maduro’s critics that combines his name with the Spanish word for “donkey” (*burro*).

popular refrain, “Maduro isn’t Chávez,” one participant responded, “Well, it’s the truth. He isn’t Chávez but, I’m telling you, he’s following [Chávez’s] legacy. Obviously, he’s a different person and he’s not going to be equal to Chávez, because nobody ever will.” A second stated, “I feel that something is lacking [in Maduro], he lacks that extra urge to make things advance, the capacity that [Chávez] had...it’s one of the things that has emboldened the opposition, that Maduro isn’t Chávez, nobody will be like Chávez, it will be difficult for anyone to equal him.” A third explained, “[Maduro] isn’t a leader as such. But he was the person that Chávez confided in enough to leave in his place, and that gives [Maduro] a vote of confidence above and beyond. He’s charismatic, not as much as Chávez obviously, but then again, there is no comparison.” A fourth declared, “Maduro, as president, I don’t seem him... not like Chávez, because he’s never going to be like Chávez. But he’s learned some things from Chávez. What I see is that he wants to be strong but he has a heart that’s too soft. He isn’t like Chávez.” While these participants spoke of Maduro in more favorable terms, they struggled to compare him to Chávez and, to varying degrees, also expressed disappointment with his leadership.

Most importantly, regardless of their feelings toward Maduro, all participants stressed that their loyalty remains rooted in Chávez. As one stated, “There is a misunderstanding. You know that when Maduro comes to power... he comes to power with Chávez, as the son of Chávez, and that’s why we call him Chavista.... I defend [Maduro] but we aren’t Maduristas...we are Chavistas.” Another declared, “It’s like this. If we are waiting in line to buy food or medicine...the name you hear is Chávez, not Maduro. Of course, if I had to vote another time, I would vote for Maduro, [but it would

be] a vote of faith because Chávez supported him. When we're in the street, we speak in terms of Chávez." These individuals' resolute defense of the founder demonstrates that his charisma continues to protect him from the disastrous performance of his successor, whom he personally entrusted with the people's wellbeing. Moreover, the followers' ongoing support for the movement, independent of their feelings toward Maduro, underscores the resilience of their devotion and suggests the capacity of the movement to sustain itself during periods of weakness.

The Cleavage between Chavistas and anti-Chavistas

In addition to declaring their commitment to the everlasting spirit of Chávez, participants across the six focus groups expressed strong aversion toward opponents of Chavismo, revealing the continued importance of the second aspect of the symbolic narrative: the demarcation of in- and out-groups. Indeed, participants depicted the world as divided into two discrete categories: the poor, virtuous people of Chávez, on the one hand, and the privileged, selfish enemies of his movement, on the other. To illustrate this divide, the participants referred to the former group (with which they all identified) using labels such as "poor," "people," and "family." In contrast, they used terms including "rich," "squalid ones," "liars," and "agents of the right," to describe Chávez's critics.³⁸

Furthermore, participants in all focus groups—including those critical of Maduro—viewed the opposition as complicit in the economic crisis, which many

³⁸ "Escuálidos," or "squalid ones," is a term that Chávez frequently invoked in reference to members of the opposition. Similarly, he used the term "right" in reference to the political right—the group he accused of conspiring to sabotage his mission to rescue the people.

referred to as an “economic war.” For example, in one focus group, participants discussed how “private companies and the opposition” intentionally hoard products in order to undermine Chavismo’s mission to help the people:

Participant 1: “[The private companies and the opposition] have the products, but they hoard them.”

Participant 2: “I don’t know how they do it. I bought baby formula last Wednesday and already there isn’t any more.”

Participant 1: “Well, they’ve hoarded it. That’s the economic war.”

Participant 3: “In a video clip, I don’t know if you all saw it on channel 8, it lasted about 5 or 10 minutes...it showed a label in the background, “Empresas Polar, Secretary,” and I don’t know what else. It turns out that the company lowers its production levels on important dates, like when there are protests and elections. Why? So that people think [the scarcity of goods] is the government’s fault and the people suffer more.”³⁹

A participant from a different focus group depicted a similar understanding of the world as divided into two groups waging an all-out battle: victimized Chavistas versus greedy, powerful opponents:

Well, at work I know a lot of people with money, with resources, and even they say that the big companies are part of this economic war. Those same people with money, they are the ones who run things and it’s always going to be like that, that’s why they’ve gotten together to form a group. Very powerful people that want to oust Maduro, they got together and they’re going to try to do away with him.

In addition to large companies and their executives, participants described members of the opposition in daily, personal interactions as selfish and hostile. To

³⁹ Channel 8, “Venezolana de Televisión,” is a television channel with state-run programming. Empresas Polar is the largest brewery and food processing plant in Venezuela.

illustrate the difference between the two groups, one participant explained, “If you are rich and I am poor, who says that you should be able to have air conditioning, but not me? That’s what Chávez was about.” A second described the ongoing division between Chavistas and anti-Chavistas in her neighborhood. She said, “I used to live in Llanito, where they were very Chavista and spontaneous. Where I moved, everyone is squalid. I keep quiet but you know, because they are suspicious.”

Interestingly, a set of pro-Maduro participants spoke bitterly of self-proclaimed Chavistas who had abandoned Maduro, accusing these individuals of being opposition members who were “disguised as Chavistas.” One such participant stated, “These [disguised Chavistas] are the ones who have the most.” Another condemned this group for “going down the path of the [political] Right.” As these statements suggest, the stark division between virtuous followers and selfish opponents emphasized by Chávez’s narrative became an intrinsic component of the followers’ identification with his movement.

Faith in the Mission of Transcendence

Finally, participants exuberantly proclaimed their commitment to Chávez’s mission to “free” his righteous community of followers from the malevolent opposition. One participant stated, “Chávez awakened his people, who were in darkness and gloom.” Another said, “Chávez gifted us a country that he wanted to be free. Where am I? I am here with him and his people. We are the country, we are his people.” Another declared, “As the people, we have to awaken and we have to maintain a vision of everything Hugo

Chávez Frías did.... He was a national leader, a global leader. And why do I say he is still a leader today? Because even though he isn't with us physically, his legacy continues, just like he thought it would, with us as his people giving the movement continuity."

Participants further expressed their belief in Chávez's mission of salvation when asked to draw a picture of what Chavismo meant to them. In fact, in all focus groups, participants drew images to express their love for the movement and their sincere belief that Chávez would bring them a better future. As one participant described, "I drew a map of Venezuela covered in a heart, which represents the unity of all of us. For me Chávez is the country, all of us, with health, family, independence, [and] riches." Another drew a staircase climbing toward paradise. Describing her illustration, she claimed, "we are advancing, although the other side doesn't want to see it, we are advancing." The participants' effusiveness toward Chávez and his community of followers show that in-group cohesion remains strong even in his absence. Moreover, the drawings depicting a transcendent future suggested that the followers remain committed to Chávez's mission of transcendence and optimistic that a new leader—one who is "charismatic," "strong," "extraordinarily capable," "incorruptible," and "100 percent Chavista"—will eventually take his place.

Argentina

Despite the passage of more than four decades since Perón's death, the focus groups in Argentina suggested that citizens who identify as Peronist sustain genuine, emotional attachments to the founder and his movement. Furthermore, regardless of

whether or not participants supported Néstor and Cristina Kirchner, the most recent leaders of Peronism, they expressed their identification with the movement in terms consistent with the founder's symbolic narrative, indicating that it continues to play a central role in the perpetuation of followers' attachments.

The Glorification of the Founder

To begin, participants praised the charismatic founder and his captivating second wife, Eva, as archetypal leaders. When asked to describe ideal characteristics of a leader, participants in all seven focus groups quickly referenced (Juan) Perón—and often Eva—by name. Moreover, when asked to evaluate contemporary leaders, participants consistently categorized the leaders from best to worst on a scale from “most” to “least” Peronist, always placing Perón and Eva at the top. These gestures indicate that participants’ understanding of politics and, in particular, their evaluations of politicians, remained anchored in the glorified image of the charismatic founders.

In addition, while acknowledging that Perón ruled long ago, participants insisted that his heroic legacy remained fundamental to the movement’s contemporary identity. For instance, when asked to explain what Peronism is, one stated, “Everything is Perón, Perón, Perón...the point is Perón, always reflecting all [socioeconomic] classes. Perón is immense.” Another said, “The first thing that comes to mind is Perón and Evita.” A third answered, “Peronism refers to Perón.” A fourth declared, “Let’s get to the point, we are talking about Perón.” When the moderator prompted, “Is Peronism alive today?” another participant explained that, even when Argentina is governed by non-Peronists (such as

Mauricio Macri, the President of Argentina at the time the focus groups were conducted), “Perón is there. He’s dormant, but he’s out there.” In short, regardless of their opinions of subsequent leaders of the movement, an enthusiastic consensus emerged across the focus groups regarding the sacred status of Perón and Eva, suggesting that the followers’ identity remains anchored in the sanctified image of the founding couple.

Notably, disagreements emerged between pro- and anti-Kirchner participants regarding whether different successors of Perón qualified as “true Peronists.” Pro-Kirchner participants perceived Néstor and Cristina Kirchner as heroes and genuine successors of Perón and Eva. As one pro-Kirchner participant stated, “Néstor embodies Perón and Cristina embodies Evita.” Another described, “To this very day, Perón and Eva are present, Cristina [and Néstor] too.” When the moderator asked if Cristina tried to copy Eva, one group of pro-Kirchner participants responded:

Participant 1: Yes, but [Eva and Cristina] are part of the same base.

Participant 2: I think Eva and Perón were the masters, and through that [the Kirchners] made their own project, but using the same base, in different time periods and with a different situation for the people.

Participant 3: I think that Cristina, being a woman, followed Evita as an example. But Evita always had Perón at her side; Perón was in politics and Evita was with the people. Cristina had to do it all by herself [after Néstor died], at one time she did it all with Néstor, but then she had to go it alone.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Néstor died of a heart attack in October 2010, during the third year of Cristina’s first presidential term.

Participants in other pro-Kirchner focus groups echoed these sentiments, stating that the Kirchners “represented a new expression of Peronism,” “drew inspiration” from Peronism, and “wrote another chapter of the same [Peronist] guidebook.”

Remarkably, the pro-Kirchner youth, who had only inherited memories of Juan and Eva Perón indirectly from older generations, also described the founders as directly influencing the Kirchners’ leadership. One youth stated, “The two leading couples that are here for the youth and the adults today are Perón and Evita, Néstor and Cristina.” Another explained, “The thing is, we grew up with the [Kirchner] model. We know that Kirchnerismo comes from Peronism, but it is an updated Peronism, one that is with the people, that is more combative.” A third replied, “We are living Peronism through Kirchnerismo.”

Conversely, anti-Kirchner participants expressed disappointment in Cristina and her husband. These participants felt deeply offended that the Kirchners had the nerve to call themselves ‘Peronist.’ Referring to the Kirchners, one such participant stated, “there are many fake Peronists, who hang onto the Peronist label, who carry the Peronist flag.” Another explained:

I think that [the legacy of Perón and Eva]...is a virtuous path and that it could come to manifest itself once again. But what makes me furious is...seeing pictures where Perón and Evita are next to Néstor and Cristina (whom I hate), comparing the pictures...crazy, no, why would you dirty [the founders’ image] like that?

Likewise, when asked what Kirchnerismo and Peronism have in common, another group of anti-Kirchner participants responded as follows:

Participant 1: Nothing

Participant 2: Nothing

Participant 3: The little picture [of Juan and Eva] in the background

Participant 4: There are a lot of thieves in Kirchnerismo

Participant 5: They take advantage of Peronism and the ideal of social equality to make themselves look good, but the way they operate is very different. Peronism prioritized the worker's rights. Kirchnerismo only takes money away from the worker.

Furthermore, whereas pro-Kirchner participants applauded Cristina for drawing inspiration from Eva, anti-Kirchner participants viewed this behavior as a horrific and unsuccessful attempt to mimic their beloved Eva. Indeed, when asked if Cristina attempted to copy Eva, participants replied, “Yeah, she tried but she didn’t succeed by a long shot;” “She tried to dress and speak like [Eva], but she didn’t actually imitate her;” “Cristina wanted to be like Eva, but she doesn’t have a single hair in common with Eva. [Cristina] is an old walking idiot.”

Due to their extreme disappointment in contemporary, “so-called” Peronist leaders, many anti-Kirchner participants referred to themselves as “Peronists of Perón,” emphasizing that they drew inspiration from the movement’s founders rather than from subsequent leaders, whom they labeled “false,” “fraudulent,” and “disguised” Peronists. For example, one participant stated, “Perón is the motor that keeps the country going.” Another said, “I feel Peronist, of the *original* Peronism. If I had been born earlier [during Perón’s era], I would be ultra-Peronist.” Crucially, these disillusioned participants sustained their personal identification with Peronism in spite of their disappointment with

the movement's subsequent leaders. Thus, while describing themselves as genuine Peronists, the participants referred to successors—including Carlos Menem and the Kirchners—as traitors of the movement.

Despite disagreements between pro- and anti-Kirchner Peronists regarding the status of Peronist successors, however, similarities across the two sets of participants prevailed. For example, both sets of participants labeled leaders with no claim to Peronism, such as Elisa Carrió and Mauricio Macri, as anti-Peronist and expressed uniform disgust toward such politicians. As described above, pro- and anti-Kirchner participants also held the original founders—Juan and Eva—in the highest regard, demonstrating that the charismatic duo continues to serve as a moral compass and a lens through which to interpret politics for pro- and anti-Kirchner followers alike.

The Cleavage between Peronists and Anti-Peronists

Second, similar to Venezuela, participants across the seven focus groups described their world as divided into two categories: the virtuous yet excluded “people” (*pueblo*) whom Peronism defends, on the one hand, and the enemies of the people, on the other. Participants, who all identified themselves as part of the former group, referred to fellow Peronists as “comrades” (*compañeros*).⁴¹ In contrast, they associated non-Peronist sectors with conspiratorial elites seeking to further marginalize the poor, and frequently

⁴¹ The term “compañero” is a traditional Peronist term used to refer to fellow movement supporters.

referred to opposition members as “gorillas” (*gorilas*), “rich,” and “olarchs”.⁴² As one group of participants described:

Moderator: If I say “gorillas,” whom am I talking about?

Participant 1: Anti-Peronism

Participant 2: The Right

Participant 3: Gorilla is like River if Peronist is Boca.⁴³

Participant 4: It reminds me of something that affected me deeply, what happened with the cadaver of Eva Perón. I never understood why [the opposition] would be so bitter about a woman who did so much good for the country.

In addition to ordinary citizens, participants in several focus groups demonized leaders whom they felt had directly attacked or betrayed the legacy of Perón. For example, several participants referred to leaders whom they disliked—ranging from Menem and the Kirchners to Macri, the current president—as “unmentionables,” “weaklings,” and “puppets.” When asked what feelings these leaders evoked, participants offered labels including, “darkness,” “horror,” “poverty,” and “shame.” As described earlier, anti-Kirchner Peronists described Néstor and Cristina using these terms. But even pro-Kirchner Peronists categorized “good” (Peronist) and “bad” (anti-Peronist) leaders in similarly polarized terms. For example, pro-Kirchner participants depicted Cristina (like Eva) as a hero and defender of “true Argentines” fighting against selfish, anti-patriotic elites. These participants further applauded “Cristina’s confrontation” with her critics,

⁴² The term “gorilla” (*gorila*) is a traditional, pejorative term referring to anti-Peronists.

⁴³ River and Boca are historic rival soccer teams; the former is associated with anti-Peronists, while the latter is the team of Peronism.

whom they perceived as existential threats to the wellbeing of the people. In short, regardless of their opinions of the Kirchners, all focus group participants described their world as divided into two groups—Peronists and anti-Peronists—suggesting that this cleavage continues to drive their identification with the movement.

Faith in the Mission of Transcendence

Finally, consistent with the symbolic narrative, focus group participants described Peronist leaders as responsible for transforming society and delivering a prosperous future. This sentiment was particularly fresh for pro-Kirchner participants, who felt that Néstor and Cristina, with Perón and Eva's blessing, were fulfilling this redemptive mission. “With Néstor and Cristina, we had a future!” cried one participant. While anti-Kirchner individuals had a more cynical view of contemporary politics, they described the period when Perón and Eva governed as a golden age. “Perón kept this country afloat,” one participant remarked; another explained that, under Perón, the people had “food and options. The people always had something to eat and if you wanted to work, you could do it, you had the possibility of becoming something more.” While both sets of participants felt that Argentina had fallen from grace—either long ago (for anti-Kirchner groups) or recently with Macri’s electoral victory (for pro-Kirchner groups)—they expressed the common belief that *true* leaders are devoted to carrying out the mission of Perón: to rescue the followers from their misery and provide material and spiritual transcendence. One pro-Kirchner participant even said, in earnest, “the other day I ran into to a girl at church, and she said a prophet had told her that a new Néstor was going to

come save the country.” And although participants agreed that no such leader was in power during the time that the focus groups were conducted, they expressed hope that such a leader would eventually appear, reunite the movement, and don their beloved founder’s mantle.

In sum, the focus group conversations in both Venezuela and Argentina revealed that the symbolic narrative cultivated by Perón and Chávez, respectively, has continued to shape citizens’ identification with the movement. First, in both countries, participants indicated that they still worship the founder as their ultimate savior. Though opinions of subsequent leaders of the movement varied—especially in Argentina, where Cristina Kirchner has had a particularly polarizing effect—participants across the board agreed that the founder represents the archetypal charismatic leader and savior of the people. Second, participants in both countries described the world as separated into two groups: one consisting of virtuous movement supporters and a second made up of privileged, out-of-touch and nefarious opponents. Participants consistently identified with the former group while expressing distrust of the latter, indicating that these in- and out-groups remain intrinsic to their identity. Third, participants expressed faith in the founder’s mission of societal transformation and hoped that a new leader would rise and pick up the founder’s mantle. Importantly, even anti-Kirchner participants in Argentina, who expressed disillusionment with contemporary politics and politicians, expressed longing for a new leader to appear and carry out the founder’s mission to provide a better future.

Results: The Personalistic Mechanism of Identity Perpetuation

The previous section described the crucial role of the symbolic narrative for turning citizens' deep, emotional attachments to the charismatic founder into a resilient political identity. The present section uses evidence from participants' individual accounts to illustrate the mechanism through which the followers perpetuate this narrative and identity once the founder has died. Specifically, I show that, by retelling stories about personal experiences under the founder's rule, (and, in some cases, telling stories about experiences under the rule of successors), and preserving sacred objects to commemorate the founder's heroic leadership, the followers are able to sustain direct ties to the founder and keep their faith in his redemptive mission alive.

Venezuela

Participants in the Venezuelan focus groups shared cherished memories of their lives during Chávez's presidency. In particular, their accounts highlighted the deeply personal and unmediated nature of their connections to the leader. For example, one participant recounted:

When I was little, I remember in my house they always spoke a lot about Chávez, and I remember when I was 5 or 6 years old, he was in the neighborhood where I lived, out on the soccer field...I said, "I want you to take me, I want you to take me," until my family took me and I had the honor of holding Chávez's hand. I was so little and I gave him my hand...I remember clearly, I was little and they held me up and I had Chávez in front of me and he gave me a bag of toys and I will never forget it.

A second participant recalled meeting Chávez in similar circumstances, when the founder passed through the participant's neighborhood. Describing the encounter, the participant said:

I liked having him in front of me, I admired him as a person, for everything he was and for everything he had become. And really, when I see him it makes me proud, to know Chávez...he is the one supporting me in practically everything, he is the one who is lifting my foot out of the mud.

Notably, this participant switched to present tense when talking about Chávez, suggesting the ongoing spiritual presence of the leader in his life.

Several other participants across the six focus groups shared stories about their personal encounters with Chávez. They consistently reported these events as sentimental and even transformative experiences, as reflected in the following exchange:

Participant 1: When I saw Chávez for the first time, I was an opponent of his movement, 100%. But I happened to go to an event...and people said, "Here comes Chávez!" and I saw him riding in on a truck. He was already sick at the time, greeting the people, and it gave me goose bumps. It was really something...I mean, he was such an extraordinary human being, and when he passed in front of you, your hair stood on end...it was something strange.

Moderator: Is that the moment when you became Chavista?

Participant 1: Listen. In that moment he got my attention...He stepped out of the presidential protocol, came to the streets and put himself in a poor neighborhood. There, he spoke with the little old ladies and the people...so he got my attention and I said, 'this guy is a leader, that is how you govern!' And from that moment on I have been Chavista."

Participant 2: "The same thing happened to me. He came to my neighborhood and I got goose bumps. He came really close to me because I was pressed up against the railings. He was so close...I felt a really good vibe and my hair stood on end."

In addition to stressing their personal closeness with Chávez, the participants' stories also emphasized the founder's extraordinary capacity to resolve their suffering. For example, two participants in separate focus groups said they had written letters to

Chávez pleading him to help their sick family members. Both participants claimed that Chávez personally returned their phone calls to arrange treatments for their loved ones. Several others discussed receiving health, nutritional, and educational benefits *directly* from Chávez, as illustrated in the following conversation:

Moderator: Did you know anyone that Chávez helped directly?

All: Yes.

Moderator: Tell me, whom did you know, whom Chávez helped directly?

Participant 1: The pensioners, my grandma. He gave her a pension even though she never worked. That was direct assistance.

Participant 2: He gave spine surgery to an aunt of mine. He gave her money for the operation.

Participant 3: He gave to my sister, thank God. Today she has a home, thanks to the housing mission. And my brother-in-law is in the army and has a job.

Participant 4: One of my neighbors too, she has a daughter who is special needs and he helped her directly, taking her out of the society we lived in, and he gave her another house and medical services that she needed.

Participant 5: My godfather, for example, he had cancer and there was a time when he was very delicate and he got a wheelchair, a stretcher and all kinds of things, through a mission.

Moderator: And did Chávez give these things, or did he simply establish the mission, which made it possible for your godfather to exercise his right to get the things?

Participant 5: Well, ok, healthcare is a right, but my mom tells me that before [Chávez] the government didn't do that kind of thing for the needy, even though it was a right...no other president would go through the trouble of helping you, unlike Chávez.

For Chávez, it was a duty, and he followed through with that duty.

These statements show that participants perceived Chávez as singlehandedly responsible for tangibly improving their loved ones' lives. Even if their family members received help from missions he established rather than from Chávez himself, the participants viewed the assistance as a personal gift from their beloved leader.

As the participants told these stories, their deep affection for Chávez seemed to reignite itself. Indeed, as described above, many spoke of "getting goose bumps" and "good vibes." Some participants even began to cry as they expressed their love for Chávez, especially when sharing stories about his death. One emotionally described, "It's incredible, because when he died...it was awe-inspiring to see how the people cried. And when his body passed by [during the funeral procession] I also cried. And you saw all the people there, so many people, and it's not like the opposition says, that they were paid. They never gave me anything." Another said, "When Chávez died...you asked how Chávez's death affected the people...I felt it in my heart. I cried." Though Chávez had died several years before the focus groups were conducted, these sentimental expressions made clear that the participants' cherished memories of the founder perpetuated their unmediated, personalistic, and profoundly affective bonds with his movement.

In addition to personal stories, the Venezuelan participants mentioned keeping various objects that symbolized their personal connections with Chávez. Several claimed to own T-shirts embossed with an image of the founder. One explained that wearing the shirt made her feel "a respect, an admiration...he is like a brand, for me. Instead of

saying Adidas or Columbia, it says Chávez.” Others described hanging up photographs and posters to commemorate the founder. Still others claimed to keep maps and flags of Venezuela as a reminder of how Chávez had liberated the country. In each of these cases, participants reported displaying the objects with great pride—especially in the face of the movement’s critics—as symbols of their continued loyalty to Chávez’s movement.

Argentina

In contrast to Venezuela, where Chávez recently passed away, the focus groups in Argentina were conducted decades after Perón’s death. Nevertheless, the resulting discussions suggested that, as in Venezuela, personal stories and symbols play an essential role in the perpetuation of followers’ personalistic identification with Peronism.

Crucially, Argentine participants’ stories emphasized personal interactions that their loved ones—namely, parents and grandparents—had had with Perón and Eva during the founders’ original rule. In particular, participants highlighted the direct, miraculous impact of the founders’ deeds on their relatives’ lives. One participant described, “I have been Peronist since I was in my mother’s belly. My grandmother was a cook for Perón.” For this participant, that the grandmother worked for Perón as a cook seemed reason enough to justify his loyalty to the movement decades later. Another participant explained, “Ever since I met my spouse, Perón was burned onto my brain; I listened to all of Evita’s speeches.” Another told a heartfelt story of how she became Peronist through her parents’ experience:

I am Peronist because...I came from working parents, they built their house themselves and had six daughters...I am Peronist because of all of the

benefits my father had. We were born in private clinics, like it should be—born in private clinics and not [public] maternity wards. We studied. The benefits my father had, for example, to be able to go on vacations during the summer, to go camping...my father was Peronist, my mother even more so. She told us about different things, about neighbors who received sewing machines and other things from Evita. Even if my parents didn't receive a house paid for by the government, [Perón and Eva] made it possible for them to build a house for themselves. So, when you have grown up with that kind of foundation, at least for me, I am Peronist.

Another participant explained:

I am Peronist because my grandma and my mom lived during that time [of Perón and Eva] and they speak to me of miracles. I decided to investigate for myself in books and I concluded that I agreed with the social and economic ideals of Peronism. For example, in the economic sphere, they took care of the peon, let's call it. And in the social sphere, because Perón was a very charismatic leader and his charisma brought him closer to the people.

While this participant claimed to be Peronist due to “social and economic ideals,” his description of those ideals reflected Perón’s unmediated, charismatic—rather than programmatic—relationship with the poor. Several other participants told similarly vivid, emotional stories of grandparents who personally met and received things from Perón and Eva, such as a small toy “that had been made for the rich,” a sewing machine, and a job as a nurse in Eva’s first hospital. While they did not directly experience the founders’ heroic acts, the participants appeared to cultivate affectionate connections to Perón and Eva vicariously, through stories passed down by their loved ones.

In addition to celebrating the founders as saviors, participants told stories of their interactions with subsequent leaders whom they considered to be genuine heirs of Perón and Eva. These participants noted that they personally benefitted from the successors, and therefore considered the leaders to be “true Peronists.” For example, one participant

stated, “I am Peronist because Perón gave my grandfather his first job, Menem gave my father his first car, and Néstor gave me my first job.” Another participant claimed to be Peronist because of the benefits she received from Menem and Cristina:

Participant: I am Kirchnerista, but I think that you can’t separate Kirchnerismo and Peronism. It’s just that I am living today and Peronism...when I was a child...

Moderator: You weren’t even alive yet...you must have been born the year that Perón died.

Participant: I got married when I was young, so we experienced Peronism with Menem. During those years we were doing really well. And with Cristina too...My husband collects bicycles, and in the age of Menem we had five bicycles, with Cristina we had three, and now [under Macri] we don’t have any.

Another participant who prospered during Menem’s presidency painted a romantic vision of Menem riding on horseback to save the country during the 1988 electoral campaign—an image not unlike those described by Venezuelan participants of Chávez riding into their neighborhoods atop a truck. Similarly, a third participant shed tears when he recalled how he got a job that saved him after the 2001 crisis “thanks to Néstor.” A fourth emotionally exclaimed that she supported the Kirchners due to their similarities with Perón and Eva. After listing various material goods that she and her family had received “thanks to Cristina,” ranging from medicine to food to DVD players, she stated, “I am Kirchnerista because [Néstor and Cristina] help the people from below, the poor people, and this is very similar to what my mother experienced in the time of Perón and Evita.”

In short, though participants disagreed with each other regarding whether Menem, Néstor Kirchner, and Cristina Kirchner deserved the label of “true Peronist,” they appeared to judge the three successors based on the same criterion: the leader’s personal provision of material benefits to the participants (or their relatives). In particular, the participants suggested that stories of each leader’s largesse served as proof of the leader’s love for the people and, correspondingly, his/her ability to fulfill the Peróns’ legacy. These cherished memories of the leaders—which, notably, were shared after all three successors had fallen from power—clearly played a central role in sustaining the participants’ identification with the movement.⁴⁴

In addition to recounting stories of their interactions with the movement’s heroic leaders, many participants reported safekeeping symbols that reminded them of these leaders and their mission of salvation. One participant proudly declared that he still had the sewing machine that Eva gave to his grandmother. Another claimed she saved the toy scale—a “rich people’s toy”—that Perón had given to her grandfather during a campaign visit to La Rioja. Other participants saved objects in homage to subsequent movement leaders. For example, several kept T-shirts they had worn when attending rallies with Cristina Kirchner. Some participants in every focus group also reported that they kept photographs of movement leaders—from Juan and Eva Perón to Néstor and Cristina Kirchner—in their homes. The participants noted that they kept these pictures in important places, such as beside their beds or on shelves with portraits of their family

⁴⁴ The following Peronist successors governed Argentina: Carlos Menem (1989-1999), Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007), and Cristina Kirchner (2007-2015). The focus groups took place in 2016, less than two years after Cristina Kirchner stepped down from power and was replaced by Mauricio Macri, a non-Peronist.

members. As indicated in the following discussion, participants suggested that they cherished their photographs of Peronist leaders and considered the leaders to be members of their inner circles:

Participant 1: I have a photograph of Perón and Eva that was given to me. It's in my bedroom.

Moderator: Do you keep the photo with other pictures? If so, of whom?

Participant 1: I keep it with pictures of my kids and grandparents, my parents, and my godchildren. That's where I keep a picture of Perón and Eva, together.

Moderator: Who gave the photo to you?

Participant 1: My grandfather, just before he died.

Participant 2: In my house, my parents live upstairs and they have a big picture of Perón. It's been there for as long as I can remember...it's next to the image of Christ in my mom's room.

In a different focus group, a participant further explained the perceived connection between Peronist leaders and family members as follows:

The leader loves his people. He isn't going to rob them; he is going to work for his people so that they're ok. It's like family. One loves his family and does everything to make sure his family is ok. The same thing happens with the government. If the leader loves his people and wants his people to be well, if he values and respects them, he is going to give them even more than they expect.

For many participants, material objects ranging from toys to T-shirts to portraits symbolized the powerful, emotional, and intimate connections they—and, importantly, their parents and grandparents—maintained with their beloved leaders. As indicated by these examples, even decades after the death of Perón, symbols have continued to play an

important role in perpetuating Peronist followers' affective and unmediated identification with the movement and its leaders.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated that the survival of charismatic attachments depends primarily on the followers' adherence to the symbolic narrative. Specifically, the movement's superhuman portrayal of the founder, demonization of opponents, and mission of societal transformation form the core of followers' ongoing identification with the movement. After the founder's death, the followers sustain this identity through stories and symbols that celebrate the narrative and preserve the affective power and directness of followers' connections to the founder (and, in the case of Argentina, to subsequent leaders). This finding contrasts markedly with the logic of routinization, which suggests that charismatic movements must renounce their personalistic nature and transform into sophisticated party organizations to survive after the death of the founder.

Evidence from thirteen focus groups conducted with followers of Chavismo and Peronism, respectively, indicate the relevance of the personalistic mechanism of movement survival. In Venezuela, participants enthusiastically demonstrated the vitality and emotional intensity of their attachments to Chávez and his movement three years after the death of the founder. Their ongoing devotion—and their ability to shield it from the deplorable performance of Chávez's handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro—is a testament to the power and resilience of their loyalty to the movement. In Argentina, participants' deeply sentimental attachments to Juan and Eva Perón are equally

impressive, given that the founding couple has been dead for decades. Participants' tendency to compare subsequent leaders to Juan and Eva Perón—whether to praise the successors or to disparage them—further indicates that these citizens still use their Peronist identity as a lens for understanding the world and judging politicians.

As suggested by the results in Argentina, while followers' personalistic identification with the movement can survive for years or even decades, the political salience of their identity can fade with the prolonged absence of a charismatic leader. While sustaining deep loyalty to the movement and founder, followers can become increasingly disillusioned with politics during periods in which no leader seems capable of fulfilling the founder's mission to deliver them prosperity. However, because these individuals continue to interpret the world through the lens of their personalistic identity, they maintain hope that a strong leader will eventually appear, pick up the founder's baton, and rescue society once more. As I will show in the next chapter, leaders who appear to embody the founder's charismatic qualities are capable of reactivating the political relevance of followers' attachments in this fashion and restoring the movement to power in their own name.

Chapter 5. The Reactivation of Charismatic Attachments⁴⁵

Thus far, this dissertation has investigated the revival of charismatic movements from the perspective of the followers. Chapter three demonstrated how unmediated, emotional attachments form between the followers and their heroic leader, while chapter four illustrated how these bonds develop into an enduring identity that continues to shape followers' worldview after the leader dies. Because this identity remains anchored in the supporters' direct, emotional connections to the leader, it shapes their understanding of politics and expectations of future politicians in starkly personalistic terms. Thus, rather than viewing their politicians as ordinary public servants, the followers hold politicians to the standard of the charismatic founder. As reflected in the focus groups conducted with followers of Peronism and Chavismo, these individuals expect new leaders to embody the founder by performing heroic feats, providing tangible benefits, and fulfilling the founder's mission of transcendence.

In light of these findings, I argue that successors must demonstrate their worthiness of the founder's mantle in order to satisfy the followers' expectations and win their support. In particular, politicians must depict themselves as symbolic reincarnations of the founder to reactivate the political salience of the followers' charismatic identity and garner support as new standard-bearers of the movement. This process of reactivating citizens' attachments, which hinges in large part on the strategies undertaken by new

⁴⁵ This chapter is based on an article the author published in 2019 in *Comparative Political Studies* (Andrews-Lee, Caitlin. 2019. "The Revival of Charisma: Experimental Evidence from Argentina and Venezuela." *Comparative Political Studies* 52(5): 687-719).

leaders, is essential for the political revival of charismatic movements. Without successors who can harness the emotional power of citizens' preexisting attachments, the movement is unlikely to reclaim its predominant position in politics.

This chapter investigates the strategies that new leaders must implement to reinvigorate citizens' deep, affective ties to the movement and garner support. Drawing on insights from studies in political psychology, sociology, leadership, and electoral campaigns, I contend that successors must enact two strategies—one material and one symbolic—to achieve this ambitious task. First, successors must establish their own charisma by proposing and implementing bold policies that translate into tangible benefits for the followers and alleviate widespread suffering. Second, successors must cultivate symbolic ties to the founder to associate their charisma with the founder's glorified legacy and demonstrate their commitment to fulfilling the founder's mission to transform the followers' lives.

To test whether and how new leaders can associate themselves with their charismatic predecessor's legacy to revive citizens' affective ties and win political support, I analyze original, face-to-face survey experiments conducted with 999 movement followers in Argentina and Venezuela.⁴⁶ Specifically, I construct a 2x2

⁴⁶ I refer to the transfer of citizens' charismatic attachments from the founder to the successor as "revival" or "reactivation" regardless of the amount of time that has passed since the founder's death. This is because, as I shall argue later in the chapter, new leaders must actively reinvigorate—rather than passively inherit—the founder's mantle of authority to be considered true heirs by the followers. Thus, even though Chavismo has not lost power in Venezuela since Chávez's death, a new leader's ability to sustain the movement would require that he/she *reactivate* the followers' attachments. Failure to do so might result in the temporary political deactivation of these attachments, but not necessarily their irreversible disintegration.

experimental design in which a potential successor running for president implements (or does not implement) a set of strategic cues related to bold policies and symbolic ties to the founder.

Contrary to studies of routinization, which suggest that charismatic attachments cannot survive in personalistic form beyond the founder's death, the results indicate that citizens' deep, emotional ties to Peronism and Chavismo endure. These findings corroborate the focus group evidence from the previous chapter regarding the survival of citizens' personalistic identification with the movement.

Moreover, in the context of presidential campaigns, the survey experiment reveals that a new leader's bold, initially successful policies and symbolic ties to the founder can politically reactivate followers' attachments by intensifying the followers' positive feelings toward the movement, enhancing their perceptions of the new leader's charisma, and boosting the leader's support. In short, these results therefore indicate that, while the personalistic *nature* of citizens' attachments remains relatively constant over time, the *intensity* of those attachments can shift based on the coming and going of new leaders who claim to embody the founder.

