

TECHNOLOGICAL ELITES AND POLITICAL PARTIES: The Venezuelan Professional Community

John D. Martz, The Pennsylvania State University

David J. Myers, The Pennsylvania State University

As Latin America has moved through the second half of the twentieth century, both the public and private sectors have required increasing levels of technological skills and specialized expertise. In the public sector, this necessity has occasioned the rise to prominence of a sector known in Latin America as *profesionales y técnicos*. This emergent elite has assumed a significant role in shaping and implementing public policy because its members command skills critical to the functioning of modernizing technological society. As a result, participation by professionals and *técnicos* has become central to bureaucratic efficiency, economic development, and the manipulation of symbols that reinforce political legitimacy. Yet the political role of professionals and *técnicos* has been little explored, and direct relationships between professional elites and national parties, often central to the democratization of developing nations, have received minimal attention.¹

A search of the literature has confirmed our contention that studies of this particular group in Latin America have been conspicuously lacking (the literature on comparative public administration is strongly ethnocentric in concentrating on Western industrialized countries). A number of countries in the Western Hemisphere are bereft of any relevant or rigorous studies, while in others, we found only selective treatment of a few such groups. Furthermore, the existing studies generally offer little more than sketchy descriptive information, accompanied by spotty judicial analysis and incomplete documentation on formal structures and organization. In sum, our bibliographic review of studies of Latin Ameri-

1. It should be understood at the outset that although the customary Venezuelan usage is "*profesionales y técnicos*," those we are studying might best be regarded as constituting the nation's professional elite. Furthermore, we draw an analytic distinction between professionals and bureaucrats because we are focusing on professionals as an elite group, especially as it relates to political parties. Consequently, the somewhat embryonic literature on the Venezuelan bureaucracy is only marginally relevant to our concerns. Some of the most important studies of Venezuelan bureaucrats in English are Silva Michelena (1967) and Stewart (1977).

can professionals revealed a dearth of findings that could facilitate comparative study.² We therefore undertook an investigation in Venezuela designed to generate fresh empirical data. Our quantitative and qualitative findings provide the bases for this article and also for analysis that may well suggest parallel inquiry elsewhere in Latin America. This undertaking goes beyond description to address questions directly relevant to the political behavior of professionals and técnicos in terms of their linkages to political parties.

Recent scholarship, stimulated by the democratizing impetus in Latin America, has concluded that parties are crucial political actors. As Martz summarized this consensus in the preface to his recent comparison of the Colombian and Venezuelan systems, renewed inquiry into political parties is a prerequisite for understanding Latin American democracy (see Martz 1992, 88). A reexamination of writings on Venezuelan parties and elites turned up few sources that directly address their relationship, especially regarding the professional sector.³ It is therefore appropriate to reiterate the two most fundamental questions: what is the political role of professionals and técnicos, and what are the relationships between professionals and political parties? Pursuit of these issues entails three factors: understanding the professionals as a potentially pro-democratic force; identifying the mechanisms linking the professionals to the parties; and comprehending the interplay of power and influence between the two groups.

Given the previous lack of interest in professionals and técnicos, it

2. In the interests of conciseness, we have foregone textual discussion of these works. By way of bibliographic documentation, virtually the only general overview is Cleaves (1987). Nor are there many studies on individual occupational groups. For the medical profession, see Furlong Cardiff (1947), Rakowski and Kastner (1985), and Gall (1976). Isolated chapters may also be found in occasional compendia, such as the section on the lawyers who wrote the 1961 Venezuelan constitution included in Goldwin and Kauffman (1983). On lawyers, see also Trubek (1971), Lowenstein (1970), and Lynch (1981). Urban planners have generally been examined more in sociological terms than in political terms. Examples are Acedo Mendoza (1974), Carvajal (1977), Gómez Navas (1983), Mattos Pereira (1969), and Yujnovsky (1971). The literature on professionals outside Latin America is also limited. A representative sampling would include Cheiniss and Kane (1987), Kostof (1977), Lang (1986), Scott (1989), and Wilding (1982).

3. The first and most obvious source is Bonilla (1970). This study was the second volume in the collaborative project entitled *The Politics of Change in Venezuela*, coedited by Bonilla and José A. Silva Michelena. It reflected the vision of Jorge Ahumada and drew on the resources of the Centro de Estudios del Desarrollo (CENDES) at the Universidad Central de Venezuela, which Ahumada directed, and the Center for International Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The other volumes are Bonilla and Silva Michelena (1971) and Silva Michelena (1971). A more scientific if less-heralded contribution offering an exceptional mixture of survey data and rich historical expertise is Silvert and Reissman (1976, esp. 170–72). The goals of the writings oriented directly toward the parties differ from those to be examined in the present study. A few of these earlier studies are Martz (1966), Myers (1986), and Gil Yepes (1978). Gil Yepes examines bureaucracy and problems of politicization but pays little attention to connections between the parties and the bureaucracy. Nor does this work directly discuss professionals and their occupational organizations.

is important to specify the avenues of inquiry being followed here, which may well be heuristically suggestive to researchers focusing on other Latin American countries. Four general areas will be probed, the first being the constellation of professional organizations, taking into account the creation and development of specific professional organizations over time. The second section will deal with party mechanisms and political linkages with professionals, including channels of communication between parties and professionals. Third is the critical question of the degree to which party leadership may or may not exert influence over the professionals. Considered last will be the area of the relationship between professionalism and partisanship, including the attitudes of professionals toward parties and the democratic system.

THE HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL SETTING

Before presenting and analyzing our data, it is important to appreciate the recent and current Venezuelan milieu within a historical framework. We are focusing here on post-1958 political events following a nationwide uprising that ended a decade of military dictatorship. This outcome led in turn to creation of a fledgling democracy based on the activism of an emergent party system.⁴ The Pacto de Punto Fijo established a consensus among Venezuelan political elites that served the nation with particular effectiveness as a competitive, party-based democracy put down its roots.⁵ The process of systemic consolidation was powerfully stimulated by the 1973 elections, in which a fragmented multiparty system gave way to the biparty hegemonic domination of Acción Democrática (AD) and COPEI. Since that time, the two parties have consistently polled more than 80 percent of the presidential vote (and more than 95 percent in 1988), while their congressional slates have captured three-fourths of the ballots.

The Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), a nationalistic offshoot of the Venezuelan Communist party, established itself subsequently as third in importance (see Ellner 1988). Although it usually draws less than 10 percent of the vote, MAS has proved to be durable in capitalizing on the discontent associated with the decline in living standards since 1983. MAS's penetration has been less extensive than that of the AD and COPEI,

4. Venezuela has not been one of the Latin American countries studied heavily. The most ambitious attempt to gather hard empirical data and link them to analyses of the polity, nearly two decades ago, was that by Martz and Enrique Baloyra. Among the project's publications, see particularly Baloyra and Martz (1979). For general discussions of Venezuela's evolution during the democratic era, useful sources are Martz and Myers (1986) and the detailed treatment of modern parties made by contributors to Penniman (1980).

5. Detailed treatment of these two parties, their origins and development may be found in Martz (1966) and Herman (1980). The best extended party study to appear in many years is Coppedge (1993).

however. The Venezuelan party system, arguably the most powerful and influential in the hemisphere,⁶ became inextricably linked to the condition of democracy and the nation's institutions.⁷ Professionals have played a contributing role from the outset. Encouraged by party leaders to assist in creating political norms conducive to democratic legitimacy, they helped implement Venezuela's rapid economic development: first during the formative years of democracy and then in the 1970s, during the petroleum bonanza. When Venezuela was subsequently forced toward a period of austerity and scarcity following the calamitous devaluation of the bolívar on "Black Friday" in February 1983, Venezuelan professionals necessarily got involved in forging new economic decisions that are still intensifying pressures on the political system.

Thus Venezuela's thirty-year democratic trajectory from 1958 through 1987 makes up the political environment in which the study of professionals and the parties was undertaken.⁸ Although this topic constitutes virgin territory, students of the Venezuelan political system have long stressed the formalities of Punto Fijo and the dynamics of the prevailing consensus among party leaders. Thoughtful theories about elite pacting as a basis for democratization have been articulated, although usually at the highest level of generality and with limited empirical data. Our concerns here are more modest and more specific: to what degree and in what fashion did professionals serve as vehicles for implementing the consensual character of the Punto Fijo pact prior to the political decay that set in during the second administration of Carlos Andrés Pérez? Did the organizations representing professionals and técnicos—the many diverse *colegios*—adopt and promote the values of conflict limitation as implied by long-standing agreement among the elites? We hypothesize that professionals have long provided important support for systemic accord but have done so primarily through organizational links with the political parties. Furthermore, this support has occurred within the context of the

6. We have both reflected frequently on the state of Venezuelan political parties. For a representative sampling see Martz (1982, 1984, 1988) and Myers (1986, 1990).

7. The party system has also been at the center of public disenchantment, outbursts of popular violence, and two attempted military *golpes* against the government that took office in January 1989. An excellent narrative covering all but the second coup attempt is Sonntag and Maingon (1992). These events, however, postdate our 1987 data and raise research questions that are not a part of the present study. The failures of the party system and analyses of apparent democratic decay have been the subject of several recent papers, including Coppedge (n.d.), Kornblith (n.d.), Martz (n.d.), and Myers (n.d.). All these essays are scheduled to appear in a pair of collective works to be published in 1993. For a useful overview summarizing the experience of the past three decades, see the forthcoming work by Kornblith and Levine.

8. As will be explained, our focus-group interviews and poll data come from 1987, prior to the evident political decay that set in during the second administration of Carlos Andrés Pérez. But our findings would be significant even if the February 1989 riots and events had led to his overthrow. In other words, this research has not been rendered obsolete by current developments, nor is there any basis for arguing that the findings have been bypassed by events.

collective subordination of professionals and *colegios* to the power and influence of the parties.

To investigate the validity of these contentions and explore the questions raised, we devised a project incorporating two interrelated research methodologies. First, during July of 1987, we conducted focus-group interviews in Caracas and Ciudad Guayana with 54 professionals. These group interviews were designed to elicit basic knowledge about the post-1958 experiences and concerns of the professional community. We also gathered printed materials. These two sources were used to construct a questionnaire, which was then administered during September 1987 to a representative sample of 571 professionals and *técnicos*.⁹ Men accounted for 59 percent of the sample, women the remaining 41 percent. In terms of age, almost half of the participants (49 percent) were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four, 34 percent were between thirty-five and forty-five, and the remaining 17 percent were forty-five or older. By region, 28 percent of the respondents worked in the capital, 14 percent in Zulia, 25 percent in the Center-West region (including the llanos and the Andes), 15 percent in the Center, and 18 percent in the Northeast or Guyana.

Because half of those who filled out the questionnaire were thirty-four years old or younger, their professional experience amounted to ten years or less. Women were represented in significant numbers, although still a minority; and more than one-fourth of those interviewed were working in Caracas, the capital city. About half of those responding have spent their entire careers in either the public or private sector (25 percent completely in the public sector and 23 percent in the private sector); the other half have moved back and forth between the two worlds. Viewed from another angle, three out of four of the professionals have at one or another time in their careers been employed directly by national, state, or municipal bureaucracies. Considering that state corporations handle a significant proportion of the contracts on which private-sector professionals and *técnicos* depend, the influence of the government and political parties is even greater than these percentages suggest.

9. We set up twelve focus groups, eight of them in Caracas. Similar themes were touched on in all twelve encounters, such as the evolution and current political role of professional *colegios* in the political parties. At the same time, discussion was predominantly open-ended, with the authors probing relationships and behavior described by focus-group participants. The sample used in our follow-up survey was that of the Venezuelan polling firm COMO (Consultores de Mercadeo y Opinión C.A.), drawn from the files of the Venezuelan Oficina de Censos y Población: *Población con título en Educación Superior según especialidad: estimación 1986*. The census recorded 165,456 individuals in eight professions that we judged to be the most important for Venezuela. From this list, COMO developed a random sample of 1100 names of professionals. They were contacted and interviewed by COMO employees over seven days during September 1987. The rate of refusal was roughly four in ten (highest for lawyers at 50 percent and lowest for engineers at 34 percent). Following a refusal, substitute names were drawn at random from COMO's list of remaining names for another individual in the same profession as the one who rejected the interview.

