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Shouldering Giants:

Campaign Consultants and the Professionalisation of American Election Campaigns

Rob Griffiths

St Cuthbert's Society

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For Helen, Meurig, Kathy and Nain

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Paradox of Professionalism

There is an inherent paradox in the classical republicanism upon which Americans have based their political culture. Whilst wishing to periodically hold elected representatives to account, the people of the United States simultaneously possess a central distaste for any professionals who learn-well and overcome the strictures of the electoral arrangement. Neither those who share Walter Lippman's thesis that the modern world is too complex for those observing it through a "media-constructed pseudo-environment", nor those who prize man's virtuous role as a civic participant and "political animal" are particularly comfortable with the presence of professional politicians.¹ Authority, autonomy and hierarchy are abhorred concepts to a people who pride themselves on the openness and continuity of their government. However, whereas elections are a sideshow of government in most western democracies, in the United States they are predominant. A federal constitution, framed by men who feared the concentration of resting power and the potential of an impinging government, mandates frequent elections and therefore necessitates incessant electioneering. A unique social cohesion and lack of inherited class loyalties has led to a fluid electorate in need of constant reassurance. A national ethos of employing one's acquired fruits in the betterment of the self and of the community means that money is the sustenance of American elections, whilst it is the bane of European ones.²

Since the 1960s, the stresses and strains of the campaign trail have been compounded by changes in the nomination procedures, in the relationship that politicians have with the press, and in the motivations of the electorate. A front-loaded, media-scrutinised primary process that requires unprecedented fundraising capabilities and a Clintonesque rapid-response operation hinders those amateurs who would seek public office. If they ever did, never again will Americans elect to public office (especially to the presidency) a Cincinnatus: who was found toiling virtuously in the fields when approached by the senators of Rome.

¹ Michael Schudson, "The Trouble With Experts – And Why Democracies Need Them", *Theory and Society*, Vol. 35, No. 5-6, (Dec., 2006), pp. 491-506

² Nicholas J. O'Shaughnessy, *The Phenomenon of Political Marketing*, The Macmillan Press, 1990, pp. 30-42

But the politician is joined in his professionalisation by another. The frequency and complexity of American election campaigns allows for an “industry” that caters to the one million elections for 513,200 popularly-elected offices in every four-year cycle.³ Through this industry, a class of professional electioneers is sustained. Condemnation for these men and women, who work outside of the electoral accountability that shelters their politician-clients, has been rife. Any “political consultant” or “campaign consultant” claiming to possess knowledge or skill enough to deliver victory in an open election is deemed to be manipulating the client or trivialising democratic choice. Yet, the services they provide are in high demand. Simply, in the paradox of American political culture, professional electioneers have found both the mandate for their existence and the reason for its disdain.

What exactly constitutes a “campaign consultant” is a problem that shall be grappled with in a short while, but for now they may be defined as unelected political professionals who earn a living working on electoral campaigns for candidates or on behalf of ballot initiatives. They are the political descendants of the public relations counsel and are hired to create the most favourable public impression of their clients. Like their more commercial counterparts, they seek to establish bonds of good-will so as to coax positive responses from the voters at the ballot box.⁴ In possession of the skills of message development – creating a convincing argument for superiority over an opponent whilst rebutting the pressure from that opponent’s parallel campaign - campaign consultants have mastered the changing art of communication and transference. They have been among the first to master public opinion polling, television advertising, and the Internet and have been skilled in adapting these technologies to the aims of the political campaign. As such, they have been intricately linked to the “New Politics”: a malleable term first coined by James Perry to describe the professionalisation of American election campaigning in the late 1960s.⁵ However, they were born at the intersection of the declining political parties and the increasing technological complexities of modern campaigns. As such, the profession has always been more heavily conditioned by the systemic factors of the political environment than by the

³ Dennis W. Johnson, *No Place For Amateurs: How Political Consultants Are Reshaping American Democracy*, N.Y.:Routledge, 2001, p. XIII

⁴ Avraham Shama, “The Marketing of Political Candidates”, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 4, No. 4, (Fall, 1976), pp. 764-777; Edward L. Bernays, *Public Relations*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1952, p. 5

⁵ James M. Perry, *The New Politics: The Expanding Technology of Political Manipulation*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968

agency of consultants themselves. Consultants are therefore an adaptable, complex and evolving breed. Yet, despite their profession history, the contributions consultants make to the campaigns on which they work are either cast in a negative light, or are deemed negligible.

Like the political boss and the lobbyist before him, the proximity of the external consultant to the decision-making process has evoked fear in the democratic purist. Widely perceived as championing empty suits for profit, the campaign consultants is put on par with the investment banker who gambles with another's resources and who is, accordingly, unsuitably detached from the process. Consultants have been branded "merchandisers of discontent"; the "pimps and whores of the political waterfront"; "hired guns" or "mercenaries" who "edit reality".⁶ In its inability to measure their quantitative impact on an election campaign, political science has too often taken its cues from the populist hysteria of voyeuristic journalism. Unflattering vignettes, self-aggrandising monologues, and professional rivalries are all documented and publicised in the "process stories" that are written of them. One can add to these the depictions of consultants in popular culture (such as in Joe Klein's *Primary Colors* or in the popular television series *The West Wing*) in which they are exaggerated and are depicted as crass or disloyal figures. Thanks in part to a veil of secrecy and to the paradox alluded to at the outset of this chapter this public perception is seldom rebutted.

Yet the profession deserves more than a knee-jerk reaction. Over fifty years ago, Stanley Kelley Jr. justified the study of the public relations counsel "on the assumption that skill, like wealth or prestige or position, is a basis of power in society."⁷ The skills that Kelley spoke of are ones honed over a number of years and are the basis of the reputations upon which they operate. Joseph Napolitan, one of the founding fathers of modern campaign consultancy, sought to reassure the readers of his memoirs that it was the demand for these skills and not some Machiavellian objective that gave rise to the campaign consultant. He rationalised their existence like so: if you were erecting a million dollar building you'd hire a

⁶ Nicholas J. O'Shaughnessy, "High Priesthood, Low Priestcraft: The Role of Political Consultants", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 24, No. 2, (1990), pp. 7-23; Dan Nimmo, *The Political Persuaders: The Techniques of Modern Election Campaigns*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.), 1970

⁷ Stanley Kelley Jr., *Professional Public Relations and Political Power*, The John Hopkins Press, 1956, p. 4

professional architect and engineer; for a complicated operation, an experienced surgeon would take charge. A political candidate may have talent and expertise to offer constituents, but he may not have the knowledge of how to communicate his record to them; he may not have the political nouse to win around independents; he may not have the verbal ability to communicate his ideas; he may not have the personal wealth to finance his effort. It is only right, Napolitan believed, that expertise is sought on the effective allocation of resources and on the best avenues of communication.⁸ Validating Napolitan's rationalisation or measuring the motivations of individual campaign consultants is far from the objective of this study. It seeks neither to intentionally condemn nor defend the profession. Instead, it urges an appreciation for the complexity of the profession that is lacking in much of the literature. It does so by explaining its growth and by tracing its impact, which is infrequently negative and seldom negligible.

Attempting a Definition

As V. O. Key noted when he attempted to classify election cycles, "one of the difficulties with an ideal type is that no single actual case fits exactly its specifications. Moreover, in any system of categorisation the greater the number of differentiating criteria for classes, the more nearly one tends to create a separate class for each instance."⁹ Key may as well have been describing the difficulty in establishing a working definition of campaign consultancy. There are several problems in doing so. Firstly, how to decide who may hold the title of "campaign consultant"? Anybody can call themselves one, as the consultant "runs for no office; he passes no "bar" examinations; nor is he licensed by the state."¹⁰ There are some who quite obviously qualify for the title but who would not wish to describe themselves in that way. Equally, there are some who would take the label despite showing none of the criteria by which we categorise the consultant. The American Association of Political Consultants (AAPC) celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 2009, but no practitioner is obligated to register their interests with that body, or to practise by its code of standards, complicating the matter even further.

⁸ Joseph Napolitan, *The Election Game and How To Win It*, Doubleday, 1972, p. 2

⁹ V. O. Key, "A Theory of Critical Elections", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (Feb., 1955), p. 11

¹⁰ Robert J. Pitchell, "The Influence of Professional Campaign Management Firms in Partisan Elections in California", *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (June, 1958), p. 280

Secondly, there are as many roles a consultant might play in a campaign as there are practitioners. "Campaign consultant" is a catch-all term that encapsulates pollsters, media advisors, fund-raising experts, website designers, direct-mail organisers and general strategists. The consultant may be hired for the duration of the campaign or to complete a finite task before moving on. The consultant may have the ear of the candidate through which to shape his or her message, or they may play an implementation role only. In large part, what a consultant is asked to do is dependent on the individual circumstances. They have different *modus operandi* and the context of each election cycle conditions the challenges they face. For example, James Carville's challenge on Bill Clinton's presidential campaign in 1992 (that of persuading people who believed one thing to believe another) was significantly different to the challenge faced by David Axelrod on Barack Obama's presidential campaign in 2008 (that of breaking through with a new message in a large field of candidates).¹¹ When adaptability is a core requirement of their profession, categorising consultants becomes even more complicated. We must therefore hold our definitions open so as to accommodate those whose inclusion in the study will contribute to a better understanding of the subject area. We can, however, measure these consultants against a Platonic perfect form.