The remainder of the chapter develops and tests my theory on new leaders' reactivation of followers' charismatic attachments. In the next section, I briefly review the process through which charismatic attachments between leaders and followers initially develop and explain how new politicians can reactivate those ties to garner support. I then lay out the hypotheses, design, and results of the survey experiment conducted in Argentina and Venezuela. Finally, I discuss the substantive implications of

the findings. In subsequent chapters, I examine the conditions that shape new leaders' capacity to enact these strategies of reactivation and analyze how, together, these strategies and conditions cause charismatic movements to develop fitful trajectories that undermine the development of stable, programmatic party systems.

A THEORY OF CHARISMATIC ATTACHMENT REACTIVATION

A Review of Attachment Formation

I begin by reviewing the three conditions that the founders must satisfy to initially establish charismatic bonds with their followers. These conditions are important because they inform the strategies that successors use later on to reactivate the attachments. First, the founder must directly recognize the suffering of citizens who feel they have been excluded by mainstream society. The founder focuses on these individuals because their unfavorable circumstances make them more likely to look for a savior to rescue them (Bandura 1982; Madsen and Snow 1991; Merolla and Zechmeister 2011; Spruyt, Keppens, & Van Droogenbroeck 2016; Weyland 2003).

Second, to secure these citizens' devotion, the founder must demonstrate the capacity to single-handedly resolve their misery. Specifically, he must provide "proof" of his charismatic power by promising and implementing bold policies that showcase seemingly miraculous abilities (Weber 1979, 242; Pappas 2012). From the followers' perspective, the daring character and capacity of these policies to confer material benefits—rather than programmatic content and long-term sustainability of the policies—are essential for substantiating the leader's extraordinary abilities. Once implemented,

these policies confirm the founder's superhuman image and can temporarily protect him from subsequent drops in performance (Merolla and Zechmeister 2011, 30).

Third, the leader must cultivate a narrative that glorifies his position as the people's savior, demonizes opposing groups as enemies blocking the people's path to salvation, and stresses the founder's promise to transform society and deliver prosperity to the followers. This narrative, which frames the leader's mission as an all-out battle against evil forces, infuses followers' attachments with a profound moral intensity. Thus, the followers' support for the leader rests not just on much-needed recognition and tangible goods, but also on a deep sense of righteousness that inspires religious devotion to the leader, whom the followers come to view as brave and selfless (Zúquete 2008, 106).

As shown in chapter four, the founder's narrative is especially important for the survival of charismatic movements after the founder dies because it develops citizens' initial attachments into an enduring and deeply personalistic identity. This identity, in turn, shapes the followers' worldview, reinforces their belief in the founder's mission of ultimate salvation, and thus influences their political preferences and expectations. In particular, the identity provides citizens with a "framework that allows [them]...to make sense of social, political, and economic conditions" that occurred in the past, are unfolding in the present, or are yet to occur (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott 2009, 24-25). It also gives these individuals "ways of recognizing, identifying, and classifying other people, of constructing sameness and difference, and of 'coding' and making sense of their actions" (Abdelal et al. 2009, 25; Brubaker, Loveman, & Stamatov

2004, 47). As a worldview, then, the followers' identification with a charismatic leader can shape their perceptions and evaluations of future politicians.

Strategies of Attachment Reactivation

Political psychologists suggest that, over time, various factors can shift the political intensity of a pre-existing identity. In other words, the identity can be politically "deactivated" or "reactivated" depending on the circumstances. In the context of charismatic movements, as described in chapter four, the prolonged absence of the leader can cause the emotional charge of citizens' identification with a charismatic movement to fade. Specifically, while remaining profoundly attached the charismatic founder and his redemptive mission, identifiers can become disillusioned with the current political landscape. However, a change in circumstances—such as the eruption of a crisis—can make the followers feel threatened and cause them to look for a new savior to rescue them from the situation, which creates the potential for new leaders to reactivate the followers' attachments (Huddy 2013, 15, 44; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009, 27-28; Weyland 2003, 839).

When a crisis occurs, politicians can strategically manipulate the intensity of citizens' attachments by portraying themselves as model, "prototypical," members of the group (Huddy 2013, 12, 18). Potential successors have several incentives to engage this strategy. For one, doing so can strengthen the impact of citizens' attachments on their political preferences and increase political engagement—the combination of which can mobilize a powerful base of support for the new leader (Citrin and Sears 2009, 148;

Cramer 2016, 12; Klar 2013, 1108). Moreover, research suggests that successors who depict themselves as symbolic archetypes of the identity—i.e., the beloved founder—tend to appear more trustworthy and charismatic to fellow identifiers (Huddy 2013, 18; Haslam et al. 2011, 96, 101-103; Hogg 2001, 190).

To reactivate citizens' attachments, new leaders must disseminate cues through speech, symbolic gestures, and policies that associate the core symbols and values of the identity with the current context and the leader's personal profile (Cramer 2016, 12; Huddy 2013, 12; Klar 2013, 1108; Meléndez and Rovira-Kaltwasser 2017, 3).

Specifically, I argue that successors must enact two cues—one material and one symbolic—similar to those implemented by the founder to reactivate citizens' deep, unmediated, emotional ties to the movement. If successfully executed, these cues signal to the followers that the leader embodies the founder and is committed to reviving his mission.

In material terms, the successors must promise and enact bold, initially successful policies to prove their extraordinary power. This impressive performance signals their potential to fill the founder's shoes and convinces the followers that the new leaders are capable of resolving their suffering. To demonstrate herculean abilities, the successors' policies must prioritize the rapid delivery of tangible benefits to the followers over programmatic coherence and sustainability. Though it is difficult for successors to implement this cue at the national level *before* becoming chief executive, past records of bold, impressive performance as a subnational executive officeholders—e.g., as

governors—can provide followers with an initial cue regarding the successors' potential to fulfill their heroic promises.

Once implemented, this material cue should cause followers to evaluate the successors' performance in highly favorable terms. More importantly, however, the cue should reignite the followers' passion for and identification with the movement by convincing them that an authentic savior has emerged to pick up the founder's baton and deliver a prosperous future. In other words, more than simply demonstrating good performance, this cue should enhance the followers' *emotional* attachments to the movement and increase their charismatic perceptions of the successor.

Symbolically, successors must weave themselves into the founder's narrative by depicting themselves as true heirs and demonstrating their commitment to his mission of societal transformation. This requires successors to update the original narrative to fit with their personae and the contemporary circumstances. To do so, the leaders emphasize aspects of the founder that they share—such as tone of voice, word choice, dress, and physical gestures—while deemphasizing aspects they do not have in common. Additionally, successors can frame their opponents as traditional enemies of the movement to strengthen followers' support. They can also portray their policies—whose substantive content may differ from the policies of the founder—as achieving the same end goal: providing the followers with immediate relief and eventual salvation. To enact this set of symbolic cues, successors must communicate them through verbal, auditory, and visual channels to repeatedly remind the followers of the charismatic founder, reinvigorate the followers' feelings of excitement for the founder's transformative

mission, and convince the followers that the successors are worthy of the founder's mantle.

In sum, my theory on the reactivation of charismatic attachments challenges the logic of routinization, which suggests that these affective bonds must transform into depersonalized linkages to survive and remain politically salient after the founder disappears. Instead, I contend that followers can sustain a deep, emotional identification with the movement that reinforces their commitment to the founder's heroic mission to transform society, shapes their worldview, and influences their expectations of future politicians. Subsequent leaders can therefore reactivate followers' attachments and gain support by (1) promising and implementing bold policies that deliver tangible benefits to the followers and (2) symbolically linking themselves to the charismatic founder and his transformative project.

TESTING THE REACTIVATION OF CHARISMATIC ATTACHMENTS: EVIDENCE FROM SURVEY EXPERIMENTS

I adopt an experimental approach to test the individual and combined effects of successors' bold policies and symbolic ties on followers' expressions of emotional attachment to the movement and support for the heir. In particular, I draw on the priming, cue-taking and identity literatures from political psychology (Abdelal et al., 2009; Hogg, 2001; Klar, 2013; Tajfel, 1974; Van Vugt and Hart, 2004) to design a survey experiment with two manipulations that represent strategic cues enacted by a hypothetical candidate seeking the presidency: ***Bold policies*** and ***symbolic ties*** to the charismatic founder. The

first manipulation corresponds to the material cue: the promise and implementation of bold policies. Because it is ultimately the *fulfillment* of these policies that “proves” the successor’s charisma, I manipulate whether or not the candidate has fulfilled his bold, tangible promises to resolve citizens’ most pressing problems in the past. The second manipulation, which represents the symbolic cue, incorporates visual and auditory symbols that associate the candidate with the charismatic founder of the movement. I construct a 2x2 design with four conditions such that respondents are randomly assigned to receive both, one, or neither of the two cues. Next, I measure the respondents’ expressions of attachment to the movement and support for the successor (see Table 3).

Table 3. 2x2: Experimental Conditions and Summary of Hypotheses

	Presence of Symbolic Ties	Absence of Symbolic Ties
Fulfilled Bold Policies	<i>Fulfilled / Symbol</i> (Expect strong attachment and support for the successor)	<i>Fulfilled / No Symbol</i> (Expect middle attachment and support for the successor)
Unfulfilled Bold Policies	<i>Unfulfilled / Symbol</i> (Expect middle attachment and support for the successor)	<i>Unfulfilled / No Symbol</i> (Expect low attachment and support for the successor)

Hypotheses

Based on my theory, I develop three sets of hypotheses about the combined and marginal effects of bold policies and symbolic ties on followers’ charismatic attachments to the movement and support for the successor.

II. Candidates who *combine* the material and symbolic cues can revive citizens' emotional attachments and garner support more effectively than candidates who implement only one or neither of the two cues. Thus:

- A. Respondents in the *fulfilled / symbol* condition will express the strongest attachment to the movement. Specifically, they will identify most intensely with the movement and will express the strongest positive feelings and weakest negative feelings toward the movement.
- B. Respondents in the *fulfilled / symbol* condition will express the strongest support for the candidate. Specifically, they will perceive the candidate as most charismatic and will express the strongest intentions to vote for the candidate in future elections.

III. *Both* bold policies and symbolic ties to the founder are necessary for successors to fully reactivate citizens' attachments and garner support. The bold policies demonstrate the successor's charismatic power, while symbolic ties associate that heroic capacity with the founder and his redemptive mission. Correspondingly, each of the two cues should not be as effective when applied in isolation. Nevertheless, candidates who implement *only one* of the two cues should elicit stronger attachment and support than candidates who use *neither* cue. In short:

- A. Respondents in the *fulfilled / no symbol* condition and in the *unfulfilled / symbol* condition will express stronger attachment to the movement than respondents in the *unfulfilled / no symbol* condition.

B. Respondents in the *fulfilled / no symbol* condition and in the *unfulfilled / symbol* condition will express stronger support for the candidate than respondents in the *unfulfilled / no symbol* condition.

HIII. Finally, symbolic ties increase followers' support for the candidate because they link the candidate directly to the movement's charismatic founder and thus intensify the followers' deep, emotional identification with the movement. Therefore:

A. Followers' identification with the movement will *mediate* the effect of symbolic ties on support for the candidate.

Participants, Design, and Procedure

In partnership with two local public opinion firms—trespuntozero in Argentina and Consultores 21 in Venezuela⁴⁷—I conducted face-to-face survey experiments with a sample of each movement's most important and consistent base of followers: self-identified Peronist and Chavista adults (18 and older) from the “popular” (lower- and lower-middle-class) sectors.⁴⁸ While it would be interesting to analyze the impact of successors' material and symbolic cues on non-followers as well as middle and upper class citizens, I limited the scope of the present study due to theoretical expectations and

⁴⁷ Trespuntozero—an elite, Buenos Aires-based public opinion and market research firm specializing in nationwide political analysis—conducted the survey in Argentina from October 21 to November 20, 2016. Consultores 21, an internationally renowned, Caracas-based firm, conducted the survey in Venezuela from February 1 to 18, 2017. The Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas at Austin approved the study (2013-03-0046).

⁴⁸ In Venezuela, participants were randomly selected from the population of interest in the designated regions of the design. In Argentina, convenience samples were drawn from each region at outdoor shopping malls and plazas due to resource limitations. For the Argentine sample, quotas were used for demographic characteristics including gender, age, and education based on 2010 census data.

resource constraints. First, I focused on movement followers rather than all citizens because the experiment aims to test the potential reactivation of *existing* attachments rather than the formation of *new* attachments among previously unaffiliated individuals. Certainly, political candidates should also endeavor to expand their support base by incorporating new voters. Yet because the movement followers constitute a sizeable proportion of the population—about one-third of the electorate in both Argentina and Venezuela (Briceño, 2015; Calvo and Murillo, 2012)—earning their loyalty provides new leaders an enviable “electoral cushion” (Levitsky, 2003, 13-14). To narrow the sample in this way, respondents were asked a screening question in which they indicated which of several political traditions they felt closest to. Those who selected “Peronism” or “Chavismo” were included in the study.⁴⁹

Second, I limited the sample to followers from the popular rather than the middle and upper classes because my theory suggests that socioeconomically marginalized citizens are more likely to experience seemingly unmanageable challenges, suffer disproportionately, and develop feelings of low self-efficacy. Popular-sector citizens are therefore more likely to look for and become emotionally attached to a leader whom they perceive as heroic (Burns, 1979; Madsen and Snow, 1991). Furthermore, in both

⁴⁹ This question wording was developed based on extensive interviews, pre-tests, and consultation with public opinion specialists. It was chosen because it does not indicate the intensity of one’s attachments, nor does it imply identification or membership with a formal party. Because of the weakly institutionalized nature of Peronism and Chavismo, many popular-sector citizens identify with them as “movements” or “traditions,” but not as official “parties”. This and other screening questions were asked of all respondents well before exposure to the experimental manipulation (the material and symbolic cues) to avoid priming respondents to feel more or less identified with the movement. Specific question wording and closed-list response options can be found in the appendix.

Argentina and Venezuela, these low-income citizens make up the largest group of movement followers and a vital source of support for political candidates (Briceño, 2015; Calvo and Murillo, 2012). As suggested by public opinion specialists in both countries, education was used as a proxy for socioeconomic status; respondents with less than a college degree were included.⁵⁰

In sum, while the population of interest in this study—movement followers from the popular sectors—is limited, it provides a crucial foundation of support for aspiring political candidates. To approximate a nationally representative sample of this population, the experiment was fielded in three diverse regions of each country: the federal capital and its outskirts, an urban and traditionally anti-Peronist/anti-Chavista region, and a rural, traditionally pro-Peronist/pro-Chavista region (see Table 4). Many studies of Peronism and Chavismo focus exclusively on the federal capital, which, while populous and politically important, has distinct characteristics compared to the rest of the country. In contrast, this three-region design better captures followers' attitudes and behaviors at the *national* level, accounting for demographic, cultural, and political variation.

⁵⁰ Because more popular-sector citizens attend local colleges in both countries today than in the past, respondents aged 18 to 25 currently enrolled in college, but whose parents had completed nothing more than a high school degree, were also included in the study.

Table 4. Characteristics of Selected Regions

Selection Criteria	Argentina	Venezuela
Federal Capital and Outskirts	Lanús, La Matanza (Province of Buenos Aires)	Caracas (State of Miranda)
Urban, anti-Peronist / anti-Chavista Region	Córdoba (Province of Córdoba)	Maracaibo (State of Zulia)
Rural, pro-Peronist / pro-Chavista region	La Rioja (Province of La Rioja)	Cumaná (State of Sucre)

The survey experiment was designed as follows. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions, each of which provided information about a hypothetical governor running for president.⁵¹ After a set of filter questions intended to restrict the sample to individuals from the population of interest, enumerators carefully explained the scenario, verified respondents' understanding, and proceeded to one of the four randomly assigned experimental manipulations, described below.

To maximize external validity, the two sets of manipulations—one for fulfillment/un-fulfillment of bold policies and a second for the presence/absence of symbolic ties—imitated stimuli that voters would encounter in a real presidential campaign. I developed each manipulation with the assistance and feedback of local campaign strategists, in-depth interviews and pretests with individuals from the population of interest, and, in Argentina, a pilot survey distributed online via email and Facebook (N=239). To enhance internal validity, the survey was conducted in face-to-

⁵¹ In Argentina, the survey was administered on digital tablets using Qualtrics, which was set to randomly assign respondents across the four conditions in a balanced fashion. In Venezuela, due to resource constraints and safety concerns, the survey was administered on paper. Equal numbers of all four conditions were printed in advance and were shuffled at random by the supervisor before the enumerators received them. Enumerators were instructed to administer each paper survey as it appeared in the pile without rearranging it. Please see the appendix for a table with the number of individuals assigned to each group as well as a table with balance checks indicating random assignment was successful.

face format with local, trained enumerators to ensure that respondents understood the scenario and received the correct manipulations.⁵² Manipulation checks (described below) further verified that each stimulus achieved its intended purpose.

For the two conditions in which bold policies were enacted (*fulfilled*), the enumerator described to the respondent the candidate's successful completion of bold policies as governor, emphasizing impressive, tangible benefits he provided to popular-sector citizens in his province/state. For the remaining two conditions (*unfulfilled*), the enumerator indicated the candidate's failure to implement the same policies as governor. To stress the daring character of the candidate's policies, exaggerated wording was used, such as the promise to "end" (rather than reduce) poverty, "eliminate" unemployment, and "combat" crime. The policies also addressed real citizens' most pressing concerns, as indicated by surveys conducted no more than three months prior to fielding the study (economic crisis, unemployment, and poverty in Argentina; economic crisis, crime, and food shortages in Venezuela). Finally, to personalize and enhance the emotional persuasiveness of the scenario, I used an episodic frame (a personal anecdote) rather than a thematic frame (factual information) to depict the candidate's successful/failed implementation bold policies (Iyengar, 1994; Klar, 2013). Prioritizing emotional responses to the candidate's policies in this way corresponds to my theory that the

⁵² Enumerators in both countries were hired from each region where the survey was conducted. Supervisors from the contracted public opinion firms conducted half-day training sessions with the enumerators and continuously monitored their progress. To check validity of survey responses, supervisors called 10 percent of all respondents to ask about the content of the survey. Among this sub-sample, fewer than five percent were invalidated and were thus excluded from the analysis. All interviews produced by enumerators with invalidated responses were also excluded from the analysis.

implementation of bold, initially impressive policies strengthens followers' *charismatic*—deeply emotional and personalistic—attachments to the movement.

Next, respondents were exposed to auditory and visual cues representing the presence/absence of the candidate's symbolic ties to the founder.⁵³ First, respondents listened to a 90-second speech by the candidate using headphones provided by the enumerator. The speech was recorded rather than printed because voters tend to listen to, rather than read, candidate speeches in the context of presidential campaigns. Each speech was developed based on several real speeches made by prominent movement leaders including Carlos Menem and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina and Nicolás Maduro and Henri Falcón in Venezuela.⁵⁴ In each country, local campaign experts with public speaking experience recorded the speech.

In both versions of the speech, the candidate reflected on the country's current state of affairs and expressed bold promises that he would fulfill if elected. Next, in the two conditions in which symbolic ties were present (*symbol*), the candidate mentioned the founder by name (Perón/Chávez), referred to the followers using a typical in-group label (comrades/the Bolivarian people), and stressed the transformational character of the

⁵³ Leaders in both countries who attempt to reactivate citizens' charismatic attachments use several overlapping cues—such as colors, dress, images, and rhetoric—to signal their symbolic connection to the movement founder. Thus, to enhance external validity, the design incorporated both auditory and visual components into the symbolic cue. To the author's knowledge, this is the first experimental study to test the influence of these types of symbols on citizens' charismatic—rather than programmatic or ideological—attachments. Future studies should separate and test the effects of different symbolic cues in isolation.

⁵⁴ Henri Falcón is one of few opposition politicians in Venezuela who had defected from Chavismo since the time when the experiment was run. Falcón's speeches reference Chávez's symbolic narrative while separating himself from the current regime's failures. For these reasons, I adapted excerpts of his speeches into the experiment.

movement.⁵⁵ Conversely, in the two conditions where symbolic ties were absent (*no symbol*), the candidate did not mention the founder's name, used a neutral label for the voters (compatriots/the Venezuelan people), and referred to progress in terms of realistic development rather than using the more grandiose and missionary language of transformation. The remaining content, tone, and length of the speech in each country were held constant across all four conditions.

While listening to the candidate's speech, participants viewed a card with an image of the candidate's campaign poster, which was also designed based on materials from recent presidential campaigns and feedback from local experts.⁵⁶ Each version of the poster contained a generic campaign slogan (*Opportunity for All / Together with the People*), a solid-color background, an image of children, the candidate's name, the title "President," and a picture of the candidate from the chest up.⁵⁷ In the version with symbolic ties, the background color corresponded to the movement (celeste/red) and the image featured the founder among the children. The version without symbolic ties had a generic background color unaffiliated with any major political party in the country, and the image of children did not include the founder.⁵⁸ Figure 7 illustrates the experimental

⁵⁵ All comparisons listed in parentheses in this section are separated by country, not by experimental condition. The first term refers to Argentine version while the second term refers to the Venezuelan version.

⁵⁶ Though the survey was delivered via digital tablet in Argentina, respondents also viewed a physical, color copy of the campaign poster corresponding to their randomly assigned treatment group. Respondents in Venezuela also viewed a physical, color copy of the campaign poster.

⁵⁷ Stock photos for candidate images were purchased based on pre-tests and advice from local campaign experts.

⁵⁸ Because only the symbolic condition featured the founder, distinct images were used for symbolic and control images. The different images were selected based on similar criteria, including general tone, apparent age and socioeconomic status of the subjects, and number of subjects.

manipulations for each country, including the candidate's policy record as governor, transcriptions of the candidate's speech, and campaign posters.⁵⁹

Figure 7. Experimental Manipulation in Argentina and Venezuela.

A. Argentina

Enumerator Reads to Respondent (All Conditions)

Let's imagine that there are elections coming up, and there is a candidate running for president of the nation. The candidate's name is Diego Canedo. Currently, Canedo is governor of an Argentine province. I am going to give you some information about Canedo. Then, you will listen to a speech from him and view a campaign poster. Afterward, I will ask you some questions about what you heard and saw about the candidate. Do you understand what we are going to do?

Fulfilled Bold Policies

As governor, Canedo promised to develop the economy, eliminate unemployment, and end poverty in his province.

*So far, Canedo **has kept** his promises. For example, José, a resident of a local town, **got a job in a factory and bought a new car**. In addition, Romina, José's neighbor, **received social assistance from the government to send her children to school**.*

Thanks to Canedo, many people like José y Romina are better off.

Unfulfilled Bold Policies

As governor, Canedo promised to develop the economy, eliminate unemployment, and end poverty in his province.

*So far, Canedo **has not kept** his promises. For example, José, a resident of a local town, **is still unemployed. He continues to search for a job in a factory and had to sell his car**. In addition, Romina, José's neighbor, **asked for social assistance from the government to send her children to school, but she hasn't received anything yet**.*

Despite Canedo's promises, many people like José and Romina are struggling.

Recorded Speech, Part 1 (All Conditions)

Really, when one looks back on the past year, when one looks back at Argentina and the things that we Argentines have had to live through, one feels that strength was found where it wasn't thought to exist. Under these conditions, let it be absolutely clear that, to move forward, we need to fully take on the challenge of creating a new Argentina. I want to tell you all, with deepest sincerity, that you can count on me to accomplish what remains to be done in this country.

I will end inflation so that Argentines can save, they can buy their car, they can buy their house; I will start a fantastic program to generate employment; And I will expand social assistance so that the poorest people in our country can get ahead.

⁵⁹ All material was presented to respondents in Spanish and has been translated to English by the author.

Figure 7, cont.

A. Argentina

<p>Recorded Speech, Part 2: <u>Presence</u> of Symbolic Ties</p> <p><i>We can see the path of our country's transformation, but the most important is what remains to be done. The General Perón left us many teachings, but the one that stuck most deeply with our comrades is that of building a government that transformed Argentina.</i></p> <p><i>For that reason he said, "it is better to do than say, better to accomplish than promise." We, the Argentine people, are part of a transformative project and I intend to work in accordance with the mandate of Evita and</i></p>	<p>Recorded Speech, Part 2: <u>Absence</u> of Symbolic Ties</p> <p><i>We can see the path of our country's development, but the most important is what remains to be done. History has left us many teachings, but the one that stuck most deeply with our compatriots is that of building a government that promotes the development of Argentina.</i></p> <p><i>We, the Argentine people, are part of this country and I intend to work in accordance with the example left by many of our ancestors.*</i></p>
<p>Poster: <u>Presence</u> of Symbolic Ties</p> 	<p>Poster: <u>Absence</u> of Symbolic Ties</p> 

*Note: Because many of Perón's quotations are widely known by Argentines, the quotation was left out of the condition where symbolic ties were absent.

Figure 7, cont.

B. Venezuela

Enumerator Reads to Respondent (All Conditions)	
<p><i>Let's imagine that there are elections coming up, and there is a candidate running for president of the nation. The candidate's name is José González. Currently, González is governor of a Venezuelan state.</i></p> <p><i>I am going to give you some information about González. Then, you will listen to a speech from him and see a campaign poster. Afterward, I will ask you some questions about what you heard and saw</i></p>	
<u>Fulfilled Bold Policies</u>	<u>Unfulfilled Bold Policies</u>
<p><i>As governor, González promised to improve the economy, combat crime, and resolve the most urgent needs in his state.</i></p> <p><i>So far, González has kept his promises. For example, Carlos, a resident of a local town, was given a credit to build a house for his family, and his father received his pension. In addition, Johana, Carlos' neighbor, received bags of food to feed her children.</i></p> <p><i>Thanks to González, many people like Carlos and Johana are better off.</i></p>	<p><i>As governor, González promised to improve the economy, combat crime, and resolve the most urgent needs in his state.</i></p> <p><i>So far, González has not kept his promises. For example, Carlos, a resident of a local town, applied for a credit to build a house for his family, but he hasn't received anything yet, and his father has not received his pension. In addition, Johana, Carlos' neighbor, has to wait in very long lines to get food to feed her children.</i></p> <p><i>Despite González's promises, many people like</i></p>
Recorded Speech, Part 1 (All Conditions)	
<p><i>Really, when one looks back on the past few years, when one looks back at Venezuela and the things that we Venezuelans have had to live through, one feels that strength was found where it wasn't thought to exist. Under these conditions, let it be absolutely clear that, to move forward, we need to fully take on the challenge of creating the extraordinary Venezuela that we all want. I want to tell you all, with deepest sincerity, that you can count on me to accomplish what remains to be done in this country.</i></p> <p><i>I will end shortages so that all Venezuelans can feed their families at a fair price, without having to wait in line; I will create a program to fight and conquer crime; and I will combat inflation so that</i></p>	

Figure 7, cont.

B. Venezuela

<p>Recorded Speech, Part 2: <u>Presence</u> of Symbolic Ties</p> <p><i>We can see the path of our country's transformation, but the most important is what remains to be done.</i></p> <p><i>And as our Eternal Commander Hugo Chávez Frías said, "I swear before God, I swear before the country, I swear before my people that I will enact the necessary transformations for our Bolivarian republic to move forward."</i></p> <p><i>Live on, Venezuela! Thanks be to God and thanks to the people of Bolívar!</i></p>	<p>Recorded Speech, Part 2: <u>Absence</u> of Symbolic Ties</p> <p><i>We can see the path of our country's development, but the most important is what remains to be done.</i></p> <p><i>I swear before God, I swear before the country, I swear before my people that I will enact the necessary development for our republic to move forward.</i></p> <p><i>Live on, Venezuela! Thanks be to God and thanks to the Venezuelan people!</i></p>
<p>Poster: <u>Presence</u> of Symbolic Ties</p> 	<p>Poster: <u>Absence</u> of Symbolic Ties</p> 

Following exposure to one of the four randomly assigned conditions, respondents answered a range of survey questions regarding their emotional attachment to the movement and support for the candidate—the dependent variables of the study. To measure emotional attachment, respondents were asked how Peronist/Chavista they felt

on a scale from 0 to 10. They were also asked to indicate the intensity of their positive and negative feelings toward the movement on four-point scales including pride, excitement, and hope; anger, disappointment, and fear. Due to the high inter-item correlation between the three survey items for positive and negative feelings, respectively, I collapsed each set into an additive index and rescaled it to range from 0 to 10.⁶⁰ I interpreted statistically significant increases in the former two measures and a significant decrease in the latter as successful *reactivation* of citizens' emotional attachments to the movement.⁶¹

To measure support for the candidate, respondents were first asked a series of questions regarding their perceptions of the candidate's charisma. Based on my theory, a compelling leader who materially and symbolically embodies the founder's heroic image should appear significantly more charismatic to the followers—especially if the candidate is to consolidate his own personalistic authority.

To operationalize the candidate's charisma, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a four-point scale with three statements about his selflessness, vision of the future, and capacity to solve the country's problems. While charisma is difficult to measure quantitatively, these items have been validated in previous studies of charisma in Latin America and represent key components of the concept as outlined in my theory. I drew the first two of these statements from a five-question charisma battery

⁶⁰ The order of these questions was randomized in Argentina, but not in Venezuela due to the use of paper surveys. Cronbach's alpha scores were 0.83 for positive feelings and 0.66 for negative feelings in Argentina, and 0.83 for positive feelings and 0.79 for negative feelings in Venezuela.

⁶¹ I measured statistical significance at the $p = .1$ level due to the directional nature of my hypotheses.

developed by Merolla and Zechmeister to assess citizens' perceptions of leaders' charisma in Mexico and Venezuela.⁶² I selected the following items: “[Leader’s name] articulates a compelling vision of the future,” and “[Leader’s name] goes beyond his own self-interest for the good of the group.”⁶³ The first reflects the leader’s enactment of the founder’s mission to establish a more prosperous future for the followers; the second relates to the leader’s willingness to sacrifice personal goals to fulfill this righteous mission on behalf of the followers. I incorporated the third statement—“[the leader] is capable of resolving [Argentina’s / Venezuela’s] problems”—to capture respondents’ perceptions of the leader’s heroic capacity to resolve their misery. Though this statement is not included in Merolla and Zechmeister’s battery, it comprises a central component of my definition of charisma that is also stressed by Weber: the leader’s extraordinary ability to solve the people’s problems. Unlike survey questions in which respondents are prompted to explicitly evaluate the candidate’s economic performance (which was also incorporated in the study as a manipulation check, described below), the broader and more prospective nature of this statement better (if imperfectly) captures whether the

⁶² As discussed in chapter three, Merolla and Zechmeister (2011, 36-37) developed this five-question battery based on a larger set of questions from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire—5X Long Form, an index that has been widely used to measure charismatic leadership in the United States. The authors selected these questions from the larger survey due to higher loadings on factor analysis from a 2007 survey in the U.S. The battery has since been validated by multiple studies in Latin America, including a 2006 survey in Mexico by *Beltrán y Asociados* and a 2007 survey in Venezuela by the Latin American Public Opinion Project.

⁶³ The remaining items in the Merolla and Zechmeister battery include the following: “the leader instills pride in being associated with him;” “the leader’s actions build my respect for him;” and “the leader considers the moral and ethical consequences of his decisions.” The former two were not included in the survey experiment because they could have generated confusion due to the hypothetical nature of the design (in other studies, the charisma battery has been used with *existing* leaders). The third question was not included because citizens found the question wording confusing in a pre-test that was conducted in partnership with the Argentine Panel Election Study in 2015.

candidate inspires and convinces the followers of his/her heroic potential—a crucial component of charisma. I collapsed this three-item charisma battery into an additive index and rescaled to range from 0 to 10.⁶⁴

In addition to the charisma battery, I included a survey question to measure respondents' intention to vote for the candidate in future elections. Whereas charismatic perceptions indicate respondents' potential to form emotional ties to the leader, this item provides a more concrete measure of support that is also necessary for the leader's consolidation of power. This item was also rescaled to range from 0 to 10 in both countries. Further details regarding all survey questions, including wording and response options, can be found in the appendix.

Manipulation Checks

The survey included additional questions to verify that the experimental manipulations had their intended effects. For bold policies, respondents were asked to evaluate the candidate's performance as governor on a four-point scale. As expected, respondents in the two conditions where the candidate fulfilled bold policies as governor rated his performance significantly higher than respondents in the two conditions where he failed to implement the policies ($M_{Policies} = 3.21$ vs. $M_{No Policies} = 2.19$, $p < .05$ in Argentina; $M_{Policies} = 3.11$ vs. $M_{No Policies} = 2.42$, $p < .05$ in Venezuela).

⁶⁴ As with positive and negative feelings, the order of the charisma battery items was randomized in Argentina, but not in Venezuela due to the use of paper surveys. Cronbach's alpha scores for the charisma battery were 0.82 for Argentina and 0.89 for Venezuela.

To verify the symbolic manipulation, respondents were asked to evaluate how Peronist/Chavista the candidate appeared on a scale from 0 to 10. On average, respondents in the two conditions with symbolic ties perceived the candidate as more Peronist/Chavista than in the two conditions without symbolic ties ($M_{Symbol} = 6.98$ vs. $M_{No\ Symbol} = 6.46$, $p < .05$ in Argentina; $M_{Symbol} = 7.56$ vs. $M_{No\ Symbol} = 5.63$, $p < .05$ in Venezuela). These data suggest that respondents in both countries received the correct cues for both sets of manipulations.

Results

HI: *The combined effects of bold policies and symbolic ties cause followers to express the strongest A) attachment to the movement and B) support for the candidate.*

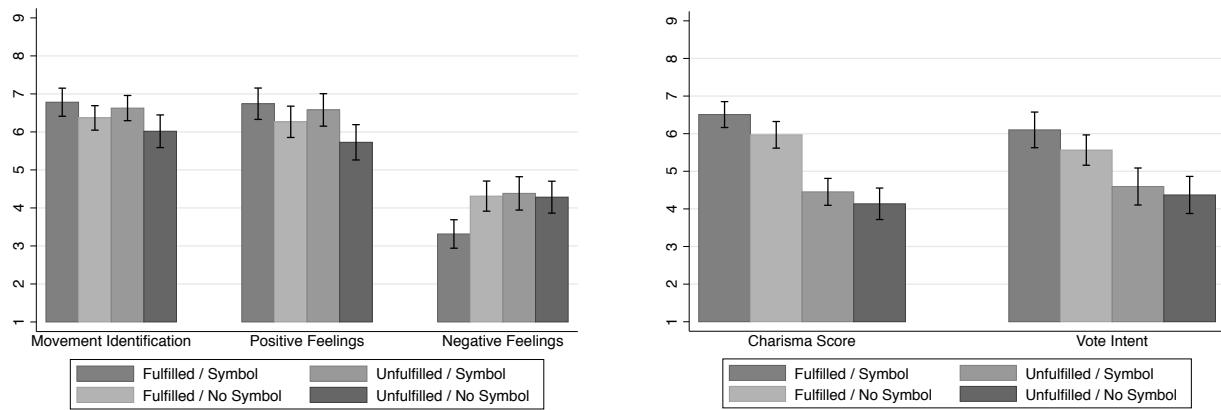
For the most part, the results support HI, suggesting that the combined effect of bold policies and symbolic ties cause followers to express the most intense emotional attachment to the movement and the greatest support for the candidate. Specifically, in Argentina, respondents who received both cues (*fulfilled / symbol*) expressed the strongest identification with Peronism, the most intense positive feelings, and the weakest negative feelings toward the movement, providing strong support for HI.A. Pairwise difference-of-means tests demonstrate that, on average, the joint effects of fulfilled bold policies and symbolic ties had a significantly greater, positive impact on followers' expressions of emotional attachment based on these three indicators. The differences were statistically significant ($p \leq .09$) in seven of nine pairwise comparisons between the *fulfilled / symbol* condition and each of the remaining conditions. The two differences that did not reach statistical significance—between *fulfilled / symbol* and *unfulfilled /*

symbol for Peronist identification and for positive feelings toward Peronism—were in the hypothesized direction, with larger scores in the *fulfilled / symbol* condition.

