

THE POLITICAL TECHNOCRAT IN MEXICO AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

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No issue in Mexican politics received more attention in selecting the 1982 presidential candidate than the role of the technocrat. The technocrat's influence on the Mexican state has had widespread consequences, such as changing political recruitment patterns, altering the socialization of political leaders, shifting career channels essential to advancement within the political system, and most significantly, causing adjustments in the stability of the political system. Crucial to any discussion of the changing role played by the technocrat in Mexican politics is a clear understanding of the term *technocrat*. This essay therefore will discuss conceptualizations of the technocrat, attempt a working definition of the term in the Mexican context, provide empirical evidence as to the presence of technocrats in Mexican politics, and suggest possible consequences for the political system.

THE CONCEPT OF THE TECHNOCRAT

The issue of the technocrat is part of two larger theoretical questions. These questions have been raised in the study of local politics by North American political scientists and in examinations of contemporary political leadership by intellectuals. The study of local politics compares the leadership potential of elective and managerial elites.¹ Analysts of local politics suggest that each type of leader has certain advantages and disadvantages. But the crucial differences between the elective leader (or politician) and the appointive manager (or technocrat) are that the means of access to office determines responsiveness to given constituencies as well as differential skills. The question of constituency responsiveness has little relevance to the Mexican scene because the election itself until recently has had little to do with how decision makers achieve their positions. This statement does not imply that politicians do not respond to certain constituencies; however, the

key Mexican decision makers at the national level, with the exception of the president, are not elected.

The second issue, the differences in skills that characterize the two types of leaders, will be discussed at length. Intellectuals, most notably C. P. Snow, raised this theoretical issue in observing that the twentieth century has witnessed a growing incompatibility between humanists and scientists, or more broadly, between generalists (politicians) and specialists (technocrats).² These two groups remain distinct because their experiences and values are so divergent as to prevent them from communicating with one another. The consequences of the failure of these two groups to communicate effectively is a central issue, and it too will be discussed in the Mexican context.

As Merilee Grindle has argued, the characteristics "generally attributed to the *técnico* are that he has specialized knowledge; he is recruited and advanced in his career through universalistic criteria of evaluation; he is apolitical and considers himself to be above politics; he makes decisions on the basis of rationality and efficiency; he often tends to underestimate the need to consider questions of human relations and politics in his work; and he is increasingly influential in policy making."³ Grindle's examination of these assumed attributes identifies deviations that emerge when they are applied to the Mexican case. Such ascriptions may give a general sense of the technocrat, but they exaggerate certain qualities. In the Mexican context, most of the assertions about the nature of the technocrat prove to be untrue because the line dividing the politician from the technocrat is a fine one. In fact, as Grindle concludes, making a hard-and-fast distinction between the politician and the technocrat is not helpful in understanding the trends in this type of leadership.⁴ It therefore makes more sense to use the term *political technocrat* rather than *technocrat* to distinguish this type of leader from the typical politician.

I would argue that in Mexico all top-level decision makers are politicians but that it is possible to delineate certain types of politicians on the basis of education, career experiences, means of recruitment, and sources of influence. Such variables contribute to the values and skills held by political technocrats and distinguish them from nontechnical public officials. A reexamination and redefinition of the characteristics listed by Grindle may serve to establish a more useful definition.

The first characteristic generally attributed to political technocrats is that they have acquired specialized knowledge that gives them expertise in the positions held. Expertise, however, may be acquired in various ways, including education, on-the-job training, and career experience. Furthermore, the assumption that individuals' expertise corresponds to the positions held at any one time may be naive. If expertise is of any value for understanding the nature and role of political

technocrats, empirical data must be obtained over a long period so that trends in this type of leadership will become apparent. No astute observer of the Mexican political system would argue that individuals always hold positions related to their special knowledge or skills, even if one can define what a political technocrat is and whether a given individual meets the necessary criteria. What I will argue instead is that political technocrats have been on the political scene since the 1930s, that they are increasing numerically in the Mexican political system, that this trend is unlikely to be reversed, and that the career patterns of political technocrats have probable consequences for the political system.⁵

EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIZATION AND THE POLITICAL TECHNOCRAT

One can examine empirically the degree of specialization present among Mexican politicians by looking for changes in the following variables: the number of different disciplines represented in their educational backgrounds; the increase in newer specializations, which have been associated almost by definition with political technocrats; the amount of graduate education; and the expansion in educational experiences outside of Mexico.

It is not surprising that as a political system modernizes, as decision making becomes more complex, and as educational opportunities increase, political leaders attain higher levels of formal education.⁶ In fact, 75 percent of all political leaders in Mexico since the 1930s, whether in the government or in opposition parties, have received college degrees.⁷ If we confine our observations to cabinet secretaries and directors of the major state agencies, however, a gradual, but definite, trend emerges in the educational levels of those officeholders from the mid-1930s to the present. These two positions in the Mexican system have been selected because they are believed by most observers to be the ones that wield political power and allocate resources.⁸

The information in table 1 demonstrates that the level of education of cabinet secretaries has changed. Sixty-five percent of those who began their careers in the Lázaro Cárdenas administration had college educations. Eighty-five percent of López Mateos's collaborators in the late 1950s had college educations. In the de la Madrid administration, the number of agency heads with college educations reached 100 percent for the first time in Mexican history. A trend that can also be seen in tables 1 and 2 is that subsecretaries often foreshadow trends among their superiors, and interestingly, among all officeholders. Since the 1930s, assistant secretaries have often been the best-educated group in the government.⁹

As I have argued elsewhere, what makes the figures for Mexican

TABLE 1 Educational Levels among Mexican Cabinet Secretaries and Subsecretaries, by Administration*

Level of Education Attained	Cárdenas (1935–1940)		López Mateos (1958–1964)		de la Madrid (1982–1983)	
	Sec. (%)	Subsec. (%)	Sec. (%)	Subsec. (%)	Sec. (%)	Subsec. (%)
Primary through preparatory	35	21	15	8	0	3
University	43	55	59	67	30	44
Graduate work	11	16	21	21	66	53
Medical degree**	11	8	5	5	3	0
Totals	100 (63)	100 (38)	100 (75)	101 (66)	99 (30)	100 (34)

*Cabinet secretaries and subsecretaries include individuals who have served as directors and subdirectors of major decentralized agencies and federal banks. The banks nationalized after September 1982 are not included in order to keep the data comparable. All data on cabinet secretaries are taken from information compiled by the author on all high-level officeholders in Mexico from June 1935 through May 1983. *The Mexican Political Biographies Project* contains 1363 individual entries. Career information and background data for individuals holding positions described in this table and table 2 are complete for approximately 85 percent of the population.