The ideal campaign consultant is defined primarily by his (for it remains a male-dominated profession) detachment from his clients. After serving an apprenticeship within one of the two major political parties, he chooses to establish himself independently, and the party for which he formerly worked respects this arrangement. He now applies his knowledge and skill for something other than the party's advancement or the potential of patronage from his successful clients. He is motivated by personal gain; financial and/or professional. With retainers and a share of the advertising purchases available if he specialises in media production or placement, he finds campaign consultancy to be a lucrative business. As an independent operator, our consultant either works in tandem with an existing firm or starts his own company. He takes on several clients every election cycle and works for non-governmental clients or towards ballot-initiatives in between. If the campaign on which he is

¹¹ Ben Wallace-Wells, "Obama's Narrator", *The New York Times*, (April 1, 2007)

working is just one of several, our consultant takes the title of “advisor” and visits the state or headquarters frequently to issue advice. He does not serve as the campaign “chair”; he leaves that to a friend of the candidate or to a member of the party. As he thrives on the “zero-sum game” and because he is interested in policy matters only insofar as they serve the goal of electing his candidates, he does not follow his successful clients into government. Whereas his career-choice may not be sustainable elsewhere, the biennial election cycle of the United States makes his a feasible option.

Of course, this ideal type is an amalgamation of many different characters and styles. Some of the most famed consultants would not fit these criteria perfectly. Indeed, the primary defining criterion of detachment between the consultant and his client is often blurred by the personal connections that are inevitably forged between long-serving consultants and candidates seeking re-election or elevation to a higher office. Should we omit Karl Rove or David Axelrod or any other professional who followed their successful clients into government, because they were too intricately linked to their candidates and chosen parties? Should their histories as free-lance consultants closely matching the ideal type be discounted? Does a practitioner forfeit his title of “campaign consultant” because he takes on only one race in a cycle? Do we omit him because he has no history of working within the party?

Again, we must accept consultancy as a fluid profession with permeable boundaries. In 2001, when Farrell, Kolodny and Medvic formulated a four-fold typology to sort political professionals, they recognised the weaknesses of classification. By placing operatives on axis measuring their party-political background against their client history, they could classify consultants as either “Marketers”, “Vendors”, “Strategists” or “Traditional Politicos”.¹² Under the ideal definition outlined above, the first three types should be omitted from this study, because they have more non-political clients or more of a non-political background than has the Platonic perfect-form consultant. However, Farrell et al. advised that their typology “should not be viewed as a static diagram, but rather, a typology consisting of

¹² David M. Farrell, Robin Kolodny and Stephen Medvic, “Parties and Campaign Professionals in a Digital Age: Political Consultants in the United States and Their Counterparts Overseas”, *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (Fall, 2001), pp. 11-30

several significant stages in which consulting appears to be developing a particular life cycle."¹³ Were we to omit "Vendors" from our discussion, we could not appreciate the corporate origins of campaign consultancy. Were we to omit "Strategists", we could not acknowledge the recent resurgence of corporate lobbying within many established consulting firms. Too often in the literature has the frustration that results from attempting a strict categorisation led to the creation of a negative ideal-type which does not reflect the complexity and diversity of the profession.

The Strands of Literature

One would expect that in the nation in which the potential of marketing has been realised most fully, and where business history is written more copiously than anywhere else, political marketers would have attracted significant academic attention. This has not been the case. Almost forty years after Dan Nimmo wrote that the campaign management industry had assumed an institutional character as central to the functioning of American democracy as parties, elections or any of the four estates, the study of campaign consultancy is still in its infancy. Political science is comfortable in the realm of institutions and processes – branches of government, legislation, and policy. It is not comfortable with unpredictable groups of politicians. As Nicholas J. O'Shaughnessy put it, there is about political marketing "a mercurial quality that defies firm categorisation...the matter is coarse, gaudy, booming, garish; mawkish, sensational, bloodshot; to the priesthood of learning, then, profoundly irritating." As late as 2000, Thurber and Nelson wrote that the campaign consulting industry "has only recently sparked interest among political scientists, journalists and the public. Relatively little is known about the world of political consultants."¹⁴

Are such assertions pre-emptive absolutions to justify empty conclusions? This is unlikely as each student who carries out some piece of primary research can make some insertion into the literature. However, it may be that some students are missing the extent of the collated

¹³ Farrell, Kolodny and Medvic, "Parties and Campaign Professionals in a Digital Age", p. 14

¹⁴ Nimmo, *The Political Persuaders*, p. 68; O'Shaughnessy, *The Phenomenon of Political Marketing*, p. XI; James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson, *Campaign Warriors: Political Consultants in Elections*, Brookings Institution Press, 2000, p. 2

information. There are several discernable strands of literature that have developed since Stanley Kelley's much-referenced collection of political marketing case-studies was published in 1956. The first of these strands is the standard survey literature: textbooks written along an almost invariable pattern and periodically updated by another political scientist. After a brief acknowledgement of the history of the campaign consulting profession, these studies examine television and media consultancy at length before looking at polling and direct-mail operations, and at consultants as ambassadors of Americanisation abroad. Whilst they are fine introductory pieces, they are often too shallow and the authors can oversimplify, leading to a negative depiction of consultants. Even Larry Sabato, whose observations are always well-respected, seemed unable to reconcile the public perception of the "hired gun" with the actuality of the consultant. Sabato abhorred the professionalisation of campaigns but not the men themselves, as shown by the juxtaposition of his criticisms with the use of quotations from well-respected and ethical consultants in the introduction of his 1981 study.

The next strand of literature is that consisting of empirical studies that attempt to quantitatively measure the impact of consultants on election campaigns. Whilst interesting, these studies are ultimately limited by methodological difficulties: they are "humbled by the scarcity of empirical evidence to support any hard and fast conclusions."¹⁵ In approaching 246 consultants with hypothetical campaign situations, Theilmann and Wilhite validated the (self-evident) theory that candidates who are behind in the polls will issue attack ads, whilst front-runners will issue positive advertisements. Meanwhile, Paul Herrnson used Federal Election Commission (FEC) records and surveyed 385 candidates and campaign managers to arrive at the predictable conclusion that there is a positive correlation between professionally-run campaigns and greater fundraising capabilities. Later, Herrnson and Peter L. Francia assessed the receptiveness of campaigns to negative advertising and took so many variables into account - the office in question, the incumbency factor, party affiliation, gender, district competitiveness - that the "consultant factor" was all but lost. Medvic and Lenart suffered a similar problem in their study of consultant influence in the 1992 congressional elections, again proving little more than the conventional wisdom and

¹⁵ Larry J. Sabato, *The Rise of Political Consultants: New Ways of Winning Elections*, Basic Books, 1981, p. 16

oversimplifying the complexities of campaign management in the process. Margaret Scammell summarised the problem of quantitative investigation when she noted that "even where poll numbers move significantly or there is general consensus that one party's promotion was clearly more professional than its rival's, it is still almost impossible to prove cause."¹⁶

The study of campaign consultancy therefore lends itself more easily to qualitative investigation, primarily through journalistic and biographical accounts. The memoirs of veterans of the campaign trail are interesting and credible but too often follow the populist hysteria in decrying the damaging effect the consultant has on the electoral process whilst nostalgically lamenting the loss of some purer relationship between the candidate and his electorate. The accounts of political correspondents still working for the major news outlets are more useful, but they are tainted by their tendency to create celebrities of a handful of consultants for the consumption of the political spectators. Meanwhile, autobiographical accounts provide fascinating insights into the daily lives of the campaign staff and their strategic decisions. Dick Morris' *Behind the Oval Office* and its appendices of agendas, for example, helped to explain the remarkable turn-around that helped President Clinton to secure a second term. However, these sources too are limited in that they tend to be self-justifying, and in that they are written overwhelmingly by Democrats, and particularly by those in retirement. Republican operatives have been less forthcoming with their professional histories and insights. Perhaps this is because they have not been the underdogs (whose stories people tend to enjoy more) as often as have been their Democratic counterparts.