Likewise, Argentine respondents exposed to both fulfilled bold policies and symbolic ties endorsed the candidate most enthusiastically, supporting HI.B. On average, respondents in the *fulfilled / symbol* condition perceived the candidate as more charismatic. These respondents also expressed greater willingness to vote for the candidate than respondents in the remaining conditions. All difference-of-means tests between this condition and each remaining condition were positive and significant ($p \leq .076$). Figure 8A presents a graphical illustration of the results and Figure 9A shows pairwise t-tests between the *fulfilled / symbol* condition and each of the three remaining conditions (full ANOVA results and p-values for all pairwise t-tests are presented in the appendix).

Figure 8. Mean Levels of Movement Attachment and Candidate Support by Experimental Condition (90% Confidence Intervals Shown).

A. Argentina



B. Venezuela

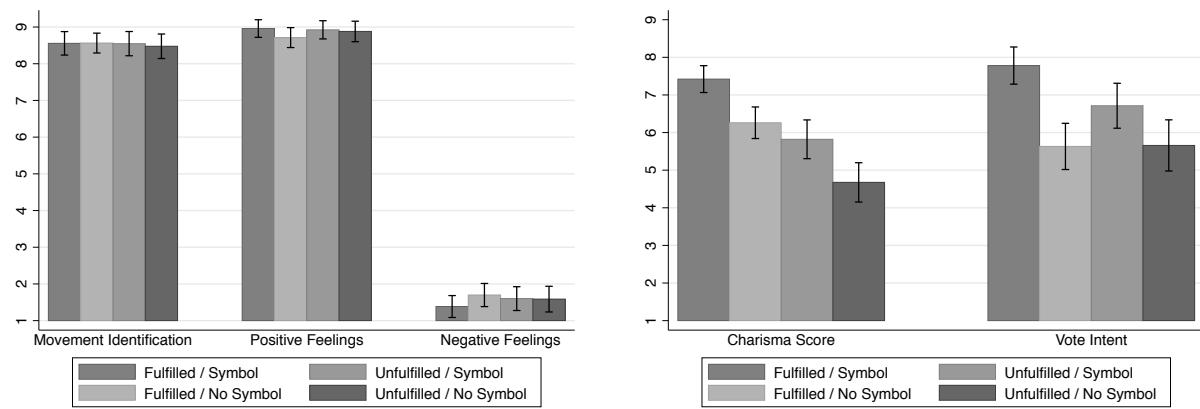
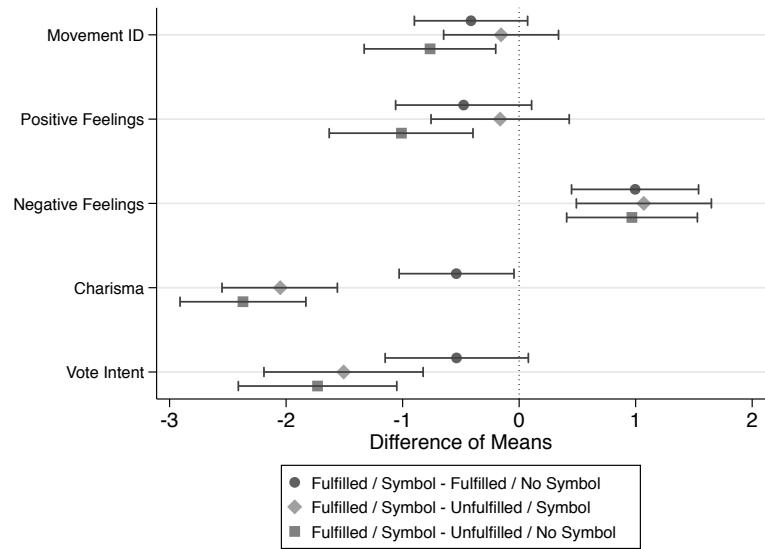


Figure 9. Difference of Means: Pairwise T-Tests (90% Confidence Intervals Shown).

A. Argentina: Hypothesis I



B. Argentina: Hypothesis II

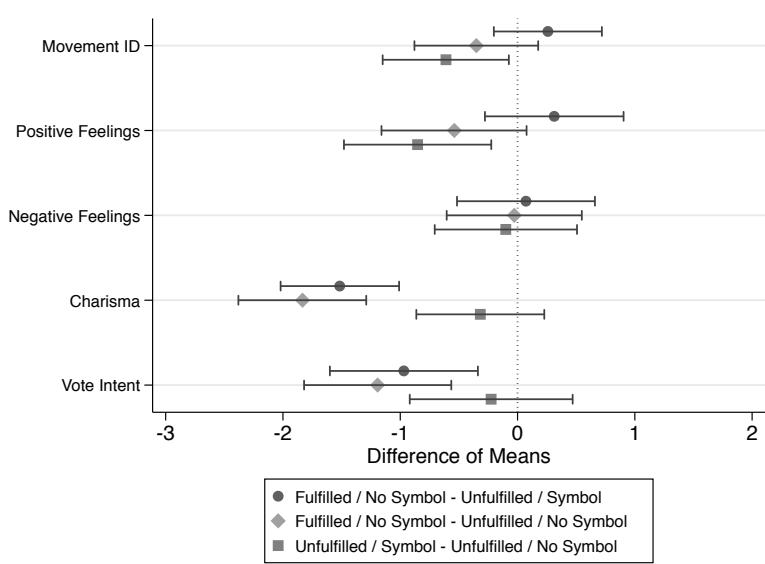
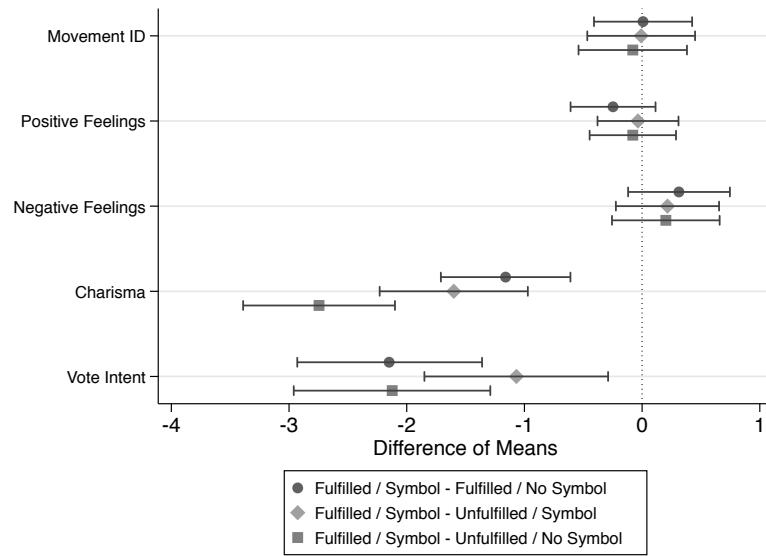
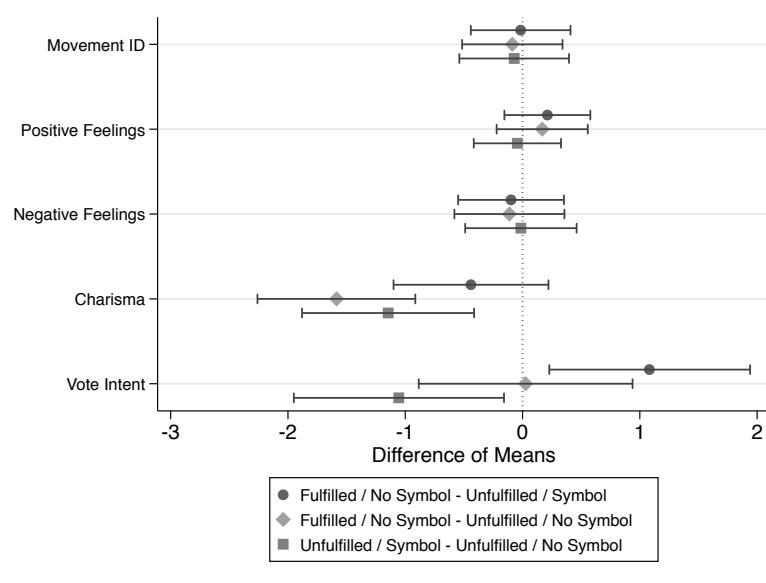


Figure 9, cont.

C. Venezuela: Hypothesis I



D. Venezuela: Hypothesis II



Figures 9A and 9C display pairwise t-tests between the condition with combined cues (*fulfilled / symbol*) and each remaining condition, as described in Hypothesis I. Figures 9B and 9D display pairwise t-tests between the conditions with marginal cues (*fulfilled / no symbol* and *unfulfilled / symbol*) and the condition with no cues (*unfulfilled / no symbol*), as described in Hypothesis II.

In Venezuela, the results for HI are mixed. On the one hand, HI.A is not supported: In terms of movement attachment, respondents expressed equally strong identification with and feelings toward Chavismo across all four conditions, suggesting that neither bold policies nor symbolic ties had a noticeable effect. The reason is that respondents expressed much higher levels of attachment than their Argentine counterparts: in Argentina, across the four conditions, identification with Peronism ranged from 6.02 to 6.78 with a mean score of 6.45, positive feelings ranged from 6.15 to 7.07 with a mean score of 6.67, and negative feelings ranged from 3.98 to 4.94 with a mean score of 4.66. Conversely, in Venezuela, identification with Chavismo ranged from 8.48 to 8.56 with a mean score of 8.54, positive feelings ranged from 8.71 to 8.96 with a mean score of 8.87, and negative feelings ranged from 1.38 to 1.7 with a mean score of 1.56. In other words, whereas the lower overall intensity of attachments in Argentina allowed for differences to reveal themselves across the four conditions, the “ceiling effects” for attachment in Venezuela suppressed any potential differences.

I suspect these ceiling effects emerged in Venezuela due to the recent nature of Chávez’s death, just four years before the survey was conducted. Because Chávez’s followers continue to mourn his passing, it is likely that their attachments to his legacy remain highly activated, resulting in the expression of particularly raw, powerful feelings toward Chavismo—regardless of the behavior of new leaders. Indeed, the survey experiment was administered during the rule of Chávez’s handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro, further intensifying the emotional salience of Chávez’s legacy. Conversely, because Perón died over forty years ago, Argentines’ attachments to Peronism are likely

to be more nuanced. Argentines who are *not* exposed to a new leader implementing Peronist cues may therefore be less likely to express their attachments as enthusiastically.

On the other hand, the results in Venezuela uphold HIB: the combined effects of bold policies and symbolic ties caused followers to express the strongest support for the candidate. On average, relative to all other conditions, respondents in the *fulfilled / symbol* condition perceived the candidate as significantly more charismatic ($p \approx 0$ across all pairwise difference-of-means tests) and were more likely to vote for the candidate in future elections ($p \leq .012$ across all pairwise difference-of-means tests). The significance of these findings is noteworthy: while attachments to Chavismo remain strong among all followers, charismatic attachment to and support for new leaders *vary* based on the extent to which leaders can a) demonstrate their own heroic capacities by fulfilling bold policies and b) convincingly tie that heroism to Chávez's legacy. Thus, to maximize their support, new candidates must behave similarly to and associate themselves with the charismatic founder to garner support—actions that perpetuate the founder's legacy. Figure 8B presents a graphical illustration of the results and Figure 9C pairwise t-tests between the *fulfilled / symbol* condition and each of the three remaining conditions in Venezuela (full ANOVA results and p-values for all pairwise t-tests are presented in the appendix).

HII: *The marginal effects of bold policies and symbolic ties on followers' A) expression of attachment to the movement and B) support for the candidate are stronger than their combined absence.*

The results provide partial support for HII. In terms of movement attachment, respondents in Argentina exposed to *either* bold policies *or* symbolic ties generally

expressed stronger attachment than respondents exposed to *neither* of the two cues, supporting HII.A. The results were significant in three of four pairwise t-tests ($p \leq .075$), and were in the correct direction in the fourth t-test. However, no significant differences were revealed across the three conditions in terms of negative feelings toward the movement, indicating that, unlike the *combined* effect of the two cues, the *marginal* effect of each is insufficient to attenuate respondents' negative sentiments toward the movement. As for HII.B, the results from Argentina suggest that bold policies by themselves caused respondents to express stronger support for the candidate, whereas symbolic ties had no significant marginal effect. On average, respondents in the *fulfilled / no symbol* condition perceived the candidate as more charismatic ($p \approx 0$) and expressed greater intentions to vote for the candidate ($p = .001$) than in the *unfulfilled / no symbol* condition. In contrast, there was no significant difference between the *unfulfilled / symbol* condition and the *unfulfilled / no symbol* condition. These findings suggest that the impact of symbolic ties on voters' support for the candidate is not as strong as the impact of bold policies. Figure 9B displays pairwise t-tests pertaining to Hypothesis II in Argentina.

In Venezuela, no significant differences emerged across the four conditions in terms of movement attachment due to the ceiling effects described above. However, the results indicate that the marginal effects of bold policies and symbolic ties significantly impacted respondents' support for the candidate, providing partial support for HII.B. On average, respondents in the *fulfilled / no symbol* and *unfulfilled / symbol* conditions perceived the candidate as more charismatic than respondents in *unfulfilled / no symbol*

condition ($p \approx 0$ and $p = .010$, respectively). Furthermore, respondents in the *unfulfilled / symbol* condition expressed significantly greater willingness to vote for the candidate than respondents in the *unfulfilled / no symbol* condition ($p = .054$). Figure 9D displays pairwise t-tests pertaining to these results in Venezuela.

In short, the findings reveal that the marginal effects of bold policies and symbolic ties influence followers' expressions of emotional attachment to the movement, their perceptions of the new leader's charisma, and their likelihood to vote for the new leader in future elections—though these effects are weaker than the joint effect of the two cues. Interestingly, the marginal effects of each cue vary according to the historical position of the charismatic movement: In Argentina, where the movement's founder died decades ago, the impact of the symbolic cue is relatively weaker than in Venezuela, where the founder died very recently and the movement remains in power. Still, in both countries, the fulfillment of bold policies appears to have a stronger marginal effect on support for the *candidate* (with the exception of vote intention in Venezuela, perhaps due to the strength of symbolic ties in the current political climate). In contrast, symbolic ties are potentially more important than bold policies for reviving followers' attachments to the *movement*. These results reinforce my theory that new leaders must fulfill material *and* symbolic cues to successfully revive the movement in their own name.

HIII: *Followers' identification with the movement will mediate the effect of the symbolic cue on support for the candidate.*

To further examine whether symbolic ties increase followers' support for the candidate by *enhancing their identification with the movement*, I turn to the third

hypothesis. Following Imai, Keele, and Tingley (2010), I estimate the average causal mediation effect of movement identification on the relationship between symbolic ties and followers' support for the candidate, measured as charismatic perceptions and vote intention (see appendix for equations and full output of the analysis). In Argentina, results uphold the hypothesis. The direct and total effects of symbolic ties on charismatic perceptions and vote intent are not significant. More importantly, however, movement attachment has a positive, significant effect (see Table 5).⁶⁵ In other words, the symbolic cue has a significant but *indirect* effect on candidate support: Exposure to symbolic ties increases followers' support for the candidate by *intensifying their identification with the movement*. In Venezuela, due to the ceiling effects for movement identification across the four experimental conditions, the results were not significant. Nevertheless, the Argentine findings underscore that, in addition to proving their *own* impressive leadership by implementing bold policies, successors who want to maximize their support should link themselves to the founder and his heroic mission to reactivate followers' attachments to the movement.

⁶⁵ The mediation analysis includes an assumption that the observed mediator is statistically independent of the observed treatment and pre-treatment confounders. In other words, among respondents who share the same treatment status (such as exposure to the symbolic cue) and share the same pre-treatment characteristics, “the mediator can be regarded as if it were randomized” (Imai et al. 2010, 313). To verify the validity of this assumption, I conducted a sensitivity analysis as suggested by Imai et al. (2010), which confirmed for both charisma ($r=.0613$) and vote intent ($r=.0965$) that the assumption was upheld.

Table 5. Average Causal Mediated Effect of Movement Identification on the Relationship between the Symbolic Cue and Candidate Support (95% Confidence Intervals Shown).

	Argentina		Venezuela	
Average Effect	Charisma	Vote Intent	Charisma	Vote Intent
Mediation (Indirect)	.138 (.014, .291)	.201 (.016, .413)	.000 (-.046, .048)	.071 (-.122, .275)
Direct	.206 (-.257, .662)	.123 (-.422, .660)	1.16 (.582, 1.72)	152 (.817, 2.21)
Total	.344 (-.128, .825)	.323 (-.244, .900)	1.16 (.592, 1.73)	1.59 (.870, 2.33)
Proportion Mediated	.361 (-2.05, 3.04)	.490 (-6.51, 9.45)	.000 (.000, .000)	.045 (.030, .081)

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided important evidence that charismatic movements can persist by sustaining their original, personalistic nature rather than transforming into routinized parties. Specifically, new politicians can tap into followers' latent attachments with the movement to politically reactivate those bonds and garner support as the movement's new savior. Successors do not achieve this by adopting a strategy of routinization, such as developing a strong, consistent programmatic platform or relying on a well-developed party organization. Rather, new leaders restore the movement to power by embracing a personalistic strategy in which they depict themselves as heroic heirs of the founder and claim their devotion to the realizing the founder's mission of transcendence. To do so successfully, these leaders must first establish their own charisma by promising and fulfilling bold policies that demonstrate their extraordinary capacities; second, they must symbolically link themselves to the founder and display

their commitment to reviving his redemptive mission. These tactics increase the political salience of followers' emotional identification with the movement, which in turn enhance their charismatic perceptions of and electoral support for the successor.

I demonstrate the mechanisms of charismatic attachment reactivation through a survey experiment conducted in Argentina and Venezuela with followers of Peronism and Chavismo, respectively. Similar to the focus groups discussed in chapter four, the results illustrate the enduring, deeply emotional nature of followers' attachments to the movement. These bonds appeared especially strong in Venezuela, but also revealed themselves in Argentina. The survival of charismatic attachments in the latter case is remarkable, given that Juan Perón died over forty years ago and many observers doubt the resilience of the Peronist identity.⁶⁶ Moreover, the evidence suggests that new leaders—even ones with whom citizens are unfamiliar, such as a hypothetical presidential candidate—can strategically leverage the founder's legacy to politically reactivate followers' charismatic attachments and increase their personal allure. In particular, successors who *combine* bold, initially successful policies with symbolic ties to the founder cause followers to express the strongest emotional attachment and elevate their own charismatic appeal.

The results also shed light on the marginal effects of material and symbolic cues. The material cue appears to have important, independent effects on support for the

⁶⁶ During personal interviews with the author conducted in Buenos Aires between March and July 2016, three public opinion specialists, three political scientists, and four political operatives from across the political spectrum (three Peronists and one non-Peronist) behavior expressed strong doubts that a strong Peronist identity persists among Argentine voters today.

candidate, measured in terms of charismatic perceptions and vote intention. This implies that leaning on the symbolic legacy of a charismatic predecessor is, by itself, insufficient to consolidate power: New leaders seeking to inherit the founder's mantle must also independently demonstrate their mighty potential. Yet the results also indicate that symbolic ties have a remarkably strong, marginal effect on citizens' emotional attachments to the movement. Moreover, a causal mediation analysis with the Argentine data indicates the important, *indirect* effect of the symbolic cue on followers' support for the candidate. The strength of this cue and its positive impact on candidate support, which operates by increasing followers' identification with the movement, underscores the enduring influence of charismatic leaders' symbolic legacies on voters' attitudes and behaviors and suggests that leaders seeking to inherit the founders' power must also tie themselves to those legacies.

Importantly, it is possible that this strategy of charismatic reactivation extends only to the movement's traditional followers—those who come from the popular sectors and claim an affinity, however faint, with the movement. Moreover, the overall size of the effects can vary: the symbolic cue may be more powerful at the outset, as indicated in Venezuela, whereas the material cue may prove more essential as time goes on, as suggested in Argentina. Implementation of the strategy therefore does not guarantee new leaders' rise to power. Nevertheless, the importance of charismatic reactivation should not be underestimated. Indeed, followers need not be active, card-carrying members of the movement; they need only have a latent identification with the movement to be influenced by successors' cues. Popular-sector voters who satisfy this condition

constitute a sizeable proportion of the electorate in countries where charismatic movements take root, including Argentina and Venezuela. Politicians therefore have substantial incentives to enact a strategy of charismatic reactivation to enhance their personal appeal. In turn, as demonstrated in the survey experiment, this strategy can nudge up followers' emotional attachment to the movement, thereby perpetuating its political relevance over time.

It is due to the enduring impact of symbolic ties on followers' attachments and the resulting influence on political support that leaders in Argentina and Venezuela have continually linked themselves to their charismatic predecessors. In Argentina, for instance, Carlos Menem justified his audacious free-market reforms in the early 1990s by claiming, "This government, this president, is doing what Perón would have done if he had to govern Argentina in this era" (Comas, 1993, author translation). Years later, when former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner sought to regain power as a senator in the 2017 elections, she claimed, "If Perón and Evita were alive, who would they vote for? Evita would vote for Cristina, Perón would vote for Taiana [Cristina's fellow senatorial candidate], and both would vote for Citizen Unity [Cristina's political movement]" ("Evita votaría a Cristina, Perón votaría a Taiana, y los dos juntos a Unidad Ciudadana" 2017). In Venezuela, despite his government's dismal performance, President Nicolás Maduro has also heavily relied on his connection to Chávez to sustain his legitimacy, declaring himself the "son of Chávez" and emphasizing his spiritual connection to the founder (e.g. @VTVcanal8 2016; Scharfenberg 2013). The results of my survey experiment suggest that these leaders' references to the charismatic founders of Peronism

and Chavismo are probably strategic attempts to revive popular enthusiasm for the movement and establish a strong foundation for the leaders' support.

In sum, this chapter has clarified the micro-foundational process through which new leaders reactivate citizens' emotional attachments to charismatic movements and increase personal appeal. In chapter six, I investigate the macro-level conditions that influence leaders' ability to successfully implement these strategies to win elections and consolidate their own charismatic authority. To do so, I move from the perspective of the movement followers to that of the leaders who seek to revive the movement. By tracing the process through some leaders succeeded while others failed across three charismatic movements—Peronism, Chavismo, and Fujimorismo in Peru—I indicate the crucial conditions that must be in place for successors to enact the material and symbolic cues described above, return the movement to power, and consolidate their own personalistic authority. Given these conditions, chapter seven then assesses the potential trajectories that charismatic movements can take over the long term and examines the ways in which they threaten democratic politics and hinder party-system development.

PART III: CHARISMA FROM THE LEADERS' PERSPECTIVE

Chapter 6. The Politics of Succession in Charismatic Movements⁶⁷

I have argued in this dissertation that understanding the striking persistence of charismatic movements requires careful analysis from the perspectives of both the movement's followers and its leadership. In Part II, I identified from the followers' point of view how charismatic attachments form, survive, and become politically reactivated by new politicians. Chapter 3 analyzed public opinion data from Venezuela to demonstrate how followers' powerful, affective bonds to the charismatic founder emerge and overpower alternative (programmatic and organizational) types of attachments. Chapter four turned to focus groups conducted with charismatic movement followers from Venezuela and Argentina to illustrate how followers' ties cultivate a deeply personalistic identity that persists for years after the founder's death. Chapter five provided additional evidence from survey experiments in both countries underscoring the resilience of this identity. Moreover, the chapter showed that new leaders who signal their potential to fill the founder's shoes by enacting bold policies and symbolically associating themselves with the founder cause followers to express their identity more strongly and increase their support for the new leader. In short, my investigation from the perspective of the followers illustrated that charismatic attachments form, persist, and become politically reactivated through a *personalistic* mechanism.

⁶⁷ This chapter is based on an article by the author that is forthcoming in 2020 in *Comparative Politics* (Andrews-Lee, Caitlin. Forthcoming. "The Politics of Succession in Charismatic Movements: Routinization Versus Revival in Argentina, Venezuela, and Peru." *Comparative Politics*).

Part III places this micro-level analysis in a historical context by incorporating the perspective of leaders who have attempted to tap into followers' bonds to revive charismatic movements and consolidate power. To that end, the present chapter analyzes how some leaders succeeded while others failed to reactivate citizens' attachments and become new standard-bearers of the movement. Whereas existing literature argues that such leaders must invest in building a programmatic party, I argue that successors must instead leverage conditions and strategies that conform to the movement's pre-existing, personalistic nature.

As indicated in the previous chapter, successors need to enact two strategies to reactivate citizens' attachments and garner support: the leaders should (1) achieve bold performance to "prove" their extraordinary abilities and (2) symbolically tie themselves with the charismatic founder to appear as heroic reincarnations. In reality, however, many leaders have attempted to implement these strategies and have failed. Under what conditions can successors effectively apply these tactics to revive the movement and consolidate their own personalistic authority?

The present chapter contends that three conditions shape successors' ability to achieve this ambitious feat. The first, crucial condition involves when and how the new leaders emerge. *Anointed successors*, who are often directly handpicked by the founder and immediately take over, encounter formidable obstacles that prevent them from becoming effective leaders of the movement. Conversely, *self-starters*, who rise on their own years after the founder's death, have greater latitude to convince the followers of

their heroic capacities and assume the founder's mantle. Thus, self-starter status is a necessary condition for success.

Yet simply becoming a self-starter does not ensure successors' victory. In fact, many self-starters attempting to embody the founder's legacy have failed. Instead, two additional factors condition whether self-starters can return the movement to power. First, these leaders need a crisis that generates widespread suffering and makes citizens more likely to crave a new savior capable of rescuing them from their problems. Second, self-starters' willingness and ability to adopt a style that plays into the movement's personalistic nature, rather than focusing on party-building and programmatic development, are crucial for their capacity to access the followers' deep, emotional attachments and portray themselves as champions of the people.

The following section analyzes the conditions under which successors can revive charismatic movements politically and consolidate power. To illustrate my argument, I then trace the process through which six successors across three charismatic movements—Peronism, Chavismo, and Peruvian Fujimorismo—attempted to reanimate their predecessors' legacies. This empirical examination relies on interviews with former leaders, analysts, and campaign strategists; focus groups with movement followers; and secondary literature, to assess the experiences of two anointed successors (Isabel Perón in Argentina and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela), two failed self-starters (Keiko Fujimori in Peru and Antonio Cafiero in Argentina), and two successful self-starters (Carlos Menem

and the Néstor and Cristina Kirchner couple in Argentina).⁶⁸ In addition to cross-sectional variation provided by the three charismatic movements, the analysis incorporates an over-time component within a single movement by examining at least one successor from Argentina within each paired comparison. In light of this study from the perspective of the leaders, chapter seven examines the trajectories of charismatic movements focusing on Argentine Peronism. By investigating the rise and fall of successive charismatic leaders within a single movement over the course of several decades, the chapter reveals how charismatic movements hinder the development of institutionalized party systems over the long term.

A THEORY OF CHARISMATIC REVIVAL

As stated in chapter five, new leaders can politically regenerate a charismatic movement by achieving bold, impressive performance and symbolically associating themselves with the founder. In the following section, I analyze three conditions that impact successors' ability to enact these strategies and reanimate the movement's original, charismatic ethos: their mode of selection, the eruption of a crisis that makes citizens crave a savior, and the successors' adoption of the founder's personalistic style for claiming power.

⁶⁸ Néstor and Cristina are widely viewed as joint leaders of a single administration, much like Juan and Eva Perón from 1946 to 1952. Long before Néstor's presidential candidacy, both leaders held political offices in their own right and worked together to increase each other's influence. Moreover, Ollier (2015) indicates, "the Kirchner couple planned to alternate power between themselves—as [Cristina] affirmed—but [Néstor's] death [in 2010] made that plan impossible." Finally, many Peronist followers compare Cristina to Eva Perón—whose charismatic appeal greatly strengthened and arguably prolonged Juan's position of power—rather than to Isabel, his uncharismatic third wife and anointed successor. For these reasons, I treat the Kirchners' joint presidencies as a single case.

Mode of Selection

The first condition that shapes successors' capacity to become new standard-bearers of the movement concerns their mode of selection. Some successors depend on the founder's direct anointment. These leaders, who present themselves as "chosen ones," typically take power in the immediate aftermath of the founder's disappearance. In contrast, other successors seek a more independent path to power, rising on their own accord long after the founder's disappearance. Unlike anointed successors, these self-starters do not have the founder's explicit blessing. Instead, they must earn the followers' loyalty, using their own tools and strategies to portray themselves as genuine heirs.

On the surface, the founder's direct endorsement would seem to provide anointed successors with a formidable advantage over self-starters. This is because, for one, the followers trust the founder's judgment and therefore provide anointed successors with an automatic base of support even before coming to power. In contrast, self-starters have to gain national recognition and popular approval independently. Additionally, elites are more likely to back the founder's chosen successor in order to minimize costly uncertainty and avoid the instability of a power vacuum (Brownlee 2007, 597).⁶⁹ Conversely, self-starters have to compete against other candidates to earn these elites' support.

Yet despite these apparent advantages, I argue that anointed successors rarely, if ever, succeed. Instead, paradoxically, it is the self-starters—who must rely on their own

⁶⁹ Specifically, Brownlee argues that "elites will accede to the ruler's choice of heir apparent" in the context of authoritarian regimes where the leader predates the party—as is the case for charismatic founders, who predate their own movements.

resources rather than directly inheriting the founder's power—who are better equipped to pick up the founder's baton and rise to greatness.

Anointed Successors

The struggles of anointed successors stem from the very nature of charisma, namely the founder's motives for selecting a replacement. As Weber stresses, the charismatic founder considers himself an extraordinary individual with unmatched power (1979, 241-246). For this reason, throughout his rule, the founder insists on his own superiority, concentrates rather than shares power, and demands unwavering loyalty from his staff. Moreover, when forced to face his own mortality, the founder refuses to groom a successor to take his place. Although a talented successor could safeguard the survival of the founder's movement, training a worthy replacement would threaten the founder's superiority. To shield his legacy from potential competitors, the founder therefore designates a loyal and unintimidating successor rather than a skilled heir.⁷⁰ As faithful disciples accustomed to pleasing the founder, anointed successors stand little chance of outshining him. At the same time, however, these chosen replacements are weaklings who lack the independent authority necessary to lead the movement in the founder's wake. Thus, while the selection of an inadequate successor protects the founder's superior image, it also places the movement in a precarious situation after his disappearance.

⁷⁰ Self-starters are unlikely to compete for power under these circumstances, as they must face the candidate personally anointed by the beloved founder and are therefore unlikely to win.

In addition to anointed successors' lack of skill and willpower, the timing of their rise to power complicates their prospects for success. This is because, by the end of the founder's rule, his audacious policies are likely to be reaching the point of exhaustion. Since the haphazard and personalistic programs are designed to prove the founder's heroic capacities, they lack the infrastructure to endure. While the performance of the policies may begin to decline during the founder's tenure, he can stave off the negative consequences by draining available resources and using his charisma as a "Teflon" shield (Merolla and Zechmeister 2011, 30). Yet neither of these tools is available to anointed successors. By the time these disciples take power, the country's resources are likely to be depleted; furthermore, anointed successors have no charisma of their own to protect their reputation. Consequently, the followers are likely to blame these new leaders—rather than the adored founder—for the policy failures.

Given the collapse of the founder's policies, anointed successors would do well to initiate drastic reforms. However, due to their initial success, the founder's policies constitute a crucial foundation for the followers' loyalty. Fearing they will appear to betray the founder's legacy, handpicked leaders therefore hesitate to reform these programs. To make matters worse, these disciples cannot convincingly blame other actors for the policy failures and resultant crisis. They may attempt to target classic enemies of the movement, but this is unlikely to win much sympathy from the followers. From the followers' perspective, the founder successfully warded off threats from these malevolent opponents; anointed successors' inability to do so only further substantiates their weakness. In short, while the founder's endorsement may initially boost anointed

successors' support, multiple obstacles related to skill, timing, and resources ultimately prevent these individuals from becoming successful new leaders of the movement.

Existing studies of charisma support the notion that anointed successors cannot uphold their predecessors' movements. Yet in contrast to my theory, scholars tend to interpret this as evidence that the movements *must* routinize to survive. For example, Kostadinova and Levitt state, "When [the founder] withdraws from politics or dies, the organization faces an enormous challenge: it either replaces the leader with a functionary who is not remotely comparable with the predecessor, or else it splinters or simply dissolves. In either case, electoral loss is a more likely outcome than revival" (Kostadinova and Levitt 2014, 500-501). Similarly, Madsen and Snow claim, "the ability of any [anointed successor] to maintain a direct tie with his/her following is very much diminished." Thus, "charismatic movements, if they are to survive for an extended period, will *inevitably* develop structure and with that structure will come some decentralization of influence" (Madsen and Snow 1991, 25-28, emphasis added).

I argue that this logic of routinization underestimates the resilience of affective attachments to the founder, which—as demonstrated in chapter four—cultivate an identity among the followers that is remarkably stable over time (Huddy 2001, 127-56; Meléndez and Rovira-Kaltwasser 2017, 3). Even in the absence of the founder, cultural symbols—such as images of the founder and stories of his/her heroism—can help sustain the identity among the followers (Huddy 2001, 143-4). In fact, these symbols may trigger especially intense feelings of sadness and yearning when the founder dies, making it very difficult to replace the followers' identity with de-personalized partisanship. In the cases

of Peronism, Chavismo, and Fujimorismo, scholars indicate the resilience of followers' deeply personalistic identity with the movement (Andrews-Lee 2018; Gervasoni 2018; Levitsky and Zavaleta 2016). As I will illustrate in subsequent sections, successors who adopt a strategy of routinization—including Antonio Cafiero in Argentina—overlook the intensity of the followers' enduring, charismatic attachments and therefore fail to tap into this reservoir of deep emotional support.

In sum, anointed successors are virtually doomed to fail. Yet the resilience of citizens' affective attachments to the founder and movement signals the potential for self-starters to reactivate those bonds years later, revive the founder's transformative mission, and consolidate independent authority. Even so, success is anything but guaranteed. In fact, most self-starters who attempt to revive the movement in their own name fall short of establishing themselves as powerful heirs. The next section assesses the conditions under which self-starters can achieve this objective and carry the movement forward.

Self-Starters

Self-starters circumvent two obstacles faced by anointed successors and therefore have greater possibilities for successfully reviving charismatic movements and consolidating power. First, because they do not seek power until years after the founder's disappearance, self-starters do not inherit the crisis caused by the founder's collapsed policies. Thus, not only can self-starters seek power unencumbered by this burden, but also, they can convincingly blame the crisis on whoever immediately replaced the founder, whether it is an anointed successor or an opposition leader. Second, by rising

years later, these leaders sidestep the founder’s desire to appoint an underwhelming replacement. While this fact alone does not ensure self-starters’ success, it encourages the emergence of more talented and promising candidates capable of exercising greater individual agency and appearing as strong leaders reminiscent of—rather than beholden to—the founder.

Scholars of routinization would claim that these two factors could not revive charismatic movements because their lack of structure would cause disintegration before self-starters could bring them back to life. By contrast, I argue that charismatic movements can tolerate much more leadership volatility than institutionalized parties precisely *because* of their weakly structured nature and their firm emotional foundation. As shown in chapter four, unlike conventional partisanship, the profoundly affective nature of citizens’ attachments with the movement, which is rooted in the founder’s legacy, can endure even if the movement suffers an organizational decline. While the political salience of the attachments may fade during such periods, ambitious leaders who “embody the prototype” of the movement—i.e., leaders who signal their likeness to the founder—can politically reactivate citizens’ ties and earn their loyalty as new standard-bearers (Haslam et al. 2011, 137; Hogg and Reid 2006, 19; Huddy 2001; Meléndez and Rovira-Kaltwasser 2017). Indeed, while it is difficult to change the personalistic nature of citizens’ attachments, the evidence in chapter five suggests that, in some contexts, talented successors can strategically “shift the intensity” of these ties to increase their political significance (Huddy 2001, 148).