Further analysis of the sectoral breakdown for employment shows that the self-reporting of professionals reveals no significant difference between career-long activities and those at the time of interviewing. When interviewed, 44 percent were working in the public sector, 34 percent in the private, and 4 outside the professions; 13 reported being self-employed and 5 percent unemployed. The small proportion of this last category (far lower than the overall unemployment rate of 16 percent) confirms the relatively privileged status of Venezuelan professionals and técnicos. Additional survey data relate to their membership in professional organizations, the *colegios*. The structure and activities of these organizations will be detailed later, but it is helpful to note at the outset that the more powerful ones serve as economic and political shields for their members. The broad biographical profile of our respondents showed that 74 percent belonged to their corresponding professional *colegio*. Nearly one in five of those registered in their *colegio* said that they had held a position of leadership at some point. Thus some 15 percent of all professionals have been involved in running one of the *colegios*.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

The Colegios

In Latin America, the professional *colegios* trace their origins to the medieval guilds of Spain and Portugal. Little is known about the *colegios* in Venezuela until the modernizing leadership of General Antonio Guzmán Blanco (1870–1888). At that time, the only three *colegios* existing were those for doctors, lawyers, and engineers. This situation continued with minor changes until the revolution on 23 January 1958. In the new democratic milieu, a proliferating umbrella of *colegios* began to provide new and increasingly important outlets. *Colegios* were founded to serve two primary professional functions. First, the *colegios* were expected to set and safeguard standards within the professions around which they were organized. This authority derives from congressional legislation specifying the standards of each by adopting the “Ley de Ejercicio Profesional,” without which a profession has no legal status in Venezuela. The second major function is to develop and promote training for improving the quality of professional performance, a service offered to members by the more prominent *colegios*.

Colegios have increased in size and number in Venezuela as more professionals have become active in political parties, particularly during the *petrobonanza* (1973–1983), when state corporations grew exponentially.¹⁰ By 1987 *colegios* ran the gamut from the broad-gauged to the

10. As the *colegios* flourished, the more affluent ones developed services that went well

narrowly specialized.¹¹ Among the more politically influential are those for medical professionals, lawyers, engineers, and journalists. Sketches of these four colegios will compare their activities along two dimensions: their degree of autonomy from the political parties and their level of participation in policy-making.¹²

Among the wealthiest and most powerful is the Colegio de Médicos, which is tied closely to the Venezuelan political parties. Members of the colegio's Junta Directiva depend heavily on party support. Internal elections represent key tests of partisan strength, and the composition of the slates (*planchas*) is customarily determined in concert with party officials, especially those serving in the national secretariats. In practice, members of the Junta Directiva enjoy only limited organizational independence from party leadership, a situation that constrains their autonomy. Yet professional life does not revolve around the colegio, and there is a role for doctors to play in policy-making and implementation. Under a common arrangement, doctors work half a day at the state's social security hospitals and then practice in their own private clinics. Moreover, medical personnel hold official positions. For example, sanitation specialists take pride in their central role in modernizing the Venezuelan health system, and the minister of Sanidad y Asistencia Social is traditionally selected from their ranks.¹³

Professional conditions for lawyers differ considerably, resulting in little sense of professional collegiality. The popular impression is that Venezuelan lawyers are *sifrinos*, individuals with expensive and trendy tastes in dress, food, and lifestyle. Competition—not collaboration—is the lawyer's hallmark. Emphasis on specialization and the drive for self-advancement make Venezuela's legal profession solitary and individualistic in nature. This individualism is reflected in the negative view of the Colegio de Abogados expressed by many lawyers. Because members tend to operate on their own, this colegio generally draws no more than 10 percent of the membership in its elections, with the competition being straight tests of party strength among *planchas* representing the AD,

beyond basic health and insurance, including a range of social events and cooperative shops and stores with goods available at below-market prices. In most cases, social welfare institutes were established, known as Institutos de Previsión Social (INPRES). Because Venezuelan professionals are not covered by the national social-security system, the INPRES for each colegio serves as the major source for group life insurance, medical coverage, and disability benefits for members.

11. At the time of this research, for example, thirty-eight organizations were represented in AD's Secretaría Nacional de Profesionales y Técnicos, including such minor groupings as tourism técnicos, private investigators, and topographers. For further details, see AD (1988).

12. This sense emerged following a comparative review of elite interviews in July 1987 with the juntas directivas of the colegios for doctors, engineers, journalists, and lawyers in Caracas.

13. Prominent figures from other branches of the profession who were identified with AD also benefited from official approval during the recent administration of fellow doctor Jaime Lusinchi (1984–1989).

COPEI, and MAS. Although lawyers' participation in politics is substantial, it is based on personal affiliation rather than on the colegio. The Venezuelan judicial system has been most directly linked to the parties, specifically to Acción Democrática, which rebuilt the judiciary after the 1958 overthrow of military dictatorship. Even today judges not affiliated with the AD may be hampered in advancing through the court system, a probability underlying the level of cynicism expressed by focus-group participants about the legal profession and its colegio.