The final strand of literature is that which consists of studies conducted by individual university departments or academic bodies. In September 2006, for example, the Center for Public Integrity (CPI) unveiled a gift to the students of campaign consultancy. In conjunction

¹⁶ John Theilmann and Allen Wilhite, "Campaign Tactics and the Decision to Attack", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 60, No. 4, (Nov., 1998), pp. 1050-1062; Paul S. Herrnson, "Campaign Professionalism and Fundraising in Congressional Elections", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 3, (Aug., 1992), pp. 859-870; Peter L. Francia and Paul S. Herrnson, "Keeping it Professional: The Influence of Political Consultants on Candidate Attitudes toward Negative Campaigning", *Politics and Policy*, Vol. 35, No. 2, (2007), pp. 246-272; Stephen K. Medvic and Silvo Lenart, "The Influence of Political Consultants in the 1992 Congressional Elections", *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (Feb., 1997), pp. 61-77; Margaret Scammell, "Political Marketing: Lessons for Political Science", *Political Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 4, (1999), p. 737

with the Joan Shorenstein Center for Press Politics and Public Policy at the Kennedy School of Government, the non-profit journalistic organisation undertook a six-month investigation of the 2003-2004 election cycle. Its researchers examined 471 races, 900 candidates, and all six major party committees (national, congressional and senatorial). They trawled through the one million independent expenditure reports that were given to the FEC in electronic form and identified the recipients of the candidates' money. Those recipients who were deemed to have provided "strategic or creative political services" to a campaign were classed as consultants and their online literature consulted for the purpose of validation. Finally, where possible, the CPI sought to assign a speciality to the recipient (e.g. "media", "polling", "political tech" or "direct-mail"); a considerable challenge as the "itemization of a consultant's commissions or profits is not required by the FEC."¹⁷

The result of this six-month investigation is perhaps the most comprehensive record of campaign consultant activity that has ever been compiled. A searchable database allows the student to find out who a consultant worked for, how much money was given to them, and how the money was allocated. If this was not enough, the CPI also conducted interviews with a number of consultants to accompany its "The Buying of the President" series for 2008. Though the interviews were more concerned with the corrupting power of money than with the consulting profession itself, the discussions are insightful. Collated, they suggest that consultants are as nostalgic for the old days as are journalists; that they would like to see free airtime allotted to candidates; that they are now paid less in commission than they were paid in the past; that market principles, not government subsidies, help candidates. Such insights are of great value when they are read in conjunction with other sources.

Chapter Outline

This study is inevitably a blend of all of the above strands of literature: the qualitative and quantitative; empirical and anecdotal; journalistic and biographical. However, it seeks to

¹⁷ For more on the Center for Public Integrity's study see Sandy Bergo, "How We Did It: The Anatomy of an Investigation", Center for Public Integrity, Washington D.C., (Sept 26, 2006): accessed online on March 20, 2009 at: www.publicintegrity.org/consultants/

build on the existing literature by taking its weaknesses into account. Firstly, whilst students may recognise the obvious milestones in its history, they often fail to see campaign consultancy as a profession in flux: unique as a profession in that it has predictable and measurable points of renaissance i.e. election cycles. They also tend to begin their assessments by taking the Platonic ideal type as their starting point and they can be dismissive of the diversity and heterogeneity they find. The first half of this study is therefore concerned with outlining the growth and evolution of the profession and the role of the consultant in the modern campaign. Chapter 2 is an historical explanation of the industry from its origins in the 1930s up until 2004. Whilst it is in no way a comprehensive history, it blends individual testimonies and case-studies with explanations of the wider systemic processes that have contributed to the growth. Chapter 3 then looks at the role of the modern consultant in message creation and dissemination. A clearer understanding of the rationale behind each task, and of the division of labour required will help us to understand the necessity of modern campaign consultancy.

The second weakness in the existing literature is that students often fail to appreciate the impact that consultants have on campaigns and on the greater political environment. Aside from those qualitative studies which tend to arrive at quite obvious conclusions, consultants are too often studied in isolation of the electoral processes to which they contribute. Chapter 4 therefore looks at the impact that campaign consultants have had on the two main political parties in the United States. It questions the conventional wisdom that consultants are detrimental to the parties and puts forward evidence to suggest that the two work in a symbiotic partnership. Chapter 5 then examines the 2008 presidential race. Not only was that year notable for the further growth and evolution of the profession, but the impact of the foremost consultants on the process of message creation within the Obama and Clinton campaigns was such that nobody can possibly call the consultant's influence "negligible" again. Finally, Chapter 6 summarises and posits some suggestions for further study.

Chapter 2: Institutional Memory

The Growth and Evolution of a Profession

Innovation, Joseph Schumpeter believed, "involved the emergence of new combinations of technologies, markets, and organisations that either generated new methods of production, or new goods and services, or a reorganised or a newly-created industry."¹⁸ Like Ford, General Motors or Westinghouse, campaign consultancy had uniquely American origins and its history deserves documentation: to serve both as its own historical record for use by practitioners and students, and as an accompanying history to the wider events of which it was a tributary. This chapter seeks to contribute towards that history by examining some of the more significant events from the early incarnation of campaign consultancy in California during the Great Depression, to the industry it had become by the 2003-2004 election cycle. Of course, in attempting to write an historical narrative, one is drawn to developments at the highest level, despite Joseph Napolitan's conclusion that innovation is seldom prescribed from above but adopted there once its potential has been demonstrated at the lower levels. The incorporation of computer technology into campaigns, for example, was very much a low-level initiative.

Electoral campaigns at the state-wide level, Napolitan said, serve as Petri dishes as they pose problems there that are uncommon in the "atypical" presidential campaign.¹⁹ Yet these races tend to go undocumented unless they serve as a particularly demonstrative example. As such, this can never be a comprehensive history. It serves instead to outline the three phases in the growth and development of campaign consultancy. The first of these was the period before 1933, of which little needs to be said so long as we recognise the strong roots that campaign consultancy has in the public relations and advertising industries. The second phase, between 1933 and the 1970s, saw the onset of professionalisation. There was an acceptance of the new campaign technologies but there remained reluctance on the part of many candidates to seek advice outside of their personal

¹⁸ See Republican pollster Richard Wirthlin's foreword in Frank I. Luntz, *Candidates, Consultants, and Campaigns: The Style and Substance of American Electioneering*, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1988, p. VII

¹⁹ Joseph Napolitan, "Media Costs and Effects in Political Campaigns", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Vol. 427, *Role of the Mass Media in American Politics*, (Sept., 1976), pp. 114-124

spheres. In the post-1970s phase, campaign consultancy became an industry characterised by an increased opportunity to practise, willing investors, public awareness, press attention, and celebrity status. Even now, it has not reached the zenith. The chapter concludes with some observations on the continuing growth and evolution of the profession.

Early Origins

There are students who tenuously point to a letter of Quintus Cicero's regarding neighbourhood canvassing as an early example of campaign consultancy. They point to Abraham Lincoln's awareness of image-manipulation in his recognition that he "who molds public sentiment...makes statutes or decisions possible or impossible to execute." They point to the colonising of the New World as a successful advertising strategy; to the distribution of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* as a direct-mail campaign; to the Boston Tea party as an overt action.²⁰ Intriguing as these examples may be, we must instead look to the late nineteenth century for the real seedlings of campaign consulting. Realising that post-purchase satisfaction would pay dividends in an age of standardisation and mass production, corporations sought to turn the tide of unpopularity that plagued them with the onset of the trust-busting "Progressive Era" and hired men to boost their reputations. Former newspapermen were especially sought after for their expertise in marketing. In 1906, for example, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company hired Ivy Lee, a New York City reporter (and later an advisor to George Westinghouse, Charles Lindbergh, Walter Chrysler, and possibly even to Adolf Hitler) to improve its "public relations". Standard Oil and several other corporations vertically integrated their PR operations soon after.

With effect to politics, consultants began to displace an earlier campaign culture soon after this incarnation in the field of business. Of course, public officials had teamed up with electoral-savvy advisors long before they brought in public relations men. Senator Mark Hanna of Ohio engineered William McKinley's election to the governorship of that state in 1891 and then to the presidency in 1896, and famously said of the two things important in

²⁰ Walter de Vries, "American Campaign Consulting: Trends and Concerns", *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (March, 1989), pp. 21-25; Kelley, *Professional Public Relations and Political Power*, p. 45; Bernays, *Public Relations*, p. 33

politics that “the first is money and I can’t remember what the second one is.”²¹ Equally, Franklin Roosevelt’s 1932 campaign was greatly aided by the efforts of its manager James Farley, who traversed eighteen states in nineteen days promoting FDR’s candidacy. However, in comparison with contemporary consultants, Hanna and Farley were “amateurs”: far from useless or unschooled, but too closely aligned with the political party, the candidate, their policies, their electoral success, and their patronage to be considered outsiders.

More detached were the likes of George Creel, who was hired by Woodrow Wilson in 1917 to help popularise U.S. involvement in the First World War. Indeed, it was Creel’s Committee on Public Information that served as a vehicle for the man who would become the founding father of American public relations. Edward L. Bernays, a nephew to Sigmund Freud, sought to bring the same process of scientific examination to the marketing industry that his uncle had brought to the study of psychology. He was the originator of the “overt action”: helping to popularise men’s wristwatches, to end the taboo over women smoking in public, and to humanise austere public officials (i.e. by taking Al Jolson and forty other vaudevillians to breakfast at the Coolidge White House).²² Bernays justified what others would call his “manipulation” when he wrote that “it is one of the manifestations of democracy that anyone may try to convince others and to assume leadership on behalf of their own thesis.”²³ Attitudes could be adjusted by what he termed the “engineering of consent” and, as was the case with the NAACP and with the millinery industry which he detailed, perception was paramount.