Conditions for Self-Starters' Success

Many self-starters emerge but few succeed in reviving the movement and becoming its preeminent leader. One reason is that success requires the emergence of a severe crisis, which is an exogenous condition over which self-starters have little control. Similar to the founder's initial rise to power, a crisis is important because it makes citizens hungry for a savior to rescue them. Not only does a crisis intensify *existing* followers' longing for such a leader, but it also makes citizens who were not previously followers of the movement—such as newly marginalized groups and younger generations who may not have directly experienced the founder's rule—look for an exceptional leader to provide them with relief (Madsen and Snow 1991; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009; Weyland 2003). Just as with the initial rise of the charismatic founder, the eruption of a crisis provides a crucial opportunity for self-starters to prove their independent capacity to establish a heroic image and an impressive base of support.

Yet the objective existence of a crisis does not ensure the success of self-starters. To connect with and earn the devotion of the followers, these leaders must also adopt the founder's personalistic style. To do so, self-starters must *use* the crisis—they must "perform" and "mediate" it—to prove their heroic power and write themselves into the founder's symbolic narrative as true heirs who are destined to pick up the founder's baton (Moffitt 2015, 189). To achieve this, self-starters exercise individual agency by relying on their own leadership skills and charisma. Rather than investing time and energy into party-building, as the routinization thesis would suggest, self-starters must use superb

communication skills and magnetic appeal to reignite followers' emotional attachments and claim those bonds for themselves.

Moreover, self-starters must use symbolic tactics to play up the crisis and increase the political relevance of the founder's narrative under new circumstances. Specifically, in addition to portraying themselves as heirs of the founder, self-starters must revive the polarizing dynamic of the movement by blaming their opponents for the crisis and framing them as menacing enemies of the people. This enhances cohesion among the followers while alienating the self-starters' critics as evil adversaries. Additionally, self-starters must use speech, dress, gestures, and other symbols to restore the relevance of the founder's mission of salvation and frame their actions as necessary for fulfilling this noble promise.

To recapitulate, I claim that the revival of charismatic movements requires a combination of structural conditions and new leaders' individual agency. Structurally, successors must arise as self-starters to emerge from the founder's overbearing shadow. These leaders must also seek power after the eruption of an acute crisis in order to convincingly portray themselves as saviors capable of meeting the people's needs. Once these two structural conditions have been met, self-starters must then rely on their own skills and charisma to embody the founder's personalistic style. Only by fulfilling these three conditions can successors return the movement to power and declare themselves true heirs and heroes in their own right.

TESTING THE THEORY: CHARISMATIC SUCCESSORS IN LATIN AMERICA

To test my theory of charismatic revival against the routinization thesis, I focus on Peronism, Chavismo, and Fujimorismo, the three most prominent charismatic movements in Latin America's recent history. Specifically, I examine three sets of successors from across these movements: two anointed successors, two failed self-starters, and two successful self-starters.⁷¹ To begin, I analyze Isabel Perón and Nicolás Maduro, the only two anointed successors from these movements. Subsequently, I explore the paths of two failed self-starters: Keiko Fujimori and Antonio Cafiero. While many self-starters have attempted and failed to revive charismatic movements, I analyze Fujimori and Cafiero because their candidacies were widely considered as viable and competitive. Finally, I analyze the complete set of successful self-starters from these cases: Carlos Menem and the Kirchners in Argentina.

Using interviews with former leaders and campaign experts, original campaign materials, newspaper articles, and secondary sources, I trace the process through which each set of leaders failed or succeeded to return the movement to power and assess the relevance of the three conditions outlined in my theory. Next, I return to the focus groups discussed in chapter four to highlight followers' personal impressions of the founder and subsequent leaders.⁷² While the focus group participants do not constitute a representative sample of followers, their discussions provide multiple accounts that corroborate my

⁷¹ By definition, successors who seek to revive the movement must openly identify with its label.

⁷² Because focus groups were not conducted in Peru, this type of evidence is not used for the case of Keiko Fujimori.

leader-focused research regarding the strengths and weaknesses of different types of successors (Cyr 2016, 247).

I use three criteria to distinguish “success” from “failure.” First, to embody the founder’s legacy, I argue that successors must occupy the same office: that of the chief executive. Yet becoming the chief executive is insufficient; after all, anointed successors achieve this without any real accomplishment of their own. To become true heirs of the founder, successors must also establish a strong popular mandate by securing a landslide electoral victory over opposition candidates and drawing mass support in a sustained way once they are in office. To qualify as a landslide victory, I contend that successors must win the election by a margin of at least ten percentage points. To show their ability to draw mass support in a sustained way, I turn to executive approval ratings.⁷³ Successful leaders must secure the approval of a majority of the population (at least 50 percent) for at least one year in executive office. Table 6 displays the six successors analyzed here with their scores for each of the three criteria.

⁷³ Approval ratings are drawn from the Executive Approval Database. Carlin et al. 2016, available for download at www.executiveapproval.org.

Table 6. Scoring of Successors under Analysis: Anointed Successors, Failed Self-Starters, and Successful Self-Starters

Successor Type	Leader (Country)	Chief Executive	Margin of Victory	Highest Annual Exec Approval
Anointed successor	Isabel Perón (Argentina)*	Yes (1974-1976)	--	--
	Nicolás Maduro (Venezuela)	Yes (2013-present)	1.5%	37.91 (5/2013-4/2014)
Failed Self-Starter	Antonio Cafiero (Argentina)	No (1989 campaign)	--	--
	Keiko Fujimori (Peru)	No (2011, 2016 campaigns)	--	--
Successful Self-Starter	Carlos Menem (Argentina)	Yes (1989-1999)	10.5%	60.13 (8/1989-7/1990)
	Néstor Kirchner (Argentina)**	Yes (2003-2007)	Uncontested	69.00 (6/2003-5/2004)
	Cristina Kirchner (Argentina)***	Yes (2007-2015)	22.3%	58.84 (1/2011-12/2011)

*As her husband's vice president, Isabel Perón became president upon his death rather than being elected. Her approval numbers are not listed due to the scarcity of public opinion data from this tumultuous period in Argentine history. Nevertheless, her widespread unpopularity as president is widely documented (e.g., Madsen and Snow 1991, 134; McGuire 1997, 165-170), suggesting that her approval numbers would have fallen below the 50-percent threshold.

** Néstor Kirchner and Carlos Menem advanced to a second round of presidential elections in 2003. Due to Kirchner's overwhelmingly superior numbers, Menem dropped out of the race before elections were held.

*** Though Cristina immediately succeeded Néstor as president, I consider her as a self-starter rather than an anointed successor because, from their initial rise to national executive power in 2003, the two ambitious leaders planned a *joint project* to become Argentina's new saviors. See endnote 9 for further details.

Anointed Successors: Isabel Perón and Nicolás Maduro

I begin by assessing the trajectories of two anointed successors: Isabel Perón, who inherited the Argentine presidency in 1974 from her husband, Juan Perón; and Nicolás Maduro, whom moribund Hugo Chávez handpicked as president of Venezuela in 2013. While both Isabel and Maduro became chief executives of their respective countries, their support rapidly diminished shortly after they took office. After two disastrous years, Isabel was ousted by a military coup in 1976, while Maduro became an authoritarian leader who managed to cling to power only through repression rather than charisma. While both leaders assumed the top office, they projected an uninspiring symbolic image and failed to reform their predecessors' collapsing policies. The weak leadership of these anointed successors led to the temporary deflation of the movement; however, citizens' charismatic attachments survived, setting up the future possibility of movement revival by self-starters—an outcome that routinization would not predict.

Isabel Perón

As detailed in chapter one, Juan Perón rose to the presidency in 1946 and consolidated a powerful charismatic movement alongside his second wife, Eva, by granting unprecedented benefits to millions of socioeconomically and politically excluded citizens. Though Eva died of cancer in 1952 and a military coup exiled Juan to Spain in 1955, outlawing Peronism for nearly two decades, Perón remained Argentina's

most prominent political figure throughout his lifetime. Indeed, during his exile (1955–1973), he influenced politics through proxy leaders and his unmatched support base.⁷⁴

Perón frequently spoke of creating an “organized community” of followers, suggesting that his movement might one day routinize (Perón 1974). In practice, however, he undermined the organizational dimension of his movement by allowing the proliferation of ideological rifts within it and maintaining unchallenged personalistic control over it (McGuire 1997, 50; Page 1983, 161). These tactics deepened the “chameleonic” nature of his political brand and prevented the rise of powerful protégés while reinforcing his position as supreme leader (Ciria 1974, 30). Indeed, personal loyalty to Perón constituted the only thread uniting his otherwise bitterly divided followers. Upon returning to Argentina to serve a third presidential term in 1973, he displayed reluctance to share his power. Despite old age and a delicate political and economic context, he appointed his most faithful servant, Isabel, as his vice president and eventual successor (McGuire 1997, 164). By nominating a complete political novice rather than a more experienced leader, he showed his desire to dominate the movement.

As her husband’s unwilling successor, Isabel lacked the political familiarity and skill to maneuver her government out of the crisis and claim her place as the new leader of Peronism. Instead of reaching out to console the devastated masses, she failed to take ownership of the deep bonds her husband had cultivated. Thus, while followers expressed euphoria upon Juan’s return to Argentina in 1973, they viewed Isabel as weak and bland.

⁷⁴ During this period, presidents owed their victories to Perón’s endorsement or the abstention of his followers; military dictators seized power in response to elected presidents’ inability to sustain a popular mandate and stable government in Perón’s absence (Kirkpatrick 1971, 49–78).

In fact, her presidency was widely perceived as a “leaderless situation,” and voters “assumed that she would not be able to remain, even as a figurehead” for the movement (Di Tella 1983, 69).

Isabel’s failure to inspire the followers was compounded by her inability to reform her husband’s dysfunctional policies of economic nationalism. While these policies created impressive growth and delivered prosperity to millions of Argentine workers, by Perón’s exile in 1955 the policies were approaching exhaustion. Subsequent regimes struggled to implement adequate reforms and were therefore held responsible for the declining trade, expanding debt, increasing inflation, and low growth that resulted. This failure to address the crisis provided Perón with a second opportunity to prove his heroic power upon returning to Argentina in 1973. At the time, he proposed the “Social Pact,” a series of bold programs—enhancing Argentina’s economic independence from the U.S., freezing inflationary prices, and increasing workers’ wages—to return the country to the prosperity of his prior rule. As before, these policies *initially* delivered impressive results and sustained Perón’s superhuman reputation for the rest of his life, which lasted just nine months, until July 1, 1974 (Pion-Berlin 1983, 54). Shortly thereafter, the policies quickly imploded, causing a grave crisis.

Despite the urgent need for reform, Isabel feared that altering her husband’s policies would impose a painful cost on the followers and betray his legacy. Thus, in a halfhearted effort to maintain support, she promised to deepen rather than reform his platform of economic nationalism through nearsighted, irresponsible methods such as manipulating inflation. This strategy soon shattered the economy and unleashed violent

social conflict, and Isabel—unable to credibly attribute the policies’ failures to an opposing leader—was saddled with the blame (*ibid.*, 61). Rather than promising to rescue the country through bold action, as Perón had done in the past, she reacted by retreating from politics, taking leaves of absence in September and November 1975 (McGuire 1997, 166).

Isabel’s weak personal image and failed leadership led Peronist followers to view her as a tremendous disappointment rather than her husband’s genuine heir. Thus, while their loyalty to Perón and Eva survived, their attachments never transferred to Isabel. As followers stated in focus groups with the author in 2016 when asked about Isabel’s rule, “I am Peronist of [Juan] Perón,” “I am an *original* Peronist,” “I follow Eva and her masses, but Isabel was a disaster;” and “Isabel was chaos.” Although her rule gave way to a military dictatorship in March 1976, these statements suggest that, because followers disassociated Isabel from Perón, their attachments to his legacy survived.

Nicolás Maduro

As described in chapter three, Hugo Chávez took Venezuela by storm upon rising to the presidency in 1998. During his fourteen-year rule, he took drastic measures to destroy the unpopular, corrupt, and dysfunctional regime he replaced and establish his image as a true champion of the poor. Although the dramatic impact of his reforms depended on unsustainably high oil prices and drastic overspending, they provided unmatched benefits to millions of citizens and solidified Chávez’s status as their everlasting savior. Correspondingly, when he revealed that he had cancer on July 1, 2011,

he ensured his followers that he would combat the illness; in the meantime, while undergoing treatment in Cuba, he promised he would continue to personally govern the country rather than appoint a successor (Primera 2011). Thus, when he announced his cancer was terminal in December 2012, the hero appeared as surprised and devastated as his followers that he would not live on to serve as their immortal protector. As though resigned to the fact that any successor would be inadequate, Chávez anointed Nicolás Maduro, an obsequious follower with scant ambition or domestic political experience, as his heir. The choice surprised many within and outside of Chavismo. Yet the anointed successor's lack of skill made Chávez appear even more impressive; furthermore, Maduro had devoted years of service to Chávez—a characteristic of paramount importance to the founder (Corrales and Penfold 2015, 160).

Since becoming president in 2013, Maduro has utterly failed to claim true leadership of Chavismo. His attempts to legitimate his authority have hinged exclusively on his appointment by Chávez rather than the establishment of an independent charismatic image. For instance, he has declared himself the “son of Chávez,” referenced the founder constantly in speeches, and covered public spaces with images of his predecessor. Perhaps as a result, support for Maduro remains at about 28 percent—a surprisingly high figure, considering his catastrophic mismanagement of the economy and society in general (GBAO Strategies 2019). Nevertheless, whereas Chávez relied on his captivating charisma to consolidate support, Maduro has used despotic tactics to remain in power, including jailing opposition politicians, outlawing (or holding fraudulent) elections, and repressing civilians (Freedom House 2018). Furthermore, his

claims to have assumed the founder’s mantle appear absurd to many followers, who have been forced to endure hyperinflation, extreme shortages of basic goods, and even starvation (Corrales and Penfold 2015, 171; Gill 2017).

Like Isabel Perón in Argentina, Nicolás Maduro has also proven unwilling and unable to transform his predecessor’s foundering policies. To sustain the flow of benefits to his followers during his rule, Chávez squandered the state’s oil profits and recklessly interfered with the economy. Maduro therefore inherited an administration that severely undermined economic production and embraced drastic overspending, triggering inflation, shortages, corruption, and crime. Despite these problems, the successor’s only political asset—Chávez’s personal endorsement—made him unwilling and unable to introduce desperately needed reforms, which has caused a devastating crisis. Furthermore, Maduro’s attempts to blame the domestic opposition politicians and foreign “imperial” powers, such as the United States and Europe, have appeared thoroughly unconvincing—even to followers, who have long distrusted these “enemy” groups. Consequently, many Chavistas view the new leader as responsible for their suffering. As several followers expressed in focus groups conducted in 2016, “Maduro is a bad Chavista;” “we are more Chavista than Maduro is;” and “what a shame that Maduro is the one representing Chavismo today.” Because of Maduro’s refusal to reverse policy failures, about half of Chávez’s followers opposed Maduro in 2015, two years into the anointed successor’s rule (Briceño 2015).

Several scholars have taken Maduro’s failure as evidence that Chavismo has died—a testament to the ephemerality of charismatic movements (e.g., López Maya

2014, 68-87; Rondón 2017). Conversely, I argue that the stark contrast between Chávez and Maduro has caused many followers to *reinforce* their attachments to the former while distancing themselves from the latter. Indeed, half of Chávez’s most devoted followers—about 16 percent of the electorate—identify as “Chavistas *no Maduristas*” (Briceño 2015). Moreover, despite Maduro’s unpopularity, 57 percent of voters maintain favorable views of Chávez (Kronick 2015). And in focus groups conducted with Chavista followers in 2016, participants expressed disdain for Maduro while declaring their love for Chávez and expressing faith that a more competent successor will appear someday: “I am with the future, and we are going to get it with Chavismo;” “one looks to the future and one sees Chávez.” Others declared that their future leader should be “charismatic,” “honorable,” “capable of restoring order,” and “100 percent Chavista.” Contrary to the logic of routinization, wherein citizens’ bonds must transform into depersonalized organizational linkages, the survival of citizens’ affective ties to Chávez suggest the potential for his movement to reemerge one day in its original charismatic form under a more appealing successor.

Failed Self-Starters: Keiko Fujimori and Antonio Cafiero

Only self-starters can restore charismatic movements to power because they steer clear of the founder’s desire to marginalize skilled leaders who might steal the limelight, escape blame for the collapse of his policies, and rise years after the founder. Yet being a self-starter is insufficient for success. These leaders must also rise during a crisis to appear as new saviors and must portray themselves symbolically as new standard bearers

devoted to reviving the founder's mission to transform society. I analyze two self-starters who failed to fulfill one of these two conditions: Keiko Fujimori in Peru, who tried to rise in the absence of crisis conditions, and Antonio Cafiero in Argentina, who chose a routinization strategy rather than a personalistic approach.

Keiko Fujimori

In June 1990, political outsider Alberto Fujimori was elected president of Peru during a period of hyperinflation and insurrection. He immediately implemented drastic policies of economic stabilization, bringing hyperinflation to a screeching halt, and soon launched a campaign to combat the insurgent groups as well (Weyland 2002, 150-158). Combined with his personal allure and his inspiring mission to “reengineer Peru,” these bold initiatives helped him consolidate impressive popular support (Carrión 2007, 126-149). Devotion to Fujimori proved especially strong among the poor, who had suffered the most from economic crisis and political violence prior to his rule. Indeed, his popularity remained well above 50 percent in 2000, ten years after his rise to power, when he won a third (unconstitutional) term (Arce and Carrión 2010, p 37-38).

While he retained a large and devoted following, Congress threatened to depose Fujimori following his electoral victory in 2000, citing accusations of corruption and misconduct. He resigned that November while in Japan and remained in self-imposed exile until 2007, when he was imprisoned for human rights abuses committed during his rule (ibid; Levitsky and Zavaleta 2016, 433). When he was forced to step down in 2000, Fujimori’s personalistic legacy left the country in a leadership vacuum. In fact, in

subsequent years, Peru endured a series of disliked presidents characterized by “broken promises” (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 147).

Over time, however, Keiko Fujimori—the daughter of the exiled founder—demonstrated her potential to return Fujimorismo to power and become its new champion.⁷⁵ When she competed in presidential elections in 2011 and 2016, she built a larger and more consistent support base than any other political party. In 2016, she claimed 39.9 percent of the vote in the first round—nearly twice as much as the runner-up candidate (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 145-47). To build this support, Keiko first established herself as a self-starter. Rather than depending on her father’s anointment, she sought the presidency several years after his demise, using her own charismatic appeal to establish direct connections with Fujimorista voters. While embracing her father’s reputation for jumpstarting the economy, combatting guerilla insurgency, and becoming the people’s champion, she established independent authority. Perhaps as a result, substantial tension emerged between Alberto and Keiko. Indeed, analysts speculate that unlike her brother Kenji, who fought for years to pardon Alberto and finally succeeded in December 2017, Keiko *opposed* her father’s release from prison, fearing he would overshadow her ambitions to become the movement’s new leader (Birnbaum 2017; Tegel 2017). Nonetheless, she enjoyed the support of traditional Fujimoristas and a growing number of “Keikistas” within the movement, who supported both her father’s legacy and her new leadership (Levitsky and Zavaleta 2016 436-37).

⁷⁵ I am grateful to Carlos Meléndez for sharing his insights on the case of Keiko Fujimori.

In addition to positioning herself as a self-starter, Keiko adopted key elements of her father’s personalistic style to win over Fujimoristas. For example, rather than campaigning on a specific platform, she made sweeping promises to reverse economic stagnation and meet the needs of citizens “tired of waiting for solutions to their pressing problems” (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 152). She also donned her father’s approachable, “down-to-earth” style and traveled the country to forge direct ties with voters.

Importantly, even as she established personalistic appeal with her supporters, Keiko also tried to establish a party organization more than any other presidential candidate. She created a new party, Popular Force (*Fuerza Popular*—FP), organized local-level party committees throughout Peru, and nominated candidates for subnational elections under the new party label. Perhaps as a result, FP achieved some electoral successes, including an absolute majority in Congress in 2016 with 36 percent of the legislative vote (Birnbaum 2017; Tegel 2017).

Despite these efforts, I contend that Keiko prioritized her personalistic appeal over her party-building efforts at crucial moments. During her presidential campaigns, she created a “personalistic vehicle” that overshadowed her nascent party (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 152). Her supporters also came to call themselves “Keikistas” rather than FP partisans, indicating their loyalty to the individual over the party. In short, Keiko’s “success at party-building [was] far from guaranteed,” whereas her image as a fresh leader capable of delivering prosperity to the suffering masses—as her father did two decades earlier—played to the personalistic foundations of Fujimorismo (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 155).

Yet while Keiko achieved self-starter status and adopted an engaging personalistic style, she narrowly lost the elections in both 2011 and 2016, failing to secure the presidency. Contrary to the successful self-starters discussed below, she did not manage to win an impressive, landslide victory over her opponents (*ibid*). Thus, she was unable to restore her father's movement and exercise power as the people's new savior.

I argue that Keiko failed due to the absence of a crisis—another crucial condition for self-starters' success. An economic boom in the mid-2000s, driven by international demand for Peru's copper, gold, and natural gas, generated substantial growth and acted as a “buffer against social malaise” (*ibid*, 147). International actors such as the U.S., who approved of Fujimori's neoliberal development model, also supported Peru's economy throughout the 2000s through trade deals (McClintock 2006, 107). Consequently, while Peruvians expressed disappointment in their leaders, they did not desperately crave a hero as they did prior to Alberto's rise in 1990. Keiko's promises to once again “reengineer Peru” and restore prosperity did not resonate enough with the public to catapult her into power.

Antonio Cafiero

In Argentina, Antonio Cafiero, a talented and experienced leader, had the potential to become a successful self-starter when he competed in the presidential primaries for the Peronist Justicialist Party (PJ) in July 1988.⁷⁶ By then, memories of Isabel's failures had been overshadowed by the even-worse performance of the military

⁷⁶ The Justicialist Party (*Partido Justicialista*—PJ) is the main, though not the only, party affiliated with the Peronist movement.

during the 1976-1983 dictatorship. Moreover, by seeking power fifteen years after Perón's death, Cafiero rose as an independent leader and not as a submissive protégé of the founder. Without the inherent weaknesses of anointed successors, Cafiero's path to power seemed more promising than that of his Peronist predecessor.

Additionally, Cafiero sought power amidst a terrible economic crisis, further enhancing his prospects for becoming the new leader of Peronism. The outgoing president from the (non-Peronist) Radical Civic Union (UCR) party, Raúl Alfonsín, had failed to stimulate growth, reduce inflation, or ameliorate the country's ballooning debt. Despite Alfonsín's attempts to stabilize the economy, unemployment worsened, wages stagnated, and prices soared, increasing social conflict while destroying his popularity (McGuire 1997, 185-86). This provided a unique opportunity for Peronist self-starters such as Cafiero to seek power: with Alfonsín delegitimized and the crisis worsening every day, citizens grew eager for a new leader to rise up and relieve their misery (Weyland 2002, 138).

Despite these advantages, Cafiero failed to reactivate followers' attachments and secure the Peronist presidential nomination. I argue that this is because he did not play to the movement's charismatic foundations. Rather than promising to save his people through whatever means necessary, as Perón had done, Cafiero committed himself to the "Peronist Renovation," an effort to transform Peronism into a strong, institutionalized party (Cafiero 2011).⁷⁷ He adopted this approach because, in line with scholars of

⁷⁷ Although the PJ was already technically a political party, it suffered tremendous institutional weakness and was historically subordinated to the power of the overarching movement and of Perón himself (see McGuire 1997, 1-3).

routinization, he believed that “Peronism could only survive...to the extent that it clearly assumed the form of a *party*, detached itself from authoritarian traditions, and stopped trying to center itself around a plebiscitarian leadership that had not existed since Perón’s death” (McGuire 1997, 167-168, emphasis added).

While Cafiero’s attempt to transform the movement into an institutionalized party appealed to middle-class intellectuals, it distanced him from traditional, popular-sector (lower- and lower-middle-class) Peronists, who simply wanted a strong leader to resolve their pressing problems.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Cafiero’s lack of affinity with Perón’s personalistic legacy caused the followers to perceive the successor and his team as “a bunch of urbane intellectuals mesmerized by an exotic leftist ideology perhaps appropriate for Sweden or Germany but alien to Argentina’s nationalist tradition” (McGuire 1997, 211). Cafiero’s dry communication style also projected “formality, wordiness, and lukewarm progressivism,” further alienating him from traditional Peronist followers (*ibid*). In fact, compared to his alluring competitor, Carlos Menem, Cafiero was so unpopular with the masses that, a week before the July 1988 primaries, pundits predicted that his victory over Menem would depend on *low* turnout among Peronist voters (“Evita votaría a Cristina, Perón votaría a Taiana, y los dos juntos a Unidad Ciudadana” 2017). In the end, Cafiero suffered a humiliating defeat: to the chagrin of PJ elites, he lost in 19 of 24 electoral districts, by a total margin of more than 100,000 votes

⁷⁸ Author interview with Alberto Kohan, Menem’s political adviser, former Cabinet Chief, and Minister of Health, November 4, 2016.

(“Menem, candidato presidencial del PJ” 1988).⁷⁹ As the incumbent Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires—a traditional Peronist stronghold—Cafiero even lost his own province to Menem by over 23,000 votes! (“Replanteo en el justicialismo tras el triunfo de Carlos Menem” 1988).

In brief, Cafiero’s failure to win the Peronist nomination for president demonstrates the unviability of routinization for reviving charismatic movements. His commitment to party institutionalization over the cultivation of an inspiring, charismatic image prevented him from appearing as Perón’s heroic descendant. Though he was a self-starter in a time of crisis, he attempted to create a programmatic organization rather than simply playing to Perón’s personalistic legacy. This strategy of routinization alienated followers and marked Cafiero as an elite politician rather than a hero capable of reviving Perón’s ambitious mission to transform society.

As the experiences of Keiko and Cafiero illustrate, self-starters fall short of reanimating charismatic movements when they fail to meet one of two essential conditions. First, as Keiko’s unsuccessful quest for power shows, leaders who emerge in the absence of crisis cannot leverage citizens’ desperation for a new savior and thus struggle to establish a charismatic image reminiscent of the founder. Second, Cafiero demonstrates that self-starters who attempt to routinize the movement into a structured party rather than filling the absent founder’s shoes fail to tap into supporters’ profound, affective bonds and thus struggle to cultivate their own charismatic allure.

⁷⁹ The electoral districts include the country’s 23 provinces plus the Federal Capital of Buenos Aires.

Successful Self-Starters: Carlos Menem and the Kirchners

I now turn to two sets of Argentine self-starters who successfully revived Peronism: Carlos Menem, who governed from 1989 to 1999, and Néstor and Cristina Kirchner, who ruled from 2003 to 2015. Both Menem and the Kirchners dominated the movement, kept its organization weak, and demonstrated through stark policy reversals that they had little interest in programmatic routinization. Instead, these self-starters focused on embodying the movement's pre-existing, personalistic nature and linked themselves symbolically to the founder. Consequently, both sets of leaders were able to convincingly portray themselves as genuine heirs of the founder, reinvigorate citizens' attachments, and restore the movement to power under their own charismatic authority.

Carlos Menem

Carlos Menem defied the expectations of party elites by securing the PJ presidential nomination in July 1988 against Cafiero, the favored candidate, and becoming president the following year. Subsequently, Menem established a new chapter of Peronism, giving the movement new life and becoming the most beloved leader of Argentina since Perón. Indeed, Menem swept the May 1989 elections by more than 10 points; enjoyed approval ratings as high as 70 percent within two years of assuming office; successfully revised the constitution to allow for reelection; and won a second term in 1995 with a margin of more than twenty points (Carlin et al. 2016).

In addition to consolidating impressive popularity, Menem's charismatic leadership revitalized Peronism as the country's predominant political force. In fact, while deliberately undermining the efforts of Cafiero and the "Peronist Renovation" to

institutionalize the movement—a process I will discuss in greater detail in chapter seven—he inspired followers to express their attachments with renewed strength. This is reflected by the dramatic increase in the proportion of citizens who expressed their identification with the movement after his rise to power. According to public opinion surveys from local firms, whereas about 16 percent of citizens openly identified with Peronism in 1985, more than 40 percent identified themselves with the movement in 1992, just three years into Menem’s presidency.⁸⁰ In contrast, over the same period of time, the proportion of citizens who identified with the UCR—the main opposition party and the party of Menem’s predecessor, Alfonsín—declined precipitously, from about 32 percent in 1985 to 20 percent in 1992 (Romer and Associates 1985, 1992).

Like Cafiero, Menem’s presidential candidacy was aided by his self-starter status and his rise during a severe crisis. The difference in the two leaders’ fates, I contend, lies in their contrasting leadership styles. As described in the previous section, Cafiero’s efforts to routinize the movement led to his downfall. He believed that working through the party’s nascent institutional channels, establishing a platform for effective programmatic governance, and accumulating the support of party elites would lead to victory. In reality, however, this approach alienated Cafiero from the Peronist rank and file, effectively cutting him off from the movement’s most powerful asset.

⁸⁰ Both of these polls were accessed through the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. The 1985 poll, conducted by Consultoría Interdisciplinaria En Desarrollo S.A. (CID), was a nationally representative, face-to-face survey of 1,504 young and mature adults (aged 16 and older). The 1992 poll, conducted by Romer y Asociados, was a sample of 1,229 adult residents from 8 of Argentina’s 23 provinces.

In contrast, Menem's deliberate effort to revive Perón's personalistic approach and apply his own charisma resonated deeply with the followers. By portraying himself as a hero in times of dire crisis, he explicitly recognized and promised to address the hopes and fears of the people. As summarized by the major national newspaper, *La Nación*, in the aftermath of the 1988 primary election, "The Cafiero...ticket represented rationality. It had a structure behind it and a more homogenous project. Menem worked principally on folklore and the emotional content of Peronism" ("Replanteo en el justicialismo tras el triunfo de Carlos Menem" 1988). It is for this reason that Menem was able to politically mobilize Peronist voters, vanquish his opponent, and restore the movement to power in his own name for a full decade.

Consistent with my theory laid out in chapter five, I argue that Menem's successful adoption of a personalistic approach depended on a combination of symbolic and material strategies. To begin, the leader established direct, affectionate communication with Peronist supporters, reinforcing his symbolic image as the founder's authentic and charismatic heir. In contrast to the elitist appearance of his opponents—including Cafiero in the 1988 primary election and the UCR's Eduardo Angeloz in the 1989 general election—Menem embraced a "swashbuckling personal style," donned casual clothing and sideburns that rivaled those of historic caudillo Facundo Quiroga, and traveled tirelessly to personally connect with ordinary people (McGuire 1997, 208). Alberto Kohan, a close advisor who would become Menem's chief of staff, recalled how massive crowds would greet Menem as his campaign bus pulled into each town. After years of suffering under disappointing leaders, Kohan stated, citizens felt inspired by

Menem's charisma.⁸¹ Carlos Corach, who became Minister of the Interior, explained that, like Perón, Menem was able to "interpret the sentiments, both good and bad, of the people," and used this understanding to "tell the people what they wanted to hear."⁸²

Additionally, during his 1989 presidential campaign, Menem promised citizens relief from the crisis and a return to the prosperity of Perón's rule, rather than articulating the programmatic details of his proposals. On the surface, the candidate's platform seemed consistent with Perón's policies of economic nationalism. For instance, he proclaimed he would increase workers' wages through his "*Salariazo*" and would reignite Perón's state-sponsored "productive revolution" (Arias 1995). Despite these vague programmatic references, however, Menem focused primarily on his promise to save the people from their suffering—a duty he claimed that the outgoing Radical administration had failed to uphold. For example, two weeks before the May 1989 elections, he stated, "The current government has been unable to resolve [the country's] problems, and has made them even worse. There is even more hunger, and [the government] has failed to guarantee the right to health, to a dignified home, to social protection, and the rights of the elderly" ("Menem: 'No ofrezco falsas promesas, sino trabajo y más trabajo,'" 1989).

Moreover, rather than focusing on the details of his own policies, Menem pledged to do whatever was necessary to reverse the failures of the outgoing regime and

⁸¹ Author interview with Kohan, July 20, 2016.

⁸² Author interview with Carlos Corach, Menem's political adviser and former Minister of the Interior, July 14, 2016.

“pulverize the crisis” (“Hay que enfrentar la crisis y pulverizarla, dijo Menem” 1989). In doing so, he became the first leader to bring Perón’s mission of salvation back to life. As he stated on the campaign trail:

[I have no commitments] to unions or business people. The only [commitment] I have is to the people, and with your support, we are going to pick up the productive revolution. We are going to create the conditions and the infrastructure for development and growth. I’m not here to promise anything, I only pledge to work hard, which is the only thing that can lift Argentina out of stagnation and weakness (“Menem: ‘No ofrezco falsas promesas, sino trabajo y más trabajo’” 1989).

By assuring the people that he would resolve the crisis and deliver prosperity through whatever means necessary, Menem shifted the public’s attention away from programmatic substance and successfully embodied the charismatic spirit of Perón.

Shortly after coming to power in July 1989, Menem performed a programmatic about-face by implementing stark free-market policies. In particular, the new president fearlessly launched unconventional alliances with private companies and business elites long demonized by Peronism, namely the multinational corporation Bunge y Born; enacted structural adjustment measures that were even more extreme than the recommendations of international financial institutions; and committed Argentina to a fundamentally liberal economic model. Then, in 1991, Menem followed these adjustment programs up with the Convertibility Plan, a “highly risky” policy that pegged the Argentine peso to the U.S. dollar (Weyland 2002, 112-115).

Predictably, most PJ elites criticized Menem’s bold gestures as brazenly anti-Peronist (Cafiero 2011, 464-65; Levitsky 2003, 148-49). Yet, while the substance of these policies contradicted those of Perón, they provided material evidence of Menem’s

charismatic power by putting a swift and seemingly miraculous end to the hyperinflationary crisis that the new president had inherited from his predecessor, Alfonsín. Indeed, by straying from the substance of Perón's original programs, Menem embodied the founder's daring spirit and, in the short term, rescued the followers from their misery. For example, the Convertibility Plan reduced inflation from 1,344 percent in early 1990 to 17.5 percent in 1992 and to 3.9 percent in 1994 (Weyland 2002, 158). The plan also increased the purchasing power of poor Argentines—many of them Peronist followers—in an extraordinary fashion (Gantman 2012, 338). Menem's audacious structural adjustment policies also paved the way for impressive economic growth, achieving an annual rate of 7.5 percent between 1991 and 1994, as well as a substantial decline in poverty, from 21.6 percent in October 1991 to 16.1 percent in May 1994 (Weyland 2002, 158).

The impressive, stabilizing impact of his policies on inflation and prices granted Menem overwhelming popular support, even if the policies ultimately hurt poor Peronists by generating high unemployment, social spending cuts, and a devastating economic crash in 2001. Crucially, both Menem and his supporters interpreted the remarkable, though short-lived, success of his programs as evidence of his genuine Peronist roots. In fact, throughout his presidency, Menem skillfully invoked Perón to justify his actions in the name of protecting the people from harm. As he declared in 1993, “This country, this president, is doing exactly what Perón would have done if he had to govern Argentina today” (Comas 1993). Ten years later, during his third (and ultimately failed) campaign in 2003, he declared, “Carlos Menem is the best and most authentic disciple of Juan

Perón and of Eva Perón” (Sued 2003). Even today, long after his fall from power, many Peronists personally attribute their 1990s prosperity to him. As followers reported in the focus groups, “thanks to Menem, I bought my first house, there was credit available, and there wasn’t inflation;” “Menem was good to my dad;” “with Menem, we could eat well.” While some leaders strongly opposed Menem, followers praised him for quickly resolving their problems and fulfilling Perón’s mission to deliver prosperity.

