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Jana Morgan
University of Tennessee, Knoxville, janamorgan@utk.edu

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PARTISANSHIP DURING THE COLLAPSE OF VENEZUELA'S PARTY SYSTEM*

Jana Morgan

University of Tennessee

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Abstract: Political parties are crucial for democratic politics; thus, the growing incidence of party and party system failure raises questions about the health of representative democracy the world over. This article examines the collapse of the Venezuelan party system, arguably one of the most institutionalized party systems in Latin America, by examining the individual-level basis behind the exodus of partisans from the traditional parties. Multinomial logit analysis of partisan identification in 1998, the pivotal moment of the system's complete collapse, indicates that people left the old system and began to support new parties because the traditional parties failed to incorporate and give voice to important ideas and interests in society while viable alternatives emerged to fill this void in representation.

A central aspect of democracy is that citizens have a voice in decision making and influence government so that it is continually responsive to their preferences (Dahl 1971). In contemporary democracies, much of this representation occurs through the channels of political parties. Parties are the primary agents of representation and virtually the only actors with access to elected positions (Hagopian 1998). By channeling the pursuit of interests into the institutional structure, parties peacefully frame

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competitive politics and allow different interests to participate and gain access to the governing process through democratic means (Przeworski 1995). In countries where democracy itself remains tenuous, the nature of the party system may promote or impede democratic consolidation, thereby impacting both governance and governability.

Significant changes in a party system's structure and major components, then, will profoundly impact political dynamics and the quality and endurance of democracy. This sort of change, which extends beyond the context of a stable system and involves transformation of the system itself, shapes the nature of contestation and the policy outcomes the system produces. Party system collapse is a particularly troubling sort of transformation, involving both transformation of the system and virtual elimination of its component parties. Party system disintegration is likely to lead, at least initially, to disorder and heightened conflict in politics. Civil society organizations and nascent political parties that fill the vacuum created by collapse may elevate conflict and produce uneven political contestation. In essence, the decay and failure of parties and party systems elicit concern about the quality of representative democracy.

A wealth of literature on party system structure (Cox 1997; Lipset and Rokkan 1967) and internal party dynamics (Levitsky 2003) exists, and important advances have been made in understanding the fortunes of certain types of parties (Kitschelt 1994). Realignment and dealignment research even addresses some issues concerning changes in party systems (Dalton, Flanagan and Beck 1984). But these studies concern fluctuations within the context of a stable party system where the number of parties and their relative ideological positions remain constant. Neither the realignment literature nor studies of party systems' internal structures and component parties directly examine the sort of change that "occurs when a party system is transformed from one class or type of party system into another" (Mair 1997, 52).[1] Few studies consider this sort of system-transforming change (but see Mair 1997). Moreover, research that does explore system transformation tends to focus on the systemic outcome of decline without exploring its foundation in individual political behavior (Dietz and Myers 2003). What remains a mystery is which citizens are more likely to abandon old political parties in favor of emerging alternatives.

I narrow this gap in understanding by exploring the microlevel underpinnings of party system transformation through analysis of partisanship at the pivotal point when an old system is replaced with a new one. Such analysis provides insight into the differences between citizens who

1. System transformations include changes in the number of parties or in the level of ideological polarization; shifting from a two-party system to a multiparty one is transformation, but change within the same multiparty system structure is not. Discontinuity in the number of parties or polarization indicates the existing system has been replaced (Mainwaring and Scully 1995).

remain true to traditional parties and those who do not, illuminating factors that enable abandonment of the old system and encourage support for emerging parties. Understanding what motivates people to desert existing parties in favor of new groups provides leverage in explaining the underlying basis for party system transformation.

THE UNEXPECTED COLLAPSE OF VENEZUELA'S PARTY SYSTEM

To explore the individual-level dynamics of party system transformation, this article examines collapse, the particularly problematic form of transformation that has become increasingly common in Latin America. I analyze the dramatic decay of Venezuela's party system, in which the two major parties disintegrated and were supplanted by new parties constituting a polarized multiparty system. The collapse of the Venezuelan party system offers an ideal opportunity for exploring system transformation. From the onset of the current democratic period until the 1980s, Venezuela was considered an example of democratic success, holding regular competitive elections, guaranteeing civil and political rights, and alternating control of government between two institutionalized, mass parties (Coppedge 1994). And these parties, Acción Democrática (AD) and the Christian Democratic Party (COPEI), were instrumental in the development and endurance of Venezuelan democracy (Kornblith and Levine 1995).

Institutionalized party systems like Venezuela's have been considered crucial for democratic consolidation because they provide advantages such as stability, governability, and accountability (Dix 1992; Mainwaring and Scully 1995). But despite what appeared to be a high degree of institutionalization, the party system began to decay in the 1980s. Some scholars had observed cracks in the system and expected change or slow decay (Martz and Myers 1986), but its complete collapse was largely unanticipated. Nevertheless, the two-and-a-half-party system and its major component parties have all but disappeared in the past decade. Venezuela, then, presents an instance where party system disintegration seemed a highly improbable outcome, but where the system, nevertheless, decayed dramatically.