It was in California in the early 1930s, however, that the campaign consulting industry emerged unabashedly. That state was fertile ground for such a development. There were no ancient party-political loyalties; partisan organisation was light and ties were further loosened with the mobility that followed the Great Depression; the vast geography made it a difficult state to co-ordinate. In many ways, California was indicative of what post-World

²¹ Jules Witcover, *No Way To Pick A President: How Money and Hired Guns Have Debased American Elections*, Routledge, 2001, p. 74

²² Sidney Blumenthal, *The Permanent Campaign: Inside the World of Elite Political Operatives*, Beacon Press, 1980

²³ Edward L. Bernays, “Manipulating Public Opinion: The Why and How”, *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 33, No. 6, (May, 1928), p. 959

War II suburbanisation and mobility would do to the country as a whole. Politicians running for office there faced a multi-faceted and disparate electorate that did not take cues from the political parties, and so they looked to people with experience of disseminating persuasive messages. The first people to cater exclusively to this need were Clem Whitaker and Leone Baxter who met whilst working on behalf of the Central Valley Project, and established Campaigns, Inc. in 1933. They were not the first political managers or counsels, but they were the first campaign firm – a company devoted entirely to the management of campaigns. By 1955, they had won seventy of their seventy-five races for major and minor public office and for ballot propositions.

Whitaker and Baxter asked a lot of the clients for whom they consulted. They worked exclusively for Republican candidates, and even then only for those fighters or showmen who could match the maximum budgets they drew up (fundraising was not a service they provided). They would decide on a simple but multi-faceted platform, compile both offensive and defensive research dossiers, and never let their candidate stay on the back foot.²⁴ Their influence, Whitaker said, was “achieved through convincing voters of the rightness and soundness of our case” and in educating them about political events. Baxter said that the PR man could present abstract ideas in an “attractive form to masses of people who are too occupied with their daily lives to think analytically on their own account” and keep them well-informed.²⁵ Whether their motives were really educational or rather the pursuit of corporate profit, they were certainly the “first to find the way to the voter in the absence of the party machine.”²⁶

Yet despite Whitaker and Baxter’s pioneering spirit, campaign consultancy did not take hold nationally until the Eisenhower campaign of 1952, and then it was due in large-part to the advent of television. Television achieved 75% household penetration in just seven years (1948 to 1955); half the time that it had taken the wireless radio.²⁷ Consuming hand-tailored entertainment in private, Americans ceased to solicit the company of their neighbours and

²⁴ Pitchell, “The Influence of Professional Campaign Management Firms in Partisan Elections in California”, pp. 278-300

²⁵ Kelley, *Professional Public Relations and Political Power*, p. 60

²⁶ Perry, *The New Politics*, p. 11

²⁷ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2000, pp. 216-246

turned inwards, demanding that their politicians reach them on an independent level. As Eisenhower's opponent in 1952, Adlai Stevenson expressed horror at the "high-powered hucksters of Madison Avenue" selling Ike in "precisely the way they sell soup, ammoniated toothpaste, hair tonic, or bubble gum" to this audience.²⁸ Hiring the distinguished advertising firm of Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn (BBD&O) and cartoonists from the Walt Disney Corporation, Eisenhower's campaign was far ahead of Stevenson's. As a national figure whose political convictions were unknown, Eisenhower was a blank canvas. Rouser Reeves, an "advertising prophet", orchestrated an ad campaign based upon the issues that George Gallup's polling data had shown to be important. With Korea, corruption, taxation and living costs as their guiding themes, a mixture of twenty second and one minute television advertisements were created.²⁹ Eisenhower won thirty-nine of the forty states in which the "Eisenhower Answers America" series was broadcast. His consultants were very much the "vendors" (those coming from a commercial background to advise political clients) that Farrell et al. described in their typology, but this contingent swiftly moved on after his victory. They realised that ephemeral public officials were less lucrative than more constant brands. However, others recognised that one could make a comfortable, full-time living crafting the messages and images of political candidates.

Accordingly, the next decade saw the multiplication of firms along the lines of Whitaker and Baxter's. Indeed, many of the founders of these new firms had served their apprenticeships under the pioneers. Stuart Spencer and Bill Roberts established Spencer-Roberts & Associates Inc. in California in 1960. Like Whitaker and Baxter, they too worked strictly for Republican clients. Whilst still a fledgling company, they were retained by Nelson Rockefeller to co-ordinate his California primary effort in the 1964 presidential nomination contest. They recruited 12,000 volunteers and mailed out one million pieces of promotional literature. Rockefeller eventually lost by only two percentage points to Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, most likely because he fared badly among social-conservatives when allegations of adultery surfaced during the campaign. Thanks to their growing reputation, however, Spencer and Roberts were able to take their pick of the potential California gubernatorial candidates in 1966. They chose Ronald Reagan, steered him to a resounding

²⁸ Witcover, *No Way To Pick A President*, p. 53

²⁹ O'Shaughnessy, *The Phenomenon of Political Marketing*, p. 48

win over Governor Pat Brown, and they continued to consult for him on his 1970 re-election campaign and on his two successful presidential campaigns in 1980 and 1984.

Another Republican consulting firm founded around the same time as Spencer-Roberts was Campaign Consultants Inc., based on the East Coast. That firm consulted for Spiro Agnew in Maryland; helped the Republican State Committee co-ordinate the 1967 State Senate elections in New Jersey; and helped George Romney to compile a database of over 80,000 voters in his New Hampshire primary campaign in 1968. Meanwhile, Doug Bailey and John Deardourff (two consultants who had met whilst working on Rockefeller's aforementioned California primary campaign) established their firm in 1967 and also worked for Governor Romney: this time in his bid to stop Richard Nixon taking the Republican nomination in 1968. Over the next thirty years, they took on moderate Republican clients and were advising eleven of the country's nineteen Republican governors at one point in the 1970s. The upbeat and positive ad campaign they produced for Gerald Ford after joining his presidential campaign in August 1976 is widely credited for narrowing Jimmy Carter's twenty-point lead to the two-point advantage he held on Election Day 1976.³⁰

The Selling of Presidents

In 1968, Eisenhower's protégé became the epitome of the packaged candidate when he manufactured his image anew. Richard Nixon shuffled off the failure of his 1960 presidential campaign, which he was perceived to have lost in a televised image-contest against John Kennedy. The picture of Kennedy's Camelot was rosy and engrossing enough so that its peasants forgave the trespasses of its leader.³¹ Television had not worked as well for Nixon, who had come across as cold and unnatural in the presidential debate against the youthful Senator Kennedy. As documented in Joe McGinniss' *The Selling of the President 1968*, Nixon did not repeat his mistakes. In a strategy memo from that campaign, the chief speechwriter Raymond Price urged the candidate to "bear constantly in mind that it's not what we say

³⁰ Patricia Sullivan, "Pioneering GOP Consultant John Deardourff Dies at 61", *The Washington Post*, (Dec. 28, 2004)

³¹ Joe McGinniss, *Selling of the President*, Penguin, 1970, p. 30

that counts, but what the listener hears; not what we project, but how the viewer receives the impression.”³²

Nixon converted to this theory. He retained the services of Harry Treleaven, who had handled accounts for Pan-Am and Ford at the famed J. Walter Thompson advertising agency, and who had helped a young George H. W. Bush to a congressional seat in a district of Houston that had never before elected a Republican. The team around Treleaven produced interactive panel quizzes which were locally-aired to fresh audiences in ten states from Massachusetts to Texas and tailored to their issues. They shot ads to appeal to individual cities, such as one on the increasing problem of law and disorder in Buffalo, New York. In contrast to the turbulent Democratic Convention in Chicago, they purposefully staged what Norman Mailer noted was the “dullest convention anyone could remember”, recognising that banality foreshadowed success with the “silent majority”. They meticulously ensured that the ads they aired were scrubbed of any controversial material (regarding racial disparity in the Vietnam draft, for example). Frank Shakespeare, the CBS producer who served alongside Treleaven and Len Garment in the trio of Nixon’s image-makers, said that “without television, Richard Nixon would not have a chance...With it, he cannot lose.”³³ What a turnaround this was. Nixon’s team crafted a consummate television professional out of their candidate and won him the presidency in the process.

Meanwhile, Joseph Napolitan was serving as the flag-bearer of Democratic campaign consultancy. James Perry called the victory he organised for Milton Shapp in the 1966 Pennsylvania gubernatorial primary “the most striking demonstration of what the new technocracy can do when pitted against an unalloyed old-style political organisation.”³⁴ Shapp, an unknown millionaire who was far from favoured by the “bosses” in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, fared badly in early public opinion polls conducted by Napolitan in January 1966. However, those same polls showed that the party machines in those aforementioned cities were deeply distrusted by Democratic voters outside of them. A campaign called “The Man Against The Machine” was organised and an accompanying documentary with that

³² Hugh Hedo, “Campaigning and Governing: A Conspectus”, in Norman Ornstein and Thomas Mann, *The Permanent Campaign and Its Future*, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 2000, p. 15

³³ McGinniss, *Selling of the President*, pp. 59-61

³⁴ Perry, *The New Politics*, p. 42

title, which Napolitan claimed was the “best thing of its kind ever done”, was broadcast in an effective blitz in the few days before the Democratic primary on May 17. Shapp won the nomination contest by 50,000 votes and though he went on to lose the general election to his Republican opponent, Napolitan went from strength-to-strength.