By communicating in a direct and emotive fashion, tying himself to Perón, and rescuing citizens from hyperinflation-induced suffering, Menem embodied Perón’s most alluring traits. His policies eventually collapsed and unleashed an even deeper crisis. Indeed, beginning with Menem’s second presidential term in 1995, unemployment, inequality, and crime steadily increased (Gantman 2002, 338-44). Moreover, in the aftermath of his presidency, from 1999 to 2002, the economy sharply contracted, hitting rock bottom in December 2001. The dollar-to-peso convertibility came to a halt with a devaluation of the peso in January 2002, which led to an economic contraction of 11.74 percent that year (*ibid*, 332, 339-44). Yet, in spite of this implosion, the impressive short-term effects of Menem’s policies, combined with the leader’s captivating appeal, had successfully reactivated citizens’ charismatic attachments to Peronism for several years and had expanded his base to include the business-oriented middle class. Consequently, the leader achieved tremendous personalistic authority that endured for a decade. More importantly, by embodying the charismatic legacy of Perón, he successfully returned the Peronist movement to power and thus demonstrated its capacity to reemerge as a predominant political force without shedding its deeply personalistic nature.

Néstor and Cristina Kirchner

As described above, Menem's unsustainable policies, especially the problematic Convertibility Plan, unleashed a terrible economic crisis in December 2001. In turn, this disaster delegitimized the political system: the government cycled through five presidents in eleven days, beginning with Fernando De La Rúa, Menem's non-Peronist successor who resigned on December 21, and ending with Eduardo Duhalde, a Peronist who served as interim president from January 2, 2002 to May 25, 2003 (Gantman 2012, 345). During this transition, Peronism fragmented and did not nominate an official presidential candidate for the 2003 elections. Instead, three Peronist politicians—Carlos Menem, Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, and Néstor Kirchner—ran on independent tickets. Menem won the first round of elections with 24 percent of the vote but dropped out of the race, fearing he could not win in a run-off against Néstor, who was overwhelmingly the favored candidate. Thus, Néstor, a governor from the far-flung, southern province of Santa Cruz, became president (Mora y Araujo 2011).

While the new leader owed his presidential victory in 2003 in large part to the weak profiles of the other candidates, he and his wife, Cristina, leveraged favorable conditions to redefine Peronism on their own terms and dominate politics for the next twelve years. First, like Menem in 1989, Néstor became president in 2003 as a self-starter rather than an anointed successor. He achieved this by waiting four years after Menem's fall to seek power and avoiding any association with his defamed Peronist predecessor. Moreover, he distanced himself by turning against Menem. This allowed the former president's economic policies to break down under De La Rúa, a non-Peronist; softened

his once-powerful grip on Peronism; permitted Néstor to frame Menem as a neoliberal traitor; and created the opportunity to reconfigure the movement by promising a return to Perón's economic nationalism.

Second, Néstor's rise after the 2001 collapse was essential to his reactivation of Peronism. To address the crisis and alleviate citizens' extreme suffering, Duhalde, Néstor's immediate predecessor, implemented painful economic stabilization policies in 2002, including a massive devaluation of the peso. This, combined with rapid growth in global commodity prices, produced much-needed relief during Néstor's presidency. Indeed, between 2003 and 2007, Argentina's gross domestic product grew at an annual rate of about nine percent, the value of the peso stabilized, unemployment declined from 21.7 to 8.5 percent, and wages increased by over 50 percent (Damill and Frenkel 2015, Table 1).

Crucially, the self-starter capitalized on this remarkable recovery to frame himself as the people's savior. To begin, he aggressively attacked others for causing the crisis, including Menem, the International Monetary Fund, and other foreign creditors (Gantman 2012, 345). For instance, during his 2003 campaign, Néstor blamed Menem for intentionally undermining the wellbeing of the people and weakening Argentina's democracy, stating that the former president "robbed Argentines of their right to work, then their right to eat, to study, and to hope; then, he came after the last right they had, to vote" ("Kirchner acusó a Menem de dar un 'golpe a la democracia'" 2003). Subsequently, in December 2005, Néstor canceled Argentina's debt payments to the International Monetary Fund, blaming the international financial institution for inflicting

“pain and injustice” on Argentina during the 2001 crisis through pressuring the country to enact “policies that undermined economic growth” (“Argentina cancela su deuda de 9.810 millones de dólares con el Fondo Monetario Internacional,” 2006). This confrontational approach suited Néstor’s “fighting” personality and thus accentuated his appeal as a strong, charismatic leader.⁸³ Moreover, his aggressive style connected him to a key dimension of the Peronist legacy: the deep cleavage between the humble people and the selfish elites. Consequently, this strategy established emotional connections between Néstor and the movement’s followers without tying the new president explicitly to the Peronist label, which would have risked associating him with Menem’s disastrous failures.

In addition to deepening the cleavage between “elites” and “the people,” Néstor took personal credit for the economic recovery, even though it resulted largely from the stabilization measures imposed by Duhalde in 2002, prior to his rise to power (Damill and Frenkel 2015). Establishing this impression proved relatively easy for the new president, as his presidency coincided with notable improvements in employment, wages, salaries, and economic growth (Mora y Araujo 2011). In fact, thanks in large part to the concrete results of this recovery, Néstor’s approval soared to 74 percent by July 2003, two months into his presidency, and Peronists seemed convinced that he would become a heroic reincarnation of the founder (Carlin et al. 2016; Mora y Araujo 2011). As followers declared in the focus groups conducted by the author in 2016, “the world was

⁸³ Mora y Araujo 2011; Author interviews with Kohan, Corach, and two anonymous advisers from the Kirchner administration (on April 6, 2016 and April 13, 2016, respectively).

sunken, and he saved us;” “the people began to believe in their president once again;” and “Perón’s legacy [was] alive in Néstor.” In short, because the new president was able to depict himself as responsible for the seemingly miraculous economic recovery, Néstor consolidated impressive, personalistic power and revived Peronism on his own terms, as a separate chapter from that of Menem (*ibid*; Ollier 2015).

Once Néstor proved himself worthy of the people’s adoration, he and Cristina set about consolidating their symbolic image as charismatic heirs of Juan and Eva Perón. To do so, the leading couple behaved in a deeply personalistic fashion and resurrected components of the Peronist narrative that played to their strengths while further separating them from their Peronist predecessor. For example, as mentioned above, the Kirchners adopted a polarizing, openly confrontational attitude toward their opponents, including Menem, agro-industrial elites, figures associated with the 1976-1983 military dictatorship, international financial institutions, and supporters of the neoliberal development model in general (Wortman 2015). This strategy recharged followers’ enthusiasm for the movement by reminding them of Eva’s defiant attitude towards anti-Peronist “oligarchs” and it differentiated the Kirchners from Menem, who had a much more conciliatory leadership style.⁸⁴

The Kirchner couple also portrayed themselves as unparalleled champions of human rights. This appealed to young, middle-class, and leftist Peronists whose relatives and friends had suffered persecution and repression during the 1976-1983 military

⁸⁴ Mora y Araujo 2011; author interviews with Kohan, Corach, and two anonymous advisers from the Kirchner administration (April 6, 2016 and April 13, 2016, respectively).

dictatorship (Wortman 2015). Interestingly, while President Alfonsín had courageously defended human rights and democracy in the immediate aftermath of the dictatorship, the Kirchners downplayed the contributions of this non-Peronist leader and instead “considered themselves to be the authors of human rights in Argentina.”⁸⁵ By consolidating an image as passionate defenders of victimized people, Néstor and Cristina boosted their charismatic appeal, especially among middle-class and leftist Peronists.

Finally, upon becoming president in 2007 in what was intended to be a strategy of alternation in power with Néstor, Cristina focused on rekindling direct, emotional ties with Peronists from the popular sectors. This strategy solidified the Kirchner couple’s symbolic position as true Peronists and, in combination with the extraordinary economic recovery under Néstor, curried favor with the movement’s traditional rank and file. Indeed, several Kirchner-affiliated political strategists stressed that, especially once the initial euphoria brought by the economic recovery began to fade, forging affective linkages with Peronist followers in this fashion was essential for the leading couple to “return Peronism to power,” “interpret and refresh the identity,” and consolidate their position as the undisputed heirs of Juan and Eva.⁸⁶

As president, Cristina reconnected with Peronist followers by portraying herself as “Evita reloaded,” mirroring the founder’s wife in speech, dress, and interactions with voters (Wortman 2015). This activated followers’ passionate, visceral connections to the

⁸⁵ Author interview with Kohan, July 20, 2016.

⁸⁶ Author interviews with two anonymous political advisers from the Kirchner administration (April 6, 2016 and May 10, 2016, respectively).

movement and associated Cristina with Eva's saint-like image—"a combination of Christ, Che, and Robin Hood."⁸⁷ After Néstor's unexpected death from a heart attack in 2010, Cristina also portrayed him as a martyr alongside Juan and Eva, drawing explicit comparisons between the two leading couples. Consequently, Cristina won reelection in 2011 with an overwhelming 54 percent of the vote. Reflecting on this period, followers declared in the focus groups, "Perón is embodied by Néstor, and Eva by Cristina;" "for me, Cristina is a reflection of Eva;" "Perón and Eva, Néstor and Cristina, they are the most important leaders in Argentina."

During Cristina's second term, the Kirchners' policies of economic nationalism began to deteriorate, resulting in rising inflation, poverty, and crime (Salvia 2015). Correspondingly, similar to Menem at the end of his presidency, some followers came to view Cristina as a failed Peronist leader. As non-Kirchner Peronists in the focus groups stated in 2016, one year after her fall from power, "I didn't like Cristina at all, I hope she never returns, she makes me so mad because of the things she did;" "Cristina spoke about being 'national and popular,' but the government was a cash register for her;" "the era of Cristina was terrible, she disgusts me." Other followers expressed frustration with Cristina's attempts to portray herself as the contemporary Eva. For example, one participant stated, "Cristina wanted to be like Eva, but she didn't have a single hair in common." Another declared that Cristina's attempt to imitate Eva "was a costume she used to keep robbing the people." A third stated, "she tried [to be like Eva] but she didn't

⁸⁷ Author interview with an anonymous communications strategist from the Kirchner administration, April 6, 2016.

succeed by a long shot.” A fourth said, “She tried to dress and speak like [Eva], but she didn’t actually imitate her.” A fifth stated, “she wanted to be like Eva but she didn’t ever succeed.” A sixth explained, “Evita was a common woman. Cristina wanted to be like that but she fell victim to her own selfishness and ego.” As reflected by these statements, Cristina’s declining performance led Peronist followers to view her as a fraudulent Peronist, and thus symbolically excommunicated her from the movement while reaffirming their own attachments to its founders.

The Kirchner administration receded from power in 2015 with the presidential election of Mauricio Macri, a non-Peronist. Yet while the leaders’ government ultimately fell, I argue that Néstor’s rise as a self-starter; his policies, which became associated with dramatic growth and economic prosperity; and both Néstor and Cristina’s symbolic strategies to reignite the followers’ emotional attachments to the movement enabled the leading couple to establish a formidable new episode of Peronism. In doing so, the Kirchners—like Menem before them—deepened the widespread perception in Argentina that Peronism is the only force capable of governing the country.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that charismatic movements persist to dominate politics long after their founders disappear. Contrary to existing studies, which suggest that survival depends on routinization, I claim that many such movements endure by retaining their personalistic core and welcoming new leaders who recharge their charismatic nature. Thus, rather than establishing stable development trajectories like more

conventional parties, these movements unfold in a “spasmodic” pattern. After their founders disappear, charismatic movements become latent and the whole country seems adrift. Yet new crises enable subsequent leaders to emerge, reactivate citizens’ emotional attachments, and restore these movements to power. This process does not rely primarily on party organizations, as scholars of routinization would argue. Rather, it depends on successors’ ability to convincingly portray themselves to the followers as charismatic saviors who have come to revive the founder’s mission to rescue society.

As illustrated in this chapter, successors must fulfill three conditions to revive the movement in new contexts: achieve self-starter status; rise up amidst a crisis; and play to the movement’s personalistic nature. While many politicians have attempted to restore charismatic movements to power in Latin America and beyond, only leaders who have leveraged these conditions, such as Carlos Menem and Néstor and Cristina Kirchner, have been able to consolidate independent authority as heirs of the founder.

Importantly, the power of successful self-starters is temporary. Like charismatic founders, their bold performance eventually collapses. Unless they leave power before this implosion, it dampens their heroic image and dilutes their connection to the founder. Yet these failures do not destroy the movement because citizens’ attachments remain rooted in charismatic founders, not in successors. Indeed, followers label disappointing successors as “traitors” to the founder. The movement then enters a period of leaderless fragmentation until conditions ripen once more for a new self-starter to rise and pick up the founder’s baton.

Based on the findings discussed in this chapter, the next chapter investigates the long-term trajectories of charismatic movements and assesses their negative impact on democracy. The analysis focuses on the rise and fall of charismatic successors in the context of a single movement: Argentine Peronism. In contrast to the conventional wisdom, which suggests that surviving charismatic movements routinize and therefore have a stabilizing impact on democracy, the chapter demonstrates that enduring charismatic movements make for political systems characterized by pernicious personalism, perpetually weak institutions, and frequent crises.

Chapter 7: The Spasmodic Trajectories of Charismatic Movements

The preceding two chapters demonstrated that leaders who seek to revive charismatic movements in their own name must leverage specific strategies and conditions to reactivate followers' fervent attachments and consolidate their own cult of personality. Chapter five indicated that new leaders must combine material and symbolic cues—impressive performance to demonstrate heroic capacities and symbolic ties to the founder and his mission of transcendence—to reinvigorate followers' identification with the movement and enhance the new leaders' charismatic appeal. In turn, chapter six demonstrated that, to effectively implement these strategies, successors must fulfill three conditions. First, they must achieve self-starter status by rising to power years after the founder's disappearance; second, they must emerge following the eruption of a crisis that makes people feel the need to be saved once again; third, the new leaders must adopt a personalistic style reminiscent of the founder in order to establish unmediated, affective connections with the followers.

Given the strategies and conditions required to revive charismatic movements, the present chapter investigates the pattern in which these movements unfold over time. To do so, I examine the trajectory of a single charismatic movement—Argentine Peronism—over the course of eight decades. This historical analysis reveals how the personalistic mechanism identified in the previous chapters generates a fitful yet self-perpetuating cycle of politics in which periods of predominant charismatic leadership alternate with

periods of leaderless fragmentation, repeatedly hindering programmatic development and democratic consolidation.

This chapter challenges the conclusions drawn by scholars of routinization regarding the pattern in which charismatic movements unfold. Existing literature states that the survival of charismatic movements requires institutionalization—a process in which the movement loses its personalistic nature, intermediaries within the movement establish a programmatic brand, and they develop an organizational network to sustain the support of loyal partisans (Jowitt 1992, 107; Madsen and Snow 1991, 29; Shils 1965, 202-5; Weber 1979, 246).

In contrast, I claim that the personalistic core of charismatic movements remains intact over time and continues to shape key characteristics of the political system. The reason is that successors adopt the founder's personalistic style of leadership in order to claim followers' pre-existing charismatic attachments and consolidate power. To prove extraordinary capacities and appear as the symbolic reincarnations of the founder, self-starters enact bold initiatives that overtake party politics and disregard institutional constraints. This personalistic approach makes these new leaders triumphant, but only temporarily. Indeed, the nearsighted nature of their audacious policies, combined with the weakness of institutional safeguards, also set the leaders up for eventual failure. It is through this erratic, up-and-down process that charismatic movements perpetually inhibit programmatic and institutional development.

The following section presents a theoretical discussion that integrates the perspectives of movement followers and leaders to explain the spasmodic trajectories of

charismatic movements. I argue that, while generating tremendous political and economic volatility, the fitful pattern in which these movements develop reinforces, rather than dilutes, the personalistic nature of the movement. Subsequently, I illustrate this self-reinforcing pattern using the case of Peronism, which has experienced four distinct waves of charismatic leadership over its eighty-year history. The first wave rose with Juan Perón's ascension in the 1940s and receded with his forced exile in 1955; the second culminated in Perón's return to power in 1973 and faded with his death in the following year; the third arrived with Carlos Menem's rise in 1989 and retreated with the end of his second administration in 1999; the fourth transpired with Néstor Kirchner's presidency in 2003 and declined with Cristina Kirchner's exit in 2015.

Through this investigation, I illustrate how each wave of Peronism reinvigorated citizens' charismatic identity and temporarily strengthened each leader's personalistic control while simultaneously sowing the seeds for the leader's demise. The results underscore the endogenous nature of charismatic movement revival and explain how, paradoxically, such movements generate periods of political strength and coherence as well as periods of recession and political fragmentation, the latter of which, in turn, help prepare the ground for the movement's re-emergence.

THE FITS AND STARTS OF CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS

The survival of charismatic movements hinges primarily on the resilient nature of citizens' emotional attachments to the founder and his eternal promise of transcendence. While the political salience of these attachments waxes and wanes depending on the

circumstances, the personalistic nature of the bonds persists, even during times in which there is no leader to guide the way (Huddy 2001, 49). Thus, when favorable conditions return, self-starters who convincingly portray themselves as heirs of the founder can inject the followers' latent attachments with renewed importance. The capacity to mobilize these followers into political action grants self-starters a formidable advantage over other candidates and paves the way for the movement's revival.⁸⁸

In contrast to the stable nature of followers' charismatic bonds, the influence of new leaders is contingent and time-bound. One reason is that these self-starters—like the founder—must seek power under conditions of crisis. Without a crisis, citizens would not feel the need to be saved and would therefore be less likely to view even compelling self-starters in a heroic light. Additionally, to substantiate their extraordinary abilities, new leaders must enact policies that trade sustainability for an impressive, short-term impact. Accomplishing this requires successors to exercise their own skill and personal appeal, but it also depends on factors that lie beyond the leaders' control, such as an amenable geopolitical environment, a favorable socioeconomic context, or natural resource windfalls available for exploitation. Because these conditions occur intermittently, the revival of charismatic movements unfolds in an episodic manner that contrasts with the stable, linear development of institutionalized parties.

Ambitious self-starters who are able to leverage the above-mentioned conditions, achieve heroic performance, and tie themselves to the founder's mission of salvation

⁸⁸As indicated in previous chapters, the rank-and-file followers of Peronism and Chavismo constitute approximately one-third of the voting population in Argentina and Venezuela, respectively. In both cases, this core group of supporters has remained fairly stable over time.

consolidate remarkable authority. Yet their personalistic victory also plants the seeds for their eventual demise, deepening the erratic nature of charismatic movements. For one, the bold policies of self-starters are inherently unsustainable. To achieve an impressive impact, these policies weaken institutional checks designed to safeguard the policies' sustainability (Bersch 2016, 207; Levitsky and Murillo 2013, 100). Additionally, because the early success of the policies temporarily alleviates popular suffering, citizens' need for a charismatic savior also fades away. Self-starters' symbolic association with the founder therefore becomes increasingly strained, especially as their extraordinary performance begins to wane.

Self-starters further limit their own power by surrounding themselves with faithful confidants rather than experienced bureaucrats and party leaders. Upon rising to the presidency, the successors tend to establish these personalistic ruling coalitions—which consist of friends, family members, and other sycophants—to overcome party constraints and eliminate institutional checks on their authority. Initially, these yes-men help pave the way for self-starters to dominate politics. Yet as conditions grow more challenging and performance begins to decline, these advisers' lack of experience and inability to challenge opinions of the self-starters, no matter how imprudent, further jeopardize the leaders' prospects for continued popularity and success. Moreover, because underlings often enjoy kickbacks in exchange for their loyalty, accusations of corruption can further erode the legitimacy of the once-popular self-starters.

In short, the combination of followers' resilient personalistic attachments and successors' dramatic but short-lived power causes charismatic movements to develop

oscillating trajectories that contrast with the steady path of routinization. At the outset, the charismatic founder establishes a heroic legacy as an everlasting savior by providing the suffering masses with unprecedented recognition and tangible, seemingly miraculous benefits. Crucially, the founder disappears before his policies fully collapse, exonerating him and protecting his legacy. Soon after, the combination of his disappearance and the exhaustion of his policies unleash a crisis and power vacuum. This causes the movement to recede from power and ushers in a period of leaderless fragmentation. However, the disintegration of parties, the weakness of democratic institutions, and the followers' ongoing devotion to the movement make it difficult for leaders and parties unaffiliated with it to rise up and stabilize the country on their own terms. Consequently, the country can languish under conditions of crisis and uncertainty for years.

Under these circumstances, scholars of routinization contend that it is virtually impossible for charismatic movements to regenerate themselves (Kostadinova and Levitt 2014, 500-501; Madsen and Snow 1991, 25-28). Conversely, I argue that citizens' suffering and frustration with failed leadership during such periods makes them yearn for a new hero to rise up and resolve the situation in a manner reminiscent of the founder. Thus, paradoxically, the period of "leaderlessness" following the founder's death eventually creates the opportunity for self-starters to revive the movement by playing to its personalistic roots. In particular, when the conditions shift to favor self-starters—when the crisis has erupted and enough time has passed for these new leaders to avoid blame and rise independently—the followers are likely to find the self-starter's personalistic style, as well as her promise to provide them with much-needed relief, reminiscent of the

founder. Thus, using the combination of crisis conditions and personalistic tactics, self-starters can catapult the movement back into power.

Even so, because the legitimacy of self-starters rests on the movement's personalistic foundation, these leaders can only restore the movement to power temporarily. When the performance of their audacious policies inevitably crests, their loyal advisers are unable to provide guidance; political institutions, which have been starved of power, cannot easily correct these policy failures; and the successors' symbolic influence erodes. Yet because the followers' loyalty remains grounded in the founder's legacy, the fall of self-starters—while disappointing—does not compromise these citizens' underlying devotion to the movement. Rather, many supporters come to view failed self-starters as fraudulent representatives of the movement. As these citizens suffer from the resultant crisis, they begin to look for another, more convincing hero to pick up the founder's baton. Eventually, this search for a new savior positions the movement to surge back to power on another wave of charismatic leadership, led by a different self-starter who is able to don the founder's mantle.

In sum, charismatic movements unfold in fitful waves. After the founder's death, self-starters rise to power and consolidate authority using favorable conditions and personalistic tactics, which ultimately lead to their downfall. In turn, the failures of these leaders generate crises that cause suffering citizens to long for a new savior who seems capable of resolving the situation. The movement therefore swings back into power under new and momentarily compelling self-starters. The rise of the new personalistic leader

causes the cycle to repeat, generating a self-reinforcing pattern of political and economic volatility.

The remainder of this chapter demonstrates the spasmodic nature of charismatic movements by examining the historical trajectory of Argentine Peronism. In particular, I analyze four waves that Peronism has experienced in which leaders have surged to power, dominated the political system, and subsequently receded, leaving economic and political crises in their wake. During each wave of the movement, the executive leader established a magnetic cult of personality, concentrated executive power, dominated parties, and successfully overpowered political institutions. Between each of these waves, society suffered a serious crisis, opposition administrations failed to govern effectively, and the movement endured extensive fragmentation. By stringing these waves together, I demonstrate how charismatic movements can generate an endogenous cycle of economic and political fits and starts.

THE REVIVAL OF CHARISMA AND THE TUMULTUOUS HISTORY OF THE PERONIST MOVEMENT

The First Wave Rises: Juan Perón and the Foundation of the Movement

The introduction to this dissertation discussed how Perón emerged and cultivated charismatic bonds with his followers. He secured the devotion of his supporters by directly recognizing their exclusion and suffering, incorporating them into politics, providing them with unprecedented material benefits, and promising to radically transform society. The directness, emotional fervor, and asymmetry that characterized the followers' attachments to Perón enabled him to consolidate tremendous authority.

Leveraging this popular mandate, he enacted seemingly extraordinary programs which, in turn, reinforced the loyalty of his supporters. His daring policies eventually destabilized the political system and caused a serious crisis. However, the impressiveness of their initial impact also formed the foundation of his legacy, thus reinforcing followers' enduring allegiance and shaping the trajectory of Argentine politics for decades to come.

During his first reign (1946-1955), Perón used the charismatic bonds he established with his followers to concentrate power. Indeed, though he gave workers some political voice, he never relinquished significant control to union leaders. Thus, while some have suggested that Perón intended to establish a corporatist system (e.g., Wiarda 1973, 2009), in reality he maintained a direct relationship with his constituents in labor and industry. As Wynia states, “Perón was a very impatient and ambitious leader...who jealously guarded his authority from business and industrial leaders who sought to limit it” (Wynia 1978, 54, 60). Rather than ceding authority to others, as a corporatist model would have required, the founder empowered the state (and, thus, himself) through an aggressive program of economic nationalism and import substitution industrialization (ISI). With his bold policies, he gained personal control over commodity trading and lucrative industries, which enabled him to construct state institutions through which to distribute benefits directly to his rank and file (*ibid*, 47).

Between 1946 and 1949, Perón’s daring reforms produced a “golden age” in Argentina. The GNP grew by 25 percent and the working and popular sectors experienced unprecedented upward mobility (Wynia 1978, 52). This period of growth resulted in both immeasurable gains for poor citizens, including a newfound sense of

respect, dignity, and material prosperity (James 1988, 18). Yet by deepening citizens' adoration of Perón, these victories also accelerated his executive aggrandizement. In fact, the apparently miraculous impact of his policies caused his followers to perceive him as "the ultimate guarantor" of their wellbeing and thus reinforced the emotional depth and political asymmetry of their relationship with him (*ibid*, 99).

Emboldened by the fervent loyalty of his supporters, Perón dominated the political system for several years, undermining the development of parties and overpowering political institutions that threatened his superior status. Within his own "Peronist party," a loose conglomeration of conflicting factions, he "cultivated contention and disarray," such that unwavering allegiance to him constituted the only thread uniting his fractious constituents (Page 1983, 161). He also attacked opposition leaders and parties as selfish and undemocratic elites, painting them as a dangerous threat to the people's prosperity and elevating his gallant image in the eyes of his followers (*ibid*, 208-209). Furthermore, he treated Congress as an extension of his personal authority, relying on inexperienced and unthinking legislators to bend to his will (*ibid*, 164). Finally, he frequently bypassed actors and institutions that questioned his bold actions, ranging from economic advisors to the central bank to the Supreme Court (Wynia 1978, 68-70).

In sum, the combination of Perón's charismatic appeal and his efforts to silence competing voices granted him "virtually limitless power" (Page 1983, 228). The steadfast devotion of his support base was crucial to this concentration of his personalistic authority. In turn, his accumulated power helped reinforce his glorification. Indeed, his singlehanded initiation of bold economic programs to "rescue" his supporters made him

seem even worthier of his followers' adoration. The shortsighted and self-serving character of these policies would eventually cause them to implode, destabilizing the system and harming Perón's own supporters (McGuire 1997, 59-60). Yet, driven by their thirst for recognition and their charismatic perceptions of the leader, Peronist citizens would remember the initial, extraordinary success of the policies and would blame others for the policies' eventual failures. As I will illustrate below, the founder's legacy—combined with the military's violent intervention, which threatened to destroy that legacy—would help the movement survive during Perón's exile and eventually establish the conditions for his return nearly two decades later.

The First Wave Recedes: Coup, Exile, and Chaos

During Perón's second presidential term (1952-1955), the immediate payoffs of his economic policies began to fade as structural weaknesses surfaced. By this time, his aggressive ISI program had drained the state's reserves of gold and foreign currency, while industrial growth had slowed and agricultural exports had plummeted (Wynia 1978, 66-68). The economic slump that followed affected the popular sectors—his rank and file—in the form of stagnant wages, inflation, and shortages of basic goods such as meat and grain (Page 1983, 269). To protect his charismatic reputation, Perón responded to the downturn by firing his economic advisors and blaming them for problems of corruption and mismanagement. That many of these individuals, including Central Bank President Miguel Miranda, had been personally appointed by Perón and had simply been following his orders did not implicate him in their guilt (Wynia 1978, 69). To the

contrary, this strategy actually vindicated Perón in the eyes of the followers and reinvigorated their support for him (Page, 271-272).

Having preserved his heroic image, Perón reluctantly addressed the crisis through his Economic Plan of 1952 (Wynia 1978, 70). Composed in secret, the Plan reversed many of his prior pro-labor policies by opening Argentina to foreign capital, inviting private investors, and initiating an anti-inflationary monetary policy to stabilize the economy. Perón justified these ideological reversals using the same promise of political, economic, and social justice that he had declared during his initial presidential campaign, underscoring the personalistic—rather than programmatic—nature of his leadership (Page 1983, 287). He also blamed selfish, rural interests and “foreign imperialists” for attempting to thwart his righteous effort to transform Argentina, even though his excessive state intervention had generated many of the problems in the first place (Wynia 1978, 70-71). Thus, as circumstances began to improve, Perón did not suffer for reneging on his earlier programs. Instead, from the followers’ perspective, his about-face reinforced his reputation as the ultimate problem-solver and corroborated his “genius” (ibid, 288).

However, while Perón successfully redirected blame for the downturn and temporarily salvaged the economy, he failed to address the fundamental weaknesses of his policies, including “the accelerating decapitalization of the private sector, the declining quality of economic infrastructure, and faltering entrepreneurial confidence” (Wynia 1978, 73). Furthermore, his brazen refusal to cooperate with entrenched elites—including opposition politicians, agricultural exporters, industrial and financial leaders,

elements of the military, and the Catholic Church—placed his regime on increasingly precarious ground, even though his charismatic appeal and popular support remained strong. Consequently, an elite-backed military coup ousted Perón in 1955, forcing him to flee the country and remain in exile for eighteen years (McGuire 1997, 72-75).

Based on the routinization theory, Perón’s sudden disappearance should have caused his movement to fade away or transform into an institutionalized party. Yet his abrupt and violent ouster only enraged his followers and deepened their affective attachments to him. Moreover, the timing of the coup—after Perón had achieved a modest economic recovery, before the complete deterioration of his policies—protected his legacy and generated in his followers an intense nostalgia for the prosperity they had experienced in prior years thanks to his leadership. Indeed, throughout Perón’s exile, his supporters expressed “elements of a regressive fantasy for ‘the good old days’ of a ‘golden era’ – a plaintive reflection on a glorified, utopian past” (James 1988, 98). As I will describe below, similar to routinization scholars, the backers of the 1955 coup underestimated the resilience of citizens’ devotion to their beloved leader. This miscalculation, combined with the challenges of governing an economically deteriorated and politically fragmented society, undermined opposition actors’ efforts to rid Argentina of Peronism. More importantly, it enabled the founder to maintain his personal grip over the movement and established the conditions for his eventual return to power.

To maintain control over his movement during his exile, Perón began by reinforcing the loyalty of his followers. His eventual successor in Argentina’s presidency, General Pedro Aramburu, facilitated this task by proscribing the Peronist party, banning

Perón's inner circle from participating in politics, and outlawing the use of proper names for parties (McGuire 1997, 80). Aramburu assumed that these measures would diminish Perón's influence and re-route followers' support to more traditional parties who offered "bread-and-butter unionism" (*ibid*, 81-82). Had Peronism routinized by this juncture, Aramburu's strategy would likely have been effective. In reality, however, the new leader's efforts only emphasized the enduring, charismatic appeal of Perón—whom poor citizens viewed as single-handedly responsible for their newfound prosperity (Ciria 1974, 25). Perón took advantage of this oversight by rallying his followers to resist the military government and fight for his return to power. The founder's supporters from across the country responded by mobilizing in a wave of "ill-defined...insurrection" to demand his homecoming (James 1988, 83). Thus, Aramburu's proscription of Peronism actually *reinforced* the followers' identification with the movement and deepened their resistance to the new regime.

To further tighten his grip on his movement, Perón undermined attempts by politicians in his own ranks to reestablish his movement without him. His rank and file, who had never been organized into a "well-institutionalized Peronist party," facilitated this effort by refusing to support leftists and "neo-Peronist" leaders who proposed anything "less than the complete return of Perón" (McGuire 1997, 79; James 1988, 83). Capitalizing on this unmediated support, the founder also invoked a tactic that had served him well during his presidency: he encouraged divisions between the different factions of his movement, including hard-liners who promoted an aggressive strategy of resistance

against the military regime, soft-liners who sought to negotiate with the new government, and a third group who preferred a middle path (McGuire 1997, 87).

Beyond his own ranks, Perón also accelerated the fragmentation the opposition. In 1957, the UCR divided into two factions: Arturo Frondizi's Intransigent UCR (UCRI), which proposed allying with Peronists to defeat Aramburu, and Ricardo Balbín's UCR of the People (UCRP), which refused to partner with Peronists and thus sought power independently (McGuire 1997, 84). To deepen this fissure, Perón backed Frondizi's candidacy for the 1958 presidential elections, calling on his supporters to vote for the UCRI candidate. Not only did this strategy further divide the UCR, but it also thwarted efforts to institutionalize Peronism, as it drew a significant portion of Peronist votes toward Frondizi and away from neo-Peronist leaders (Corach 2011).

Finally, in the 1960s, Perón thwarted the efforts of Augusto Vandor, an experienced union leader in his own movement, to build a routinized Peronist party that would sustain the movement's traditional, pro-labor policies while leaving the founder behind (James 1988, 162). A passionate defender of Argentine workers and a pragmatic leader, Vandor would likely have protected Peronist followers' interests more effectively than Perón himself (McGuire 1997, 133). Yet the founder deliberately sabotaged Vandor's attempts to carry the party forward without him. To do so, Perón empowered the radical left wing of his movement—a faction with which he had very little in common ideologically (*ibid*, 91). While inciting chaos and violence in this fashion compromised the wellbeing of his own followers, it also safeguarded Perón's control over his

movement, further demonstrating his preference for charismatic power over programmatic substance.

In sum, chaos, fragmentation, and instability defined the interregnum between Perón's ouster in 1955 and his return to power in 1973. Both opposition and neo-Peronist parties failed to coalesce and attract sufficient political support to establish a stable, democratic party system. Instead, the military, obsessed with erasing Peronism while unconfident in other parties' capacity to govern, regularly interfered. In fact, two democratically elected leaders who served during the period, Arturo Frondizi (1958-1962) and Arturo Illia (1963-1966), were ousted by military coups; the third, Héctor Cámpora, served only as a stand-in candidate for Perón and was replaced by the founder just months after his election in 1973 (Wynia 1978, 14).

I argue that citizens' charismatic attachments to Perón, combined with the exiled leader's ongoing interference, helped sustain his image as the only person capable of rescuing the country from crisis and chaos—even though he played a direct role in generating the upheaval in the first place. With his charisma intact, the triumphant Perón therefore returned to Argentina in 1973 amidst throngs of fervently loyal followers to begin his third presidential term.

The Second Wave Rises: Perón's brief return to power

Like his first rise in the mid-1940s, Perón relied on his enduring personalistic appeal to return to power in 1973. In a conciliatory gesture, the military regime permitted the Peronist party—though not Perón himself—to participate in elections scheduled for

that March. The regime invited the participation of Peronism in the hopes that “the ‘Perón myth’ would have eventually vanished during his long exile” (Ciria 1974, 30). As in 1955, however, the military once again underestimated the depth of citizens’ affective ties to their leader. By 1973, the founder had not just sustained the devotion of his original followers, but he had also grown his base by incorporating middle-class and leftist activists (Page 1983, 453). While the interests and values of these new supporters contrasted markedly with those of the working-class rank and file, he appealed to all of them: to his traditional followers, he symbolized a return to the heyday of his prior rule; to his new constituents, he appeared as an inspirational and revolutionary figure, “almost a local version of Mao or Fidel” (Ciria 1974, 29-30). Regardless of their interpretations, however, all of Perón’s supporters became convinced that their vision of the future required his *personal* resumption of power.

Harnessing the faith of his followers, Perón revived his movement in typical charismatic fashion. His handpicked proxy, Héctor Cámpora, ran in the March 1973 presidential election. A “staunch supporter and personal representative of Perón,” Cámpora posed little threat to the founder and vowed to immediately step down upon winning the election to restore Perón to power (Ciria 1974, 32). With Perón’s blessing and the campaign slogan, “Cámpora to the presidency, Perón to power,” the proxy candidate won in a landslide (New York Times, 3/14/73, p.42 “Triumph for Perón”). True to his word, Cámpora welcomed Perón back to Argentina and stepped down from power in July, just four months after being elected. The founder won a newly scheduled

election that September with 62 percent of the vote and, on 12 October, greeted masses of jubilant—if internally divided—followers from the presidential palace (Page 1983, 477).