Contrasting sharply is the Colegio de Ingenieros, whose historical trajectory dates from its founding in 1861. In the wake of the decade of abuse and interference under the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez, this colegio was restructured in November 1958 by Decree 444, which is still in effect. The Colegio de Ingenieros enjoyed great independence from the political parties in the early 1960s, but its members gradually coalesced into party *fracciones*. In our focus-group interviews, a consensus was expressed that those members allied with the party in power receive favorable treatment in appointments to relevant government posts.¹⁴ Yet engineers do not view themselves as mere pawns of political parties. They contend that politicians normally defer to their professional judgment in planning and constructing major public works. This view is especially characteristic of the influential subassociation of *ingenieros civiles* (civil engineers). Most large construction firms retain civil engineers as representatives in the colegio. Many of the senior executives in the public and private sectors are themselves professional civil engineers, as is customary for the ministers of Transporte y Comunicación and Ambiente. For engineers in general, relative autonomy from the parties has been accompanied by critical participation in national development projects throughout Venezuela's democratic experience.¹⁵

The fourth major colegio considered here is that for journalists, the Colegio de Periodistas, which has been an important standard-bearer for Venezuelan democracy. Although the academic training it offers is spotty at best and its standards are less than rigorous, this colegio is valued by journalists for several reasons: its frontline position during the winning and reinforcing of Venezuelan democracy; its efforts to cope with the large number of unemployed or underemployed journalists; its struggle to protect independent journalists from arbitrary firing; and its deter-

14. This view is linked to the extensive government contracts negotiated with engineering firms, most of which are oriented toward COPEI and the AD. Private firms whose loyalty lies with the party in power have a substantial advantage when bidding takes place, not to mention the many instances when noncompetitive bidding is the norm. See also the provisions of the Colegio de Ingenieros de Venezuela, "Reglamento electoral," mimeo, Caracas, 1987.

15. The Sociedad de Arquitectos first coalesced under the organizational aegis of the engineers, to whom they have looked for protection. Even today architects enjoy extensive benefits as members of the Colegio de Ingenieros. For similar reasons, *urbanistas* (city planners) have elected to remain within the engineers' colegio.

mination to maintain basic freedoms of the press. The colegio's affairs nevertheless reveal politicization.¹⁶ Planchas of candidates for internal elections must be cleared by COPEI or AD leaders, and those elected to the Junta Directiva are perceived mainly as party spokespersons. Although most journalists disapprove of this arrangement, they are even more critical of the practice of *palangre*, or "selling one's pen." As many as one-fourth of all journalists are perceived as having sold their pens at one point or another. Because of the oversupply of journalists, the colegio's role, especially its links to the parties, has become critical in gaining and retaining employment. Whatever the concerns about maintaining an independent Venezuelan press, it is the colegio that provides journalists with their major channel into professional employment.

On comparing these four prominent colegios, it becomes evident that the distinctions among them are largely qualitative. Autonomy from the parties is generally limited, except for the engineering colegio, and even its ties have increased in recent years. Internal elections become professional or sectoral surrogates for national competition among rival parties, and they strongly influence the composition of slates. Consequently, many important colegio activities depend heavily on the approval of appropriate party officials at the national level. In return, colegio leaders enjoy a participatory role in policy-making, except in journalism. Certainly, high-level government officials in the fields of medicine, law, and engineering are chosen by the parties in concert with colegio leaders. This practice has been especially pronounced in judicial appointments due to the primacy of Acción Democrática. At the same time, professionals in our focus groups who remained mostly in the public sector generally display stronger allegiance to their sponsoring party than to their colegio. The characteristics of each profession are also relevant. For example, the intervention of a professional colegio might be crucial for lawyers or engineers interested in direct political involvement, but for journalists it would be secondary at best. Despite these and other dissimilarities—and recognizing the importance of their contributions during the early years of the democratic period—Venezuela's professional organizations by the late 1980s were occupying generally subordinate positions in their relationship to the political parties.

The Party Perspective

The role of Venezuelan parties and partisan interaction with the colegios was a recurring theme in the focus-group interviews. This topic speaks directly to both the second and third general areas outlined earlier: the mechanisms linking the parties with the professionals and the accom-

16. Interview with the Junta Directiva, Colegio de Periodistas, Caracas, 17 July 1987.

panying power relationships. To explore these issues more fully, we spoke at length with AD and COPEI professionals who had played pivotal roles in linking the partisan fractions of their professions to their respective political parties.¹⁷ What emerged was conventional wisdom viewing the professional community as consisting predominantly of independents who leaned toward COPEI (*copeyanos*) or were registered members (*inscritos*). Those oriented toward the AD were in exile or else quietly apolitical in order to survive the persecution of the dictatorship. But after the AD's decade of controlling the national executive (from 1959 to 1969), the associated patronage enabled the AD to gain strength within the professional community. Then during the COPEI government of Rafael Caldera (1969–1974), the minister of Obras Públicas (himself an engineer) attempted to reverse the trend. COPEI gradually tightened relationships between its apparatus and professionals, with the government favoring engineers, architects, and construction firms linked to the Social Christian groups.

The AD response included authorizing its Secretaría de Profesionales y Técnicos at the 1972 party convention. COPEI later followed suit, as did MAS. Acción Democrática was more experienced in organizing societal interests and set standards that COPEI and MAS have followed. Over the years, the AD's organizational structure evolved into a complicated entity with horizontal and vertical linkages, overlapping jurisdictions, and a burgeoning party bureaucracy.¹⁸ The AD's Secretaría de Profesionales y Técnicos is connected to its constituency along three identifiable lines: the political, the professional, and the socioeconomic dimensions. The political dimension is served by the AD party fraction of each colegio, the professional by specific colegios, and the socioeconomic dimension via each colegio's social-service office (Instituto de Previsión Social or INPRES). The AD fraction within each colegio has its own organization, usually divided into four subunits of organization, finances, legal acts and correspondence, and management and logistics (see AD 1986, 21).

Interparty relationships concerning professionals and técnicos were highly consensual in the early years following the Pacto de Punto Fijo. By the mid-1970s, Acción Democrática had established a dominant position in most of the colegios, and while the AD continued to honor the spirit of Punto Fijo, it also attempted to limit the number of positions on juntas directivas reserved for professionals representing the COPEI and MAS fractions. By the 1980s, the pressures against continued power-sharing

17. Interviews with leaders of the AD and COPEI Secretarías de Profesionales y Técnicos were instructive. Homero Parra of the AD was an economist and his COPEI counterpart, José Miguel Uzcátegui, an engineer. Both viewed themselves as full-time politicians aspiring to even higher positions within their respective party hierarchies. Contact between them was minimal. In contrast, MAS Secretary Ramos Guerra was a personal friend of Parra, who also kept channels open with Uzcátegui. Interview with Parra, Caracas, 22 July 1987.