His involvement in the Humphrey presidential campaign against Nixon in 1968 almost made the difference there too. Reuniting the film-makers with whom he had worked on Shapp's campaign (Charles Guggenheim, Shelby Storck and Tony Schwartz), he crafted a similar biographical film and some notorious ads criticising Nixon's selection of Spiro Agnew as his running mate (i.e., the “Heartbeat Away From the Presidency” and the “Laughter Track” ads). However, Napolitan knew that whilst more money could be found, more time could not. A late Democratic Convention in a turbulent atmosphere and the candidate's decision not to break with President Johnson's Vietnam policy until September 30 (after which he raised \$300,000 overnight) all hindered what Napolitan could do to help. Nevertheless, Napolitan and his Republican counterparts (some of whom have had their achievements detailed above) certainly made their presence known in the 1960s. As the electoral process became even more complex, and as others recognised the success that they were having, the occupation was to change dramatically.

The Explosion of a Profession

In the history of campaign consultancy, as in most modern American political history, Watergate is a watershed. In the wake of the revelations and of the president's resignation, the contours of the election landscape were greatly altered so as to avoid similar corruptions in the future. For one, the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (FECA) created a new body to oversee the disclosure of financial contributions, and placed limits on how much individuals and committees could contribute to a candidate and/or to a party every cycle. Furthermore, the Democratic McGovern-Fraser Commission overhauled that party's system of presidential nomination and prodded the Republican Party to do the same. The direct results of its recommendations were a huge surge in the number of state primaries, the effective end of deliberative national conventions, and the participation of unaffiliated

voters in the nomination process. Indirectly, it led to the nomination and election of a dark-horse candidate: Jimmy Carter.

Hamilton Jordan, Carter's campaign manager, had advised him to develop his organisation and fund-raising capacity as far as two years ahead, to mount a vigorous campaign in the early primaries to increase name-recognition and build momentum, and to run in as many state primaries as possible.³⁵ Jordan's advisory memo became the blueprint for all future candidacies and strengthened Arthur Hadley's concept of the "Invisible Primary". Described by Republican consultant Mike Murphy as a "circus" that feeds reporters and the five thousand or so people for whom the race is "full-bore" so early on, the "Invisible Primary" is the period between one Election Day and the following Iowa Caucuses, when prospective candidates must build their war chests and committees.³⁶ Antagonistic to the governing process in many ways, it places a heavy burden on prospective candidates, particularly those with low name-recognition. Anthony King wrote about the Vulnerable American Politician who is forever Running Scared because the next election is never too far away.³⁷ There is the story of Senator Jim Sasser having to campaign for sixteen hours a day in rural Tennessee twenty-two months before the election in November 1982. In February 1981, he had already asked Democratic pollster Peter Hart to work for him, and was recruiting others.³⁸

Once in government, Jimmy Carter's actions contributed to another sideshow of government: the "permanent campaign". In his Initial Working Paper on Political Strategy of December 10 1976, Pat Caddell (Carter's polling prodigy) wrote that "it is my thesis that governing with public approval requires a continuing political campaign." Caddell had, Sidney Blumenthal believed, "articulated a new ideology of governance, a new paradigm." Whether Blumenthal was correct in assigning that date in 1976 as the beginning of the permanent campaign mentality, or whether Michael Kazin of Georgetown University was

³⁵ Stephen J. Wayne, *The Road to the White House: The Politics of Presidential Elections*, St. Martin's Press/New York, 1980, pp. 104-110

³⁶ CPI interview of Mike Murphy conducted by Jules Witcover on March 8, 2007 and accessed online on April 5, 2009 at: www.buyingofthepresident.org/index.php/interviews/mike_murphy/

³⁷ Anthony King, *Running Scared: Why America's Politicians Campaign Too Much and Govern Too Little*, Free Press, 1997, and "The Vulnerable American Politician", *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 27, No. 1, (Jan., 1997), pp. 1-22

³⁸ Martin Tolchin, "Tennessee Senator Campaigns for 1982", *The New York Times*, (Feb. 1, 1981)

correct in claiming that the permanent campaign has been a “national tradition” since the mid-nineteenth century is a topic for extended debate.³⁹ One cannot deny, however, that there has been in recent decades a strengthening of the desire for public approval amongst elected officials. One indication of this is the increased complexity of the White House polling operation. In their 2002 article, Murray and Howard measured how much each White House since Carter’s had spent on retaining pollsters and how many surveys had been conducted. They found that whilst Carter and George H. W. Bush polled sporadically, Reagan and Clinton polled frequently from very early on in their terms. Indeed, Clinton (perhaps in preparation for Al Gore’s presidential campaign) spent more on polling in his last year than he had done in any previous year of his presidency.⁴⁰ If officials deem it necessary to strengthen their electoral chances earlier and to extend their winning campaign formulae to the governing process, then the advisors that brought them victory become even more indispensable.

As these two mentalities (the “Invisible Primary” and the “Permanent Campaign”) took hold in the late 1970s, the campaign consulting industry grew with new vigour. To coincide with the presence in the White House of the “fleshy embodiment” of political marketing, more than 50% of firms were established after 1980.⁴¹ With a steadier stream of business, consultants spread their resources around more campaigns, although a process of “occupational specialisation” meant that they narrowed their remits to media-buying or polling or direct-mail. With more of them working more frequently, consultants came to public attention in the “process stories” of the campaign correspondents. The initial negative impression was cemented during the 1988 presidential campaign. As the author of the Time magazine article “It’s The Year of the Handlers” noted, that campaign became “a narrow-gauge contest between two disciplined teams of political professionals.” It was a campaign of “mechanical perfection” and “sound-bite sabotage” that, due to an absence of visceral issues, commanding personalities and domestic or foreign imperatives, contained

³⁹ Sidney Blumenthal, *The Permanent Campaign*, pp. 39-41; Michael Kazin, “Permanent Campaign? It’s a National Tradition”, *The Washington Post*, (Feb. 13, 2007)

⁴⁰ Shoon Kathleen Murray and Peter Howard, “Variations in White House Polling Operations: Carter to Clinton”, *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 4, (Winter, 2002), p. 533

⁴¹ O’Shaughnessy, *The Phenomenon of Political Marketing*, p. 185; Sidney Blumenthal, “Marketing the President”, *The New York Times*, (Sept. 13, 1981); Murray and Howard, “Variations in White House Polling Operations”, pp. 538-539

very little of substance.⁴² The Democrats nominated Michael Dukakis: a man with no overriding theme whose preference for detail made him an effective politician but an ineffective nominee. Dukakis' motivation for running seemed to be that he thought he could win. The sitting Vice-President, George H. W. Bush, was not as natural a performer as President Reagan had been. Like Dukakis, he enjoyed governing over campaigning (a preference which would lead to his defeat four years later). Nevertheless, he had significant consulting expertise in his corner. Lee Atwater (the "happy-hatchet man" of the Republican Party) managed the campaign whilst Roger Ailes (an advisor to Nixon and the founder of Fox News) conducted media operations.

Having lost his chief strategist to controversy after his implication in the sabotage of Joseph Biden's primary campaign, Dukakis was slow in retaliating to the attacks put on the air by Atwater and Ailes. His name became a synonym for "big taxpayer, big spender, polluter, weak on defence, soft on crime, an unacceptable risk."⁴³ The "Willie Horton" ad (produced by a "527" independent-expenditure group with close ties to Ailes), documented the crimes that a Massachusetts inmate had committed whilst out on a weekend furlough program that Governor Dukakis had supported, and this decimated the considerable lead Dukakis had held over Bush after the Democratic Convention. To date, that remains one of the most controversial political advertisements ever produced, due both to its racial undertones and to the misconstruing of Dukakis' role in the furlough program. As Boston Globe journalists Christine M. Black and Thomas Oliphant noted in their account of that campaign, "any reasonably skilled campaign would be expected to respond like tigers to attacks" such as the ones levied at Dukakis. Had his campaign had an overarching and positive theme to refocus attention on, these attacks would have looked "petty by comparison."⁴⁴ However, the candidate's purposeful message was conspicuously absent and his team did not respond in time to the attacks: a mistake that would not be made by Dukakis' successor as the Democratic nominee.

⁴² Unknown, "It's The Year of the Handlers", *Time*, (Oct. 3, 1988): accessed online on April 16, 2009 at www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,968564,00.html

⁴³ Christine M. Black and Thomas Oliphant, *All By Myself: The Unmaking of a Presidential Campaign*, The Globe Pequot Press, 1989, p. 4

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10

The Consultant as Celebrity

In December 1991, Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas hired the consulting partnership of James Carville and Paul Begala to coordinate his presidential campaign. Carville is perhaps the best known of all the consultants to be mentioned in this study, thanks in large part to his post-consulting career in film and television. A relatively late starter in the profession, he achieved major successes in electing Bob Casey to the governorship of Pennsylvania in 1986, and Zell Miller to the governorship of Georgia in 1990. However, it was his role in a Pennsylvania Senate race of 1991 that brought him national political stardom. Democrat Harris Wofford had filled a Senate seat after the death of the incumbent. With Carville and Begala, Wofford overcame a forty-seven point poll deficit to beat Dick Thornburgh (President Bush's Attorney-General and hand-picked nominee) to earn the seat on his own merit at the general election. This underdog victory impressed almost all of the candidates running for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1992, but Carville signed on to work for Clinton. He was credited with the "haiku" that formed the basis of Clinton's message: Change vs. More of the Same; It's the Economy, Stupid; Don't Forget Healthcare. The sign from which this message originated hung on the wall of Carville's office in the "War Room": the aptly-named campaign headquarters in Little Rock, Arkansas. From those offices, Carville necessarily perfected the art of damage-control.