The Second Wave Recedes: Death, dictatorship, and the return to democracy

As discussed above, Perón resumed the presidency after nearly two decades of exile by leaning on his charismatic authority and fighting attempts to destroy or institutionalize his movement. These efforts facilitated his comeback, but they also presented him with intractable challenges, including an unstable political situation, a disjointed movement, and a fragile economy. Perón sidestepped these issues temporarily by condemning the failures of the prior military regime and making vague promises to restore independence, prosperity, and social justice to Argentina through projects such as the “Social Pact” and the “Reconstruction and Liberation Project” (Ciria 1974, 34; Wynia 1978, 252). Given the perilous state of the economy and explosive divisions—not only within his movement, but also across other sectors of society including opposition parties, the revolutionary left, and the military—his grand gestures would not last long. Fortunately for his legacy, however, he died before disaster ensued, just nine months after assuming office (Pion-Berlin 1983, 54). Rather than blaming him for the dark period that followed, his devotees therefore sustained their glorified perceptions of their beloved *Conductor*.

As described in chapter six, Isabel Perón’s short-lived and disastrous presidency from July 1974 to March 1976 reinforced her husband and predecessor’s dysfunctional economic policies and ratcheted up the use of repression in a failed attempt to quell

popular dissent. Subsequently, the military ousted her and instilled a dictatorship under General Jorge Videla. Over the next six years, the military increased state-sponsored repression to horrific levels in its quest to “annihilate” the revolutionary left—and anyone even remotely associated with the left—in the name of reestablishing order (McGuire 1997, 170-171). The regime “disappeared” tens of thousands of civilians, killed thousands more outright, and pushed more than two million others to flee the country (Haberman 2015).⁸⁹ Furthermore, Videla sought to stabilize the economy by demobilizing the working class and aggressively reenacting a free-market model to curb inflation and stimulate growth. Although these extreme measures led to a modest economic recovery during the first three years of the dictatorship, the regime—despite claiming to be a beacon of economic discipline and efficiency—indulged in “gargantuan borrowing” and destroyed industrial productivity, leading to the widespread implosion of financial institutions (McGuire 1997, 171-173). The resulting economic collapse, combined with a last-ditch effort to shore up legitimacy through a failed invasion of the British Falkland Islands, forced the regime to usher in a caretaker government and restore democratic elections in 1983 (*ibid*, 178-179).

During the military dictatorship, Peronism fragmented even more than during the founder’s eighteen-year exile. While the regime’s unspeakable acts of torture suppressed the Peronist left, rifts grew in the movement’s more traditional, union-centered base due to disagreements regarding how to confront the dictatorship. Some union leaders, such as

⁸⁹ The “Disappeared” refers to the citizens whom the military’s captured, clandestine tortured, and often murdered.

Saúl Ubaldini of the beer workers' union and Roberto García of the taxi workers' union, adopted a combative approach in which they led general strikes and openly expressed their opposition. Others, including Lorenzo Miguel of the steelworkers' union and Jorge Triaca of the plastic workers' union, chose a more conciliatory path that involved negotiation with the regime in hopes of securing a role in the eventual transition to democracy (ibid, 173-174). Like the Peronists, opposition parties also suffered repression and fragmentation, albeit to a lesser extent. Similar to union leaders, Radical politicians disagreed about how to deal with the military regime. For example, UCRP leader Ricardo Balbín endeavored to cooperate with the military in order to gain a more prominent role in a transitional regime, whereas Raúl Alfonsín openly opposed the regime throughout its six-year tenure (ibid, 177).

Despite these divisions, the military dictatorship's unabashed brutality and failed economic policies ultimately caused the regime to collapse, motivating Peronist and UCR leaders to form a united front to facilitate a transition to democracy. This coalition, dubbed the *multipartidaria*, played an active role in scheduling elections for October 1983 (Corach 2011). Due to the deep fissures within Peronism, which had intensified due to the absence of its charismatic founder and the unrelenting repression of the dictatorship, the movement failed to present a compelling candidate for the election. Instead, its fractious leaders nominated Ítalo Luder—an unintimidating and perfunctory lawyer with no connection to the movement's rank and file (Madsen and Snow 1991, 139).

In contrast to the behind-the-scenes politicking of Peronist leaders who all coveted the presidency, the UCR held a transparent, democratic primary election in which candidates had the opportunity to appeal directly to voters. Consequently, unlike their Peronist counterparts, UCR leaders overcame internal divisions and coalesced behind Raúl Alfonsín (McGuire 1997, 183). An inspiring leader who promised to restore light, hope, and democracy to the country after years of repression and darkness, Alfonsín swept Luder in the elections and became Argentina's first post-transition president.⁹⁰

Yet while problems of leaderless fragmentation prevented Peronism from returning to power during this period, the Peronists capitalized on their enduring influence over the working class to obstruct Alfonsín's capacity to govern. Specifically, while unable to return society to the "glory days" under Perón, these politicians could mobilize Peronist workers to undermine the new administration by highlighting how Alfonsín's proposals to stabilize the economy—which included scaling back benefits Perón had granted decades earlier—betrayed the founder's legacy. Using this logic, Peronism's otherwise divided union leaders, including Ubaldini and Triaca, joined forces to oppose the new president's proposed reforms. In fact, over the course of Alfonsín's term, these leaders coordinated well 13 general, nationwide strikes (McGuire 1997, 200). These tactics greatly hindered Alfonsín's success and played a crucial role in the leader's premature exit from power in July 1989, several months before the official completion of his term.

⁹⁰ Author interview with Vischi.

In short, while no leader emerged as Perón's clear heir in 1983, the movement's capacity to mobilize followers and obstruct opposing forces sustained its political relevance throughout Alfonsín's presidency. Perhaps more importantly, by inhibiting the leadership capacities of the president, the rebellious behavior of union leaders throughout the 1980s created a deep crisis of governability and demonstrated to Peronist followers the inability of non-Peronist leaders to meet their needs. In turn, the desperate economic and political circumstances in which Argentina found itself toward the end of Alfonsín's presidency established a ripe opportunity for a new charismatic savior to arise, pick up Perón's baton, and save the people from their distress.

The Third Wave Rises: Carlos Menem

As described in chapter six, Carlos Menem rose toward the end of Alfonsín's chaotic presidency to restore Peronism to power and—temporarily—become Argentina's preeminent leader. A self-starter seeking power in the midst of a terrible crisis, Menem embraced a personalistic style of leadership that “echoed Perón’s,” which revitalized citizens’ emotional attachments to the movement and restored their faith in its promise to bring them peace and prosperity.⁹¹ As I will describe below, Menem’s charismatic allure played a crucial role in reviving Peronism and establishing his authority. Yet, just as with the first two waves of the movement under Perón, the same tactics ultimately led to his downfall and yet another period of tumultuous crisis.

⁹¹ McGuire 1997, 212; author interview with Kohan, November 14, 2016.

In contrast to his failed predecessor, Menem secured the loyalty of Peronist citizens in part because he was able to portray himself as a genuine successor of Perón. He boasted a lifelong record as a devout Peronist: he had participated in the party as a young activist during Perón's second presidential term, had endured five years of imprisonment under the military dictatorship, and had served three terms as the Peronist governor of the rural, Western province of La Rioja (McGuire 1997, 207-208). Leveraging these strong connections to the movement, he rose above political infighting and portrayed himself as uniquely capable of picking up the founder's baton and restoring the people's faith in the movement's promise of redemption.⁹² Thus, Menem distanced himself from Alfonsín's failed administration; triumphed over Cafiero in the 1988 Peronist primary; handily defeated UCR candidate, Eduardo Angeloz, in the 1989 general election; and began his presidency backed by a powerful, emotionally charged base of supporters.

As president, Menem solidified his image as a charismatic savior by implementing daring reforms. Most prominently, his Convertibility Plan, which artificially fixed the Argentine peso to the US dollar, attacked and eventually ended hyperinflation, which dramatically increased the purchasing power of ordinary Argentines (see chapter six). Menem enacted the Plan in April 1991 after his cascade of neoliberal reforms that directly contradicted Perón's original, state-centered policies and far outpaced Alfonsín's proposed structural adjustment plans (Weyland 2002, 20-21).

⁹² Author interview with Kohan, November 14, 2016.

Nevertheless, I contend that his behavior was quintessentially Peronist, as he ended the crisis and provided the suffering masses with much-needed relief. Indeed, between 1990 and 1994, inflation dropped from 1,832 percent to 4 percent, newly privatized public services—which had been hopelessly dysfunctional before Menem’s rise—became efficient and affordable, and the country achieved sustained economic growth (McGuire 1997, 219-220). Thanks to these policies, Argentines enjoyed a higher quality of life than they had experienced in decades. In short, while horrifying the principled leaders of the center-left Peronist Renovation—the coalition dedicated to institutionalizing the movement—Menem’s emotional appeal and extraordinary performance during his first presidential term revived the movement in all its personalistic glory.

Capitalizing on his success, the self-starter followed Perón’s model by deepening his control over politics. To begin, Menem conquered the Peronist party by marginalizing prominent leaders of the Renovation and replacing Cafiero as president of the PJ. He also filled his cabinet with trusted friends rather than experienced officials from within the party, selected several previously anti-PJ leaders as prominent advisers, and personally endorsed political outsiders ranging from celebrities to speedboat racers to corporate CEOs for legislative and gubernatorial positions rather than supporting party officials (McGuire 1997, 242-243). In doing so, he stifled the efforts of many to routinize the PJ, coopted important opposition leaders, and strengthened Peronism’s personalistic nature.

In addition to overpowering parties, Menem undermined institutions that constrained his supreme authority. For example, he bypassed the legislature to enact hundreds of emergency decrees that ensured the swift implementation of his free-market

reforms, which many politicians found worrisome and irresponsible. By the end of 1993, he had pushed through over three hundred such decrees—about ten times more than the country had experienced over the previous 140 years combined (*ibid*, 256).⁹³ He also sidestepped legal challenges to his executive power by increasing the number of Supreme Court justices from five to nine and handpicking loyalists to fill the new vacancies. To reinforce the appearance of his indomitable popularity, he meddled in electoral rules to benefit his administration and even pushed through a new constitution permitting his reelection in 1995 (*ibid*, 255-257). Through these tactics, Menem successfully overcame constraints imposed by the other branches of government and solidified his charismatic power in a manner highly reminiscent of the founder.

To recapitulate, like the charismatic founder, Menem harnessed the fervent loyalty of the Peronist rank and file and the early success of his economic reforms to achieve hegemonic control over the political system. As with Perón, his direct appeals to the popular sectors helped catapult him into power. Then, as president, he used his personalistic authority to reinforce his heroic image and temporarily provide his supporters with determined reprieve from economic crisis. Ultimately, Menem's actions undermined his followers' long-term programmatic interests, destroyed the efforts of the Renovation leaders to routinize Peronism, and weakened political institutions vital to the consolidation of democracy. In turn, Menem's charismatic leadership strengthened Peronism by reenergizing the followers' enthusiasm for the movement and causing them

⁹³ By the end of his two presidencies, Menem had enacted a total of 545 emergency decrees (Capriata 2008).

to worship him as its new chief. Though his supremacy would not last, I argue that his reign would play a crucial role in deepening the personalistic nature and spasmodic trajectory of the movement.

The Third Wave Recedes: Menem's Fall and The Convertibility Crisis

During Menem's second presidential term (1995-1999), the structural deficiencies of his audacious policies began to emerge. In particular, it became increasingly difficult for society to ignore the unsustainable nature of the Convertibility Plan, as the official value of the peso far exceeded its real worth. While Menem refused to publicly acknowledge this disturbing reality, anxiety rose among ordinary Argentines, whose livelihood had become dependent on the artificial exchange rate (Weyland 2002, 187). Adding to this fear were the social consequences of Menem's neoliberal reforms, which included growing inequality and unemployment (Gantman 2012, 338-341). Although the Peronist rank and file continued to view Menem favorably, these problems directly impacted their lives and thus began to erode his reputation as a heroic problem-solver.

Unable to run for a third presidential term in 1999, Menem was forced to yield the Peronist candidacy to Eduardo Duhalde. A programmatically more principled leader and longtime rival of Menem's, Duhalde enjoyed the backing of politicians in the movement who had grown frustrated by the president's hegemonic behavior and his waning performance (Weyland 2002, 194). Yet Menem's influence over the movement remained significant. Furthermore, many of the outgoing president's conservative supporters backed his former Economy Minister, Domingo Cavallo. This fragmentation deprived

Duhalde of valuable votes and ultimately cost him the election. Thus, Fernando De La Rúa, a dreadfully uninspiring candidate aptly nicknamed “*el chupete*” (baby pacifier), came to power backed by a loose alliance of anti-Peronist parties (*ibid*).⁹⁴

As with the recession of the first two Peronist waves in 1955 and 1974, respectively, Menem’s delicate economic and political balance collapsed upon his departure from power in 1999. Throughout his presidency, he had enforced political cohesion and economic stability from the top down using his unmediated charismatic authority. His sudden absence, combined with the exhaustion of his shortsighted policies, ushered in a chaotic period without a leader to guide the way. Indeed, the virtually powerless De La Rúa failed to take charge of the situation upon rising to office and thus resigned in December 2001 (Weyland 2002, 195). This combination of economic collapse and feeble leadership de-legitimized the political system and led citizens to riot in the streets (Krauss 2001).

In the eleven days between De La Rúa’s resignation and Duhalde’s appointment as interim president, the country endured a profound leadership crisis in which five presidents rose and fell. Remarkably, the military did not intervene during this tumultuous period—a testament to the country’s commitment to a minimal level of democracy as well as its strong aversion towards violence. Nevertheless, the crisis revealed the disintegrated state of the party system and demonstrated how little the country’s political institutions had progressed over the previous decade.

⁹⁴ The Alliance supporting De La Rúa’s candidacy consisted of the UCR, a center-left coalition called Frepaso, and several smaller parties (Weyland 2002, 194-195).

In terms of political parties, the UCR grew even weaker during the 1999-2003 period than it had been when Alfonsín stepped down from the presidency prematurely in 1989. The party's inability to compete in the 1999 elections without crafting an alliance with several other parties was an illustration of its frailty; De La Rúa's feeble presidency and resignation in 2001 only exacerbated the party's failure to thrive. Consequently, in the wake of the crisis, the UCR would play little role in stabilizing the country and would never again present a stand-alone candidate for presidential elections (Roberts 2007, 12).

Peronism likewise remained divided in the aftermath of Menem's presidency. For his part, Duhalde led a large group of party stalwarts against Menem and his neoliberal policies. The rival's faction had begun to accumulate strength in 1997, as Menem's performance had begun to wane. Yet Duhalde's group encountered several obstacles that prevented them from assuming control over the party. As mentioned previously, one reason is that Cavallo also ran for president under a separate ticket in an open attempt to split the PJ (Cassese 1999). Menem also retained control over important factions of the PJ, hindering the efforts of his Peronist opponents to dethrone him. Thus, while constitutionally barred from running for a third presidential term in 1999, he managed to get himself reelected as president of the PJ until 2003 (Ventura 1999).⁹⁵

When Duhalde scheduled presidential elections for 2003, the PJ refrained from endorsing an official candidate, reflecting the lack of cohesion within the party. As a result, three leaders with Peronist affiliations ran on separate tickets: Menem; Néstor

⁹⁵ Duhalde challenged the legality of the PJ internal elections, but the Menem-backed Supreme Court upheld the results, securing Menem's place as the party president (Ventura 1999).

Kirchner, the Governor of Santa Cruz (Duhalde's preferred candidate); and Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, the Governor of San Luis. Notably, despite running independently, the three candidates did not attempt to break away from Peronism and start new parties. Instead, each depicted himself as a true successor of Perón while targeting the others as frauds threatening to denigrate the beloved founder's legacy. Most explicitly, Menem claimed throughout his campaign to be Perón's most faithful successor. He even declared during his campaign finale in the iconic River Plate stadium in the Federal Capital, "Carlos Menem is the authentic and best disciple of the Lieutenant General Juan Domingo Perón and of Eva Perón" (Sued 2003).

Although Kirchner downplayed his ties to the PJ in order to distance himself from Menem, he also implicitly connected himself to the charismatic founder. For example, just as Menem had claimed to reinvigorate Perón's "productive revolution" during his 1989 campaign, Kirchner promised an economic "model of production and work"—a clear association with the founder's original platform (Ybarra 2003). Similarly, while less popular than Menem or Kirchner, Adolfo Rodríguez Saá titled his electoral coalition after the founders' movement, "National and Popular Movement," and referenced Perón's promise of salvation by titling his caravan "The March of Dreams" (Lucas Colonna 2003). In short, while the infighting between Peronist-affiliated leaders kept the PJ fragmented and weak during the 1999-2003 period, each candidate's efforts to associate himself with the charismatic founder underscore the ongoing power and legitimacy of Perón's charismatic legacy.

Like parties, political institutions during this period remained frail. The judicial branch remained deeply politicized and the legislature was virtually powerless, as evidenced by its failure to implement much-needed economic reforms and prevent the 2001 collapse (Ventura 1999). With weakling De La Rúa at the helm, the executive office also lost its sweeping authority. Given the utter disempowerment of the three major branches of government, the State had little capacity to address the crisis. Consequently, citizens throughout the country became thoroughly disillusioned with the government and grew detached from politics in the years following the crisis (Quiroga 2005, 322-323).

Despite the discredited status of political parties and institutions, however, Peronism sustained its reputation as the only legitimate force capable of governing the country during the transitional period from Menem to Kirchner (Mora y Araujo 2011; Ollier 2015). In fact, I contend that Argentina recovered from the 2001 collapse primarily due to the ongoing legitimacy of Peronism and the strength of the chief executive office relative to other political institutions. Paradoxically, while undermining democratic institutions, the movement's popular legitimacy and its monopoly over executive power also saved Argentina from worse fates. Moreover, while the 2001 crisis had made citizens feel utterly fed up with politics, it also reinforced their perception of Peronism as the single force capable of rescuing the country from desperate circumstances. Thus, even while rejecting contemporary politicians, the followers sustained their attachments to the movement and their faith in the founder's promise to provide them with salvation. As I will discuss in the next section, it is for this reason that the followers would come to

worship another set of charismatic saviors soon after the crisis, restoring Peronism to its position of power.

The Fourth Wave Rises: Néstor and Cristina Kirchner

As discussed in the previous chapter, Néstor Kirchner rode into the presidency in 2003 on the wave of economic recovery that Duhalde had initiated in the previous year. Taking personal credit for the reestablishment of prosperity, the new leader—and, subsequently, his wife, Cristina—consolidated tremendous popularity and reinvigorated followers' emotional attachments, thereby ushering in the fourth wave of Peronism.⁹⁶ Interestingly, some scholars and PJ activists insisted in interviews with the author that the Kirchners brought the movement back to life by constructing a state-centered, nationalist economy similar to Perón's original platform. For instance, Santiago Cafiero, a Peronist official in the Province of Buenos Aires and grandson of Antonio Cafiero, stated that, whereas Menem claimed the Peronist label through superficial “iconography,” the Kirchners resurrected the programmatic substance of Peronism through reinstating “concrete policies of state-centered economics and social redistribution.”⁹⁷ Based on this

⁹⁶ Initially, the Kirchners tried to establish a unique, “Kirchnerista” brand that superseded (but still incorporated) Peronism. For example, Néstor claimed he was establishing a “transversal” coalition that incorporated Peronist and non-Peronist actors alike. Julio Cobos, the Radical Governor of Mendoza, served as Cristina's vice president during her first presidential term (2007-2011). However, similar to Alfonsín's attempts to create a “Third Historical Movement” in the 1980s, the Kirchners' attempts to establish a new movement failed. As the Kirchners' joint administration progressed, their non-Peronist alliances fell apart, especially during Cristina's presidency (Mora y Araujo 2011; Calvo and Murillo 2012, 151). Ultimately, the leading couple abandoned their dream of establishing an independent movement and came to openly embrace their Peronist roots. Consequently, their rule became widely perceived as a new, formidable chapter of the pre-existing movement (Ollier 2015).

⁹⁷ Author interview with Santiago Cafiero, Peronist activist, adviser to Alberto Fernández, and grandson of Antonio Cafiero, July 5, 2016; author interview with Delfina Rossi, Peronist activist, former Director of the National Bank of Argentina, and daughter of Agustín Rossi, May 15, 2015; author interview with Macarena Kunkel, Peronist activist and daughter of Carlos Kunkel, April 19, 2016; and author interview

reasoning, one might conclude that, in contrast to Menem, the Kirchners successfully transformed Peronism into the center-left, programmatic party envisioned by Antonio Cafiero and other leaders of the Peronist Renovation a decade earlier.

Yet, as I will argue below, the Kirchners intentionally undermined others' attempts to routinize Peronism and strengthened the charismatic heart of the movement. They achieved this by adopting the same strategies to consolidate their supreme authority as Perón and Menem had in the past. However, to distance themselves from Menem's tainted administration, they enacted these strategies in reverse order: they began by enact daring and initially successful programs, then embraced their roles as the heirs of Juan and Eva Perón.

To begin, while Menem stressed his role as a Peronist before implementing bold reforms, Néstor enacted policies that produced extraordinary, though unsustainable, benefits that reenergized the followers and secured the loyalty of new supporters from the lower and middle classes. His decision to repay Argentina's massive debt with the International Monetary Fund in December 2005 exemplifies this approach. This astonishing initiative created a "climate of euphoria" across Argentina by liberating the country from the "tutelage" of one of its most detested and powerful overlords (Ollier 2015; "Histórico: El país saldrá en un solo pago la deuda con el FMI," 2005). Moreover, it cast the president in a heroic light and distinguished him from Menem, whom the public widely perceived as selling out to the IMF in the first place. Thanks to the

with Juan Ernesto Gullo, son of Juan Carlos "Dante" Gullo, July 11, 2016. Cafiero, Rossi, Kunkel, and Gullo expressed similar views that the Kirchners managed to revive the (leftist) programmatic substance of Peronism and thus advanced efforts to routinize the movement.

impressive economic recovery, Néstor's popularity quickly skyrocketed, reaching 74 percent by July 2003 (Mora y Araujo 2011).

As president in subsequent years, Cristina implemented similar programs to display her own determination and capacity to transform Argentina. For example, in a bold move in 2008, she renationalized the pension system that Menem had privatized in 1993. She presented the decision as a radical effort to “protect our pensioners and our workers,” from the evils of Menem’s neoliberalism as well as the greedy interests of developed countries, “economic conglomerates,” and “large banks” (Arza 2012, 48-49; Datz 2012, 116). In reality, the policy revealed Cristina’s “political short-termism and executive strength,” and undermined “long-term concerns about the stability of the social security system” (Datz 2012, 101). Yet renationalization deepened the enthusiasm of her followers, greatly enhanced her control over the country’s fiscal resources, and enabled her to restructure and temporarily alleviate the country’s large and growing public debt. Consequently, while complicating the country’s economic stability, this daring fiscal policy strengthened her image as the common people’s central protagonist and proved her willingness to stand up on the world stage to defend her supporters against powerful enemies.⁹⁸

Having achieved impressive performance and distanced themselves from Menem, the Kirchners proceeded to portray themselves as symbolic reincarnations of Perón and Eva and thus revived the movement’s quasi-religious mystique. Néstor did this implicitly

⁹⁸ Author interview with anonymous communications strategist from the Kirchner administration, April 6, 2016.

by portraying himself as the champion of Argentine workers, (Wortman 2015). He also reanimated the cleavage the founder had emphasized between the privileged and the poor—a dimension of Peronism that Menem had downplayed. For example, he attacked the former president, human rights abusers from the military dictatorship, and international financial institutions as powerful, selfish elites.⁹⁹ Conversely, he praised Argentine workers, the progressive middle class, youths, and the poor masses and virtuous citizens (Wortman 2015).

When Cristina rose to power in 2007, she reinforced this cleavage between the privileged and the poor, and explicitly embodied Evita's persona as the mother of the impoverished masses.¹⁰⁰ Throughout her presidency, she mingled with poor Argentines during public acts, used passionate rhetoric to defend the “people” against selfish elites, and depicted herself as personally responsible for redistributing wealth to virtuous Argentines via her social programs. She also introduced many such programs in the “Evita Room” of the presidential palace, with an image of the founder’s wife projected prominently behind her, as exemplified in Figure 10.

⁹⁹ Author interview with Corach.

¹⁰⁰ Wortman 2015; author interview with anonymous communications strategist from the Kirchner administration, April 6, 2016.

Figure 10. Cristina Kirchner Announces a Social Plan to Increase Subsidies for Low-Income Students in the “Evita Room” of the Presidential Palace, 2015.



Source: <https://www.cfkargentina.com/cristina-kirchner-discurso-progresar-estudiantes/>

However, it was Néstor’s sudden death from a heart attack in October 2010 that would catalyze the Kirchners’ most powerful symbolic association with the charismatic legacy of the Peróns. Following this tragic event, Cristina doubled down on her efforts to create an “idealized image” of her husband that associated both of them to the founders (Cherny 2014, 156). For example, she broadcast images in which she and Néstor mimicked the founders’ passionate embrace during a massive campaign rally (see Figure 11). She also publicly mourned Néstor’s death for an extensive period of time and continually referred to “Him” as Christ-like during the final years of her presidency, intensifying her allure as a brave and tenacious widow. And just as Perón immortalized Eva’s saintly image upon her tragic death, Cristina solidified Néstor’s charismatic legacy by incorporating his image into propaganda spread throughout the country; renaming

streets, public buildings, and neighborhoods after him; and constantly referencing his miraculous contributions to society (Wortman 2015; Cherny 2014, 156).

Figure 11. Cristina and Néstor Kirchner Embrace, Mimicking Perón and Eva.



Source: www.cfkargentina.com/fotos



Source: https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/08/30/album/1504108014_834194.html

Contrary to the hopes of some party activists and intellectuals, the Kirchners did not use their charismatic authority to oversee the construction of a leftist, institutionalized party. Rather, the leading couple seized control of the PJ and leveraged their popularity to

vanquish threats from the party’s mid-level agents. Initially, Néstor adopted a conciliatory tone to win the support of diverse leaders from within and beyond the PJ (Mora y Araujo 2011; Cherny 2014, 150). Yet, as he became more popular, these actors—especially Duhalde—quickly went from critical sources of support to obstacles threatening to hinder his consolidation of power. As these fragile political alliances grew more strained, Néstor abandoned this “transversal” movement and established a new chapter of Peronism that he and Cristina could define on their own terms (Ollier 2015).

To establish a new, formidable, “Kirchnerista” chapter of Peronism, Néstor used his overwhelming popular support to demand loyalty from Peronist governors and legislators throughout the country. He also punished PJ leaders who questioned him by nominating parallel lists with his own candidates during the 2005 mid-term elections, who easily won thanks to their association with him. He also weakened dissident Peronist governors by placing loyal mayors (*intendentes*) with new executive powers in their districts. When Peronist officials attempted to create a united front in opposition to the president’s aggressive behavior, he responded by pressuring influential members of the PJ to resign, effectively deactivating the party (Cherny 2014, 151-154). In a final blow to the party, Cristina competed against Duhalde’s wife, “Chiche,” in the 2005 elections for senator of the Province of Buenos Aires. Unfortunately for Duhalde, his experience as a two-term governor of the province was no match for the Kirchners’ unmatched popularity. Cristina therefore emerged victorious, extinguishing the former leader’s influence and paving the way for the Kirchners’ undisputed control over the party (*ibid*; Mora y Araujo 2011; Ollier 2015).

Throughout the remainder of their combined presidencies, the Kirchners controlled the PJ in a manner reminiscent of Menem and the founders. They repeatedly overcame threats from dissident Peronist leaders by deepening their direct, personalistic connections with their adoring followers. This is exemplified by Cristina's decisive re-electoral victory in 2011 in the aftermath of her husband's death. Before her husband's demise, a group of important Peronists had been plotting to wrest the party from the Kirchners' grasp (Cherny 2014, 155). Yet his death reinvigorated the followers' deep, emotional support for Cristina and exalted her husband as a martyr. Consequently, she won the 2011 elections with an overwhelming 54 percent of the vote, smothering threats to her power from PJ challengers and enjoying supreme control over the movement and the country for several more years.

Similar to their charismatic predecessors, the Kirchners also weakened several political institutions in their quest to sustain their personalistic authority. To begin, like Menem, Néstor made ample use of emergency decrees to rapidly and singlehandedly enact his policies—a total of 270 over the course of his presidency, an average of one every six days (Capriata 2008). While Cristina passed fewer than 50 decrees during her two presidential terms combined, she also used this tool strategically to enhance her charismatic image.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, like Perón, the Kirchners interfered with the National Institute for Statistics and Census of the Republic (INDEC) to falsify statistics and mask

¹⁰¹ For example, in a blatant attack on the agricultural elites, Cristina announced an emergency decree in June 2008 that would redirect fees from the agro-export industry to fund her government's massive redistributive social plans (Calvo and Murillo 2012, p 153-154). Though she ultimately failed to enforce the new policy, her emergency decree deepened the divide between her followers and opponents while increasing her symbolic image as a true savior among the poor.

the rising inflation that had resulted from their state-centered economic policies. By 2012, the disparity between real and “official” inflation rates reached nearly fifteen percentage points (Streb 2015). Third, to strengthen their appearance as heroes defending the people against malevolent enemies, the Kirchners attacked media outlets critical of their administration and dominated public spaces with propaganda. Most prominently, Cristina launched an all-out attack against the media giant *Clarín* for criticizing her efforts to increase taxes on the agricultural export sector to fund her social spending in 2008 (Becerra 2015).

In sum, Peronism surged back to power under Néstor and Cristina just as it had under Menem. Had the movement become institutionalized, this impressive comeback would have been unlikely. Yet because its charismatic nature persisted, it was able to resume its position as the country’s predominant political force following the 2001 crisis. Specifically, citizens’ enduring attachments to Peronism and their faith in the founder’s mission of salvation caused them to crave a new hero capable of resolving their misery. The Kirchners capitalized on this opportunity to rise up and demonstrate their charismatic power. They oversaw an impressive economic recovery and singlehandedly reversed Menem’s neoliberal program through reinstating the economic nationalism and state interventionism of the past. Moreover, they strategically reconstructed the movement’s symbolic narrative by writing Menem out and depicting themselves as the true heirs of Perón and Eva. In doing so, Néstor and Cristina politically reactivated the followers’ affective bonds, dominated the PJ, and weakened institutions that threatened their executive power.

As with Menem, this charismatic style of leadership allowed the Kirchners to consolidate hegemonic power—but only for a limited period of time. As I will illustrate in the next section, their shortsighted programs eventually imploded, compromising their heroic image. The Kirchners’ collapse would once again usher in a period of leaderless fragmentation. Yet rather than destroying the movement, this recession, which would occur under non-Peronist president Mauricio Macri, would simply provide the opportunity for Cristina to stage an impressive comeback four years later.

The Fourth Wave Recedes: Cristina Kirchner’s (temporary?) Fall

Over the course of Cristina’s two presidential terms, unchecked social spending and protectionist economic policies exacerbated problems of increasing inflation, rising prices, and shortages of basic material goods (Damill and Frenkel 2015). Rather than addressing these problems, she attempted to preserve her power through personalistic tactics. She blamed the economic struggles on “evil” opposition actors including speculators, international financial institutions, and private corporations. She also brazenly denied the severity of the looming crisis, providing distorted inflation statistics, further increasing social spending, and relentlessly spreading propaganda in praise of her administration’s progress.

Yet as her second presidency unfolded, it became increasingly difficult to sustain the illusion of prosperity with these stopgap measures. Moreover, in large part due to her declining performance, Cristina’s plan to legalize “re-reelection,” which would have permitted her to serve a third consecutive presidential term, failed, forcing her to step

down in 2015 (Gilbert 2015). As with Menem in 1999, the combination of growing economic woes and the charismatic leader's inability to remain in executive power caused the Peronist movement to recede from power once again.

Due to economic deterioration and Cristina's looming departure, Peronism once again suffered a crisis of fragmentation as her presidency drew to a close. The 2015 elections reflect these internal divisions. Cristina reluctantly endorsed Daniel Scioli, the lackluster Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires and Menem's original protégé, as the PJ candidate (Raszewski 2015). As in 2003, two additional Peronist candidates ran on independent tickets: Sergio Massa, a prominent national deputy from the Province of Buenos Aires and Cristina's former Chief of Cabinet, and Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, the governor of San Luis and perennial presidential hopeful.

Similar to 1999, the fragmentation of Peronism greatly facilitated the opposition, who coalesced around a single candidate: Mauricio Macri, the center-right, wealthy businessman and Governor of the Federal Capital. Macri won and stepped into the presidency, backed by an ideologically variegated, seven-party coalition called “*Cambiamos*” (Let’s Change), whose sole unifying foundation was its opposition to Cristina. Notably, the new president won only in the second round of the election.¹⁰² In the first round, he won a mere 30 percent of the vote; in contrast, the Peronists won a combined 61 percent (about 38.5 percent for Scioli, 20.5 percent for Massa, and 2 percent

¹⁰² The 1994 Constitution of Argentina requires that, in presidential elections, the first-place candidate win either 45 percent of the popular vote or 40-44 percent of the popular vote *and* defeat the runner-up candidate by at least ten percentage points. Otherwise, the top two candidates must compete in a second round.

for Rodríguez Saá). While Peronism clearly remained the country's most popular political force, however, its internal divisions permitted Macri to participate in a runoff against Scioli. In short, Macri won because Peronists disillusioned with the Kirchner regime refused to support her weakling successor.

Without a strong popular mandate, an ideologically coherent party, or a convincing association with Peronism, Macri had few resources with which to confront the economic downturn he inherited from his predecessor. The damage the Kirchners had inflicted on important institutions, including INDEC and the central bank, further compounded the new leader's capacity to govern (Davies 2015). To address these problems, he adopted a principled, business-like approach rather than assuming a charismatic style of leadership. As a civil engineer, businessman, and member of Argentina's upper class, this approach appeared to suit Macri. Furthermore, as an adviser in his administration insisted in interviews with the author, his lack of emotional connection with the people would help differentiate him from his melodramatic predecessor. This, she reasoned, would enhance Macri's capacity to govern.¹⁰³

In contrast, I argue that Macri's isolation from Peronism, as well as his unwillingness and inability to adopt Perón's personalistic style, has severely limited his capacity to govern effectively. As stressed by the communication strategist, rather than providing reassurance to the citizenry, Macri's style has appeared "cold, calculating, intellectual, and administrative," making it virtually impossible for him to establish

¹⁰³ Author interview with Soledad Planes, polling adviser to Cabinet Chief Marcos Peña, June 21, 2016.

affective ties with the masses.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, his cautious approach to policymaking, especially his attempts to gradually restructure the economy—to stabilize the situation without causing too much additional suffering for citizens—have made him appear hesitant, weak, and incapable of addressing the country’s increasingly dire circumstances (Touzón 2017). Consequently, Argentines have come to associate the country’s worsening economic problems—including increasing inflation, which reached an average of 54.7 percent over the past twelve months—with Macri’s weak leadership, as illustrated by the newly popular term, “Macrisis” (Rapoza 2019).

In short, while the fall of Peronism enabled Macri’s rise to power just like De La Rúa’s fifteen years earlier, I argue that it has also precluded him from becoming a popular leader. Indeed, like Menem, the Kirchners’ charismatic authority resonated deeply with millions of voters, weakened the already-fragmented party system, and further undermined democratic institutions. Although this style of leadership planted the seeds for the Kirchners’ own demise, paradoxically, it has also made Macri’s failure virtually unavoidable. This is because, as the movement receded from power, it bestowed upon Macri serious economic problems without providing him the personalistic allure or institutional strength to address the issues. Perhaps even more than his predecessor, this has implicated the new president as responsible for the crisis.