To assess how this seemingly exemplary party system came to such an inauspicious end, I analyze Venezuelans' underlying attitudes during the collapse. I begin with a description of the evolution of the party system since the 1970s, discussing changes in aggregate partisanship. Then, using a nationwide survey conducted at the critical moment of collapse, I examine the differences between people who remained loyal to Venezuela's traditional parties and those who abandoned them for new options. I conclude by arguing that key determinants of party system collapse were the failure of existing parties to incorporate important ideas and interests in society as well as the emergence of viable alternatives that seemed to fill this void.

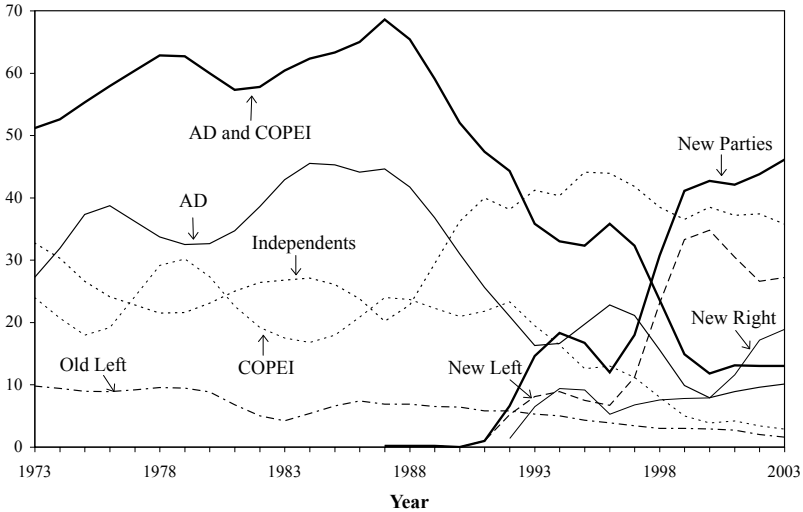

Figure 1 Partisan Identification in the New and Old Party Systems, 1973–2003.

Note: Data displayed are a smoothed version of the annual average frequency of survey respondents who identified with each group. The Old Left includes Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), Movimiento Electoral del Pueblo (MEP), Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR), and Partido Comunista de Venezuela (PCV). The New Right includes Convergencia, IRENE, Proyecto Venezuela, Primero Justicia, and Gente de Petroleo. The New Left includes La Causa R, Movimiento Quinta República (MVR) and Patria Para Todos. *Sources:* Baloyra, Batoba, Consultores 21, DATOS, and IVAD; compiled by the author.

PARTISANSHIP IN A CHANGING SYSTEM

Because a party should function to represent its base, a party that lacks sympathizers and militants lacks purpose and power. So, shifts in partisanship tell a story of the ebb and flow of parties within a system and of how the system changes as a result. To explore the evolution of the Venezuelan party system, I examine aggregate partisanship over 30 years beginning with the 1973 consolidation of the two-party system, followed by the system's decay and the emergence of new parties. Figure 1 depicts partisanship in Venezuela from 1973 through 2003, based on data assembled from dozens of nationwide, face-to-face, public opinion surveys.[2]

In figure 1, we can see that AD, COPEI, and the traditional left maintained fairly constant levels of support through the mid-1980s. However,

2. Data are taken from Baloyra, Batoba, Consultores 21, DATOS, and IVAD. The typical question battery includes militants and sympathizers as partisans; only respondents indicating neither party militancy nor sympathy are considered independents. The data are three-year moving averages of the annual partisanship series, constructed by averaging all surveys in a given year. In some years (1974, 1976–8) no surveys were conducted; I fill these gaps by averaging adjacent years' frequencies. No company provides coverage of the entire period, but in years where overlap exists, frequencies track well together, indicating cross-firm reliability.

identification with parties of the old system decayed by the end of the decade. AD support fell precipitously after the reelection of AD's Carlos Andrés Pérez in 1988. The timing of this decline is significant, as it occurred simultaneously with Pérez's abandonment of the state-centered development model for which he had become famous during his first presidential term. In early 1989, Pérez announced widely unpopular reforms that embraced many orthodox neoliberal policies including privatization, trade liberalization, and deregulation (Naím 1993). In February 1989, concerns about an increase in transportation fares provoked many Venezuelans to engage in a largely spontaneous protest, el Caracazo, which lasted for several days and ended only when Pérez called upon the military to stop the violence. Despite the unrest, Pérez proceeded with implementation of many aspects of his agenda, albeit in a scaled-back form (Karl 1997; Naím 1993). The announcement of neoliberal reforms and subsequent protests accelerated AD's demise, in part because the reforms marked a significant rightward shift by the leader of a historically center-left party and because the protests furnished a stunning, public display of festering frustration with the traditional parties (Author interviews 60, 66).[3]