Appropriately, a word on the role of the fourth estate should accompany an explanation of Carville's talents, as he became renowned for his "spinning" the campaign correspondents. Journalists have been increasingly hostile to political candidates since the deceptions of Watergate and, more importantly, since they were shown what they had been missing when Theodore White published *The Making of the President 1960*: an investigative piece that upset the balance between journalist and politician that had theretofore been challenging but good-natured. In White's stead, generations of journalists have followed and the distinction between a candidate's public persona and his/her private life has been blurred. Even White came to regret pioneering his brand of investigative journalism. He said "I sincerely regret it. Who gives a fuck if the guy had milk and Total for breakfast..It's

appalling what we've done to these guys."⁴⁵ The "Teddy White syndrome", as George Romney labelled it in 1968, is the default function of today's media. Democratic consultant Anita Dunn believed that for the followers of White, and of Woodward and Bernstein, "there is a whole ethic around just assuming these [politicians] are corrupt." The net result of this increased hostility and suspicion is that political candidates need articulate advocates who are skilled in channelling and focussing press attention, and in reacting to what reporters throw up when they veer from this course.

James Carville was such a consultant. His reputation as a champion of the underdog should not be mistaken for softness. His political nouse and his ferocity in both offense and defence were what appealed to Governor Clinton, and Carville certainly needed these attributes. Even before the New Hampshire primary, the damage caused by allegations of Clinton's infidelity was compounded by the emergence of a letter that appeared to show his attempts to dodge the Vietnam War draft. But, as Jules Witcover noted, "learning well the lesson the Dukakis campaign taught – that charges unanswered were charges believed – Clinton's operation tried to extinguish every brushfire that came along."⁴⁶ Clinton's "rapid-response" operation was unprecedented and was depicted in the Oscar-nominated documentary *The War Room*, filmed over the course of the campaign. At every juncture, Carville and George Stephanopoulos (Clinton's Communications Director) sought to dominate the news cycle by spinning at post-debate conferences, tipping the press off to the sins of the other campaigns, and drawing the media's attention back to one of the messages in the famed haiku. When he addressed the final meeting of the "War Room", Carville wore a t-shirt that bore the slogan "Speed Killed...Bush" and he told the staff present that they had "changed the way campaigns are run." Mary Matalin, later to be Carville's wife but then a staffer to George H. W. Bush, played down this statement as an exaggeration, saying of the rapid-response success that "because the Democrats had been so poor at it four years earlier, now they were geniuses for getting it right."⁴⁷ Regardless, Carville wrote his name into campaign legend in 1992.

⁴⁵ Timothy Crouse, *The Boys on the Bus*, Random House, 1973, pp. 34-35

⁴⁶ Witcover, *No Way To Pick A President*, p. 61

⁴⁷ Mary Matalin and James Carville, *All's Fair: Love, War, and Running for President*, Hutchinson, 1994, p. 261

Clinton's election to the White House was far from the end of his dealings with campaign consultants. The "New Democrat" proceeded to stumble through his first term. His campaign promises were sidelined for expediency; an effective ad against his health-care reform plans led to 48% public opposition of them by August 1994; and he was forced to bargain with a non-cooperative Democratic Congress. Clinton was rewarded for his incompetency with an overwhelming defeat in the 1994 mid-term elections, when Newt Gingrich and his radically-conservative "Contract for America" captured the support of voters. In defeat, Clinton turned to a pollster he had been close to long before Carville. Dick Morris was a veteran of New York City politics who had been a field organiser for Eugene McCarthy in 1968 and for George McGovern in 1972. Most of his clients thereafter were Republicans and he had produced controversial ads for Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina and even claimed to have written the "Willie Horton" ad for the Bush campaign in 1988.⁴⁸ However, he had realised Bill Clinton's potential early on and signed-up to help him win his Arkansas gubernatorial campaign in 1978. It was Morris that Clinton called in the days preceding the 1994 defeat and, from then until his exposure in April 1995, Morris worked covertly from a Washington D.C. hotel room under the codename "Charlie".

According to Stephanopoulos, there was a noticeable change in attitude and lexicon as Clinton began to channel Morris. When his identity was revealed to the White House staff, Morris told Stephanopoulos "I really want to thank you for winning the last election – so I can win the re-election."⁴⁹ His lack of tact may not have endeared him to others, but his advice to Clinton was sound. The first phase of his two-pronged recovery strategy was "neutralisation". Unlike Clinton's more academic pollsters, Morris was prescriptive and encouraged Clinton to end up on the right side of the 60% issue. He urged the president to pass sections of Gingrich's Republican agenda that were popular with voters (such as a balanced budget, tax cuts, welfare- and affirmative-action reforms), effectively neutering the radical freshmen Republicans in the House. The second phase of Morris' strategy was a process he labelled "Triangulation". Following the Hegelian dialectic, he encouraged Clinton to adopt the best policies of each party and merge them in an act of "political sagacity". Morris explained: "The Democrats say, 'No Tax Cuts'. The Republicans say, 'Tax Cuts for

⁴⁸ Dick Morris, *Behind the Oval Office: Getting Reelected Against All Odds*, Renaissance Books, 1999, p. 399

⁴⁹ George Stephanopoulos, *All Too Human: A Political Education*, Hutchinson-London, 1999, p. 332

everyone'. We say, 'Tax cuts if you are going to college or raising children or buying a first home or saving for retirement.'" ⁵⁰ Clinton championed incremental initiatives like school uniforms, curfews, the V-Chip, increased benefits for veterans suffering the effects of Agent Orange: all symbolising a values-orientated presidency. He publicised his new agenda not from a White House podium, but through paid media which Morris (working on commission) encouraged and produced. As Witcover noted, "television offered a unique opportunity to Clinton-Gore strategists like Dick Morris to smother the public consciousness with messages about a reformed Bill Clinton cured of the perceived liberal excesses of his first term." ⁵¹

Complementary to this values-oriented offensive, the Clinton White House conducted a defensive operation. When Bill and Hillary Clinton faced probing investigations (journalistic and legal) over the Whitewater affair and other scandals, a separate unit headed by Mark Fabiani and Chris Lehane (both political consultants) was established to defend the President and First-Lady. Fabiani and Lehane jokingly dubbed the room they worked from the "Arsenal of Democracy", and themselves the "Masters of Disaster". They showed a "Carvillian" mastery of rapid response. When former FBI agent Gary Aldrich published his account of Clinton's extramarital activities, the "Masters" linked Aldrich to the Dole campaign and to a "shameful Republican "plot" in less than 72 hours." ⁵² With Morris on the offensive and the "Masters" on the defensive, Clinton was soon enjoying a higher approval rating. A New York Times article in the month before the 1996 election quoted a White House aide saying that "the election was last year" and Stephanopoulos saying that "the truth is the race hasn't changed in nine months". ⁵³ Between the usurpation of Republican ground on social and fiscal values and Clinton's dominance of the airwaves during the government shutdowns of late 1995 and early 1996, Republican nominee Senator Bob Dole stood very little chance.

⁵⁰ Catherine Needham, "Brand Leaders: Clinton, Blair and the Limitations of the Permanent Campaign", *Political Studies*, Vol. 53, (2005), p. 351

⁵¹ Witcover, *No Way To Pick A President*, p. 105

⁵² Unknown, "Masters of Disaster", *Newsweek*, Special Election Issue, (Nov. 18, 1996): accessed online on April 18, 2009 at: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/103408>

⁵³ Alison Mitchell, "Clinton Campaign Finds Harmony After Swift Exit By Morris", *The New York Times*, (Oct. 15, 1996)

The Consultant in the New Millennium

Thanks to Carville's crass but homely mannerisms, and to the revelations of infidelity with a prostitute that caused Dick Morris to have to resign from Clinton's re-election campaign, the popular perception of the campaign consultant by the new millennium was that of a celebrity. Both Carville and Morris penned books about their experiences with Clinton, and were eager to speak publicly to defend the president on political talk shows. They became recognised faces of the administration and their openness endeared them to many politicians. In 2000, Karl Rove's succession to "poster-boy" of the consulting industry darkened this public perception. A highly visible presence during George W. Bush's governorship and presidency, Rove was dubbed "the most influential and important political consultant to a president that we've ever seen."⁵⁴ Whereas the egoism and crassness of Carville and Morris had meant that they were open and predictable, Rove was more of a shadowy figure and his professional history was littered with rumours of Machiavellian practices. However, though he may be an atypical example of a consultant, Rove became such a high-profile political actor that his actions have conditioned the way in which American campaign consultants are viewed.