Meanwhile, although Peronism has remained fragmented, it has preserved its reputation as the only political force capable of governing the country. Moreover, as

¹⁰⁴ Author interview with anonymous communications strategist from the Kirchner administration, April 6, 2016.

reinforced by hundreds of focus group participants and survey respondents cited throughout this dissertation, many Argentines have continued to express deep, emotional connections to the movement. They have also professed hope that a strong leader will rise from within the movement to rescue them from their economic and spiritual distress. For their part, several Peronist leaders seem aware that citizens' latent attachments are awaiting reactivation (Díaz 2018). Most prominently, Cristina has been plotting a comeback by positioning herself as a vice-presidential candidate with Alberto Fernández—her former cabinet chief, an ideological moderate who has the potential to entice the support of anti-Kirchner Peronists—at the head of the ticket. As political consultants have indicated, this move could allow Cristina to broaden her support base without sacrificing her personalistic authority. Similar to Perón and Cámpora in 1973, one consultant states, “In the eyes of the public, it will be Alberto governing, but Cristina in power” (Jourdan and Raszewski 2019). These developments suggest that Cristina, flanked by a handpicked co-leader, is likely to restore the movement—and herself—to power. In light of Macri’s failure, the conditions seem ripe for her return to power.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has documented the spasmodic pattern in which charismatic movements unfold. Following a crisis, a valiant leader surges to power, promising to rescue the people from their suffering. To substantiate his capacities as an all-powerful savior, the leader concentrates authority by cultivating deeply emotional bonds with

voters, fragmenting political parties, and overriding institutional constraints. Through this process, the leader establishes a political movement rooted in his charismatic appeal.

Eventually, the founder's seemingly extraordinary, yet inherently unsustainable, performance begins to falter. Having undermined the institutional safeguards in the name of concentrating power, the founder's government stands on the brink of collapse. Because the founder dies or disappears before the moment of doom arrives, he escapes blame for the ensuing disaster. Nevertheless, the inevitable eruption of a crisis—compounded by the sudden absence of the founder's charismatic authority—causes the movement to recede from politics. Crucially, this retreat from power is temporary; it does not cause the movement's permanent demise, nor does it set in motion a process of institutionalization. Instead, the citizens' profound, affective identification with the founder persists and helps perpetuate his movement in politically latent form.

During this period of crisis, the followers' worldview remains rooted in the founder's personalistic authority. Indeed, the followers mourn the loss of their beloved savior and desperately wish for a symbolic reincarnation to appear and take charge of the chaotic situation. Meanwhile, thanks in large part to the founder's aggressive quest for supreme power, political parties remain deeply fragmented and political institutions remain weak. I contend that these conditions do not lend themselves to reconstructing a routinized party system. Instead, they create opportunities for new politicians to revive the movement by embodying the founder's charismatic style.

Thus, out of the ashes of the movement's first collapse, a new leader has the opportunity to rise and restore the movement to power. Like the founder, the successor

accomplishes this by tapping into the followers' unmediated emotional attachments and implementing daring reforms, which she achieves by overpowering parties and weakening institutions that threaten her executive power. These personalistic tactics help the successor resuscitate the movement, yet their viability rests on short-lived policies and poor political infrastructure. Paradoxically, then, the successor's victory plants the seeds for another collapse. While this failure may discredit the leader in question, however, the movement—whose legitimacy rests primarily on the charismatic legacy of the founder—survives. The cycle therefore repeats, perpetuating the movement while generating recurrent political and economic volatility. My historical analysis of Peronism and its four waves of charismatic leadership illustrates this spasmodic trajectory. In the following chapter, I draw reflect on the self-reinforcing nature of charismatic movements and draw broader conclusions about the consequences for democracy.

Chapter 8. Theoretical Implications and Broader Conclusions

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Central Findings

This dissertation has investigated how two paradigm-shifting political movements founded by charismatic leaders, Argentine Peronism and Venezuelan Chavismo, have lived on and dominated politics for years after the deaths of their founders. Conventional understandings of charisma would predict that the survival of these movements would require their transformation into institutionalized parties. Yet both movements have persisted by sustaining their original, deeply personalistic nature.

Perón and Chávez established their movements by rising in the midst of a serious crisis, recognizing people's suffering, and delivering on the promise to provide swift and thorough relief. In Argentina, Perón granted unprecedented benefits to millions of workers and poor migrants, including stable jobs, decent wages, paid vacation, housing, and healthcare. In Venezuela, Chávez established social "missions" that delivered to poor citizens a tidal wave of aid including food, water, healthcare, housing, and education. Through these impressive actions, the two leaders fostered profound, unmediated emotional attachments with their followers. Furthermore, the leaders used these bonds with their followers to overpower actors, parties, and institutions that threatened their supremacy.

Due to the unsustainable magnitude of their ambitious benefit programs, the founders' seemingly miraculous performance predictably declined, unleashing economic

and political instability that would undermine democracy and harm their own supporters.

Yet the followers would remember the initial, astounding performance of the policies rather than their eventual exhaustion and collapse. Moreover, because Perón was ousted by a coup and Chávez died before the implosion of their reforms, their followers would exculpate them from blame, which helped solidify the leaders' charismatic legacies.

Based on the logic of routinization, the affective intensity of the followers' attachments should have dissipated after the founders' deaths. In turn, the "de-personalization" of these bonds should have transformed the movements into more conventional, institutionalized political parties. Yet in both cases, the deep, affective quality of citizens' attachments to the founders proved strikingly resilient.

Upon the deaths of the charismatic founders, the followers' emotional attachments grew even more intense. When Perón passed away in 1974, his followers stampeded Congress, where his body was displayed, and "succumb[ed] to emotion" at the loss of their savior (Page 1983, 494). While different factions of the movement violently opposed each other in subsequent years, the groups remained unified in their unwavering loyalty to Perón. Similarly, when Chávez died of cancer in early 2013, the masses thronged the streets of Caracas to mourn his death in amazing displays of public crying. Afterward, shrines commemorating the founder popped up in private homes and public spaces across Venezuela, evidencing the ongoing significance of his charismatic influence. Even as followers grew increasingly divided based on their support for Chávez's handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro, they all remained devoted to the founder.

Today, at least one-third of voters in Argentina and Venezuela continue to express emotional attachments to Peronism and Chavismo. Moreover, the personalistic character of the two movements remains strong, whereas their programmatic trademarks and organizational infrastructures remain underdeveloped. These characteristics suggest that the followers' loyalty is still rooted in the movements' charismatic foundations and cast doubt on the argument that the movements have routinized.

To explain this surprising outcome, my theory of charismatic movement revival examines the nature and trajectory of followers' support for the founder and movement, as well as the strategies and conditions used by new leaders to connect with the followers and consolidate power. Drawing insights from political psychology on the nature and behavior of political identities, I explain why citizens' charismatic attachments persist and demonstrate how new leaders can reactivate those bonds by claiming to be heirs of the adored founder. In turn, I analyze the interplay between structure and agency to determine the conditions under which successors can revive the movement and establish their own charismatic authority. Finally, I weave together the perspectives of followers and leaders to illustrate how charismatic movements develop self-reinforcing, spasmodic trajectories. Based on this research, I show that charismatic movements can persist in personalistic form and dominate politics for years and even decades after their founders disappear, rather than disintegrating or transforming into institutionalized parties.

To begin, I contend that the foundation for movement survival rests on citizens' charismatic attachments. As shown in chapter three, the founder of the movement must fulfill three conditions to establish these bonds with his supporters. He must directly

recognize the people's suffering; promise and enact bold policies that provide the people with desperately-needed relief; and craft a narrative that praises him for the miracle of salvation, depicts his opponents as enemies, and stresses his quasi-religious mission to provide the people with transcendence. Although existing literature documents the importance of these conditions for the formation of charismatic bonds, it underestimates the downstream impact of these factors on followers' political attitudes and behaviors. Conversely, my research shows that the founder's direct recognition, seemingly miraculous performance, and symbolic narrative form the basis of citizens' worldview and understanding of politics for years to come.

The reason that the followers' original, charismatic attachments have a profound and enduring influence on their attitudes and behaviors is because these bonds develop into a resilient political identity. As suggested by political psychologists, the *nature* of this identity is enduring; however, its *salience* fluctuates over time. Thus, when the charismatic founder disappears and his policies collapse, the deeply personalistic nature of citizens' attachments remains intact. Yet, under these circumstances, the political significance of the bonds is likely to decline—at least temporarily. Indeed, struck by the absence of the founder and devastated by the ensuing crisis, the followers are likely to withdraw from politics, causing the movement to retreat from power.

Crucially, however, as illustrated in chapter four, citizens' fervent devotion to the founder and movement persists. This is because, even in the founder's absence, the followers remain intimately attached to his narrative, which worships his heroic leadership and keeps alive his promise of salvation. Over time, the followers preserve this

narrative and pass it to new generations by recounting cherished memories and holding onto symbols that commemorate the founder's selflessness and extraordinariness. This personalistic mechanism preserves the charismatic nature of citizens' identification with the movement and sustains their hope that a new savior will eventually rise up, assume the founder's mantle, and restore the movement to power. Thus, while citizens' attachments become politically latent following the disappearance of the founder, their bonds have the potential to be reactivated by successors who prove themselves worthy of the founder's role.

To resuscitate the political salience of the followers' deep, affective bonds and consolidate power, I argue that successors must satisfy symbolic and material conditions similar to those fulfilled by the founder. In particular, new leaders must promise and implement audacious policies that deliver tangible benefits in order to demonstrate the leaders' capacity to take the founder's place. In addition, the new leaders must weave themselves into the movement's symbolic narrative to demonstrate their intention to revive the founder's redemptive mission. As demonstrated in the survey experiments in chapter five, successors who achieve these strategies cause followers to express stronger emotional attachment to the movement. Moreover, the movement's supporters come to view such leaders as more charismatic and worthier of electoral support. Thus, the findings indicate that it is possible to reactivate the political salience of citizens' resilient, *charismatic* attachments.

In sum, analysis from the followers' perspective demonstrates that unmediated emotional attachments to the founder create a foundation for the long-term survival of

charismatic movements. Yet the capacity of successors to return these movements to power depends on an additional set of conditions related to both structure and agency, as outlined in chapter six. First, successors must seek power independently, as self-starters, years after the founder has disappeared. Unlike the weakling successors whom founders directly anoint, self-starters have greater autonomy to reshape and update the movement's narrative without appearing to undermine the founder's legacy. Second, new leaders must seek power under conditions of crisis, when followers' craving for a hero intensifies. Only then does the opportunity emerge for the new leaders to prove their extraordinary ability to rescue the people, thus reviving the founder's mission of salvation. Finally, because of the charismatic nature of the followers' identity, successors must conform to the founder's personalistic style. This final condition is essential for rekindling the followers' affective attachments and convincing these devotees that the successors are worthy of the founder's mantle.

By combining the perspectives of movement followers and leaders, my theory demonstrates that charismatic movements develop spasmodic trajectories that are self-reinforcing. The daring reforms that successors implement to substantiate their charismatic potential trade long-term sustainability for a powerful, initial impact. Achieving this performance is necessary: each successor's legitimacy as an heir of the founder depends on it. Invariably, however, the unsustainable nature of the policies causes them to break down, which eventually erodes the new leader's authority. When the successor falls from grace, the movement recedes from power and the political salience of citizens' attachments declines once again. However, this temporary slump

does not change the resilient, charismatic nature of the followers' bonds. In fact, by producing a crisis, this downturn actually creates the opportunity for a new self-starter to rise up and reactivate the followers' ties. The new leader achieves this in the same fashion as her predecessor: by implementing impressive, yet shortsighted, policies and tying herself to the symbolic legacy of the founder. This process therefore repeats the abovementioned cycle. In short, the movement lives on, but it unfolds in an erratic pattern characterized by the periodic resurgence of charismatic leadership followed by temporary, leaderless recessions.

In addition to preserving personalistic leadership, the fitful life cycle of charismatic movements perpetually undermines party-system development, accelerates institutional decay, and generates economic instability. While charismatic leaders' policies tend to produce abbreviated periods of impressive economic growth and social wellbeing, eventually they collapse and unleash terrible crises. These downturns are compounded by the weakness of political parties and the relative absence of institutional safeguards—characteristics that are reinforced with the rise of each successor. Thus, charismatic movements cause countries to suffer unusually extreme levels of political and economic volatility.

Argentina's eighty-year experience of Peronism, detailed in chapter seven, underscores the negative consequences of charismatic movement revival for programmatic development and economic stability. Indeed, while the tumultuous character of the country's history predates Perón, the frequency and intensity of nationwide crises dramatically increased starting with the charismatic founder's rise to

power in 1946. Since then, the economic and political highs and lows experienced in Argentina have been extreme, even in comparison to other Latin American countries known for volatility and institutional weakness (Mora y Araujo 2011; Levitsky and Murillo 2013).

Although Chavismo has unfolded more recently than Peronism, the political chaos and economic devastation it has produced in Venezuela has made the country stand out in Latin America as uniquely unstable. Some scholars and pundits optimistically predict that the failed leadership of Chávez's terribly unappealing handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro, has planted the seeds for the movement's self-destruction (López Maya 2014; Denis 2015; Rondón 2018). Conversely, my theory predicts that, in light of the impressive resilience of followers' attachments and the opposition's monumental struggles to unify and gain the trust of the poor masses, Chavismo has significant potential to endure. In fact, the movement's current chapter is not unlike that of Isabel Perón, whose failed leadership following the death of her husband precipitated Argentina's 1976-1983 military dictatorship. It is possible that, similar to Peronism, Chavismo will temporarily implode under the strain of Maduro's authoritarian rule and reemerge years later under a more compelling self-starter, when conditions are more favorable.

In conclusion, my theory provides a novel explanation for the remarkable persistence of political movements founded by charismatic leaders. Rather than transforming into routinized parties, I show that the original, personalistic nature of these movements fuels their perpetuation. Thus, these movements can live on and dominate

politics for long stretches of time. However, their fitful trajectories generate perpetual institutional weakness, social upheaval, and economic volatility. Unlike routinization, which encourages the gradual development of programmatic continuity and organizational infrastructure, the revival of charismatic movements poses lasting threats to democracy and party-system development.

Theoretical Contributions

Routinization versus Revival

To my knowledge, this study is the first to directly challenge the routinization thesis and provide an alternative explanation for the striking resilience of charismatic movements. While some scholars have produced insightful theories about the survival of charisma, their analyses are firmly rooted in the logic of routinization. Weber's original theory of charisma and its routinization provides the foundation for these studies (1979). According to Weber, charisma is inherently unstable in its pure form. Yet, he argues, charismatic movements have the potential to transform into alternative forms of authority: namely traditional authority, rational authority, or a combination of the two (ibid, 246). Based on this reasoning, Weber discusses several potential pathways of routinization. For instance, charisma might be "traditionalized" into a form of hereditary succession, in which next-of-kin inherits the original leader's legitimacy (ibid, 248). Alternatively, charisma might be "rationalized" by transferring from the leader to a series of offices, rules, and procedures used to govern society (ibid).

Building on Weber, Shils (1965) develops a theory in which the leader's charisma disperses to a series of inanimate offices, groups, and laws. Specifically, he claims that charisma survives by detaching from the individual leader and infusing associated "collectivities"—as well as inanimate "roles and rules"—with meaning and value (*ibid*, 205). Citizens' faith in and attachments to the leader therefore transfer to these institutions, strengthening and stabilizing the bureaucracy that develops in the charismatic leaders' place (*ibid*).

Alternatively, Jowitt argues that charismatic movements and parties can survive if their *platform*, rather than (or in addition to) their leader, embodies a heroic and transformative mission. In these cases, he states that the "[charismatic] Party is called on to sacrifice, struggle, and exercise continual vigilance to maintain its purpose" (1992, 11). Unlike Shils, who states that the charisma originally associated with an individual leader "disperses" to institutions, Jowitt contends that the institutions can develop a form of "impersonal" charisma from the outset (*ibid*; Shils 1965, 205). To illustrate his theory, Jowitt traces the trajectory of Leninism, which he argues was always rooted at least as much in a "charismatic" platform as in Lenin's personal appeal (Jowitt 1992, 8-12).

Despite the differences across these authors regarding the origin of charismatic authority, they all conclude that charisma can only persist in *de-personalized* form. In contrast, my theory of charismatic movement revival stresses that charisma lives on precisely by sustaining its *personalistic* core. The followers help maintain the personalistic essence of charisma when the founder disappears by recounting their individual experiences of his heroic leadership. This reinforces the citizens' direct,

emotional attachments to the founder and his movement, rather than transforming their bonds into respect for bureaucratic offices and procedures that are indirectly associated with the founder, as Shils would argue. Moreover, whereas routinization theories insist that only depersonalized party organizations can perpetuate charisma, I argue that new leaders who *personally* embody the founder can revive charisma in its original form. Using this strategy, successors can become powerful charismatic leaders themselves, if only temporarily. By developing this personalistic mechanism of survival, my theory makes a novel and important contribution to the literature on charisma.

Structure versus Agency

In explaining the personalistic revival of charisma, this dissertation also contributes to key debates about the roles of structure and agency in politics. Scholars debate the extent to which charisma relies on one or the other. On the one hand, some define charisma as a personality trait with mysterious origins (see references in Merolla and Zechmeister 2011, 29). This interpretation, which underscores the magnetic appeal of individual leaders, focuses disproportionately on agency at the expense of structure. Unsurprisingly, many social scientists have criticized this understanding of charisma as too slippery, ambiguous, and subjective to warrant rigorous analysis (e.g., Mudde 2007; Schlesinger 1960; Van de Brug and Mughan 2007; Worsley 1957).

On the other hand, some authors stress that structure plays an indispensable role in the establishment of charismatic authority. For instance, Weber states that charismatic leaders must rise “in times of psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, [or] political

distress” to prove their extraordinary capacities to their potential disciples (Eisenstadt 1968, 18). Similarly, Madsen and Snow underscore the importance of a crisis for generating feelings of low self-efficacy which, initiates the process of charismatic bonding between leaders and followers (1991, 9-14). These theories of charisma highlight important structural conditions. However, they risk becoming overly deterministic. Indeed, given the intensely personal and subjective nature of this type of authority, it would seem problematic to overlook the individual agency of charismatic leaders.

My study sheds greater light on the distinct influences of agency and structure on charisma by tracing the long-term trajectories of charismatic movements. Specifically, I illustrate how structure and agency interact to facilitate new leaders’ ability to reactivate citizens’ charismatic attachments and inherit the founder’s mantle. I show that the capacity of successors to revive the movement depends in part on their agency. Without their own personal appeal, skill, and experience, these leaders could not achieve extraordinary performance reminiscent of the founder, nor could they tap into the followers’ emotional bonds.

Nevertheless, my theory stresses the centrality of structural conditions in the revival of charismatic movements. To begin, the eruption of a crisis provides the indispensable opening for successors to prove their heroic potential because makes citizens crave a savior in the first place. The new leaders’ mode of selection and the timing of their rise also greatly influence their prospects for success. Finally, the preexisting, charismatic nature of citizens’ identification structure the way these leaders

govern. Specifically, these leaders must use a personalistic style and tie themselves to the founder's legacy to fulfill the followers' expectations for a savior. Thus, while charismatic successors often manage to exercise largely independent authority for a period of time, these structural conditions impose crucial constraints on their power. Paradoxically, however, these conditions also strengthen the movement's momentum and help extend its survival beyond the abbreviated rules of its different successors.

A Novel Explanation for Enduring Institutional Weakness

Finally, my theory of charismatic movement revival contributes to the literature on institutional weakness in developing countries. In many such countries, existing studies highlight the detrimental impact of problems including personalism, elites' top-down control of parties, stark programmatic reversals, severe crises, and excessively permissive electoral rules on party-system institutionalization (Gervasoni 2018; Kostadinova and Levitt 2014; Lupu 2013, 2014; Mainwaring 2018; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Roberts 2007, 2013). Roberts further argues that these problems can be reinforced by the "ebb and flow of populist waves," as demonstrated by resurgence of Peronism under Carlos Menem and again under the Kirchners (2007, 4, 12).

My theory contributes to this literature on recurrent institutional weakness by developing a streamlined account that rests on the self-reinforcing, spasmodic trajectories of charismatic movements. Specifically, as detailed in chapter seven, I argue that the emergence of these movements sets into motion an endogenous cycle of personalistic leadership that establishes—and subsequently perpetuates—many of the above-

mentioned problems associated with institutional weakness. Moreover, because the charismatic core of such movements persists over time rather than succumbing to routinization, my theory suggests that it can undermine democratic development for decades. Thus, unlike studies of institutional development and decay that analyze shorter time periods, my analysis sheds light on long-term patterns in institutional underdevelopment.¹⁰⁵

Importantly, my explanation of institutional weakness extends only to countries where charismatic movements have taken root. Nonetheless, I argue that its contribution to the literature is valid and useful for two reasons. First, even if they are somewhat rare, my research shows that charismatic movements have a powerful and enduring impact on political systems. Second, the growing trend toward the “personalization” of politics, combined with the recent rise in charismatic populist leaders in countries throughout the world, suggest that my theory may become increasingly relevant in diverse contexts (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Garzia 2011; Gervasoni 2018; Kyle and Mounk 2018; McAllister 2007). The next section demonstrates how the central components of my theory generalize to several cases within and beyond Latin America.

¹⁰⁵ Alternative accounts that consider long-term consequences of historical legacies on institutional development include Roberts (2007) on serial populism, Loxton (2018) and Riedl (2014) on authoritarian legacies, and Lange, Mahoney, and Von Hay (2006) ad Hariri (2012) on colonial legacies. However, to the author’s knowledge, the present analysis is among the first to examine the long-range impact of charismatic legacies.

CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT REVIVAL IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Does the theory presented in this dissertation—that charismatic political movements survive by sustaining their personalistic nature—provide valid and useful insights for cases beyond Argentina and Venezuela? A brief examination of three such movements in Peru, Brazil, and Italy suggests that it does. While an in-depth, multi-method investigation of these cases lies beyond the scope of this study, I rely on secondary literature to assess the relevance of different aspects of my theory across the three cases. First, I consider to what extent leaders in these countries fostered charismatic bonds with their followers. Next, I examine whether these leaders used their authority to establish charismatic movements that overpowered existing parties and institutions. Subsequently, I analyze the trajectories of these movements after their founders' departure from the political scene, paying special attention to the state of citizens' attachments and the movements' downstream impact on the party system. To conclude, I gauge the potential for each movement to reemerge in the future under the authority of a charismatic self-starter.

This short analysis illustrates that, despite emerging in diverse contexts, key characteristics of the three movements under examination appear strikingly similar to those of Peronism and Chavismo. In particular, like their Argentine and Venezuelan counterparts, the founders of all three movements established unmediated, emotional attachments with a large group of citizens and used charismatic power to dominate politics, weakening the party system and important political institutions along the way. The three founders also remained remarkably popular even after stepping down from

power. Simultaneously, successors—whether anointed by the founder or supported by opposition forces—failed to establish independent legitimacy and therefore struggled to govern effectively or strengthen parties and other institutions. Finally, in some cases, the widespread and persistent adoration of the followers suggests the potential for revival of the movement when the right conditions emerge. In other cases, movement revival seems unlikely. Nevertheless, I demonstrate that, even in these cases, the charismatic legacies of the movement founder continue to influence politics in important ways that undermine programmatic development.

Peru

As described in chapter six, Alberto Fujimori rose to power in 1990 as a political outsider amidst a severe crisis of hyperinflation and “brutal insurrectionary violence” (Weyland 2006, 14). The urban lower classes and rural poor, who suffered disproportionately from the crisis, saw in Fujimori the potential for miraculous relief. Indeed, unlike Mario Vargas Llosa—Fujimori’s elite competitor who allied with existing parties and proposed a detailed platform for economic recovery—Fujimori rose independently and campaigned on a simple promise that resonated with the suffering masses: “honesty, technology, and work” (Weyland 2002, 102-103). In office, Fujimori followed through on his promise by enacting a series of daring reforms to combat hyperinflation; next, he launched a campaign to defeat Peru’s most violent insurrectionary group, the Shining Path, and soon captured its top leaders (*ibid*, 150-158). To the poor, Fujimori’s straightforward promises and audacious performance seemed

extraordinary—especially compared to the incompetence of past administrations. Thus, although the founder’s emotional appeal was less pronounced than that of Perón or Chávez, he cultivated a powerful narrative that celebrated his reputation for “getting things done,” denounced his adversaries (including Congress and the Supreme Court) as obstructionist, and solidified deep, unmediated attachments with Peru’s underprivileged masses.

By fulfilling the three conditions necessary for establishing charismatic attachments, Fujimori enjoyed tremendous popular support. By 1992, just two years into his presidency, he achieved an approval rating as high as 82 percent (Weyland 2002, 171-172). Even eight years later, when the impressive performance of his policies began to wane and allegations of corruption and wrongdoing surfaced, his approval remained well above 50 percent (Arce and Carrión 2010, 37-38; Wise 2006, 220).¹⁰⁶ Notably, poor voters offered particularly strong and enduring devotion to the leader. In fact, by 2000, his approval among the very poor was 17 points higher than among the upper class (Carrión 2006, 130).

Having established his personalistic authority, Fujimori trampled on the already-fragmented party system and dismantled democratic institutions over the course of his ten-year rule. When he rose to power in 1990, Peruvians had already lost faith in established parties. In this context, Fujimori seemed especially appealing due to his lack

¹⁰⁶ In particular, Wise states that Fujimori’s initially impressive reforms were rather superficial in the long run: they failed to “tackle glaring reform gaps in such areas as income distribution, the restructuring and modernization of small and medium-sized firms, and export promotion” (2010, p.220). Thus, “although the Fujimori coalition was patently successful in launching the first phase of market reforms in Peru, this same coalition emerged as the main bottleneck in the pursuit of second-phase market reforms” (*ibid*, p.224).

of affiliation and the fact that “he hadn’t done anything yet” (Weyland 2002, p.102). As president, the leader capitalized on public sentiments to concentrate power and further undermine the party system. For example, rather than building a new party, he created four transient coalitions to support each of his election campaigns: “Change 90” in 1990, “New Majority” in 1995, “Let’s Go Neighbors” in 1998, and “Peru 2000” in 1999. He subjugated each of these vehicles to his personal will and let them fade away when he no longer needed their services, extinguishing opportunities to develop the coalitions into nascent parties (Carrión 2006, 7; Levitsky 1999, 82).

In addition to accelerating the disintegration of the party system, Fujimori challenged democratic institutions that threatened his power. In April 1992, he orchestrated a military-backed self-coup in which he “closed the Congress, suspended the constitution, and purged the judiciary” (Levitsky 1999, 78). Shortly thereafter, he enacted a new constitution that permitted his overwhelmingly popular reelection in 1995 (*ibid*). Like other charismatic leaders, Fujimori reinstated elections to demonstrate his tremendous popular support, the most essential source of his legitimacy. Yet he also maintained a tight grip on other democratic institutions, enabling him to exercise unquestioned authority for eight more years (Carrión 2006, 6). In doing so, he was able to singlehandedly carry out policies to sustain his supreme power without fear of reprisal.

Under pressure from Congress, Fujimori reluctantly resigned in 2000 and fled to Japan after being elected for a third, unconstitutional term (Levitsky and Zavaleta 2016, 433). Crucially, his poor followers remained loyal to him even after he was forced from power. His disciples’ ongoing support posed significant challenges to subsequent leaders

and hindered efforts to reestablish institutionalized parties. Despite achieving substantial economic growth, Peru's subsequent, anti-Fujimori presidents suffered low approval ratings and struggled to satisfy poor voters, who constituted the charismatic leader's base (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 147; Tanaka 2011, 77). Furthermore, rather than building new parties to support their candidacies, leaders have followed Fujimori's model by acting as "free agents" during elections, further inhibiting party-system development (Levitsky and Zavaleta 2016, 412). For these reasons, while the charismatic leader has been absent from politics for nearly two decades, Fujimorismo has been the country's *only* cohesive political identity (Levitsky and Zavaleta 2016, 432; Tanaka 2011, 80).

As discussed in chapter six, Fujimori's daughter, Keiko, made an impressive attempt to revive Fujimorismo by running for president in 2011 and again in 2016. Although she invested greater resources in constructing a party than her father did, she also relied heavily on her symbolic connection to him and personally embodied his reputation for miraculously resolving the people's most pressing problems (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 152). Keiko failed to win the presidency in either year due primarily to the absence of a severe crisis—which tempered the voters' desire for a charismatic savior to relieve their suffering. Even so, her personalistic image and association with her father reactivated the support of many of his followers (*ibid.*, 155; Tanaka 2011, 81). Thus, in the 2016 election, she won the first round of the elections by a wide margin and lost in the second round by a razor-thin margin of .02 percent (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 150–151). Moreover, Keiko's opponent, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, won the election due to his *anti-Fujimorista* status rather than his own platform or identity. In fact, as an illustration

of his weak mandate, the new president resigned less than two years into his tenure, under threat of impeachment, based on accusations of corruption (Vergara 2018, 65).

In sum, Fujimori’s movement has continued to shape Peruvian politics since the charismatic leader’s disappearance from politics nearly two decades ago. Millions of followers have continued to express profound attachments to his legacy. Meanwhile, political parties have remained extremely fragmented, while non-Fujimorista leaders have struggled to shore up independent legitimacy. Although a new self-starter has yet to restore the movement to power, the resilience of followers’ loyalty to the movement is impressive, as is the movement’s enduring, personalistic influence on the political system. Given this reality, it is not unreasonable to expect that Fujimorismo will remain an important political player in Peru for years to come. It is even possible that, if a crisis were to emerge, more voters could be persuaded to support a self-starter associated with Fujimori’s enduring reputation for “getting things done.” The movement’s personalistic revival therefore remains a significant possibility.

Brazil

In contrast to Perón, Chávez, and Fujimori, Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva rose to the Brazilian presidency in January 2003 as the candidate of a well-established party, the by-then center-left Workers’ Party (PT).¹⁰⁷ Lula’s path to victory was also more gradual: after running for president and losing three times—in 1989, 1994, and 1998—he finally won the October 2002 election in the second round, garnering 61 percent of the vote

¹⁰⁷ Although the PT started out as a radical leftist party in the 1980s, it had moderated substantially by the time Lula rose to power in 2003 (Hunter 2007).

(Hunter 2007, 466). Finally, a longtime PT official, Lula adopted a more moderate, center-left discourse than his populist counterparts (Samuels and Zucco 2014, 131).

Yet while Lula rose with the support of the PT, he also created a powerful cult of personality that dramatically influenced Brazilian politics during and after his presidency while compromising the institutional strength of his party. He began by fulfilling the same three conditions as Perón and Chávez to foster direct, emotional attachments with an enormous group of supporters. First, he explicitly acknowledged the disproportionate suffering of citizens who hail from the neglected North and Northeast regions of the country, who tend to be “poorer, less educated, darker skinned, and less involved in politics” than most (Samuels and Zucco 2014, 130). Second, he substantiated this symbolic recognition with sustained economic growth and redistributive policies that “lifted thirty-million people out of poverty” (de Souza 2011, 76). Finally, he solidified deep attachments with his followers by cultivating a narrative that celebrated his extraordinary performance and his “common touch” with the people while “lambast[ing] his critics” using “hardball rhetoric” (*ibid*, 76, 81). Although Lula’s discourse was significantly less aggressive than that of Perón and especially Chávez (Samuels and Zucco 2014, 133), his willingness to fight for and defend his poor, neglected followers caused them to shower him with fervent adoration.

Thus, while Lula rose to power with the support of a well-institutionalized party, he consolidated the support of his followers using his magnetic personal appeal rather than his party affiliation. Consequently, his approval soared during his presidency; moreover, the number of citizens who identified personally with the leader (*lulistas*)

greatly outnumbered those who identified with his party (*petistas*) (de Souza 2011, 75, 88; Hunter and Power 2019, 69; Samuels and Zucco 2014, 130). These citizens praised the leader, rather than the party or even the State, for improving their lives.

Hunter and Sugiyama's study of the recipients of Lula's largest redistributive program, the *Bolsa Família*, illustrates the personal nature of his ties with his followers. In particular, their analysis shows that recipients perceived their conditional cash transfers as coming from Lula himself, rather than from the State. The authors write, "When we asked respondents to identify who was responsible for the Bolsa's creation, 72 percent reported President Lula...To our participants, Lula represented the federal government" (Hunter and Sugiyama 2014, 836). Crucially, the authors also indicate that the recipients' connections to Lula went far beyond a transactional exchange of electoral support for material benefits. Instead, Lula gave these followers a profound "sense of social inclusion" imbued with "symbolic significance" (ibid, 840). These findings illustrate that, similar to charismatic attachments in Argentina and Venezuela, Lula's followers expressed unmediated, affective connections to the leader that rested on material as well as symbolic foundations.

Upon consolidating deep, emotional bonds with his followers, Lula behaved similarly to other charismatic founders by taking steps to weaken political parties and institutions that threatened his executive authority. For example, rather than strengthening the PT as a cohesive and programmatic party, he crafted a "ten-party coalition" in Congress to support his legislative initiatives (de Souza 2011, 76). He also turned to "outright bribery" to buy support from other parties and discipline members of his own

party, taking care to distance himself from the corruption scandals that surfaced (*ibid*, 80). During his second term, Lula “saw to it that there were no ministers [in his cabinet] imposing enough to overshadow him” (*ibid*, 81). These actions, combined with his “mythical status,” enabled Lula to overpower the PT and cause the party—once emblematic of Brazil’s steady progress—to weaken (Hunter and Power 2019, 78).

Following Lula’s presidency, the resilience of his charismatic movement—and his appointment of weakling successors—destabilized and provoked the eventual decomposition of Brazil’s party system. Specifically, when forced to step down from power in 2010, he personally anointed Dilma Rousseff—an uninspiring yet utterly faithful supporter—to succeed him. Rousseff had no charisma, scant leadership experience and few genuine ties to the PT. Nevertheless, Lula endorsed her as his most trusted servant, hoping to steer politics from behind the scenes (de Souza 2011, 87). To ensure her victory, the founder symbolically associated Rousseff with his personal charisma. In fact, on the campaign trail, he declared her to be “his ‘incarnation’ as a woman and even advised voters to address him as ‘Dilma’ (*ibid*, 85).

Similar to Isabel Perón and Nicolás Maduro, Rousseff won the presidency thanks in large part to her charismatic predecessor’s explicit designation. Consequently, like her fellow anointed successors, she failed to consolidate independent authority and thus struggled to govern effectively. In particular, as the economic boom that Lula had enjoyed began to fade, Rousseff lacked the “political muscle” to reform Lula’s expensive social policies; indeed, doing so would have cut her off from his heroic legacy, her sole source of legitimacy (*ibid*, 86). Thus, Brazil suffered a “brutal recession” during

Rousseff's presidency (Hunter and Power 2019, 71). Furthermore, because she also lacked the charismatic authority to discipline Lula's fractious coalition of parties in Congress, the party system grew even more fragmented (de Souza 2011, 86-87).

Mired in a crisis of legitimacy triggered by economic recession and the eruption of an enormous corruption scandal called *Lava Jato*, the legislature impeached Rousseff in 2016 and paved the way for her equally uninspiring vice president, Michel Temer, to become interim president (Hunter and Power 2019, 73). Temer, a longtime member of the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB), the centrist ally of the PT, failed to improve the situation and suffered extreme public disapproval. In fact, during his tenure, support for the Brazilian government plummeted to six percent—by far the lowest rating of eighteen countries in the region (*ibid*, 74).

Remarkably, despite the disastrous performance of Lula's anointed successor and, subsequently, her vice president, the founder's charismatic legacy remained untarnished in the eyes of his followers. Thus, when Lula ran for president once again in 2018, opinion polls considered him the favored candidate (*ibid*, 76). That his supporters—especially those from the impoverished, rural Northeastern region of the country—continued to worship him after extensive suffering and political upheaval brought about by his handpicked replacement is a testament to the resilience of their personalistic attachments. Leveraging the support of his followers, Lula would likely have won the 2018 election and returned his movement to power. Yet in late August 2018, just two months prior to the elections, he was disqualified from running due to his imprisonment

on charges tied to the *Lava Jato* corruption scandal (*ibid.* 73).¹⁰⁸ In response, the desperate leader acted once again in a truly charismatic fashion: he hastily anointed yet another weakling, Fernando Haddad, to run in his place.