18. The basic organizational pattern has been analyzed at length in Martz (1966). The current structure, as modified in a recent party congress, is described in AD (1986).

TABLE 1 *Venezuelan Identification with Party Families, as of September–November 1987*

<i>Party Family</i>	<i>General Population^a</i> (%)	<i>Professionals and Técnicos^b</i> (%)
AD	39	42
COPEI	22	12
MAS	2	6
Independents	37	40
Total	100	100

Sources: COMO national poll of attitudes, November 1987; and poll of professionals described in note 9.

^an = 2271.

^bn = 571.

mounted. During COPEI's last period in power (1979–1984), the party seriously discussed plans for relegating the AD to permanent minority status. These proposals were eventually set aside, however, and since regaining power, the AD has maintained the basic *modus operandi*. Nonetheless, the growing systemic difficulties with shared governance have manifested themselves and plagued the second administration of Carlos Andrés Pérez (inaugurated in 1989). High-level political connections continue to be important, especially at the level of policy-making directorates in the ministries and the major state corporations. Focus-group respondents expressed the conviction (eighteen months before Pérez took office) that purely political criteria had taken precedence over professional or technical competence.

PROFESSIONALS AND INTEREST ARTICULATION

Power relationships between the professional community and the parties are central, but latent conflict exists between professional canons and partisan pressures. In exploring further the dynamics of interest articulation, we will consider first the biparty domination of COPEI and the AD. The data from our poll of professionals indicate that the professional community consists of three categories: a large majority supporting one or another of the two dominant parties, a small band of committed and militant leftists, and a significant minority that chooses not to identify with any party. Table 1 profiles the broad similarities in patterns of party support between the professional community and the general population.¹⁹ The distribution reflects historic partisan divisions within Venezuelan society that crystallized in a bipartisan mode in the 1973 elections.

¹⁹ The views of the general population were drawn from a separate nationwide poll taken in November 1987.

This outcome was also a by-product of the patronage powers commanded by the national executive during the petrobonanza. Table 1 also indicates the magnitude of COPEI support as the only significant variation in party-family identification that differentiates the general population from the specialized community. The gap of 22 percent for the general population and 12 percent of the subgroup is striking. Within the AD or the MAS party families, the differences are inconsequential.

As noted, the patronage powers of the Venezuelan national executive make affiliating with the governing party advantageous, especially for obtaining government contracts and jobs. Given that Acción Democrática was in power at the time of the survey, it is not surprising that a plurality of professionals identified with the AD. Thus although AD professionals were once less evident in the professional community than in the general population,²⁰ the proportions in both groups had become roughly the same. It is also predictable that the percentage of those claiming identification with the COPEI party family would be lower than the comparable percentage in the general population. Indeed, the fact that 58 percent of the professional community pursues its career path without openly identifying with Acción Democrática is strong evidence that the Venezuelan system accepts and values diversity. There is reason to assume that this toleration has given rise to “rules of the game” that shape and channel the professional community’s political behavior. It is helpful to think of such regularized activity in terms of “auxiliary political roles.” Focus-group discussions encouraged us to examine these roles.

Although the primary activities of professionals are obviously those of the architect, accountant, engineer, and so on, they also involve a significant political component. As a result, scenarios are engendered that influence professional behavior. To determine which auxiliary political roles Venezuelan professionals believe they sometimes perform, we first discussed the subject in the focus groups. Five identifiable roles emerged: mediator (between professional standards and doctrinal political prescriptions); defender of political ideology (in the face of the technical requisites of one’s profession, if necessary); defender of professionalism (against party efforts at politicization); defender of the political parties (against allegedly elitist professional standards); and outright critic of political party behavior.

When our survey was administered, two out of three respondents denied that they acted in any auxiliary political role in exercising their profession. The magnitude of this denial was compelling. This finding implies that Venezuelan professionals and técnicos resist viewing them-

20. See Myers (1969). Chapter 3, “Eliminating the Committee to Remodel the Slums of Caracas,” describes the role of professionals in early policy-making by the Punto Fijo regime, an environment in which professionals oriented toward COPEI outnumbered their AD counterparts.

selves as playing political roles when they act as careerists, although this belief contradicts the findings of the earlier focus groups. Alternatively, it may be that the respondents were hesitant to speculate in this context about the political implications of their professional activity. Of the approximate one-third who acknowledged their belief that professional activity had an auxiliary impact, the role cited most often was defense of professionalism. Thirty-eight percent of respondents acknowledging a political dimension to their professional behavior selected this response. The 32 percent who viewed themselves as acting out a political role (175 respondents) responded in the following manner when asked how often they had to defend professional norms against partisan demands: 28 percent answered "often"; 20 percent, "at times"; 13 percent, "rarely"; 32 percent, "never"; and the remaining 7 percent did not know or did not answer.

These results imply that many respondents (48 percent) not only perceived some conflict between professional standards and political party demands but also viewed their professional life style as mandating a defense of professional standards against party pressures. Yet one-third claimed that they never found themselves in a situation in which they had to defend professional standards against partisan interests. In assessing the systemic significance of this response, it is necessary to keep two points in mind: eight out of ten participants in our focus groups acknowledged that on at least one occasion they had defended professional interests against partisan pressures, while 68 percent of respondents to our survey denied that auxiliary political roles intruded into their professional behavior.

Professionals in our focus groups were unanimous in claiming that upholding professional standards did not threaten the capacity of political parties to govern but merely channeled the dispensing of patronage. Indeed, given the earlier mismanagement of development under Pérez Jiménez (an experience that discredited his rule and shaped the perceptions of two generations of AD and COPEI leaders), it is scarcely surprising that these advocates of democracy would promote significant adherence to technical criteria, even when such adherence constrained patronage. In the long run, subordinating political demands to technical ones can be viewed as a hedge against disastrous developmental decisions. Thus an important by-product of allowing professionals the latitude to uphold standards has been an increase in governmental efficiency. This perception prevailed throughout our focus groups.