Rove, more than any previous consultant, had tied his fortunes to his candidate's success. A rising star in the Republican Party, he had worked as an assistant to Republican National Committee Chairman George H. W. Bush, and had established his own direct-mailing firm in Texas in 1981. Seeing potential in the younger Bush, he groomed an "improbable president" who had once told an old Yale friend, "You know, I could run for governor and all this but I'm basically a media creation."⁵⁵ Rove tutored George W. Bush in Texas politics and scientifically scripted his gubernatorial campaigns. In the Governor's Mansion, he shaped Bush's agenda to look like that of a likely Republican presidential candidate: sidelining a hate-crime bill, tabling tougher abortion legislation, introducing school vouchers, and preserving a \$2 billion tax-cut. Once in the White House, Rove turned his attentions to securing the second term that the elder Bush never had.

⁵⁴ James Moore and Wayne Slater, *Bush's Brain: How Karl Rove Made George W. Bush Presidential*, John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2003, p. 10

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 161

It had been a theme of George W. Bush's campaign that his victory would bring an end to the "permanent campaign" style of governing whereby leaders followed polls and focus groups rather than sound, if unpopular, policy. However, the "Office of Strategic Initiative" that Rove established in the West Wing was the very institutionalisation of the permanent campaign.⁵⁶ He encouraged the president to raise tariffs on foreign steel which had the effect of driving up automobile prices whilst protecting the steelworkers of Pennsylvania: a state that Bush had lost in 2000. Rove stood against raising the embargo on Cuba: a gesture that could have undermined Fidel Castro's regime and could have furthered American business interests, but which would have invoked the anger of many Cuban-American voters in South Florida. Furthermore, Bush's U-turn on the closure of the Vieques bombing range in Puerto Rico was in part a reaction to another of Rove's concerns about the loss of the Hispanic vote. Direct-mail pioneer, Richard Viguerie, described Rove's tactic as governing with compartmentalisation and bribery.⁵⁷

Cynical or not, Rove's management of Bush's campaigns was certainly disciplined in contrast to the Democratic campaigns of the new millennium. In 2000, Al Gore's campaign team was characterised by feuding between his primary consultants, and in 2004 the media attention focussed on Bob Schrum. A much purer consultant in definition, Schrum's professional history was that of personal involvement in eight presidential campaigns and countless others at lower levels. As none of the presidential hopefuls that he had worked for were elected, his presence in a presidential campaign became known as the "Schrum Curse". Yet 2004 was also the year of the "Schrum Primary", such was the demand for his expertise as a strategic consultant. Schrum had certainly amassed an impressive tally of non-presidential victories before his retirement in 2004. He had worked for thirty successful Senate candidates, twenty successful House candidates, eleven successful gubernatorial candidates, and many others at the city level and abroad. After working as a speechwriter for Ted Kennedy in the early 1980s, he had established a lucrative media consulting firm with David Doak (a more conservative Democratic consultant) and Pat Caddell. After

⁵⁶ Dana Milbank "Serious 'Strategy': As Rove Launches Elaborate Political Effort, Some See A Nascent Clinton 'War Room'", *The Washington Post*, (April 22, 2001)

⁵⁷ Moore and Slater, *Bush's Brain*, p. 12-13; John F. Harris, "Clintonesque Balancing of Issues, Polls: Role of Politics Evident in Bush's White House", *The Washington Post*, (June 24, 2001); See also the CPI interview of Richard Viguerie conducted by Jules Witcover on August 14, 2007 and accessed online on April 6, 2009 at: www.buyingofthepresident.org/index.php/interviews/richard_viguerie/

Caddell's departure over financial disagreements, Doak and Schrum had a productive working relationship for the next decade.

Indeed, Doak and Schrum were referred to as "Soak and Run" by competitors who were angry at them for working on so many races at one time.⁵⁸ Schrum also received heavy criticism for his work after his partnership with Doak ended. When working on Alfred A. Checchi's gubernatorial race in 1998, he advised the candidate to launch an earlier air war than any gubernatorial campaign in Californian history had done before, and he produced one hundred different ads of which only forty were aired. The manager of that campaign hired an external pollster to determine whether Schrum had been advocating these actions for his own financial benefit. This pollster concluded that Schrum had been dishonest in his counsel and that it had been a strategically flawed campaign.⁵⁹ Of course, Schrum is not unique among consultants in profiting from a candidate's loss: the consultants on one half of a campaign will inevitably do so. However, he has earned a reputation for milking the campaign for all of its worth. Not only did the firm of Schrum, Devine and Donilon Inc. earn \$2.7 million from the Kerry campaign and the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in 2004, Schrum was also behind a consortium named Riverfront Media LLC which earned an additional \$150 million for the production and placement of ads for the campaign.⁶⁰ When practices such as these are highlighted in the most important campaigns, it is no wonder that consultants are regularly mistrusted.

An Ongoing Professional Evolution

Thanks in large part to the Center for Public Integrity's database, we know much more about the financial compensation of campaign consultants in 2004 than we have known in the past. Of the \$2 billion that was found to have passed through consulting firms in 2003-2004, \$1.2 billion passed through media firms, confirming it to be the most expensive and favoured means of message dissemination. Direct-mail firms came in second with those

⁵⁸ Robert Schrum, *No Excuses: Concessions of a Serial Campaigner*, Simon and Schuster, 2007

⁵⁹ Susan B. Glasser "Winning a Stake in a Losing Race; Ad Commissions Enriched Strategists", *The Washington Post*, (May 1, 2000)

⁶⁰ See Bob Schrum's profile on the Center for Public Integrity's website, accessed on May 16, 2009 at: <http://projects.publicintegrity.org/consultants/default.aspx?act=profiles&pid=7>

firms earning \$298 million for their work, and fundraising experts took around \$59 million for raising the candidates' money.⁶¹ Of course, these sums generally include the funds that the companies used to buy the air-time, produce the required ads, and to post the campaign literature. Still, if a company took a commission of anywhere between 7% and 15% (which interviewed consultants confirm to be the norm) they must still earn staggering sums. And the cycle was not just lucrative at the presidential level either. The study found that it took an average of \$7 million to win a U.S. Senate seat, and an average of \$1 million to win a seat in the House of Representatives: eleven times as much money as it had taken in 1976. With more money than ever flowing through election campaigns, consultancy remains a viable career option.

Considering the workload and cost, it is unlikely that the CPI will construct a similar database for another election cycle any time soon. Were it to do so, the new edition would undoubtedly be revealing, but it would contribute little to the overarching point that was established with the 2006 edition. That study was conducted amidst fears that having to pay high consulting fees gives incumbents an advantage. They are more likely to be able to raise this money, but it is subsequently feared that they must sacrifice time that should be spent governing to do so. One must disagree with the CPI's take on the situation. The sums paid to consultants are tremendous indeed, but the database constructed fails to prove that consultants have a detrimental impact. How do we know, for example, that the commissions paid to Bush's consultants were not a percentage of a sum of money that was easily raised by his campaign staff, with little demand on the president's time? And hasn't incumbency been an electoral asset since long before professional electioneers came along? The financial figures that the CPI collected do not serve as an indication of the consultants' impact, because they do not prove an intent one way or the other. Instead, the database is a neutral resource which confirms the profession to be, for better or worse, of vital importance: if for no other reason than \$2 billion passed through it in 2004. It has literally evolved from an amateurish pastime into a billion dollar industry, and it continues to evolve even now.

⁶¹ Sandy Bergo, "A Wealth of Advice: Nearly \$2 Billion Flowed Through Consultants in 2003-2004 Federal Elections", Center for Public Integrity, Washington D.C., (Sept 26, 2006): accessed online on March 20, 2009 at: <http://projects.publicintegrity.org/consultants/report.aspx?aid=533>

We see this ongoing evolution in several different ways. Firstly, there is the continual growth in numbers. New firms come into being in each election cycle and the profession has been institutionalised, as seen by the education of students in the subject of campaign management. Since 1980, vocational postgraduate courses have sought to instil the same knowledge that one would gain over several election cycles into postgraduates studying for an additional year or two.⁶² With this continuing growth comes the second sign of evolution: "occupational specialisation". The consultants who earn fees (rather than taking commissions on advertising or polling) and who dabble in all of the activities that consultants perform rather than specialising in one area are the endangered species of the business. The all-rounder or generalist, reported Susan Glasser in *The Washington Post* in 2000, occupies "the only part of the business that is not expanding."⁶³ Consultants are increasingly honing a particular skill and applying it across more campaigns, rather than using several skills across a single campaign. Candidates therefore need to hire more consultants than they needed to before.

A direct cause of the previous two, the third sign of the evolution of the profession is that there is now more competition amongst consultants than ever before. Democratic consultant Bob Squier (according to Napolitan, the "best of all time"), was paid for his counsel by one-third of the U.S. Senate at the pinnacle of his career in the 1980s. He was able to charge a commission of 15%, and few clients argued with it. Now, a competitive market has brought commissions down. According to Jim Jordan, political director of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) between 2000 and 2002, the parties are "hammering [consultants] down a little bit on percentages...in part because there is a new generation out there willing to do it for less."⁶⁴ Unable to find as much custom at the national or state level in this more competitive climate, the consultant must take on more district and municipal races, and many have needed to return to the professions' roots in business. Corporations, from Microsoft to Wal-Mart, have found that campaign consultants

⁶² Michael B. Binford, "The Political Science Education of Campaign Professionals", *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (Winter, 1985), pp. 88-94

⁶³ Susan B. Glasser, "Hired Guns Fuel Fundraising Race; In Arena With Few Rules, Political Consultants Rake In Revenue", *The Washington Post*, (April 30, 2000)

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

possess the skills of “combat message development” which can be effectively applied in the lobbying industry. The firm of Republican pollster Bill McInturff, for example, was making more than 50% of its revenue from corporate work by 2000, as opposed to the 22% that it made from that sector when it was established in 1991.⁶⁵ Consultants can no longer pick and choose as freely as they were once able to.