Similar to Rousseff, Haddad campaigned exclusively on his symbolic connection to Lula. He even wore a mask of the founder's face as he campaigned across the Northeast to win favor with Lula's supporters, proclaiming, "Haddad is Lula. Lula is Haddad" (*ibid.*, 78). Despite his abrupt appearance as presidential candidate less than one month prior to the October election, Haddad's association with Lula lifted him to second place in the polls.¹⁰⁹ Ultimately, Haddad fell short of victory in the second round of the election against the far-right populist, Jair Bolsonaro (*ibid.*, 77). Nevertheless, in light of his exceptionally weak profile, the anointed successor's impressive rise to second place illustrates the striking power and persistence of Lula's personalistic influence.

At present, Brazil looms at the precipice of economic and political disaster. Bolsonaro has promised to restore order by combatting corruption and crime through any means necessary. More recently, he has proposed a bill to dramatically reform and privatize the pension system—a policy that has deepened the country's already-extreme polarization (de Bolle 2019). An unapologetic supporter of military rule and authoritarian tactics, it seems unlikely that the new president will respect democratic norms—especially if and when Congress challenges his executive power (*ibid.*, 81). Meanwhile,

¹⁰⁸ Lula began serving out his prison sentence in April 2018, several months before he was officially disqualified from running for president (Hunter and Power 2019, 68).

¹⁰⁹ Haddad was nominated as Lula's replacement on September 11, 2018; the first round of the presidential election took place on October 7, 2018 (Hunter and Power 2019, 68, 77).

Lula remains in prison, serving out a twelve-year sentence on charges related to the *Lava Jato* corruption scandal.

Lula's personalistic rule has played an important role in the unraveling of Brazil's party system. Despite the resulting damage, however, he remains the country's most popular president, as he demonstrated in the 2018 elections before being disqualified. Curiously, some scholars consider his movement to be "an embryonic form of petismo," suggesting that it will gradually routinize by blending into the PT (Samuels and Zucco 2014, 131). In contrast, I argue that Lulismo more closely resembles the spasmodic trajectory of enduring charismatic movements. Thus, while the future of Brazilian politics remains uncertain, the founder's ongoing support—especially among his followers in the impoverished Northeast—combined with his victimized status as a jailed politician suggest that his movement could one day reemerge in its original, charismatic form, either under his own leadership or, eventually, that of a compelling self-starter.

Italy

In Italy, Silvio Berlusconi made his political debut in 1994 amidst a crisis of legitimacy in which citizens felt thoroughly neglected by established parties (Donovan 2015, 12). Unlike existing politicians, who appeared complicit in a system of rules that benefited the political class at the expense of the people, Berlusconi connected on an emotional level with the masses and "gave voice" to their widespread frustration with the "partyocracy" (*ibid*, 12, 19). Drawing on his outsider profile and his status as a wealthy media tycoon, he promised to "transfer" his success to ordinary Italians. Indeed, he

confidently implored, “Trust me, because I can make Italy as rich as I did myself” (Fabbrini 2013, 159). He also vowed to dramatically cut taxes, slash the unemployment rate, enact massive public works projects, and increase pensions for retirees. Lastly, the charismatic leader created a quasi-religious narrative that resonated deeply with his followers. This narrative praised Berlusconi for his “mission and sacrifice” to rescue Italy from the grips of selfish politicians and deliver both material success and happiness to the people (McDonnell 2016, 723).

By recognizing the anger and suffering of citizens who felt excluded by the political establishment, promising wealth and other tangible benefits, and crafting a narrative that depicted him as the savior who would rescue the people from the morally bankrupt political system, Berlusconi founded a powerful movement called *Forza Italia* (FI) and consolidated deep, affective bonds with a large base of followers. Riding this wave of support, he became Prime Minister of Italy three times—in 1994, 2001-2006, and 2008-2011—during which he achieved a high approval rating that peaked at 63 percent and established “full personal control” over politics (Fabbrini 2013, 154-155; Sexton 2009).¹¹⁰

During his premierships, Berlusconi took advantage of his virtual monopoly over national media to project his personal appeal and showcase seemingly extraordinary

¹¹⁰ Due to Italy’s parliamentary system, Berlusconi’s executive power differed from that of other charismatic leaders under examination. In particular, he served as Prime Minister rather than as President, and did so during intermittent periods (1994, 2001-2006, and 2008-2011). Nevertheless, similar to his charismatic counterparts in other countries, he consolidated a massive, loyal following and concentrated tremendous, personalistic authority over the political system during his premierships (Donovan 2015; Fabbrini 2013; McDonnell 2016).

(though superficial) reforms (Fabbrini 2013, 159-160). He also constructed an right-wing coalition in Congress by weaving together “a complex set of personal deals dressed up in populist appeals to xenophobic nationalism and crude consumerism” (Bellany 2006, 351). In doing so, the charismatic leader further destabilized Italy’s practically collapsed party system and reaffirmed his supremacy. He also undermined democratic institutions that threatened his power. For instance, he “used his control on national television to de-legitimize independent bodies such as magistrates or newspapers and other critics” (Fabbrini 2013, 160). He also brazenly engaged in scandalous behavior ranging from tax fraud to sexual exploits, trusting that his charismatic appeal and reverent group of followers would nevertheless protect his image as a national hero (Donadio 2018).

Over the course of his rule, Berlusconi’s dramatic promises of economic reform failed to fully materialize. As the “Euro crisis” loomed and “ungovernable Italian public debt” threatened the stability of other European states, he faced mounting pressure and ultimately resigned in November 2011 (Fabbrini 2013, 167). Crucially for his charismatic legacy, the leader’s retreat from power resulted more from *external* pressure, coming from other European leaders, than from discontent among Italian voters. Moreover, the founder’s departure left a power vacuum that was filled by an uninspiring technocrat, Mario Monti, and “a cabinet composed of university professors, bankers, and high-level public officials” (*ibid*, 168). Building on his image as a victim bullied by elite European powers (especially Germany) and on the poor performance of the government that succeeded him, Berlusconi was therefore able to make an impressive comeback in 2013

(Reinbold 2013). Indeed, just two years after resigning, he courageously revived his FI movement and campaigned to become Prime Minister for a fourth time.

Ultimately, Berlusconi was barred from running due to allegations of tax fraud and thus did not return to power. However, his movement won about 30% of the votes and one-third of the seats in both houses of Congress (Alsop 2013). Moreover, Berlusconi's supporters continued to express profound faith in him. One follower passionately stated, "Now Silvio is back and I believe again" (Reinbold 2013). Another proclaimed, "I have always loved Silvio; he stands for everything that is good in the world" (*ibid*). Based on this outpouring of support, a journalist incredulously stated at the time, "adoration of Berlusconi remains widespread. In the parallel universe occupied by followers, there is no room for doubt about Berlusconi and lines are clearly drawn. Silvio is good and the others are bad" (*ibid*).

Throughout the 2010s, Italy continued to struggle with political fragmentation and economic decline (Donadio 2018). Thus, support for parties—especially the bumbling center-left coalition led by Matteo Renzi and, subsequently, Paolo Gentiloni—remained low. Meanwhile, Berlusconi's followers continued to express deep attachments to their beloved leader, causing him to run for the premiership yet again in 2018. Technically, the charismatic leader's criminal record barred him from office; he also failed to win sufficient votes. Nevertheless, Berlusconi did not disappear from politics. In fact, in 2019, with his ban from office lifted, he ran for and won a seat in the European Parliament ("Silvio Berlusconi: Italy's Perpetual Powerbroker," 2019).

In sum, Berlusconi founded a charismatic movement that dominated politics in Italy for almost two decades. Rather than fading away or routinizing when the leader resigned in 2011, his legacy and movement, backed by the ongoing devotion of millions of followers, continued to shape politics. Consequently, the system remains deeply fragmented and personalistic. In light of the leader's 2018 electoral defeat, some have declared, "the Berlusconi era is over" (Giuffrida 2018). Yet in light of the leader's regular reappearances in politics, as well as the resilience of his followers' emotional support, it seems unlikely that his charismatic legacy will easily fade. In fact, as the economic crisis deepens and Italian leaders fail to address it, it is possible that voters wistful for "recent times under Berlusconi when they felt richer" could facilitate the movement's return to power under Berlusconi or, eventually, another alluring self-starter (Natanson 2018).

Further Extensions of the Theory

Beyond Brazil, Peru, and Italy, several charismatic leaders and their movements have proven remarkably powerful and enduring. For example, in Thailand, although a military junta has governed since 2014, Thaksin Shinawatra's transformative Pheu Thai Party has remained the country's most popular and influential political force. The leader, who founded his party and became Prime Minister in 2001, transformed politics and forged lasting charismatic attachments with Thailand's rural poor. He accomplished this by directly recognizing the grievances of these citizens, attacking the political establishment, and enacting bold policies including a moratorium on farmers' debt and virtually free, universal healthcare (Ibrahim and Power 2019). The military ousted

Shinawatra in 2006; since then, however, he has sustained a massive, fervently loyal following called the “red shirt movement” while living in exile in Dubai (*ibid*).

Interestingly, the leader’s sister and anointed successor, Yingluck Shinawatra, served as Prime Minister from 2011 to 2014. Like other anointed successors, she failed to govern effectively and was forced to step down in 2014. Notably, however, her failures did not erode the faith of Thaksin’s disciples. Instead, in elections held by the military-backed party in March 2019, his movement won more votes than any other opposition party, arousing suspicions that the military interfered and artificially inflated its own vote tally (Tanakasempipat and Thepgumpanat 2019). Thus, while the military remains in power at the time of writing, in May 2019, Shinawatra’s charismatic movement appears to be waiting for the right conditions to surge back to power, perhaps under the authority of its original founder.

Similarly, in post-totalitarian China, Xi Jinping has relied heavily on his symbolic association with Mao Zedong, the charismatic founder of the Communist Party, to sustain the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party and consolidate his popular appeal as the nation’s leader. Mao founded a far more violent, totalitarian, and ideologically coherent party than the other charismatic leaders analyzed in this dissertation. Yet he also used “extraordinary charismatic powers” to cultivate deep attachments with millions of Chinese citizens (Pye 1968, 250). Similar to other charismatic founders, he cultivated a massive, loyal following by recognizing the suffering of rural peasants, launching a transformative program of modernization, and constructing a “romantic vision” of the common man with which the people personally identified (*ibid*). When faced with death

in 1976, Mao also chose Hua Guofeng, a weak sycophant, to succeed him; unsurprisingly, Hua was quickly overpowered by the more ambitious Deng Xiaoping, who enjoyed *de facto* authority over the country until his death in 1997 (Zhiyue 2017, 124).

Since assuming power in 2012, Xi Jinping has sought to establish his own cult of personality in a distinct chapter of the Chinese Communist Party's history. To do so, he has invoked strategies remarkably similar to other ambitious self-starters I have analyzed. In particular, Xi has de-emphasized the legacy of Deng Xiaoping to step out of his predecessor's shadow and establish an independent, powerful image (Myers 2018). Furthermore, Xi has "reinstitute[ed] many of Mao's norms and ambitions with gusto" (Wong and Lam 2017, 31). For instance, the self-starter has enacted bold reforms—such as the "Belt and Road Initiative," an ambitious and expensive project to connect China to European countries by building infrastructure along the historic Silk Road—that make him similarly heroic (China Power Team 2017).

Moreover, Xi has toured the country to connect directly with people and publicly "put himself on a pedestal with Mao Zedong, to rekindle a populist image" (Hernández 2018). He has also used his massive propaganda machine to launch programs of social control, such as "Xi Jinping thought" and "Xi Study Strong Nation," all of which incorporate symbols of Mao such as the "Little Red Book" (Bandurski 2019; Myers 2018). Thus, while China's severe, post-totalitarian setting makes it difficult to parse out popular from coerced support, Xi Jinping's efforts to connect himself with Mao mimic the strategies of other self-starters in charismatic movements who seek to garner their

own personalistic authority. Given that Xi has “consolidated his position as China’s supreme leader and appears to face no significant rival,” it would appear that these strategies have been effective.

In sum, charismatic movements from across the world have persisted for long stretches of time without undergoing routinization. Indeed, although the leaders of these movements have fallen from power or died, their followers have continued to express profound attachments to the leaders’ heroic legacies. Moreover, in most cases, new leaders have attempted to tap into the founders’ legacies and rekindle citizens’ attachments to consolidate their own authority, albeit with varying degrees of success. Although these movements have developed in distinct settings, where variations in regime type (democratic vs. authoritarian), institutional system (presidential vs. parliamentary), and political orientation (from communist to the extreme right) are marked, the strategies and behaviors of both charismatic founders and their successors of the different movements seem remarkably similar. Determining the extent to which citizens’ attachments to these leaders and movements persist and become reactivated through a personalistic mechanism requires further analysis. Nevertheless, the preliminary findings suggest that my theory of personalistic movement revival has broader validity in a geographically and historically diverse set of political movements.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has illustrated that, rather than fading away or routinizing, charismatic movements can persist in personalistic form for years after the death or

disappearance of their founders. Consequently, these movements can pose lasting threats to democracy. Specifically, followers' enduring, emotional attachments to the founder and his mission of salvation generate perverse incentives for subsequent politicians to act in similarly heroic ways. To do so, new leaders seek power in times of crisis, when citizens are most vulnerable. Next, to prove they are worthy of the followers' devotion, the new leaders forgo programmatic objectives to implement more dramatic and impressive, yet irresponsible, policies. To enact such policies, the leaders drain resources and override constraints imposed by political parties and democratic institutions, including the legislative and judiciary branches. In these ways, successors undermine the development of parties and perpetuate problems of institutional weakness.

In addition to undermining party-system development, the bold yet fragile nature of successors' policies impedes the quality of democratic representation. At the outset, such programs deliver substantial benefits to many citizens. Yet the extreme and programmatically untethered nature of the policies, combined with their inevitable exhaustion, ends up harming those same individuals. Most insidiously, these audacious policies unleash severe crises that are difficult to overcome, especially in contexts of institutional weakness. Rather than de-legitimizing the charismatic movement, these crises generate conditions for the movement's regeneration under the leadership of new, yet similarly personalistic, self-starters.

In short, charismatic movements develop fitful but resilient trajectories that perpetually undermine institutional development and democratic representation. The self-reinforcing nature of these movements makes them difficult to overcome. Indeed, my

theory suggests that transforming charismatic movements into routinized parties would require a powerful, exogenous force to intervene in the self-perpetuating cycle of personalistic leadership. Future studies should explore the conditions that make such a path of routinization possible.

This dissertation focuses on Peronism and Chavismo. Yet charismatic movements have dominated political systems across the world, including Lulismo in Brazil, Fujimorismo in Peru, Berlusconi's Forza Italia in Italy, Shinawatra's Pheu Thai Party in Thailand, and Maoism in China. More recently, charismatic leaders including Viktor Orbán (Hungary), the Kaczyński brothers (Poland), Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Turkey), and Donald Trump (United States) have risen to power and established powerful movements. In all cases, these movements have threatened democracy and have shown few signs of routinizing. My study reveals an alternative pathway such movements can take after the disappearance of their founders: revival in personalistic form. Furthermore, my theory provides a generalizable framework with which to evaluate the behaviors and relative success of new leaders who attempt to replace their charismatic predecessors. Above all, my findings indicate that the movements have the potential to survive, generate instability, and undermine the party institutions for years to come.

APPENDIX

CHAPTER 3

A. Survey Sampling and Methodology

Survey	Implementation Dates	Sample Type	Sample Size	Interview Type
Venezuela 2007 (LAPOP)	20 August – 30 September	National, Multi-Stage, Stratified Random Sample	1,510	Face-to-Face

B. Survey Question Wording and Response Options

Variable	Question Wording (Author Translation)	Response Options
Bolivarian Attachment (Dependent Variable)	In this moment, do you sympathize with a political party? (If yes): With which political party do you sympathize?	Open-ended
Perceptions of Charisma (Personalistic IV)	Now we are going to talk about some of the political leaders of Venezuela. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements: “I feel proud to be associated with Hugo Chávez”; “Hugo Chávez goes beyond his own self-interest for the good of the group”; “Hugo Chávez’s actions build my respect for him”; “Hugo Chávez considers the ethical and moral consequences of his decisions”; “Hugo Chávez articulates a compelling vision of the future.”	Agree strongly / agree somewhat / disagree somewhat / disagree strongly
Current Economic Eval, National (Programmatic IV)	How would you describe the country’s economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad, or very bad?	Very good / good / neither good nor bad / bad / very bad

Variable	Question Wording (Author Translation)	Response Options
Retrospective Economic Eval, National (Program. IV)	Would you say that the country's economic situation is better, the same, or worse than it was twelve months ago?	Better / the same / worse
Current Economic Eval, Personal (Programmatic IV)	In general, how would you qualify your personal economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad, or very bad?	Very good / good / neither good nor bad / bad / very bad
Retrospective Economic Eval, Personal (Program. IV)	Would you say that your current economic situation is better, the same, or worse than it was twelve months ago?	Better / the same / worse
Communal Council Participation Grassroots IV	Please tell me if you attend the Community Council meetings at least once a week, once or twice per month, once or twice per year, or never?	At least once a week / once or twice per month / once or twice per year / never

CHAPTER 4

A. Sample Questions from Focus Group Scripts: Argentina

1. Participants' memories of the charismatic founder(s)

What leaders do you recognize today in Argentina? Why are they leaders? Thinking back in history, what great leaders has Argentina had? Why?

Now, I'm going to ask for you to explain to me the legacy of Juan and Eva Perón.

2. Participants' understanding of and relationship to the movement

Now we are going to talk about Peronism. When we think of "Peronism," what are we talking about?

Why do you consider yourself Peronist? (Why / why not?)

Which of the following has more weight for you? (Guided)

- The figure of the leader?
- The ideas that Peronist leaders express or the policies they implement?
- Or your friends and family members who were already Peronist?

Since when do you consider yourself Peronist (or not)? When was it? Did you wake up one day and say, “I think I’ll become Peronist!” (Joke). Tell me.

What role does Peronism have in your life today? That is, what is it good for? Is it good for anything?

3. The Movement and Clientelism

Many people talk about Peronism and Clientelism. Do you know what we’re talking about? Do you think Peronism is strongly related to clientelism? Why/why not? What do you see as “clientelist”?

4. Presence of the Movement Today and New Leaders

Is the legacy of Perón and Eva alive today? Why / why not?

What kind of leader would be a true Peronist? What characteristics would he/she have? What would he/she do?

Thinking of leaders today, who embodies the Peronist legacy? Why? Explain to me examples of why this leader is fulfilling the legacy.

I’m going to tell you something I’ve heard in other focus groups. Some people said that Néstor and Cristina Kirchner tried to replace Peronism with their own movement that was just “Kirchnerist”. Others said that the Kirchners renovated and deepened Peronism. What do you think of those two positions? Which is more accurate, and why?

Other focus groups also told me that Cristina tried to connect herself with Eva Perón. What do you think of this idea? Do you agree? Why / why not? Do you think Cristina’s efforts were successful?

Do you think that Carlos Menem succeeded or failed as a Peronist leader? Why?

Is Daniel Scioli a true Peronist leader? Why / why not?

Is Sergio Massa a Peronist leader? Why / why not?

5. The Future of the Movement

To conclude, in your opinion, does the country need another Peronist leader? Why / why not?

What should a Peronist leader do if he/she were leader today?

What is one wish you have for Peronism in the future?

B. Sample Questions from Focus Group Scripts: Argentina

1. Participants' memories of the charismatic founder(s)

You have a paper and pen in front of you. Could you please write the first word that comes to mind when I say “Hugo Chávez”?

Think back to your earliest memories of Hugo Chávez. How, if at all, did he affect your life?

Did your life change over the years when Chávez was in power? If so, how? Why do you think that was? (What accounts for the change?)

Do you think that Chávez was a truly unique leader? What made him different from other politicians? Was there anything bad about him?

2. Participants' understanding of and relationship to the movement

Do you still consider yourself “Chavista” today? Why do you call yourself Chavista?

If the following are not mentioned, ask directly:

- Because of the memory of Chávez and his leadership?
- The fact that Maduro has continued Chávez’s programs?
- Because you belong to a community with other Chavistas (in general)?
- Because of your participation in the communal councils (more specifically)?

3. The Movement and Clientelism

Do you know people who received something from one of the Missions? Do you think the people loved Chávez because he gave them things or because they truly loved him?

4. Presence of the Movement Today and New Leaders

How has your life changed since Chávez's death? Why do you think that is?

What do you think of Maduro as a leader? Do you identify with him? Why/why not?

When you think of Maduro's attempts to tie himself to Chávez's legacy, have they worked? Why / why not?

5. The Future of the Movement

We are going to go back to the pen and paper for another activity. Please describe for me, what kind of leader would be a true son/daughter of Chávez? Can you write individual characteristics of an ideal leader?

Why did you write those characteristics?

CHAPTER 5

A. Survey Sampling and Methodology

Survey	Implementation Dates	Sample Type	Sample Size	Interview Type
Argentina	Oct 21–Nov 20, 2016	3 Regions, Convenience Sample of Peronist Identifiers	495	Face-to-Face
Venezuela	Feb 1–15, 2017	3 Regions, Random Sample of Chavista Identifiers	504	Face-to-Face

B. Survey Question Wording and Response Options: Argentina

Variable	Question Wording (Author Translation)	Response Options
Age (Filter Question)	How old are you? (MUST be at least 18 to participate)	Open-ended
Peronist Identification (Filter Question)	Which of the following political traditions do you feel closest to? (MUST choose “Peronism” to participate)	Peronism / Radicalism / Socialism / Conservatism / Development / Liberalism / Communism / Other
Political Activism (Filter Question)	Speaking of political activism, would you say you have been an activist in the past, you are currently an activist, or you have never been an activist? (MUST NOT choose “Currently” to participate)	In the past / Currently / Never
Education – Self (Filter Question)	What is the highest level of education you completed? (If over 35, MUST be “Tertiary incomplete” or less. If under 35, MUST be “Tertiary Complete” or less)	No instruction / Primary incomplete /Primary complete / Secondary incompl. / Secondary comp. / Tertiary incompl. / University incompl. / Tertiary comp. / University comp. / Postgraduate
Education – Parent (Filter Question)	What is the highest level of education your father completed? (ONLY ask respondents under 35 who answered “Tertiary Complete” or “University incomplete”; MUST choose “Tertiary incomplete” or less to participate)	Same options as listed above

Variable	Question Wording (Author Translation)	Response Options
Positive Feelings (DV – Movement Attachment)	How proud / enthusiastic / hopeful does Peronism make you feel?	Very / Somewhat / A little / Not at all
Negative Feelings (DV – Movement Attachment)	How angry / disappointed / afraid does Peronism make you feel?	Very / Somewhat / A little / Not at all
Charisma (DV – Candidate Support)	Now we are going to talk about some of your first impressions about Diego Canedo. I'm going to ask you to tell me how much you agree with the following statements: "Diego Canedo acts in the interest of everyone more than in his own self-interest"; "Diego Canedo expresses a compelling vision of the future"; "Diego Canedo is capable of solving Argentina's problems."	Agree strongly / agree somewhat / disagree somewhat / disagree strongly
Likability (DV – Candidate Support)	On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means NOT AT ALL and 10 means A LOT, based on what you saw and heard, how much do you like Diego Canedo?	11-point scale shown; respondents choose a number
Trust (DV – Candidate Support)	How much do you trust Diego Canedo?	Very / Somewhat / A little / Not at all
Vote Intent (DV – Candidate Support)	If presidential elections were held tomorrow, how likely would you be to vote for Canedo on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means NOT AT ALL likely and 10 means VERY likely?	11-point scale shown; respondents choose a number

C. Survey Question Wording and Response Options: Venezuela

Variable	Question Wording (Author Translation)	Response Options
Age (Filter Question)	How old are you? (MUST be at least 18 to participate)	Open-ended
Chavista Identification (Filter Question)	Which of the following political groups do you feel closest to? (MUST choose “Chavismo that supports Maduro” OR “Chavismo that does not support Maduro” to participate)	Chavismo that supports Maduro / Chavismo that doesn’t support Maduro / Opposition (MUD) / Opposition (non-MUD) / Other / None ¹¹¹
Political Activism (Filter Question)	Speaking of political activism, would you say you have been an activist in the past, you are currently an activist, or you have never been an activist? (MUST NOT choose “Currently” to participate)	In the past / Currently / Never
Education – Self (Filter Question)	What is the highest level of education you completed? (If over 35, MUST be “Tertiary incomplete” or less. If under 35, MUST be “Tertiary Complete” or less)	No instruction / Primary incomplete /Primary complete / Secondary incomplete / Secondary complete / Technical incomplete / Technical complete / University incomplete / University complete / Postgraduate

¹¹¹ MUD is the Roundtable of Democratic Union, the largest opposition coalition.

Variable	Question Wording (Author Translation)	Response Options
Positive Feelings (DV – Movement Attachment)	How proud / enthusiastic / hopeful does Chavismo make you feel?	Very / Somewhat / A little / Not at all
Negative Feelings (DV – Movement Attachment)	How angry / disappointed / afraid does Chavismo make you feel?	Very / Somewhat / A little / Not at all
Charisma (DV – Candidate Support)	Now we are going to talk about some of your first impressions about José González. I'm going to ask you to tell me how much you agree with the following statements: "José González acts in the interest of everyone more than in his own self-interest"; "José González expresses a compelling vision of the future"; "José González is capable of solving Venezuela's problems."	Agree strongly / agree somewhat / disagree somewhat / disagree strongly
Likability (DV – Candidate Support)	On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means NOT AT ALL and 10 means A LOT, based on what you saw and heard, how much do you like José González?	11-point scale shown; respondents choose a number
Trust (DV – Candidate Support)	How much do you trust José González?	Very / Somewhat / A little / Not at all
Vote Intent (DV – Candidate Support)	Thinking of elections with this candidate in mind, would you be interested in voting? [For those who answer "yes"]: On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is NOT AT ALL and 10 is VERY, how likely would you be to vote for this candidate?	Yes / No; 11-point scale shown; respondents choose a number ¹¹²

¹¹² Vote intent was phrased in the form of a 2-part question in Venezuela per the recommendation of the contracted public opinion firm; the combined responses are equivalent to asking how likely respondents would be to vote for the hypothetical candidate in future presidential elections (as phrased for the Argentine version of the survey).

D. Number of Individuals Randomly Assigned to Treatment Conditions

ARGENTINA	
<i>Fulfilled / Symbol</i> N=119	<i>Fulfilled / No Symbol</i> N=134
<i>Unfulfilled / Symbol</i> N=126	<i>Unfulfilled / No Symbol</i> N=117
VENEZUELA	
<i>Fulfilled / Symbol</i> N=126	<i>Fulfilled / No Symbol</i> N=126
<i>Unfulfilled / Symbol</i> N=126	<i>Unfulfilled / No Symbol</i> N=126

E. Balance Checks to Assess Randomization

ARGENTINA						
Proportion	<i>Fulfilled / Symbol</i>	<i>Fulfilled / No Symbol</i>	<i>Unfulfilled / Symbol</i>	<i>Unfulfilled / No Symbol</i>	χ^2	$p > \chi^2$
Female	0.57	0.43	0.42	0.5	7.64	.054
Mean					F	$p > F$
Age	40.98	37.31	40.28	40.79	1.56	.199
Education	4.50	4.64	4.48	4.58	.45	.716
VENEZUELA						
Percent	<i>Fulfilled / Symbol</i>	<i>Fulfilled / No Symbol</i>	<i>Unfulfilled / Symbol</i>	<i>Unfulfilled / No Symbol</i>	χ^2	$p > \chi^2$
Female	0.51	0.5	0.5	0.52	.09	.99
Mean					F	$p > F$
Age	38.02	37.14	37.99	37.67	.12	.949
Education	5.28	5.00	4.84	5.06	1.89	.130

F. Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Characteristics

ARGENTINA			
Variable	My Sample (2016)	APES/CSES (2015)	LAPOP (2014)
Age	39.80	43.00	42.10
Education (self)*	4.55	4.20	5.04
Female	0.48	0.53	0.52
<i>N</i> =495			
VENEZUELA			
Variable	My Sample (2017)	Latinobarometer (2015)	LAPOP (2014)
Age	37.70	40.77	40.64
Education (self)*	5.05	5.33	5.27
Female	0.51	0.52	0.50
<i>N</i> =495			

*Note: Education was not measured on the same scale in the LAPOP and Latinobarometer surveys as in the author's survey; to determine comparable figures, the author made approximate transformations from number of years of education to cut-off points for each education level with guidance from local experts.

G. Full ANOVA Results

ARGENTINA (N=496)						
	Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3	Condition 4	F	p > F
Movement Identification	6.78	6.37	6.63	6.02	2.25	.082
Positive Feelings	7.07	6.64	6.92	6.15	2.86	.036
Negative Feelings	3.98	4.88	4.94	4.85	4.13	.007
Charisma	6.51	5.97	4.45	4.14	26.26	.000
Vote Intent	6.10	5.56	4.60	4.37	8.23	.000
VENEZUELA (N=504)						
	Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3	Condition 4	F	p > F
Movement Identification	8.56	8.56	8.55	8.48	.04	.987
Positive Feelings	8.96	8.71	8.92	8.88	.48	.694
Negative Feelings	1.38	1.7	1.6	1.59	.46	.711
Charisma	7.42	6.26	5.82	4.68	16.58	.000
Vote Intent	7.78	5.63	6.71	5.66	7.89	.000

H. Pair-Wise T-Tests

ARGENTINA								
		Cond.1 – Cond.2	Cond.1 – Cond.3	Cond.1 – Cond.4	Cond.2 – Cond.3	Cond.2 – Cond.4	Cond.3 – Cond.4	
Movement Identification		.41	.15	.92	-.26	.35	.61	
		P-Value	.081	.303	.013	.823	.136	.062
Positive Feelings		Difference in Means	.43	.15	.92	-.28	.49	.77
		P-Value	.090	.325	.004	.808	.075	.026
Negative Feelings		Difference-in-Means	-.90	-.96	-.87	-.06	.03	.09
		P-Value	.001	.001	.002	.420	.532	.786
Charisma		Difference-in-Means	.54	2.06	2.37	.15	.19	.04
		P-Value	.037	.000	.000	.000	.000	.338
Vote Intent		Difference-in-Means	.54	1.5	1.73	.96	1.19	.30
		P-Value	.076	.000	.000	.006	.001	.594
VENEZUELA								
		Cond.1 – Cond.2	Cond.1 – Cond.3	Cond.1 – Cond.4	Cond.2 – Cond.3	Cond.2 – Cond.4	Cond.3 – Cond.4	
Movement Identification		0	.01	.08	.01	.08	.07	
		P-Value	.488	.489	.388	.475	.368	.801
Positive Feelings		Difference in Means	.22	.03	.07	-.19	-.15	.42
		P-Value	.013	.433	.361	.171	.238	.845
Negative Feelings		Difference-in-Means	-.32	-.22	-.21	.1	.11	.01
		P-Value	.116	.209	.234	.640	.653	.961
Charisma		Difference-in-Means	1.16	1.61	2.74	.44	1.58	1.14
		P-Value	.000	.000	.000	.136	.000	.010
Vote Intent		Difference-in-Means	2.15	1.07	2.33	-1.08	-.03	1.05
		P-Value	.000	.012	.000	.019	.481	.054

* Note: Condition 1 = Fulfilled / Symbol; Condition 2 = Fulfilled / No Symbol; Condition 3 = Unfulfilled / Symbol; Condition 4 = Unfulfilled / No Symbol. For more information on the treatment conditions please see Table 3 in the main text.

I. Causal Mediation Analysis

Following Imai et al. (2010, 311-312), I use causal mediation analysis to separate the *direct* effect of the treatment (symbolic ties) on the outcome of interest (candidate

support) from the *indirect* effect of the treatment through the causal mediator (movement identification). The average *direct* effect for the sample is calculated as follows:

$$\bar{\zeta}(t) \equiv \mathbb{E}(Y_i(1, M_i(t)) - (Y_i(0, M_i(t))) \text{ for } t = 0, 1$$

where $\bar{\zeta}(t)$ is the average direct effect under assignment to “symbolic ties” ($t = 1$) or “no symbolic ties” ($t = 0$); $Y_i(1, M_i(t))$ is subject i ’s level of support for the candidate given assignment to “symbolic ties” and the value of movement identification that would be observed under treatment t , and $Y_i(0, M_i(t))$ is subject i ’s level of support for the candidate given assignment to “no symbolic ties” and the value of movement identification that would be observed under treatment t .

The average causal mediation (*indirect*) effect is calculated as follows:

$$\bar{\delta}(t) \equiv \mathbb{E}(Y_i(t, M_i(1)) - (Y_i(t, M_i(0))) \text{ for } t = 0, 1$$

where $\bar{\delta}_i(t)$ is the average causal mediation effect under assignment to “symbolic ties” ($t = 1$) or “no symbolic ties” ($t = 0$); $Y_i(t, M_i(1))$ is subject i ’s level of support for the candidate given assignment to treatment t and the value of movement identification that would be observed under assignment to “symbolic ties,” and $Y_i(t, M_i(0))$ is subject i ’s level of support for the candidate given assignment to treatment t and the value of movement attachment that would be observed under assignment to “no symbolic ties.”

The average total effect ($\bar{\tau}(t)$) of symbolic ties on candidate support can thus be summarized with the following equation, incorporating the average direct effect and the average causal mediation effect:

$$\bar{\tau}(t) \equiv \mathbb{E}(Y_i(1, M_i(1)) - (Y_i(0, M_i(0))) = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{t=0}^1 \{\bar{\delta}(t) + \bar{\zeta}(t)\}.$$

To estimate the average causal mediation, direct, and total effects, I use the “medeff” command in Stata, following four steps as outlined in Hicks and Tingley (2011, 609):

- Step 1: Fit models of the observed outcome and mediator variables
- Step 2: Simulate model parameters from their sampling distribution
- Step 3: Repeat the following three steps for each draw of model parameters:
 - 1. Simulate the potential values of the mediator
 - 2. Simulate the potential outcomes given the simulated values of the mediator
 - 3. Compute quantitates of interests (average causal mediation effect, average direct effect, average total effect)
- Step 4: Compute summary statistics such as point estimates (average) and confidence intervals.

The table on the following page displays the full output for each causal mediation analysis in both countries, starting with the model fit for the mediator variable, movement identification; proceeding to the model fit for the outcome variable, candidate support (measured first as charisma and second as vote intent); and ending with the estimated average effects. The full analysis is available (in the form of a Stata .do file) from the author upon request.

Table: Full Results of Causal Mediation Analysis

	ARGENTINA		VENEZUELA	
A. Model for Mediator Variable (Movement ID)				
	Charisma (SE)	Vote Intent (SE)	Charisma (SE)	Vote Intent (SE)
Symbolic Ties	.498 (.218)	.481 (.218)	-.001 (.206)	.151 (.202)
Intercept	6.20 (.154)	6.22 (.154)	8.44 (.143)	8.40 (.145)
N, R ²	495, .0104	494, .001	457, .000	461, .001
B. Model for Outcome Variable (Charisma; Vote Intent)				
	Charisma (SE)	Vote Intent (SE)	Charisma (SE)	Vote Intent (SE)
Symbolic Ties	.205 (.233)	.122 (.274)	1.16 (.288)	.152 (.352)
Movement ID	.270 (.048)	.407 (.056)	.063 (.066)	.445 (.081)
Intercept	3.43 (.338)	2.47 (.399)	4.92 (.590)	1.91 (.726)
N, R ²	495, .065	494, .099	457, .036	461, .099
C. Summary Statistics				
Average Effects	Charisma (95% CI)	Vote Intent (95% CI)	Charisma (95% CI)	Vote Intent (95% CI)
Causal Mediation	.138 (.014, .291)	.201 (.016, .413)	.000 (-.046, .048)	.071 (-.122, .275)
Direct	.206 (-.257, .662)	.123 (-.422, .660)	1.16 (.582, 1.72)	1.52 (.817, 2.21)
Total	.344 (-.128, .825)	.323 (-.244, .900)	1.16 (.592, 1.73)	1.59 (.870, 2.33)
Proportion Mediated	.361 (-2.05, 3.04)	.490 (-6.51, 9.45)	.000 (.000, .000)	.045 (.030, .081)

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