**The medical degree is differentiated from graduate work because it, along with law, has been the traditional degree earned by college-educated Mexicans and politicians, at least since the nineteenth century.

politicians significant is that higher education is not widely accessible to Mexicans.¹⁰ North American officeholders in comparable positions would have similar educational prerequisites, but access to all levels of education is widespread in the United States. Unlike their North American counterparts, college-educated Mexicans receive professional degrees in such fields as law, engineering, medicine, or architecture rather than the bachelor of arts or science degrees that most North American graduates earn. Politicians in Mexico constitute a distinct educational elite, and heads of agencies and their assistants are an even more selective group within the larger political leadership. But for the purposes of determining trends in skills attributed to political technocrats, the amount of graduate work completed is an even better measure than a college degree. Because it is becoming increasingly common for middle-class Mexicans to obtain undergraduate degrees, graduate

work—especially from private universities—is the new point of demarcation for the elite.

The trends in postprofessional education among Mexican decision makers are remarkable. In the 1930s, only 11 percent of cabinet leaders and 16 percent of subcabinet leaders had obtained education beyond their professional degree. By the late 1950s, 21 percent of all secretaries had graduate education. In the de la Madrid administration, two-thirds of all cabinet secretaries had attained this level of education as well as more than half of the subsecretaries (see table 1). Thus, the number of leaders with graduate education increased nearly fivefold by 1983.

These general educational characteristics demonstrate another complementary pattern. As the number of individuals without university degrees declined to a tiny minority of decision makers, those formerly without any higher education completed their first professional degree; thus, in the 1950s, the figures for university-educated agency heads increased substantially over those for the 1930s. But in the last twenty years, the numbers of those with only university degrees have declined and leveled off, and now the postprofessional category is growing at the fastest rate.

Perhaps a more accurate indicator of technical expertise is the type of education received. A review of disciplines studied by politicians reveals several important characteristics about the political system. Not surprisingly, among all politicians from 1935 to 1983, law still prevails as the most popular professional degree, with 56 percent of the college-educated having graduated in law. Among all university-educated politicians, the law degree is followed in importance by arts and letters (13 percent), engineering (10 percent), medical and dental (10 percent), and economics and accounting (8 percent).¹¹ The two positions most important to decision making, however, reveal some interesting educational trends.

There are several reasons why law has always dominated the educational backgrounds of politicians: a law degree provides skills useful to a political career; the faculty at the National University has been politicized; and law is the field from which teaching politicians have traditionally recruited disciples. Thus law continued to attract students hoping for political careers, and their numbers even increased slightly from the 1930s through the 1950s. But since the 1950s, the pattern has changed (see table 2). Law has begun to decline as the discipline chosen by future politicians. Three other broad areas have shown a marked increase: economics and accounting, engineering and architecture, and liberal arts and the sciences. Although only 6 percent of all cabinet secretaries in the 1930s were trained in accounting and economics, by the 1980s, this category had increased sixfold. While agency

T A B L E 2 *Trends in University Degrees among Mexican Cabinet Secretaries and Subsecretaries, by Administration*

Type of Degree Received	Cárdenas (1935–1940)		López Mateos (1958–1964)		de la Madrid (1982–1983)	
	Sec. (%)	Subsec. (%)	Sec. (%)	Subsec. (%)	Sec. (%)	Subsec. (%)
None	32	21	16	9	0	3
Law and Medicine	52	51	55	58	30	24
Economics and Accounting	6	5	7	9	37	29
Architecture and Engineering	8	21	15	20	13	21
Other*	2	3	7	5	20	24
Totals	100 (65)	101 (39)	100 (74)	101 (66)	100 (30)	101 (34)

*Refers to degrees in the liberal arts, public administration, political science, communications, industrial relations, and the natural sciences. Political science and the sciences predominate in this category.

heads with university training in engineering and architecture have nearly doubled, the proportional change in fields like political science, communications, and the natural and physical sciences has been most dramatic, with a tenfold increase since the Cárdenas era.

These changes are important for two reasons. In the first place, they reflect attitudinal changes as to what politicians themselves value as part of their credentials. Politicians as a group seem to believe that the political system or the state now places a higher value on a new set of credentials: graduate education and degrees in disciplines other than law and medicine. In the past, most politicians were willing to gain educational expertise in a second area only after receiving a law degree first. Miguel de la Madrid represents the generation that made this transition, combining the traditional law degree with postprofessional training in a nontraditional field. But figures for the younger generations, as represented by many assistant secretaries in the de la Madrid administration, clearly suggest that the traditional law degree is no longer necessary and that for the first time in Mexican political history, more than half of the assistant secretaries have chosen to obtain their initial degree outside of law or medicine. This choice is mirrored in the

political recruitment process and the career success of politicians. As these young politicians assume leadership roles in *camarillas* and use the university system to teach and recruit new disciples, they will increase the number of politicians who will follow in their footsteps.

The level of educational specialization characterizing political technicians in Mexico is indicative of another change in values. In the first place, the political leadership (not only those who are political technocrats) have become convinced that degree specialization and advanced education are necessary in the federal bureaucracy. Second, traditional politicians obviously believe that this special knowledge is sufficiently useful to appoint subordinates with such skills. Finally, the increase in advanced specialized training implies that expertise may be more important in solving social and economic problems than are political skills. Indeed, expertise is viewed an asset in maintaining the stability of the political system, the quality most important to all establishment politicians.