Neither COPEI nor the old left were able to capitalize on this widespread rejection of AD. The old left decayed slowly beginning in the late 1980s. And COPEI's decline was remarkable, starting in the early 1990s and intensifying when former president Rafael Caldera abandoned COPEI and won reelection as an independent in 1993. In part, COPEI's rapid decline may be attributed to Caldera leaving the party and then successfully striving to undermine the party organization he had played an instrumental role in building (Author interview 62). But the *copeyano* party leadership also contributed to the feud between Caldera and his former party by pushing the past president to the periphery of the party and working to undermine his ability to win the COPEI nomination for the presidency in the 1993 elections (Author interview 66). Together these dynamics served to divide and damage the credibility of the Venezuelan Christian Democratic movement, which weakened the viability of COPEI as the major alternative to AD (Author interviews 57 and 58).[4] The decline of these fundamental components of Venezuela's old party system was so great that by 2000, AD support fell below 10 percent and support for COPEI and the old left each dropped below 5 percent. By 2003, fewer than 15 percent of Venezuelans identified with AD or COPEI.

3. The author conducted nearly 90 open-ended interviews with current and former Venezuelan party leaders and politicians during 2003 and 2006.

4. Thanks to the anonymous *LARR* reviewer who suggested the complexities of this dynamic.

As affiliation with the old system declined, political independence grew, reaching 40 percent by 1991. Then just as the number of independents leveled out, support for new political options developed. The new left appears with the rise of the radical union-based La Causa R in the late 1980s. The new right emerges when former president Caldera leaves COPEI and creates *Convergencia* to support his 1993 presidential bid. In 1998, more parties emerge to contest the presidential elections, including Salas Romer's Proyecto Venezuela and Chávez's Movimiento Quinta República (MVR), and new parties overtook the old in their share of partisan identifiers. Parties of the old system lost most of their supporters during the 1990s, with people becoming independents and then defecting to emerging options of the left and right. At the system level, this created a shift from a predictable two-and-a-half-party system to a polarized multiparty system.

EXPLAINING PARTISANSHIP DURING PARTY SYSTEM COLLAPSE

By the 1990s the decay of the old parties extended beyond the ebb and flow typical of election cycles. This decay first manifested as dealignment in which Venezuelans simply had no partisan sympathies, rather than as complete system collapse in which people left the old parties and also embraced new affiliations. AD and COPEI continued to receive a plurality of votes in legislative contests, and when the old left was included, old parties controlled 66 percent of seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 70 percent of the Senate through 1998.[5] Furthermore, although the traditional parties technically did not control the presidency beginning in 1994, Rafael Caldera's reelection can hardly be considered a significant break with the old parties. In leaving COPEI, Caldera painted himself as an independent, but his ties to the old system were undeniable. Alone, Caldera's election was not sufficient to constitute the collapse of the party system, although his departure from COPEI did play a significant part in delegitimizing one of the system's major component parties.

Therefore, although the party system clearly decayed throughout the 1990s, its collapse was not complete until the 1998 elections. In the year leading up to the elections, we observe not only declining support for the old system, but also rapidly increasing affiliation with new parties. The 1998 elections proved pivotal. In the legislative elections of November 8, AD and COPEI received only 37 percent of the vote, and presidential elections a month later solidified the collapse. AD and COPEI abandoned their parties' presidential nominees and instead supported former *copeyano* and Proyecto Venezuela founder Henrique Salas Romer. Together the parties attracted only 11 percent

5. Compiled from Consejo Supremo/Nacional Electoral.

of the presidential vote—less than one-third of Salas Romer's total support, and Salas was soundly beaten by former coup leader Hugo Chávez. So, although decline is evident during the 1990s, the 1998 elections represent the pivotal moment in which the old parties' decay ultimately produced the collapse of the entire system, when the old system's major components no longer controlled the government and were supplanted by new options.

In the dramatic transformation of Venezuela's once-exemplary party system, 1998 is critical as the moment in which decay becomes collapse. By analyzing partisanship at this pivotal moment, I am able to examine how individual-level attitudes and actions produced system collapse. The analysis employs data from a nationwide, face-to-face, survey of 1,500 Venezuelans, conducted November 13–27, 1998, after the legislative elections that dealt a heavy blow to AD and COPEI and before the victory of Chávez in the December presidential contest. The survey, RedPol98, was designed by a network of Venezuelan scholars and conducted by the respected firm DATOS, I.R. Using these data, I explain partisanship, providing insight into the motivations of the many Venezuelans who left the old parties and embraced new options.

THEORIZING PARTISANSHIP IN A CHANGING SYSTEM

What prompted so many Venezuelans to abandon the old parties while others maintained long-standing partisan ties? To answer this question, I develop hypotheses based on the particular circumstances of party system transformation and on general theories of partisanship. I argue that the critical impetus behind the exodus from the traditional party system was its failure to provide adequate substantive and symbolic representation to growing sectors of society. Lack of meaningful distinctions between the major parties provoked disenchantment with existing parties and encouraged the pursuit of new options that addressed shortcomings within the system. Also, the absence of a sense of connectedness to the parties enabled people to stray because they were not integrated into the existing system. Ultimately, frustration with the choices presented by the old system fomented a desire to look elsewhere for representation.

