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(Contributed by IBPP Research Associate Sharon Reimel de Carrasquel through Global Network Initiative Staffer Melanie Antonich). My particular field of research is Perceived Quality of Life in different environments, work, community, etc. In January I hope to begin a new study having to do with diabetic patients, personal control, and quality of life. My colleagues and I recently published an article on our findings during an exploratory phase on social axioms (social beliefs). This project is part of an international study being undertaken in 11 countries around the world and is headed by Dr. Kwok Leung, head of the Department of Psychology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Probably of significant interest at the moment for IBPP readers are the results of the Venezuelan presidential elections held on December 6th. As you probably already know, the ex-golpista (from golpe--sudden military insurrection) won with a populist platform. Needless to say his campaign was geared towards the lower socioeconomic levels of the population and put forth any number of promises for housing, health services, and education innovations that would provide more and better education for the poorer sectors. Naturally, in a situation where the economy is in ruins, it will be virtually impossible for him to fulfill these promises. While the other candidate had considerable experience as the former governor of the state of Carabobo, he lacked the charisma and popular appeal of Chavez.

What was perhaps a positive aspect of these elections was the fact that the vote indicated an absolute rejection of the traditional political machinery. The election reflected the people's dissatisfaction and displeasure with the corruption that has been the characteristic of forty years of "democracy" in Venezuela--forty years that have left a balance of almost 80% of the population in dire poverty, a national health service in ruins, and an educational system that is on the verge of collapse and an increase in crime (particularly theft). Obviously, voters were fed up.

On the more positive side, in spite of the rumors that a "golpe" would be imminent if Chavez won, the elections were totally calm and without any type of disturbance. In fact, for the first time in the 36 years that I have been in Venezuela, there was absolutely no claim that the elections were "fixed". Personally, I feel that, if trouble is to occur, it will take place in six months to a year, if Chavez is not able to keep the people happy-- i.e., keep his promises. (Keywords: Chavez, Reimel de Carrasquel, Venezuela.)