The source of educational expertise is also an important factor. Few Mexican politicians receive their undergraduate education abroad. To do so would prevent early entry into the political system, given the fact that native educational institutions, primarily public institutions in Mexico City, provide the pool for political recruitment. But many of the Mexican politicians who receive postprofessional education do so abroad. Unfortunately, the entire biographical data set has not been coded to evaluate this information. But it has been determined that 63 percent of the de la Madrid cabinet have studied abroad, most commonly at Yale, Harvard, and Wisconsin, as well as at the University of London and other English institutions. The fact that more politicians are obtaining such educational experiences is reflected in the backgrounds of two of Mexico's recent presidents, both of whom studied in Chile, and in that of the current president, Miguel de la Madrid, who received a master's degree in public administration from Harvard.¹²

The significance of educational experiences abroad for Mexico's political and cultural elite has not been fully examined. Foreign values obtained through such experiences may directly or indirectly affect policy-making.¹³ For example, it has been suggested that Luis Echeverría's affection for Salvador Allende and his interest in Chile can be attributed partially to Echeverría's attending school there in the 1940s. A more specific example is cabinet member Ramón Beteta, a political technocrat whose economic ideas were greatly influenced by the North American writers and statesmen with whom he became familiar as an undergraduate at the University of Texas.¹⁴

It should be noted that an educational experience in a foreign country does not automatically produce a positive or negative response to that country's values or political traditions. Also, students with cer-

tain orientations may select specific countries, thus the experience abroad may reinforce preconceived notions. It is nonetheless true that Mexicans who have studied abroad have been affected ideologically. Specifically, in a study of prominent intellectuals since the 1920s, I found that those with neoliberal ideas (a philosophy corresponding to that held by most politicians of the period) were more likely to have lived in the United States (79 percent) than were their peers who professed Marxist views (36 percent).¹⁵ However affected and for whatever reasons, more Mexicans are studying abroad.

The degree to which would-be political technocrats or intellectuals attempt to apply their experiences abroad when they return home is also important. Latin Americans have often been criticized by their own political and intellectual leaders, as well as by North American intellectual historians, for trying to implement solutions that imitate European or North American models.¹⁶ The hallmark of the Mexican political system that has made it successful to some degree is its unique pragmatism, which developed out of experiences before and after the revolution. But as political technocrats become more esteemed in the political system, and as they bring advanced educational experiences, both domestic and foreign, with them, they also bring intellectual baggage that is foreign to the needs of Mexico and her political system. Indeed, this result may well be the most significant of the multitude of consequences of the use of political technocrats for the Mexican state.

The argument that political technocrats view the political system differently than do their traditional counterparts is obviously difficult to prove. Many of the older politicians whom I interviewed are convinced that political technocrats do see things differently and that their differing views have practical consequences.¹⁷ A number of interviews with traditional politicians that appeared in the Mexican press during 1983 included the traditional politicians' lament that they as a group are disappearing from the political scene.

A specific illustration of an inappropriate foreign idea can be found in the earlier political career of Manuel Bartlett Díaz, currently Secretary of Government in the de la Madrid administration. Bartlett Díaz studied in Manchester and Paris and subsequently organized the *Movimiento Revolucionario de Juventud* of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) in the 1960s, which was patterned after the Spanish *Falange*. The movement's activities were later restricted by President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, and the press attributed its failure to the attempt to apply unworkable European ideas to the Mexican reality.¹⁸ A more subtle example of foreign influences in the de la Madrid administration is revealed in the president's order that all of his colleagues in the federal bureaucracy, from the level of director generalship on up, make public their *curricula vitae* "to show the Mexican people the personality,

preparation, and merits of the women and men who serve in the Federal Government."¹⁹ This procedure, which had never before occurred in Mexico, was described by de la Madrid as a form of social communication that he learned in public administration, the discipline he studied at Harvard. Although it can be argued that the socialization experiences generated by political institutions themselves are stronger than the learning environment of higher education, the fact is that numerous incremental changes are taking place in those institutions that ultimately will reinforce and institutionalize practices learned elsewhere. Thus, as many small changes in attitudes and behavior shared by political technocrats are incorporated into the political process, often so subtly as to be difficult to perceive, they become legitimate practices.

The value that the Mexican political system places on educational expertise, and consequently on political technocrats, can also be exemplified by the impact of these credentials on career success. To what extent do those with higher education and more specialized degrees continue their political careers? Studies of both the Mexican and Spanish cabinets suggest that politicians with technical expertise increase the longevity of their political careers in comparison with those lacking such qualifications.²⁰ It does seem logical that in the interplay of variables that determine the choice of top decision makers in Mexico, an individual with specialized expertise would have an added advantage in the selection process. As Peter Smith concluded in his important study, one of "the strongest determinants of success" in Mexican politics is a university education.²¹

RECRUITMENT CRITERIA AND THE POLITICAL TECHNICIAN

Two other criteria that scholars usually attribute to the political technocrats are that they are recruited and advanced in their careers by means of universalistic evaluation criteria and that they are apolitical. In my opinion, these two criteria are more applicable to the English and North American political systems than to the Mexican system. As I argued earlier, technicians are not so much apolitical as far less experienced politically than the politicians who lack technical expertise. While at face value these two criteria do not apply to Mexico, if carefully redefined, certain elements of each may be valuable in determining the role of the political technocrat in Mexican politics.

It is clear that top-level personnel decisions in Mexico are influenced by a combination of factors, among them the confidence that a superior has in a particular subordinate, the political skills of the appointee, the group of *camarilla* connections shared by superior and subordinate, the freedom given to superiors by the president to choose their own subordinates, the particular expertise of the individual being

considered and its relationship to the position, and the values shared by both parties.²² Thus political technocrats are not judged on merit alone, but like their nontechnical peers, on some or all of these qualities. Nevertheless, a number of changes in Mexico's recruitment process might favor the political technocrat.