People sympathize with parties that hold positions similar to their own and search for meaningful ideological and policy options that reflect their priorities (Franklin and Jackson 1983; Shanks and Miller 1990). Given the disarray of the Venezuelan party system in the late 1990s, accurately identifying the ideology and issue positions of political parties, especially new entrants, was difficult. But, it was increasingly clear that AD and COPEI no longer presented Venezuelans with distinct choices. In a nationwide survey conducted in 1983, respondents placed AD

significantly to the left of COPEI,[6] but in the 1998 RedPol survey differences in the ideological placements of the two parties had disappeared. As one party leader noted, "in the end, AD and COPEI were exactly the same" (Author interview 35). Furthermore, the policies implemented by *adeco* Carlos Andrés Pérez marked a notable shift away from his historically center-left party, with movement away from statism and interventionism towards more free market policies. COPEI, led by its former presidential candidate and Secretary General Eduardo Fernández, also advocated a neoliberal approach in the 1990s. So, while the new parties' positions were uncertain, voters knew that AD and COPEI did not provide meaningful alternatives and that the two parties were right of the average Venezuelan. Frustration with the parties' indistinguishable positions likely prompted Venezuelans, especially those on the left, to look outside the old system for parties that might speak for them. Therefore, ideology and issue positions will be significant factors in the decision to abandon the old parties.

Lack of institutionalized connectedness to the traditional parties also likely prompted people to look beyond the old system to the ranks of new parties. AD and COPEI were hierarchical organizations in which certain established interests, especially business and labor, were well represented and given privileged status (Crisp 2000; Martz 1966). Labor union and professional association members were therefore integrated into the party system and able to find effective avenues for their voices to be heard. But people outside these established functional groups, such as the urban poor and informal workers, did not have a formal connection to the old parties. Virtually all former AD and COPEI party leaders interviewed acknowledged this lack of attention to the informal sector. As one former member of AD's CEN (Comité Ejecutivo Nacional) acknowledged, "there was never any discussion about the informal sector; the party was completely unprepared and did not try to include new people or new groups" (Author interview 49). This absence of representation was exacerbated as the formal and public sectors declined in the 1990s and were replaced by the informal sector and unemployment (ILO 1998). I hypothesize that by 1998 the growing number of people who lacked institutionalized ties to political parties through work-based associations felt disconnected from and unrepresented by the old system and therefore turned to other parties that might speak more effectively for their interests.

General discontent with political parties' failure to serve as effective and trustworthy channels of representation probably also drove people away from the traditional system. I anticipate that distrust of political

6. The 1983 Batoba survey was provided by the USB Banco de Datos Poblacionales, N=1789.

parties and negative evaluations of the parties' motivations will cause people to become independents. It is even possible that as new parties emerge and offer alternative expressions of what it means to be a political party, disenchanted respondents may embrace these groups. Taken together then, lack of ideological and issue representation, absence of incorporation into the old parties, and general frustration with parties are likely to make people disappointed with their lack of voice and influence in the party system. This disappointment will provoke people to exit the old system and turn elsewhere for representation.

Research on partisanship has also found political and economic evaluations to have important influences on partisan sympathies (Fiorina 1981; MacKuen, Erickson, and Stimson 1989; Kelly 2003). Positive assessments of presidential performance are expected to promote identification with the incumbent's party. So, people satisfied with outgoing President Caldera should have been inclined to affiliate with parties connected to him. Caldera's coalition included parties of the new right (Convergencia) and the old party system (Moviemiento al Socialismo [MAS]), and he continued to be associated in many people's minds with the traditional party system despite his repeated efforts to undermine it (Author interviews 39 and 46). People pleased with Caldera's performance were most likely affiliated with the new right or perhaps the traditional parties, while the dissatisfied were inclined to consider other options especially the new left.

With regard to economic assessments, negative retrospective evaluations are expected to push people away from the old parties, while positive retrospective evaluations should promote loyalty to the old system.[7] Given the survey's timing, prospective evaluations are expected to have the reverse effect. When RedPol98 was conducted, AD and COPEI had already lost their majority in Congress, and their sound defeat by Chávez in the upcoming presidential election was imminent. So, at this moment, the new left was the object of prospective assessments. Expectations that a new left government would perform better than the incumbent government controlled by the old party system would have influenced people to sympathize with new left parties rather than remain committed to the traditional party system. So, frustration with the incumbent government likely promoted departure from the old parties while expectations of improved conditions under a government that excluded AD and COPEI could have influenced people to identify with new political options.

Finally, I consider effects suggested by political socialization theories, which emphasize social characteristics (Miller and Shanks 1996) and early life experiences (Jennings and Niemi 1968) in generating long-standing partisan attachments. Given the recent fluidity of Venezuelan partisan

7. Analysis only uses pocketbook evaluations because sociotropic evaluations were not available.

identities, it is difficult to assume that Venezuelans developed strong ties to political parties as a result of early socialization. But it is possible that some experiences generated enduring bonds to the traditional party system, while others produced more malleable identities. People who grew up with or continue to be influenced by parents who are highly committed partisans are more likely to remain loyal to the old parties than people whose parents' were not such firm supporters. The persistence of partisan identification may also be shaped by other influences on the duration and strength of commitment (Franklin and Jackson 1983). For instance, older respondents are likely to have developed stronger partisan ties than younger ones (Abramson 1975). Also, people who have fewer political resources or are less integrated into the party system, like the poor and uneducated, may be more inclined to abandon old partisan sympathies. And, despite the creation of women's committees by both AD and COPEI, men have historically dominated Venezuela's political arena; as a result, women are likely to be poorly integrated into the old system and have weaker partisan ties.