For Venezuelan professionals and técnicos formally registered as party members (*inscritos*), belonging to the relevant fraction is an important point of political contact. Of all respondents, 72 percent belonged to the appropriate *fracción*, 27 percent did not, and 1 percent did not know or did not answer. Respondents' reasons for joining professional fractions

TABLE 2 Perceptions by Professionals Identifying with a Party Family of the Positive Characteristics of Their Party Fractions

Positive Characteristics of Party Fractions	Percentage of Party-Family Identifiers Responding Positively to Professional Party Fraction			
	AD ^a	COPEI ^b	MAS ^c	Others ^d
Obtains work for members				
AD	74	54	58	56
COPEI	36	56	43	50
MAS	22	32	22	35
Has good leaders				
AD	85	52	44	57
COPEI	55	71	30	55
MAS	44	48	68	45
Wins professional support for democracy				
AD	91	59	36	62
COPEI	58	84	25	55
MAS	40	42	62	43
Open to new ideas				
AD	86	40	23	36
COPEI	43	72	0	39
MAS	49	45	65	46
Has technical influence when party governs				
AD	89	54	67	61
COPEI	44	71	64	52
MAS	23	4	25	21
Encourages high level of professionalism				
AD	81	38	20	36
COPEI	47	72	27	40
MAS	36	39	50	37

Source: COMO poll of professionals taken in September 1987 (n = 571).

^a42 percent of all party-family members identify with AD.

^b12 percent of all party-family members identify with COPEI.

^c6 percent of all party-family members identify with MAS.

^d40 percent of all party-family members are either independent (38 percent) or identify with a minor party (2 percent).

were also recorded. It is somewhat surprising that only 15 percent gave “increasing the possibility of finding work” as the primary reason for joining. More important, the data reveal that the largest grouping of respondents (40 percent) chose the possibility of influencing the translation of doctrine into projects as determining their decision to join the party fraction. The second-largest cohort (26 percent) cited furthering of

their professional interests as the primary reason for joining their party's fraction. While self-interest pervades this response, only 5 percent cited advancement within the party as the basis for their action (the remaining 14 percent did not know or did not specify). These responses indicate that even among politicized professionals, a pervasive desire exists to retain one's primary professional identity. Thus while the role of a party fraction in finding jobs for its members should not be downplayed, collegiality and the opportunity to express shared ideology in professional activity appear more vital if the fraction is to continue to be a major force within its respective professional community.

Further dissection in table 2 of respondent perceptions of fraction characteristics shows that the AD secretariat received high marks from its own militants but also from *copeyanos* and independent professionals and técnicos. The Christian Democratic professionals gave the AD professional secretariat a positive evaluation on four of the six performance dimensions. Certainly, no other party fraction approaches the AD's assessment from a broad spectrum of the professional community. COPEI professionals view their own fraction positively, although not as highly as Adecos rated their own AD organization. Meanwhile, independent professionals were critical of the fraction leadership in both AD and COPEI concerning the degree of receptivity to new ideas and the roles played in maintaining a high level of professionalism. The MAS professional secretariat was viewed less positively throughout the professional community, appearing to be relatively isolated. Overall, the partisan pattern of fractions and perceptions of their capabilities mirror contemporary Venezuelan biparty hegemony.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Two basic questions were posed at the outset: what is the political role of the professionals and técnicos, and what are the relationships of the professionals to the political parties? It was therefore necessary to identify the mechanisms linking the two entities and to trace the resultant patterns of interplay of power and influence between them. Several points emerged during the course of our investigation. First, Venezuelan professionals believe that they played an important part in creating and consolidating Venezuelan democracy between 1958 and 1987. In this context, they view the professional community as having relied on the respective colegios to serve as prime mechanisms linking them to the political parties. The relationship itself, while mutually beneficial, developed over time into one in which the political parties customarily influence the colegios. This trend led in turn to some weakening of the positive impact that the professionals and técnicos believed their organizations could achieve on behalf of Venezuelan democracy.

Four general areas of inquiry were specified as useful for taxonomic and analytic purposes. The first one concerned the creation, structure, and development of professional organizations. It also inquired whether professionals and técnicos had been important participants in Venezuela's democratic regime under the Pacto de Punto Fijo and asked about their activities during the three stages experienced from 1958 through 1987. The research confirmed the significance of professionals' role but indicated some shifts over time. Focus-group interviews and survey data revealed the professional community as both benefiting from and providing support for the rules of political regimes. With the transition from dictatorship and the subsequent consolidation of democracy up to 1973, professionals and técnicos became supporters of the system. Community political access in the decades of consolidation was shaped by the rules that evolved during this early democratic phase. At the same time, most professional colegios endeavored to systematize their organizations while striving for higher standards and controls over entry and membership.

During the decade of high petroleum revenue (1973–1983), the relative and even excessive economic abundance as well as growing state control of the economy predisposed professionals to accept politically conditioned development policy. The striving for higher standards was never abandoned but became secondary. Priority shifted to creating a demand for their services within the new state enterprises. Professionals and técnicos improved and strengthened their economic position, social status, and political bargaining power. Expansion of the public sector also provided additional incentives for professional colegios to tighten their ties with the political parties.

Meanwhile, the parties themselves had become ever more central to managing and modernizing a political regime that had transformed historic patterns of repressive authoritarianism found unacceptable by most professionals. When socioeconomic pressures mounted during the 1980s, professionals became a critical resource as party leaders searched for ways of adjusting to lower standards of living without undermining regime stability. At the time of our survey, professionals remained loyal to party-centered democracy. Notwithstanding growing evidence of systemic political decay, professionals have continued to be supportive players in Venezuelan democratization since 1958.²¹ It is scarcely coincidental that the professional community has enjoyed widespread public prestige. The November 1987 poll, subsequently repeated in January 1989, showed the

21. It is also true that when the Pérez administration was threatened by rebellious elements of the military in February 1992, professionals tended to remain above the fray, as did most Venezuelans. After the attempted golpe in November of 1992, however, "lightning" (overnight) polls showed professionals sharing popular disenchantment but remaining loyal to the system. As noted earlier, events and circumstances surrounding the decay of the democratic system lie beyond the scope of the present study.