It is likely that educational institutions are increasingly encouraging the emergence of political technocrats. The reasons for this trend are several. In the mentor-disciple relationship found among politicians as well as intellectuals, individuals in a position to recruit will naturally choose their disciples among students who have similar values and experiences.²³ As more and more mentors have taken on the characteristics of political technocrats, a pattern that began gradually in the 1920s, the number of political technocrats who were mentors has multiplied. Thus the political technocrats who teach at the National University are likely to produce younger versions of themselves rather than traditional politicians. Furthermore, a recruiting process based on selection by those already in office becomes self-perpetuating. This recruitment process is reinforced by universal changes in the value placed on higher and specialized education among all types of leadership groups.

As educational institutions have increased their influence over the recruitment process, a corresponding decline has occurred in the role that the PRI (the official party), the labor unions, and earlier the army have played in recruitment. These three institutions have been the main sources for recruiting traditional politicians in Mexico, individuals generally without special expertise who rose to the top of the system because of their pragmatic ability to deal with political problems and carry out political tasks for their superiors. But as educational institutions, especially the National University, have grown in scope, new faculties, notably economics and political and social sciences, have involved themselves more and more in the recruitment process. Furthermore, El Colegio de México, a highly specialized institution whose primary focus has been advanced training, has begun to share this function now that its alumni are taking their places in the political leadership. The Colegio's contribution to this trend will increase the proportion of political technocrats because the very goal of the Colegio has been to remain as much as possible outside the realm of politics.²⁴

The other notable change taking place in the last decade has been the gradual shift from public to private universities. Approximately 6 percent of the top administrators in the de la Madrid administration received their undergraduate training in private schools. This figure seems insignificant when compared to the total figures for graduates from public schools, but when examined as an indicator of a trend in the 1980s and contrasted to the figure of fewer than 1 percent of the administrators in previous regimes with undergraduate degrees from

private universities, it suggests a significant sixfold increase. As Daniel Levy has shown, the curriculum and values of the top private schools are distinct from those taught in public institutions.²⁵ Access to these institutions is restricted to much smaller pools of parents who can pay the tuition. Private universities promote a nonpolitical environment, and graduates of private schools have little interaction with working- and lower-middle-class students. Shared educational experiences with leadership groups in the cultural and entrepreneurial worlds may alter their relationships with one another. Interviews with public sector leaders demonstrate a tendency among certain agencies to prefer selected private university undergraduates (such as those from the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México) to graduates of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM).²⁶ This internal trend and that of education abroad, however, may be complicated or temporarily sidetracked by the recent devaluation and the resulting inability of Mexicans to pay the higher costs of private and foreign education.²⁷

PAROCHIAL CAREERISM AND THE POLITICAL TECHNOCRAT

There is no doubt that the top decision makers in Mexico are increasingly individuals who have followed careers in academia and public administration and who lack experience with mass political organizations, such as the party or labor unions. This trend is sometimes difficult to detect over time. Since 1920 the political scene has been dominated by three career patterns that I call the electoral path, the electoral-administrative path, and the administrative path. In the early years, most Mexican politicians followed the first two of these paths, taking part at the local or national level in party and electoral politics as civilians (most commonly lawyers) or as self-made revolutionary officers. But even at the beginning of the postrevolutionary era, a number of well-educated people followed largely administrative careers in the national bureaucracy, even though they also participated in political groups and were active participants in local and national elections.²⁸

All three career paths still exist in the 1980s, but the distribution of politicians who follow each pattern has changed sharply. The electoral path was commonly taken by politicians in the 1920s and 1930s and the electoral administrative path by those rising to prominence in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s. But by the 1970s, the administrative path became dominant and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future.²⁹ The dominance of this career path is both a cause and a result of the increasing presence of political technocrats in Mexico. The values of political technocrats as the most typical recruiters are becoming institutionalized within the Mexican political system.³⁰ President de la Madrid himself illustrates this general trend.

De la Madrid's career has been spent in the federal bureaucracy, beginning in 1953, when he was employed in the legal department of the Banco Nacional de Comercio Exterior. Although he was a law student, de la Madrid wrote his thesis on economic thought in the 1857 Constitution. He compiled the second-highest grade point average in his law school class and received a public administration degree in the United States, the first Mexican president to have been educated there. Every federal post that de la Madrid held was financial in nature, and indeed, his original mentor was Ernesto Fernández Hurtado, Director of the Banco de México. Although formally a member of the PRI since 1963 and active as a student orator and leader at the law school, de la Madrid had never held a party post nor run for elective office.³¹

De la Madrid symbolized the ascension to control of the new Mexican administrative elite, which is made up of political technocrats. The data in table 3 show that even since the 1930s, few cabinet members or immediate subordinates have been political militants or have used political party posts to rise to the top. Traditionally, one-fifth of Mexico's cabinet secretaries were also high party officials, a proportion that should have increased as the party increased its strength and became integral to the government. Instead, however, the number of politicians holding high party posts has stabilized at about one-seventh, and this trend has been equally true of the careers of secretaries (table 3). For the first time in recent political history, cabinet secretaries (the most prestigious group within the Mexican political system) have held high party posts in numbers fewer than all other politicians.

The clearest absolute decline in career experiences for all politicians has been in the military. Military experience has leveled off at about 5 percent of cabinet and subcabinet groups in the present administration. No cabinet secretary born after 1930 has followed a military career (see tables 3 and 4). Union careers also have displayed an interesting pattern. Initially, their numbers were small among Cárdenas's closest collaborators, probably because unions only recently had been organized and had not yet reached their zenith as recruiting institutions. By the 1950s, and in part because López Mateos was personally involved with labor in the national teachers' union, twice as many cabinet secretaries came from union career backgrounds. Again, while subsecretaries in the Cárdenas administration foretold the increasing trend toward more labor union careers in the backgrounds of secretaries in the 1950s, the small representation of union careers among subsecretaries in the 1950s foretold the pattern for the 1980s. In fact, in the two earlier administrations analyzed in table 3, cabinet secretaries followed union careers in numbers equivalent to all political leaders. But by 1983, none of them had such experiences, compared to 15 percent of all other

TABLE 3 Career Trends among Mexican Cabinet Secretaries and Subsecretaries, by Administration

Career Post Held*	Cárdenas (1935–1940)		López Mateos (1958–1964)		de la Madrid (1982–1983)	
	Sec. (%)	Subsec. (%)	Sec. (%)	Subsec. (%)	Sec. (%)	Subsec. (%)
Union leader	8	10	16	6	0	6
Military officer	22	10	8	5	6	0**
Top party post***	18	5	20	7	12	3
Any party post***	12	13	22	14	12	18****
Local deputy	12	8	8	5	0	6
Federal deputy	32	13	33	21	3	9
Mayor	12	8	8	5	3	6

*Because some individuals have held more than one post and others have held none in these categories, column totals may be more or less than 100 percent.