ANALYZING PARTISANSHIP IN VENEZUELA

I conduct multinomial logit analysis of RedPol98 respondents' partisanship to examine why Venezuelans identified with the new left or new right or became independents rather than maintaining sympathies for one of the old parties.[8] Overall, 19 percent of respondents identified with a traditional party,[9] 35 percent with the new left, and 25 percent with the new right. Independents accounted for 21 percent of the sample. Based on the theoretical considerations outlined above, the analysis considers five sets of variables that should provide insight into the factors that influence party identification: ideology and issue positions, incorporation into the old party system, general attitudes about political parties, contemporary evaluations, and political socialization.[10] Ideology is measured using respondents' self-placement on a ten-point ideology scale where higher values are on the right. Issue positions assessed include attitudes toward decentralization, preferred economic system, state economic intervention, and privatization. The impact of general attitudes about political parties is assessed through two independent variables that ask whether parties are motivated purely by winning elections and whether political parties are

8. Multinomial logit is appropriate because partisanship has four non-ordered categories. Old parties include: AD, COPEI, MAS. Treating MAS separately does not alter the findings.

9. 15 percent *adecos*, 3 percent *copeyanos*, and 1 percent *masistas* (MAS supporters).

10. Question wording and coding are available from the author upon request.

trustworthy. Appraisals of the Caldera government as well as retrospective and prospective pocketbook economic evaluations tap perceptions of performance.[11] Finally, father and mother's partisan affiliations are included, as well as variables that account for the different socialization experiences that derive from education, age, class, and gender.

Results of this full model of partisanship are presented on the left side of table 1; traditional party supporters are the reference group. Positive coefficients indicate that higher values on the associated independent variable increase the probability of identifying with the nontraditional party grouping specified at the top of the column versus identifying with an old party. Overall, the model has considerable explanatory power; the partisanship of 55 percent of respondents is accurately predicted—over twice as high as the 25 percent that would be correct by random chance.[12] Right ideology has a statistically significant negative relationship for all categories of respondents who abandoned the old parties; but of the issues, only decentralization has any measurable impact. Incorporation into the old parties served as a substantial impetus for loyalty to the old parties, while negative views of parties drove people away. Opinions of Caldera's government are barely insignificant for members of the new left, while the effect of prospective evaluations is clearly significant for this group. Notably however, retrospective economic evaluations had no influence on the decision to exit the old system.[13] This result is surprising in light of the consistent finding that economic problems have served to undermine support for incumbents in Venezuela and throughout the developing world (Kelly 2003, 2006; Pacek and Radcliff 1995; Remmer 1991). However as Remmer (1991) is careful to point out, although crisis weakens incumbents, it does not generate support for radical alternatives. The finding here that at the moment of collapse, negative retrospective evaluations did not push people toward the drastic change embodied in Chávez, coincides with this caveat. Furthermore, given that the Caldera government, rather than the traditional parties, was likely to have been the object of retrospective evaluations at the moment of the survey, a disconnect between a respondent's economic evaluations and the choice to maintain or abandon support for the traditional parties is understandable.

11. It is possible that negative views of government performance as manifested in perceptions of corruption undermined support for the old system, but RedPol98 does not provide any measures of corruption. The only item that comes close asks whether or not elections are clean. Models not shown included this variable, finding that views of election fraud had no effect on partisanship.

12. All the socialization variables but education have significant effects for at least one category of the dependent variable.

13. In models excluding prospective evaluations, retrospective evaluations remained insignificant.

Poor retrospective evaluations at this moment were more likely to have diminished support for Caldera, rather than for AD and COPEI.

To simplify interpretation, I remove the insignificant issues and retrospective evaluations from the final model presented in the right half of the table. The two models' findings are parallel, and the restricted model does not sacrifice explanatory power, correctly predicting the partisanship of 49 percent of the sample. Because logit coefficients are substantively difficult to interpret, I also conduct a simulation to produce predicted probabilities based on this model.[14] The discussion below refers to these probabilities of identifying with the different party groupings in order to illustrate the magnitude of each variable's effect.