TABLE 3 *National Attitudes toward Groups and Institutions Serving Venezuela*

<i>Group or Institution</i>	<i>Trust (%)</i>	<i>Distrust (%)</i>
Professional colegios	78	22
Catholic Church	77	23
Armed forces	74	26
Peasant organizations	68	32
Judges and courts	52	48
Police	47	53
Business owners	44	56
Labor unions	38	62
Foreign companies	32	68
Political parties	23	77
Government bureaucracy	22	78
Politicians	22	78

Source: COMO national poll of Venezuelan attitudes taken in November 1987 (n = 2271).

colegios to be the institution that Venezuelans trust most.²² In addition, results from the earlier poll (reported in table 3) show that the only other institutions enjoying comparable levels of confidence were the Catholic Church and the armed forces.

The second general area of concern was the nature of mechanisms linking professionals with the parties. The crucial instrument for the parties is the *fracción*, the most important connection and locus for integrating professionals into Venezuela's political system. These fractions became more central during the petroleum boom, as the role of the professional colegios grew more specialized. Thus the colegios have concentrated more on controlling admission, reworking the curriculum for training, and setting standards. Even these activities are witnessing enlarging roles for party fractions. They also oversee the partisan recruitment of professionals and técnicos, thus enhancing career opportunities. Finally, the two major parties influence the professional community through their control of policy-making and contracting at all levels of government.

This situation raises the issue of power relationships between professionals and parties. In several senses, the politicians enjoy a dominant role. First, within party organizations, the professional secretariats will be subordinate to the national leadership structures in which other fractions are more influential. This difference in power will be reflected in decisions made by the secretary-general, secretary of the organization, and other members of the central party leadership. Second, the party machin-

22. These findings were confirmed in a January 1988 national poll conducted by COMO for the Instituto para la Difusión del Pensamiento Político (IDPP). For an analysis of these findings, see Myers (1993).

eries in general, operating through the professional secretariats and their fractions, will strive to shape recruitment of leaders within the respective colegios. Moreover, in highly politicized projects, fraction leaders may pressure members to support the position of the party regardless of their independent professional judgments. As a final point, the role of employment opportunities continues to be relevant for two reasons: the state remains the primary employer of professionals and técnicos; and the number of professionals seeking positions exceeds the number of government jobs available.

The data show that only one-quarter of the professionals and técnicos surveyed had never worked in the public sector. Furthermore, most private firms employing professionals depend heavily on government contracts. Given the domination of the public sector by COPEI and the AD, the incentives the parties can offer to maintain the upper hand in dealing with professional colegios become evident. Prevailing conditions thus testify to party influence in their relationships with professionals, and fractions find their positions enhanced vis-à-vis the colegios. Even professionals who call themselves independent cultivate good relations with partisan fractions.

All of these findings direct attention to the fourth of our general areas of inquiry: the nature of conflicting loyalties toward professional and partisan demands. Although professionals in general have repeatedly decried "politicization of the professions," all agree that party secretariats are the best channels for articulating professional community interests (not to mention their utility for securing employment or contracts). This recognition, however, does not allay concerns among professionals that political expediency often wins out over their "best professional judgment" in setting and implementing government policy. Without qualifying its commitment to post-1959 democracy and by taking a more guarded yet supportive attitude toward the dominant political parties, the professional sector approximates national political attitudes in the context of its own specialized interests. Members of the colegios may well band together to defend their professional interests, and the survey and focus-group data demonstrate the conviction that professionalism is important. Even so, the experience described in the four major colegios further confirms the conclusion that they are not very independent of the parties. Certainly, professional organizations are subordinate to the parties even where the central foci are such apolitical functions as setting standards and improving technical training.

This outcome further testifies to the fact that the parties themselves have become more important in promoting values of conflict limitation as they evolved through the Pacta de Punto Fijo and the long series of tacit agreements that underlie the entire democratic system in Venezuela. Among other forces supporting this systemic orientation have been the

nation's professionals as articulated through the varied colegios. As a result, professionals have exercised a collective political influence consistent with their fundamental commitment to democracy and to pluralistic bargaining and conciliation.

REFERENCES

AD (ACCION DEMOCRATICA)

1986 *Estatutos*. Caracas: Secretaría Nacional de Organización.

1988 *Fracciones nacionales de profesionales y técnicos*. Caracas: Secretaría Nacional de Profesionales y Técnicos.

ACEDO MENDOZA, CARLOS

1974 *Reforma urbana*. Caracas: Fondo Editorial Común.

BALOYRA, ENRIQUE A., AND JOHN D. MARTZ

1979 *Political Attitudes in Venezuela: Societal Cleavages and Political Opinion*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

BONILLA, FRANK

1970 *The Failure of Elites*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

BONILLA, FRANK, AND JOSE A. SILVA MICHELENA, EDS.

1967 *A Strategy for Research on Social Policy*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

CARVAJAL, MANUEL J.

1977 *Política de crecimiento urbano: la experiencia de Costa Rica*. San José, Costa Rica: Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos.

CHEINNESS, CATHY, AND JEFFREY S. KANE

1987 "Public-Sector Professionals: Job Characteristics, Satisfaction, and Aspirations for Intrinsic Fulfillment through Work." *Human Relations* 40 (Mar.):125-36.

CLEAVES, PETER S.

1987 *Professions and the State: The Mexican Case*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

COLEGIO DE INGENIEROS DE VENEZUELA

1987 "Reglamento electoral." In-house document, Caracas.

COPPEDGE, MICHAEL

1993 *Venezuela: Strong Parties and Lame Ducks*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

n.d. "Partidocracia and Reform in Comparative Perspective." Forthcoming in the volume based on the November 1992 conference in Caracas sponsored by the North-South Center and INVESP.