**One subsecretary was a career officer before 1976, but data were insufficient to include him.

***Refers to positions held only in the PRI or its antecedents.

****The vast majority of these subsecretaries held positions in the Instituto de Estudios Políticos, Económicos y Sociales (IEPES) of the PRI during the campaign of 1982. De la Madrid apparently believed that these individuals needed more party experience, even if in the most technical agency of the party.

politicians. If the age of the secretary is examined, this downward trend was already apparent by the generation born in the 1920s.

The other pattern shown is that of local electoral experiences among political leaders. Experience as either local deputy or mayor has largely remained a stable proportion in the careers of all politicians from the 1930s through the 1980s, but the presence of this group has declined sharply among heads of federal agencies and has been nearly eliminated in the careers of secretaries (table 3). As for federal deputies, only one cabinet secretary, Jesús Reyes Heróles, previously held that post. He is also the only appointee at the cabinet level who has held

T A B L E 4 Career Trends among Mexican Cabinet Secretaries, by Date of Birth*

Career Post Held**	1880–89 (%)	1890–99 (%)	1900–9 (%)	1910–19 (%)	1920–29 (%)	1930–on (%)
High party post	20	19	9	11	11	6
Any party post	5	8	19	23	22	27
Union leader	5	4	6	27	9	2
Military officer	45	19	8	7	7	0
Local deputy	5	12	3	7	4	3
Federal deputy	35	30	24	18	9	9
Mayor	5	4	3	5	4	0

*Seven individuals were born prior to 1880, a number too small to break down into these categories.

**Because some individuals may have held more than one post and others may have held none in these categories, column totals may be more or less than 100 percent.

elective office, also having served as mayor of Tuxpan, Veracruz, his hometown.

The absence of electoral experience at the local, state, and national level, and the decline in the number of top party positions held by cabinet secretaries and subsecretaries in the de la Madrid administration indicate the parochial nature of political technocrats' careers. Politicians have only so much time in which to learn a variety of skills that will advance their careers and make their tenure in decision-making posts more successful. Some of these skills may be technical, others are political. This situation suggests that currently, by the time political technocrats reach their first important posts in the Mexican government, they have devoted less time to obtaining certain political skills or experiences and more time to acquiring expertise in a particular administrative area. Compared to traditional Mexican politicians, political technocrats have little direct experience with the masses, or for that matter, comparatively little experience with making political decisions and bargaining with other politicians.

VALUES OF THE POLITICAL TECHNICIAN

The final two characteristics attributed to the political technocrats are that they often underestimate the importance of human relations and politics and that they make decisions on the basis of rationality and efficiency. As I have tried to demonstrate in the preceding sections, the political technocrats incorporate qualities and skills of both politicians and technocrats. Many technocrats who would like to be politicians are weeded out before they reach high positions in Mexico. Without certain political skills, a technician would rarely rise to a policy-making position. Competent politicians who are not technocrats also base their decisions on rationality and efficiency. The difference between the two types of individuals is a question of degree, but that difference affects not only style but substance.

Today's political technocrats believe that expert knowledge can be successfully applied to solving concrete problems. This belief suggests that the identification of problems and the formulation of policies to solve those problems may be more significant than their implementation. Thus it might well be that a change is taking place within the Mexican state, a subtle, but significant, change in which greater emphasis is given to the policy formulation side of the decision-making process than to policy application.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of Mexican political technicians is the nature of their political skills and their attitudes towards them. As the result of specialized education and experiences abroad, their attitude suggests that western technology can solve most human and social problems. This view is further enhanced by a belief that what Mexico needs most is good administration, a concept synonymous with efficiency. President López Portillo, in commenting on the qualifications of his successor, reinforced this view when he stated that Miguel de la Madrid "es un hombre joven que permitirá un renuevo generacional, con criterios modernos. . . ." ³² Ironically, this attitude suggests a superficial throwback to the prerevolutionary era, where one of the watchwords of the Porfiriato was "little politics—much administration." Of course, the substance is quite different, but some Mexicans are concerned because they draw a parallel between the Científicos of that era and the new class of political technocrats of the present age. Científicos conveyed an air of arrogance in their conviction that rational thought and scientific principles could solve any problem. ³³

In the same way, many young public administrators have little respect for the experience and the political skills of their older counterparts, believing that their own formal credentials are more useful for bureaucratic decision making than years of on-the-job training. This particular attitude reached a high point under President Echeverría,

who effectively skipped an entire generation of Mexican leaders by giving positions of responsibility to many young, well-educated specialists who had almost no political experience. Any analysis of the difficulties of his regime should not ignore the inefficiency of many young political technocrats as administrators and the resentment they occasioned among the educated classes and older politicians.³⁴

Politicians, like all human beings, are socialized by experience. Anyone wanting to follow a public career examines the patterns that appear to be most successful. Modeling themselves after the career of the most successful Mexican politician, the president, prospective leaders would correctly conclude that advanced education, specialized knowledge in a field like economics or communications, graduate work abroad, several years of teaching at UNAM, and a career entirely within the federal bureaucracy would most likely enhance one's opportunities to rise to the top. This pattern would offer little encouragement for an aspiring young politician to become a militant in the PRI, the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM) or the Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC), to run for mayor, local deputy, federal deputy, or senator, or to seek positions in the party hierarchy as means of obtaining an influential post in a government agency.