The analysis supports the argument that dissatisfaction with the representation provided by the traditional parties prompted exodus from the old system. First, ideology has a significant and substantial impact on partisanship. Respondents who placed themselves on the left were more likely to abandon the traditional parties than those on the right were. As the relative size of the ideology coefficients indicate, respondents on the left are most likely to identify with the new left, but they are also more likely to support the new right or be independent than to remain loyal to a traditional party. Predicted probabilities suggest that being on the left produces a .62 probability of identifying with the new left, but only a .04 probability of identifying with a traditional party. Respondents on the left are also more likely to identify with the new right or be independents than to identify with a traditional party, having a .17 probability of belonging to each of these non-traditional groupings.[15]

Alternatively, people on the right seemed more satisfied with the options that the old parties presented. Shifting from the left end of the ideological spectrum to the right significantly increases the probability of a respondent identifying with a traditional party. Those on the right have a .28 probability of remaining loyal to the old system, while people on the left have only a .04 probability. If those on the right did turn away from the traditional party system, they were most inclined to support the new right, with a .42 probability. New right parties consisted largely of splinter groups from AD and COPEI and as such did not represent a

14. Simulation conducted using Clarify (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000). To calculate the probabilities, I set each variable to its appropriate measure of central tendency. Education, age, and ideology set to their means. Class, decentralization, and only care about elections set to their medians. All others set to their modes. Then each variable's value is alternately set to a low and a high value to determine the probability of supporting each party grouping at these different values. A complete table reporting simulated predicted probabilities for all independent variables in the model is available from the author upon request.

15. Independents were equally distributed across the ideological spectrum.

Table 1 Multinomial Logit Analysis of Partisan Identification, 1998[1]

	Full Model			*Restricted Model*		
Independent Variables	*New Left*	*New Right*	*Ind.*	*New Left*	*New Right*	*Ind.*
Ideology						
Right Ideology	-.36**	-.11**	-.20**	-.38**	-.12**	-.21**
	(.04)	(.04)	(.05)	(.04)	(.04)	(.05)
Issue Positions						
Decentralization	.19	.32	.44*	.13	.33*	.34*
	(.17)	(.17)	(.20)	(.15)	(.16)	(.17)
Economic System[2]						
Capitalism	.19	.31	.18			
	(.51)	(.52)	(.62)			
Socialism	.50	.48	.44			
	(.52)	(.54)	(.63)			
State Intervention[3]						
More Intervention	.32	.14	-.21			
	(.31)	(.31)	(.35)			
Less Intervention	.54	.43	.45			
	(.52)	(.52)	(.56)			
Privatization[4]						
Privatize All	.32	.15	.16			
	(.38)	(.38)	(.43)			
Privatize None	.15	-.14	.21			
	(.24)	(.24)	(.27)			
Incorporation						
Affiliation with Classic	-.55*	-.78**	-.72*	-.55*	-.75**	-.78*
Constituency of Old Parties	(.28)	(.29)	(.34)	(.27)	(.28)	(.32)
Attitudes about Parties						
Only Care about Elections	.43**	.37*	1.06**	.42**	.40**	.70**
	(.16)	(.16)	(.26)	(.15)	(.15)	(.05)
Trust in Parties						
A Lot of Trust	-.97*	-1.06*	-1.00	-.86*	-.84*	-1.04
	(.44)	(.45)	(.68)	(.44)	(.42)	(.66)
No Trust	.74**	.50*	1.15**	.68**	.45*	1.09**
	(.23)	(.22)	(.27)	(.21)	(.21)	(.24)
Contemporary Evaluations						
Caldera's Performance	-.44	-.04	-.16	-.53*	.05	-.23
	(.24)	(.23)	(.28)	(.23)	(.21)	(.25)

Table 1 continued

	Full Model			*Restricted Model*		
Independent Variables	*New Left*	*New Right*	*Ind.*	*New Left*	*New Right*	*Ind.*
Retrospective Economic Evaluations						
My situation has improved	-.08	.44	-.49			
	(.30)	(.28)	(.36)			
My situation has worsened	.43	.18	.03			
	(.26)	(.27)	(.29)			
Prospective Economic Evaluations						
My situation will improve	.64**	.28	.10	.58**	.34	.13
	(.23)	(.23)	(.28)	(.22)	(.22)	(.25)
My situation will worsen	-.53	-.28	.18	-.34	-.21	.28
	(.35)	(.35)	(.37)	(.32)	(.32)	(.33)
Socialization						
Father Favors Traditional Party	-1.23**	-1.01**	-.92**	-1.17**	-.97**	-1.02**
	(.30)	(.30)	(.34)	(.27)	(.28)	(.31)
Mother Favors Traditional Party	-.37	-.26	-.88**	-.35	-.24	-.74*
	(.30)	(.30)	(.34)	(.27)	(.28)	(.30)
Education	.06	.02	.13	.05	.04	.11
	(.11)	(.11)	(.13)	(.10)	(.11)	(.12)
Age	-.04	-.28**	.001	.02	-.24**	.01
	(.08)	(.08)	(.09)	(.07)	(.08)	(.08)
Class	.05	.35*	.22	.08	.39**	.30
	(.16)	(.15)	(.17)	(.15)	(.14)	(.16)
Male	-.16	-.54*	-.03	.02	-.42*	.04
	(.22)	(.22)	(.25)	(.20)	(.20)	(.23)
Constant	1.99*	.45	-1.07	2.77**	.62	-.38
	(.89)	(.92)	(1.06)	(.65)	(.68)	(.76)
Log-Likelihood		-1069.4			-1238.8	
Likelihood Ratio Test (d.f.)		1735.6 (69) **			1396.8 (45) **	
Correct Predictions		55%			49%	
N		953			1079	

1. Dependent Variable Reference Category: Supporters of the Old Parties—AD, COPEI, and MAS
2. Reference: Communism
3. Reference: The same amount of state intervention
4. Reference: Privatize some state industries

Note: Standard Errors in parentheses. *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01. Analysis conducted with Stata 9.0.