ELLNER, STEVE

1988 *Venezuela's Movimiento al Socialismo: From Guerrilla Defeat to Innovative Politics*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

FURLONG CARDIFF, GUILLERMO

1947 *Médicos argentinos durante la dominación hispánica*. Buenos Aires: Huarpes.

GALL, PIRIE M.

1976 *Municipal Development Programs in Latin America: An Intercountry Evaluation*. New York: Praeger.

GIL YEPES, JOSE ANTONIO

1978 *El reto de las elites*. Madrid: Tecnos.

GOLDWIN, ROBERT, AND ART KAUFFMAN, EDS.

1983 *Constitution Makers on Constitution Making: The Experience of Eight Nations*. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute.

GOMEZ NAVAS, OSCAR

1983 *Administración municipal y urbanización en Venezuela*. Caracas: Equinoccio.

HERMAN, DONALD L.

1980 *Christian Democracy in Venezuela*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

KORNBLITH, MIRIAM

n.d. "Crisis política y reforma constitucional en Venezuela," forthcoming in the volume from the October 1992 conference on Venezuela held at Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.

KORNBLITH, MIRIAM, AND DANIEL H. LEVINE

- n.d. "Venezuela: The Life and Times of the Party System." In *Building Democratic Institutions: Parties and Party Systems in Latin America*, edited by Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

KOSTOF, SPIRO K.

- 1977 *The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession*. New York: Oxford University Press.

LANG, JON

- 1986 "Understanding Normative Theories of Architecture: The Potential Role of the Behavioral Sciences." *Environment and Behavior* 20 (Sept.):601–32.

LEVINE, DANIEL H.

- 1973 *Conflict and Political Change in Venezuela*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

LOWENSTEIN, STEVEN

- 1970 *Lawyers, Legal Education, and Development: An Examination of the Process of Reform in Chile*. New York: International Legal Center.

LYNCH, DENNIS O.

- 1981 *Legal Roles in Colombia*. New York: Center for Law in Development.

MARTZ, JOHN D.

- 1966 *Acción Democrática: Evolution of a Modern Political Party in Venezuela*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

- 1982 "Los peligros de la petrificación: el sistema de partidos venezolanos y la década de los ochentas." In *Iberoamérica en los años 80: perspectivas de cambio social y político*, edited by Enrique A. Baloyra and Rafael López Pintor. Madrid: Centro de Investigación Sociológica, 149–82.

- 1984 "Political Parties and the Impact on Foreign Policy in Venezuela." In *Latin America in World Politics: Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Heraldo Muñoz and Joseph S. Tulchin, 133–50. Boulder, Colo.: Westview.

- 1988 "The Malaise of Venezuelan Political Parties: Is Democracy Endangered?" In *Democracy in Latin America: Colombia and Venezuela*, edited by Donald L. Herman, 155–75. New York: Praeger.

- 1992 "Party Elites and Leadership in Colombia and Venezuela." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24, pt. 1:87–121.

- n.d. "Political Parties and the Democratic Crisis in Venezuela." Forthcoming in the volume from the October 1992 conference on Venezuela held at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.

MARTZ, JOHN D., AND DAVID J. MYERS

- 1986 *Venezuela, the Democratic Experience*, second edition. New York: Praeger.

MATTOS PEREIRA, RUBEN

- 1969 *Organização Administrativa para o Planejamento Municipal*. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas.

MCCOY, JENNIFER

- 1993 *Democracy under Stress: Politics and Markets in Venezuela*. Miami: University of Miami, North-South Center.

MYERS, DAVID J.

- 1969 "The Politics of Urban Development: Caracas under Acción Democrática." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles.

- 1986 "The Venezuelan Party System: Regime Maintenance under Stress." In *Venezuela, The Democratic Experience*, revised edition, edited by John D. Martz and David J. Myers, 109–48. New York: Praeger.

- 1990 "Venezuela: The Politics of Liberty, Justice, and Distribution." In *Latin American Politics and Development*, third edition, edited by Howard J. Wiarda and Harvey F. Kline, 283–321. Boulder, Colo.: Westview.

- n.d. "Perceptions of a Stressed Democracy: Inevitable Decay of Foundation for Re-birth." Forthcoming in the volume based on the November 1992 conference in Caracas sponsored by the North-South Center and INVESP.

PENNIMAN, HOWARD J., ED.

- 1980 *Venezuela at the Polls*. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

RAKOWSKI, CATHY, AND GEORGE KASTNER

- 1985 "Difficulties Involved in Taking Health Services to the People: The Example of a Public Health Care Center in a Caracas Barrio." *Social Science and Medicine* 21:67-75.

SCOTT, MARGARET

- 1989 "Shape of Things to Come: Affluence in Bangkok Spawns New Breed of Architects." *Far Eastern Economic Review* 44:40-51.

SILVA MICHELENA, JOSE A.

- 1967 "The Venezuelan Bureaucrat." In BONILLA AND SILVA MICHELENA 1967, 86-120.
1971 *The Illusion of Democracy in Dependent Nations*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

SILVERT, KALMAN H., AND LEONARD REISSMAN

- 1976 *Education, Class, and Nation: The Experiences of Chile and Venezuela*. New York: Elsevier.

SONNTAG, HEINZ R., AND THAIS MAINGON

- 1992 *Venezuela, 4-F 1992: un análisis sociopolítico*. Caracas: Nueva Sociedad.

STEWART, WILLIAM S.

- 1978 *Change and Bureaucracy: Public Administration in Venezuela*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

TRUBEK, DAVID M.

- 1971 *Law, Planning, and the Development of the Brazilian Capital Market: A Study of Law in Economic Change*. New York: New York University Press.

VIOLICH, FRANCIS

- 1987 *Urban Planning for Latin America*. Boston, Mass.: Oelgeschlager, Gunn, and Hain.

WILDING, PAUL

- 1982 *Professional Power and Social Welfare*. Boston, Mass.: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

YUJNOVSKY, OSCAR

- 1971 *La estructura interna de la ciudad*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones SIAP.