The most ominous implications of the attitudes of the political technocrats, however, do not result from the career path they choose to follow, but from the skills they utilize to make and implement decisions. Because in the usual pattern, individuals are recruited from the university classroom directly into the federal government, successful politicians are becoming extremely adept at small-group interpersonal skills, as they maneuver within various *camarillas* on their way up the political ladder. At the same time, however, they increasingly lack the political skills required for handling conflicts among large, autonomous groups, or between the state and one or more of those groups.³⁵ U.S. studies show that decision makers with liberal arts educations are much better at coping with a wide range of problems and that their interpersonal skills surpass those of the educated specialist.³⁶ Hence, the education of political technicians is unlikely to be conducive to the later acquisition of political skills through career experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

Political technocrats in Mexico can be conceptualized implicitly, if not explicitly, as a group of individuals whose level of education, discipline of specialization, experiences abroad, and career experiences all lead them to stress the use of specialized knowledge for solving human and social problems. They are likely to believe that western technology provides the most useful models for resolving developmental issues, to

value efficient administration as the key to the state's solving such problems, and to assume that a bureaucratic solution exists for most human questions.³⁷ Political technocrats have definitely been increasing in Mexico for some time, and they now dominate the agencies most responsible for allocating federal revenues to economic and social problems.

The influence of political technocrats on Mexico's future has a number of probable consequences. In response to increased dissatisfaction among certain groups in the population, the state has begun to reform its electoral laws, thus encouraging increased participation by opposing political groups and advancing the expansion of other autonomous groups with political interests, such as labor.³⁸ Although the state is trying to respond to societal pressures in order to survive, the adjustments it introduces will themselves have consequences that cannot be foreseen. The major stresses placed on the state in the 1980s will stem from economic dislocations and the responses of large groups to them.³⁹ By making the political scene more complex and allowing increased competition, the state has permitted built-up pressures against it to subside, at least temporarily. But the long-term effect requires government leadership that can view these political consequences in the broadest possible context, foresee some of them before they occur, and most importantly, muster the skills necessary to negotiate successfully with large groups. Bureaucratic infighting is a fine skill for reaching the top within the narrow confines of the Mexican political system, but it is not very useful to the political broker who must handle mass demonstrations.

In the 1960s, political technocrats were already a large minority in the Mexican government, where they functioned as an interest group within the bureaucracy that tried to persuade the politicians to choose the alternatives they supported.⁴⁰ In one interesting case, technocrats withheld information from the president, thereby limiting his policy choices. Dale Story asserts that they "actually hid the true potential of the oil wealth from Echeverría for fear that he would use it irresponsibly."⁴¹ Now, rather than influencing decisions with their advice, they are making most of their own decisions directly. While earlier political technocrats as subordinates widened the number of alternatives from which the politician could choose by educating their political superiors to new technical choices, political technocrats today choose from a narrowing array of alternatives because they may be unaware of or lack the ability to use the broadest range of political options.

Accompanying the changing characteristics of politicians in Mexico is an important alteration in their relationship with another significant group, the intellectuals. Historically intellectuals served widely in government, but at least since 1920, the pattern of intellectual involve-

ment has changed. As intellectuals increasingly chose literary fields and the social sciences over the traditional fields of law and medicine, they abandoned government careers. Although they do not possess the mass political skills of the older politicians, they are well educated as generalists to serve in the political realm. But by deemphasizing the intellectuals' role within the state, political technocrats increase the risk that the cultural elite will provide leadership for autonomous political groups or ally themselves with dissidents in the middle class.⁴² Thus as political groups achieve autonomy in Mexico and as increased numbers of labor groups pressure the government for their independence, a third group consisting of intellectuals are expressing their independence from the state.

Western-oriented political technocrats bring with them the benefits that a universal technology can offer developing societies. They also carry the risk of emphasizing solutions that have little applicability in Mexico. Moreover, the temptation exists in politics, as in Mexican science and culture, to borrow an approach already developed elsewhere, thereby inhibiting the evolution of indigenous innovations, perspectives, and processes.⁴³ To solve its problems, Mexico cannot ignore the contributions of foreign ideas, but it must recognize that its problems are uniquely Mexican and that in the past, the state has solved most of these problems by evolving a uniquely Mexican process. The cynical view of the traditional Mexican politician as self-serving and corrupt that is widespread among educated groups may create unrealistic expectations that the new administrative class, the political technocrats, can solve all of Mexico's problems.⁴⁴ Political technocrats do not have all the answers to Mexico's problems any more than did traditional politicians. But in the 1980s, political technocrats must prepare themselves to deal with the issues of the decade by maximizing their political as well as technical skills and by remembering the most important lesson taught by postrevolutionary politicians—that is, that the answers to Mexico's problems are Mexican.

NOTES

1. Nelson Polsby laid out these issues in his discussions of the theoretical debates among students of local government. For examples, see his *Community Power and Political Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).
2. For a discussion of this issue, see Norman Birnbaum, "Problem of a Knowledge Elite," *Massachusetts Review* 12 (Summer 1971):620–36; and Bennet M. Berger, "Sociology and the Intellectuals: An Analysis of a Stereotype," *Antioch Review* 17 (1957):275–90.
3. Merilee S. Grindle, "Power, Expertise, and the 'Técnico': Suggestions from a Mexican Case Study," *Journal of Politics* 39 (May 1977):402.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 426.
5. Recognition of the importance of the political technician (or técnico) in Mexican political life was first noted in the work of Raymond Vernon, *The Dilemma of Mexico's*

- Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), most notably in his chapter "The *Políticos* and the *Técnicos* since 1940." This discussion was followed by the author's "Role of the *Técnico* in Policy Making in Mexico: A Comparative Study of a Developing Bureaucracy," Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 1970. Analyses grounded in empirical examinations in the Mexican context include James D. Cochrane, "Mexico's New Científicos: The Díaz Ordaz Cabinet," *Inter-American Economic Affairs* 21 (Summer 1967):61–72. Also, Roderic A. Camp, "The Cabinet and the *Técnico* in Mexico and the United States," *Journal of Comparative Administration* 3 (August 1971):188–213; "The Middle-Level Technocrat in Mexico," *Journal of Developing Areas* 6 (July 1972):571–82; *The Role of Economists in Policy-Making, A Comparative Case Study of Mexico and the United States* (Tucson: Institute of Government Research, University of Arizona Press, 1977). For a recent discussion of the differences between the technocrat and the bureaucrat, see Guillermo Kelley, "Politics and Administration in Mexico: Recruitment and Promotion of the Politico-Administrative Class," *Technical Paper Series No. 33* (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1982).
6. For evidence of this trend in Mexico since the 1960s in the policy-making process, see Miguel S. Wionczek, "Electoral Power: The Uneasy Partnership," in *Public Policy and Private Enterprise in Mexico*, edited by Raymond Vernon (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 55–58; Thomas T. Poleman, *The Papaloapan Project* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964); Philippe Schmitter and Ernest B. Haas, *Mexico and Latin American Economic Integration* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1964); Merilee S. Grindle, *Bureaucrats, Politicians, and Peasants in Mexico: A Case Study in Public Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); and Miguel Basáñez, *La lucha por la hegemonía en México* (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno, 1981), pp. 67–70.
 7. Data for these figures are taken from the author's *Mexican Political Biographies Project* (MPBP). See table 1, note c, for a brief description of the information contained in this data set.
 8. For evidence of this assertion, see studies by Susan K. Purcell, *The Mexican Profit-Sharing Decision; Politics in an Authoritarian Regime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Martin H. Greenberg, *Bureaucracy and Development: A Mexican Case Study* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1970); and Guy Benveniste, *Bureaucracy and National Planning: A Sociological Case Study* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).
 9. The only group of officeholders who provide an exception to this statement are supreme court justices, who must have law degrees. Thus by definition all justices have a minimal education at the university level. Their impact on Mexican policy is quite small, however.
 10. Roderic A. Camp, *Mexico's Leaders: Their Education and Recruitment* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), p. 68.
 11. A preliminary analysis of politicians who were elected to be federal deputies in the 1982–85 legislature reveals similar trends as well as a rapid increase in degrees in economics for this group.
 12. Among the contenders whom de la Madrid defeated for the official party nomination for the presidency (which virtually guarantees being the next president) was David Ibarra, who holds a Ph.D. in economics from Stanford.
 13. A brochure sent to prominent North Americans as a profile of president-elect de la Madrid had this to say about his experiences at Harvard University: "There, he showed a strong interest in economics and political science, and was a student of John Kenneth Galbraith, Arthur Smithies, Don K. Price and Calvin Blair. He exchanged ideas with students from Latin America and other parts of the world and came into contact with Latin American intellectuals, such as the Brazilian Hélio Jaguaribe, with whom he has maintained a close friendship over the years." *Miguel de la Madrid: The Next President of Mexico, 1982–1988* (Mexico: Communications and Public Affairs Office of the President-Elect of Mexico, 1982), pp. 7–8.
 14. Roderic A. Camp, *La formación de un gobernante: la socialización de los líderes políticos en el México postrevolucionario* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1981), p. 176. For other examples of the specific effects on distinguished Mexicans of living and studying abroad, see such autobiographies as Daniel Cosío Villegas, *Memorias* (Mexico:

- Joaquín Mortiz, 1976), pp. 101ff.; and José Vasconcelos, *Ulises Criollo* (Mexico: Editorial Jus, 1978). See also José Joaquín Blanco, *Se llamaba Vasconcelos* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1977), for an excellent analysis of significant events in Vasconcelos's life.
15. Roderic A. Camp, "Intellectuals and the State in Mexico, 1920–1980: The Influence of Family and Education," paper presented at the Sixth Conference of Mexican-United States Historians, Chicago, 8–12 September 1981, p. 12.
 16. The best recent North American view of the negative consequences of imitation for Mexico and Latin America is E. Bradford Burns, *The Poverty of Progress: Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). The current views of several prominent Mexican intellectuals are presented in *Mexico Today*, edited by Tommie Sue Montgomery (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1982).
 17. Personal interviews in May, August, September, and October 1983.
 18. *Excélsior*, 9 November 1981, 18A.
 19. Dirección General de Comunicación Social de la Presidencia de la República, *Quien es quien en la administración pública* (Mexico, 1982).
 20. Paul H. Lewis, "The Spanish Ministerial Elite, 1938–1969," *Comparative Politics* 5 (October 1972):97; and the author's "The Cabinet and the Técnico in Mexico and the United States," *Journal of Comparative Administration*, pp. 188–213.
 21. Peter H. Smith, *Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 247.
 22. Roderic A. Camp, "Losers in Mexican Politics: A Comparative Study of Official Party Precandidates for Gubernatorial Elections, 1970–75," in *Quantitative Latin American Studies: Methods and Findings*, edited by James W. Wilkie and Kenneth Ruddle, vol. 6 of *Statistical Abstract of Latin America* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center, 1977), pp. 23–24.
 23. See my discussion in *Mexico's Leaders* and "Intellectuals and the State."
 24. For a discussion of the Colegio's goals, see the biography of Daniel Cosío Villegas, the intellectual force behind the Colegio's curriculum. Enrique Krauze, *Daniel Cosío Villegas, una biografía intelectual* (Mexico: Joaquín Mortiz, 1980). The influence of the Colegio presages that of private schools in general on the Mexican leadership. As Daniel Levy argues, "private-sector graduates are generally more suitably trained than their public counterparts for positions in a State that is much more strongly inclined to mainstream Western than to Marxist economics." See Levy's manuscript, "The State and Higher Education in Latin America: Private-Public Patterns," 1982. Levy's assertion is supported by the fact that the present cabinet for the first time includes two graduates of the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México and that de la Madrid's appointments secretary is an alumnus of the Universidad Iberoamericana.
 25. Camp, "State and Higher Education in Latin America."
 26. This last comment is based on personal interviews that I conducted in May, August, September, and October of 1983.
 27. During a presentation I made at the Instituto de Estudios Jurídicos at UNAM in September 1983, the audience, which was composed largely of professors and full-time researchers, reported that dozens of students in the previous six months had returned from abroad because of economic difficulties.
 28. For some of these generational changes in the 1920s and 1930s, see Luis González's study, *Los artifices del cardenismo: historia de la revolución mexicana*, vol. 14 of *La historia de la Revolución Mexicana, 1934–1940* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1979), pp. 113ff.
 29. This trend now applies even to presidential precandidates. See my forthcoming article, "Mexican Presidential Candidates: Changes and Portents for the Future," *Polity* 14 (Summer 1984).
 30. De la Madrid removed Javier García Paniagua as President of the Comité Ejecutivo Nacional (CEN) of the PRI only days after he had been approved by the National Assembly of the party. It was widely reported in the press that mutual animosity existed between the two men because of García's Paniagua's distaste for political