Source: RedPol98, Universidad Simón Bolívar Banco de Datos Poblacionales

radical change. Therefore, while people on the left seemed to seek a clear break with the old system and embraced radical new left parties, people on the right were less likely to desire fundamental transformation of the party system, supporting either new right or traditional parties.

Notably, the analysis indicates that people on the left were extremely dissatisfied with the traditional parties. Not only were they more likely to become independents or support the new left over the traditional parties—a number of people on the left even preferred the new right over the old system. This tendency supports the hypothesis that people on the left were especially frustrated with AD and COPEI's failure to provide meaningful policy alternatives and resented the shift toward the right that occurred within sectors of AD during the 1990s. This frustration drove people of the left almost completely out of the old party system.

Evidence concerning the impact of issue positions on partisanship is more ambiguous. Respondents favoring decentralization were much more likely to identify with the new right or be independents than to remain loyal to the traditional parties. The predicted probabilities indicate that opposing decentralization increased the probability of supporting a traditional party by 10 points from .12 to .22. Conversely, favoring decentralization inclined respondents toward the new right or independence.

Contrary to expectations, however, the other issues had no significant effects and were dropped from the final model. Perhaps this result should not be entirely surprising. In retrospect, identifying the policy positions of Venezuela's new parties does not seem problematic. New left parties support socialism and state intervention and oppose decentralization and privatization; new right parties maintain the opposite positions, favoring capitalism, decentralization, privatization, and less state intervention. But in 1998, as many new parties were just emerging, citizens faced considerable information barriers and doubt about parties' stances on specific issues. While some new parties had experience in regional governments, most lacked national-level records. In light of the instability both within parties and in the party system as a whole at the moment of the survey, finding a null result is not astonishing. In fact, the turmoil and ambiguity of the political situation amplify the importance of left ideology and support for decentralization in generating the frustrating absence of substantive representation that drove people from the old party system.

The analysis also finds that lack of incorporation into the traditional party system induced departure from the traditional parties. I hypothesized that institutionalized connections with the traditional parties served to integrate people into the old system and promoted effective representation of their interests within government, while the absence of such connections generated resentment concerning the old parties' failure to voice concerns outside the formal system of interest representation. Indeed, I find that Venezuelans who were part of the classic

constituency of the old parties were much less likely to abandon the traditional system and embrace new options than those who were not incorporated. Membership in a labor union or professional association increased respondents' probability of remaining loyal to the old parties by 11 points from .15 to .26, while nonmembers were significantly more likely to abandon the old parties in favor of something new.

General disenchantment with political parties also prompted departure from the traditional system. As table 1 makes clear, frustration with what was perceived as parties' singular electoral motivation pushed people away from the old system. People who felt parties only cared about elections were less likely to belong to a traditional party and more likely to be independents or support a new party. Predicted probabilities indicate that Venezuelans who thought parties were motivated only by elections were half as likely to support a traditional party as those who did not hold this view. In contrast, the probability of being an independent was .20 for those who thought parties were focused simply on elections, but only .11 for those who viewed parties' motivations more favorably. Trust in parties, another measure of general views about political parties, has a similar relationship with partisanship. High trust promoted loyalty to the traditional parties, while lack of trust provoked exit. Respondents with a lot of trust had a 29 percent chance of sympathizing with a traditional party, whereas those who did not trust parties only had a 15 percent chance of remaining within the old system. Venezuelans without trust in parties were more inclined to belong to any of the new political options—left, right, or independent—than affiliate with the traditional parties.

The contemporary evaluation variables suggest additional motivations behind many Venezuelans' departure from the traditional parties. Assessments of the incumbent government and prospective economic evaluations have notable effects on partisanship, particularly in distinguishing between old parties and the new left. Negative views of Caldera's performance motivated identification with the new left over the traditional parties and the new right. Predicted probabilities demonstrate that negative evaluations of Caldera produced an increase of 10 points in the probability of supporting the new left. Alternatively, positive evaluations of Caldera increased the likelihood of backing the new right by 8 points. Prospective economic evaluations also contributed significantly to some respondents' decisions to abandon the old system and embrace the new left. Belief that the economy would improve in the next six months under a new left government led many respondents to embrace these parties. As expected, people who anticipated economic improvement under the newly elected government led by Chávez and MVR were significantly more likely to identify with the new left. Positive prospective evaluations increased the probability of identifying with

the new left by 8 points, but decreased the probability of supporting a traditional party by 5 points. As mentioned above, retrospective evaluations had no significant influence on partisan identification and were therefore, excluded from this analysis.

Finally, the analysis indicates that despite the fluidity of Venezuelan partisan identities during the 1990s, political socialization shaped respondents' decisions to remain loyal to or abandon the traditional parties. Fathers who supported traditional parties significantly increased loyalty in their children. Mothers' identification with a traditional party made respondents less likely to become independents; effects for the new left and the new right, while not significant, are also in the expected direction. Clearly, parents' devotion to the old parties promoted similar commitment among their children. We also find that younger people and women were more likely to join the new right than to maintain ties to one of the old parties, supporting the hypothesis that people such as women and youth whose socialization experiences produced weaker ties to the traditional parties were likely to leave the old system. However, contrary to these expectations, upper-class people were also more likely to join the new right than those of lower status. There are no significant socio-demographic distinctions between the traditional parties and the new left and independents. So, the unique socialization experiences of young people, women, and the wealthy prompted them to join the new right, but socialization did not contribute to departure from the traditional parties by new left supporters and independents.

CONCLUSIONS

These findings provide considerable insight into the factors that motivated so many Venezuelans to leave the old parties and embrace new ones during the late 1990s, a process which ultimately produced the collapse of the traditional party system in the 1998 elections. Analysis of partisanship at this pivotal moment reveals that abandonment of the old system was prompted by left ideology, lack of incorporation into traditional parties, negative views of parties, dissatisfaction with the incumbent, and expectations of better performance by new parties. And in some cases, the absence of socialization into the old system facilitated exit.

Most significant in understanding the party system's collapse is the myriad evidence suggesting that the mass exodus from the traditional system was motivated largely by people's frustration with the system's shortcomings in providing a sense of voice and influence in government. Findings concerning the effects of ideology and incorporation as well as general disenchantment with political parties emphasize the profound impact the system's failure to listen to and speak for many Venezuelans had on their decision to leave the old parties.

The analysis demonstrates that general disappointment with political parties pushed people away from the traditional parties toward new alternatives. But, more specific frustrations with the old system's failure to speak for the ideas and interests of an increasingly significant portion of society proved to be a particularly critical catalyst behind the system's collapse. Beginning in the late 1980s, the policies and ideological positions of AD and COPEI became increasingly interchangeable. Carlos Andrés Pérez's support for and implementation of neoliberal policy reforms during the last *adeco* presidency marked a considerable shift to the right by this traditionally social-democratic party; and important factions within COPEI also supported these reforms. Furthermore, the support AD provided to its longtime rival during Caldera's highly unpopular second administration likely served to further confuse and discourage voters. By the late 1990s, AD and COPEI no longer presented meaningful alternatives, as the two parties had converged upon a similar ideological position on the right side of the spectrum. This convergence produced frustration among people on the left who increasingly felt disenfranchised. When new parties emerged and became viable alternatives, they attracted the growing numbers of people discontent with the indistinguishable policies of AD and COPEI. The analysis here expounds the individual-level underpinnings for this aggregate-level phenomenon; people on the right were seven times more likely to remain loyal to the traditional parties than those on the left.[16] The failure of the traditional party system to give voice to both sides of the ideological spectrum drove people away from the old parties.

In addition to AD and COPEI's ideological uniformity undermining representation and prompting exit from the old system, formal means of channeling and voicing societal interests also proved inadequate. People connected to the traditional parties through membership in effectively incorporated sectoral groups like professional associations and unions were much more likely to remain committed to a traditional party than those who were not. By the late 1990s, the proportion of the population in these incorporated groups had dropped considerably. But the old parties failed to integrate emerging sectors into existing channels of interest representation; so, growing numbers of Venezuelans were not formally connected to the political system. This created a situation in which a large portion of the population lacked the attachments needed to promote commitment to the old system, making people more inclined to leave the traditional parties for new ones.

What can these findings tell us more generally about the underpinnings of party system transformation and collapse? The failure of a party system to provide meaningful, viable alternatives promotes frustration

16. For a discussion of the aggregate-level dynamics see Kelly (2005).

among the portion of the population left unrepresented by the seemingly immutable agenda that will be implemented regardless of which party controls the government. This kind of frustration with what is viewed as the monolithic ideological position of the parties causes people who do not hold this same ideology to look elsewhere for representation. Lack of meaningful alternatives in a party system makes it more susceptible to transformation or collapse. Furthermore, a party system that does not adapt to changes in social and economic structure and neglects incorporation of emerging sectors of the population into existing channels of representation is also vulnerable to a mass exodus of partisans. As more people feel disconnected from and unrepresented by the existing parties, the system risks collapse—losing its position as the central mechanism connecting people to their government. Eventually, the hope that new political parties will perform better than the status quo provides the impetus for people not only to leave the old parties but also to embrace alternatives. In this analysis, we observed that positive expectations about the ability of a new left government to make improvements in the economy created the impetus for people to embrace the new left, the emerging dominance of which was crucial in the collapse of the old system. Therefore, this analysis suggests that party system collapse is precipitated by the inadequate representation of the old party system coupled with the anticipated success of new political alternatives.

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