- technicians, whom he believed de la Madrid to represent. *Excelsior*, 14 October 1981, p. 1; *Latin America*, 23 October 1981, p. 1.
31. See *Excelsior*, 6 July 1981, pp. 1, 10A; *Tiempo*, 5 October 1981, p. 4; *Tiempo*, 15 May 1972, p. 31; *Excelsior*, 4 May 1972, p. 4; *Tiempo*, 28 May 1979, 13; *The New York Times*, 26 September 1981, pp. 1, 4; *Excelsior*, 6 October 1981, p. 10A; and *Excelsior*, 26 September 1981, p. 13A.
 32. *Excelsior*, 8 January 1982, p. 16A.
 33. Concerning their values and the problems they created, see the case study done by James Cockcroft, *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution, 1900–1913* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968).
 34. Several politicians complained vociferously about the incompetence of this younger generation. More recently, a prominent governor admitted to me that the personal warmth of the traditional politician was a quality that should be acquired by the political technicians. Moreover, even lower-level employees of certain government agencies have indicated a difference in the style of the technocrat versus the traditional politician. They used the word *cold* to describe the political technician. Interviews in Mexico, May–August 1978; May 1982; and February and March 1983.
 35. This situation is one of the reasons why so much attention is paid to Fidel Velázquez, longtime head of the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM) and his possible successor. In the 1950s, the government led by the president could manipulate the labor leadership at will, guiding them within its own economic framework. Today Velázquez has gained enough autonomy, as well as a reputation for an iron hand over this large labor federation, to pressure the government. There is probably no one in the present cabinet who has sufficient experience in labor matters to influence directly the transition in leadership or mobilize the union. Thus the consequence of political technocratic leadership for the unions is to allow them greater autonomy and to force the government leadership to rely on union leaders for support.
 36. Robert E. Beck, "The Liberal Arts Major in the Bell System Management," *Project Quill Report* (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges, 1981), pp. 227–39. Beck found that graduates in the humanities were especially strong in interpersonal skills when compared with those graduating in sciences, math, engineering, and business.
 37. This belief has spread to other educated groups in Mexico. For example, León García Soler, in his popular *Excelsior* column, "La Mitad del Foro," recently remarked sarcastically, "Este, García Paniagua, demuestra que en la Secretaría del Trabajo la virtud principal de un político es serlo." 3 January 1982, p. 18.
 38. For some interesting explanations of the consequences of these changes, as well as their impact on organized labor, see Kevin Middlebrook, "Political Change in Mexico," in *Mexico–United States Relations*, edited by Susan K. Purcell (New York: Academy of Political Science, 1981), pp. 55–65; and Middlebrook's "The Political Economy of State-Labor Relations in Mexico," a paper presented at the meetings of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., 3–6 March 1982.
 39. Recent views predicting some of these responses were made by a group of North American scholars before the CEN of the PRI in November 1982. Their interpretations and the Mexican response to them have been reprinted in the publication by the Comité Ejecutivo Nacional del PRI, *Perspectivas del sistema político mexicano* (Mexico: PRI, 1982), pp. 61–66. For the English version, see the entire issue of *The Mexican Forum* (December 1982).
 40. Evidence of this situation can be found in Susan Purcell, *The Mexican Profit-Sharing Decision*; Christopher Mitchell, "The Role of Technocrats in Latin American Integration," *Inter-American Economic Affairs* 21 (Summer 1967):3–30; and Roderic A. Camp, *The Role of Economists in Policy-Making; A Comparative Case Study of Mexico and the United States* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977).
 41. "Development Strategies in an Oil Exporting Nation: The Case of Mexico," paper presented at the International Studies Association, Cincinnati, 24–27 March 1982, p. 4.

42. For example, Herberito Castillo, a professor at the School of Engineering and long-time political activist, became the leader of the Partido de Trabajadores Mexicanos (PTM). See Daniel Levy and Gabriel Székely, *Mexico, Paradoxes of Stability and Change* (Boulder: Westview, 1983), pp. 75–76. Another example is that of Luis Villoro, a member of the Colegio Nacional and a leading essayist who also became militant in the opposition parties in the late 1970s. For his justification of why an intellectual should be involved in political life, see his interview with Rodolfo Guzmán, “La organización política independiente, única vía de cambio sin violencia: Villoro,” *Proceso* 14 August 1978, pp. 6–8.
43. For some insights into the consequences of the importation of foreign values, see Cinna Lomnitz, “Science and Social Change in Latin America,” paper presented at the International Symposium on Intellectuals as Agents of Change in Mexico and Latin America, Central College, 19–20 October 1980; and Larissa Lomnitz, Leticia Mayer, and Martha Rees, “Recruitment and Training of Mexican Professional Leaders: The School of Veterinary Medicine of the National University of Mexico,” manuscript, 1981.
44. One of the most crafty Mexican presidents, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, was asked about the influx of political technicians during his successor’s regime. He remarked that one always had to be very careful with técnicos but that they should be used. Those who should make the decisions, however, should always be the politicians. See “Red privada,” *Excelsior*, 3 March 1980, p. 27A.