The evidence in this chapter is selectively based on the research of others, the testimonies of those who have been willing to divulge, and the few case studies that exist. The history woven from these strands is not comprehensive but recognizing how and why campaign consultancy grew into a profession, and viewing recent developments in the light of old ones, is essential. This chapter’s title, “Institutional Memory”, is a reference to consultants being the keepers of a history. As they are not subject to electoral approval (unless the electorate consistently dismisses their clients), consultants can build careers that span decades, and they are likely to continue to practise when ephemeral public officials have left office. Their history runs parallel to significant electoral developments, such as the advent of public-opinion polling, television and the Internet. Their profession grew in tandem with the fragmentation of the electorate and the diminishment of the role of the traditional political party. We learn more about strategies, the candidate-centred campaign, party relations, advertising campaigns (both positive and negative), and press relations by accepting consultants as legitimate political actors. Furthermore, as shall be noted in Chapter 3, consultants are bound to become even more important as “new media” innovations broaden a candidate’s technological opportunities and allow others to unofficially impinge on campaigns.

⁶⁵ Glasser, “Hired Guns Fuel Fundraising Race”

Chapter 3: "War Rooms"

Message Creation and Dissemination in Modern American Elections

In his famed commentary on American democratic practice, Alexis de Tocqueville noted that "when men are no longer united amongst themselves by firm and lasting ties, it is impossible to obtain the cooperation of any great number of them, unless you can persuade every man whose help you require that his private interest obliges him voluntarily to unite his exertions to the exertions of all the others."⁶⁶ Though American voters were never mindless drones, their voting patterns could, at one time, be anticipated based on their given party affiliation. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were ages of politics that Pippa Norris called "pre-modern": when campaigns were labour intensive rather than capital intensive; when a partisan press informed the grassroots activists, who helped rear the candidates themselves; when the party was the main instrument in any given election. In such times, the candidate's stance on an issue was less important than his party credentials, and so a distinct message clarifying his political leanings or setting him apart from his opposition was not always necessary.

In the postmodern society, voters have become distant, if well-informed, spectators in the process.⁶⁷ As Robert Putnam noted, "financial capital – the wherewithal for mass marketing – has steadily replaced social capital – that is, grassroots citizen networks – as the coin of the realm."⁶⁸ There has been a transition in voting behaviour from Lazarsfeld's sociological/demographical model to Anthony Downs' model of rational and economic calculation. Diverse constituencies must now be targeted by race, marital status, educational background, religion, household income and geography. The existence of great numbers of unaffiliated and uncommitted voters now necessitates a utilitarian campaign: one which seeks to provoke a reaction from the audience, rather than merely spreading information.⁶⁹ Within such a campaign, each candidate must make themselves known to

⁶⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Wordsworth Edition, 1998, p. 220

⁶⁷ Pippa Norris, "The Evolution of Election Campaigns: Eroding Political Engagement?", Paper Presented to the Conference on "Political Communication in the 21st Century" at the University of Otago, N.Z., (Jan., 2004), p. 3

⁶⁸ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 40

⁶⁹ Nimmo, *The Political Persuaders*

their electorate, and persuade voters to cast their votes in expectation of a stated outcome. Whereas the parties have spent years associating themselves with certain principles in the hope that they can maximise voter percentages (a Downsian "Spatial Strategy"), candidate-centred campaigns can appreciate the nuances of the individual race and focus on the candidate's strengths. This "saliency theory" suits consultants, who can poll for the most relevant issues and can adjust the campaign's message depending on the expected result.⁷⁰

Put practically by Napolitan, one must "decide what you want the voter to feel or how you want him to react. Decide what you must do to make him react the way you want. Do it."⁷¹ At all levels (federal, state, or municipal), political candidates must blend their rationale for wanting to be elected with their political stances and objectives in a coherent message or narrative. This message must be easily communicable through a range of media and (it is hoped) be in line with the stances and objectives of the majority of people in the constituency. In the absence of party, external expertise is often sought in shaping this message and in allocating the resources for its dissemination. Firstly, consultants help decide what a campaign's message should be. Traditionally, pollsters are hired to aid the campaign staff in deciding which effective themes the campaign should run upon. Secondly, consultants are hired to help fund the distribution of the message through direct-mail and, increasingly, Internet solicitations. Thirdly, the message must be disseminated as widely and as efficiently as is possible on the airwaves and online. Of course, some of these are interconnected processes. They are not always functionally distinct and the weighting placed upon each one changes as the campaign evolves and is pressured by opposing forces. However, by dealing with each activity in turn we can outline the rationale (the operational *raison d'être*) behind it and can come to understand the consultant's role more fully. It is to message creation that we turn first.

Message Creation: Polling

Knowing what the party faithful and (more importantly) what independent voters are favouring at any given time is essential to a political campaign, and the way to acquire this

⁷⁰ Farrell, Kolodny and Medvic, "Parties and Campaign Professionals in a Digital Age", p. 16

⁷¹ Mark P. Petracca, "Political Consultants and Democratic Governance", *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (March, 1989), p. 13

knowledge is to ask them directly. According to one Democratic consultant, polling is the “central nervous system” of a modern campaign.⁷² In and of themselves, polls are not determinative. Huge poll deficits are surmountable, as one of Joseph Napolitan’s successful candidates (Governor Frank Licht of Rhode Island) found after coming back from a twenty-seven point deficit in the first poll taken on his behalf in 1970. However, scientific public opinion research is controversial as many see an antagonism between the right of the voters to have their voices heard and the prerogative of the elected representative to shape policy without a show of hands. Edmund Burke famously spoke for the autonomy of the public official when he told his constituents, “your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgement, and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion.” Does polling dispense with the need for such electoral uncertainties as convictions, of which Burke showed the courage? In Democratic strategist Joe Trippi’s biography, he tells of a client who filmed diametrically opposite advertisements on the abortion issue so that he could broadcast the one his polls told him would play best with voters.⁷³ Such pandering is regrettable and consultants are often blamed for the disappearance of spontaneity and for turning leaders into followers.

However, campaign consultants are quite articulate in justifying the need for opinion polling, and they raise some rational arguments in its defence. Napolitan knew that the usefulness of polls lay not in their transformative power, but in their ability to highlight the four or five key issues that could form the basis of discussion in the campaigns he ran. A political candidate may have strong opinions on a myriad of issues from healthcare to education, from Israel to the environment, from social security to national security. However, they only have the time that they can afford to purchase and the time allotted to them by a cynical news media in which to transmit these opinions to the public at large. They must, therefore, have an accurate assumption of what the public want to hear about: hence the prevalence of academic such as Pat Caddell, Richard Wirthlin and Stanley Greenberg in the field. On the website of Democratic pollster Celinda Lake, the argument for polling was rationalised like so: “advertising is expensive, and our clients want to know if

⁷² Johnson, *No Place For Amateurs*, p. 90

⁷³ Joe Trippi, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything*, HarperCollins, 2004

their ads are effective. We...make sure our clients get the most bang for their buck. Through LRP research, our clients know what works, and why.”⁷⁴ No single candidate can put an end to the thirty second ad or to the five second sound-bite but, forced to compete within those restraints, they can and should have some idea of what voters want to hear about in that timeframe.

Polling is therefore an educative exercise for the candidate and their team. In 1966, for example, Governor George Romney’s pollsters found that the priorities of the voters of Michigan had changed since they had elected him to office. Crime and delinquency was now the chief concern of Michigan’s voters, with fiscal issues dropping from first to sixth place in terms of importance. Comfortable in re-election so long as he acknowledged this change, Romney looked to strengthen the other Republican tickets in Michigan by urging them to acknowledge it too. That year, the unknown Robert Griffin (running for the U.S. Senate against a six-term Democratic governor) and five Republican congressional candidates were educated about the concerns of the voters by the voters themselves, and were rewarded for their attentiveness. Polling was not a trivial activity undertaken for the profit of the pollster, but an exercise which signalled to the candidates that they needed their understanding of, and policies on Michigan’s social issues to be at the forefront of their campaign preparations.⁷⁵

Educational or not, polling can of course be a lucrative niche for campaign consultants, as was seen in 2004. Taking only those amounts paid to companies the Center for Public Integrity classed as providing polling services (adding those they classed as providers of the “phones” and “phone banks” needed to conduct the polling could bring up the totals considerably), George W. Bush spent \$2,045,775 across ten companies whilst John Kerry spent \$3,455,773 across five companies. Of Kerry’s retained firms, the Mellman Group was paid \$2,144,375 for their services. In that company’s online literature, they recognised that “all of our research methods are worthless if the data we collect are inaccurate or biased,” but they also recognised their role in the greater campaign of persuasion that their clients

⁷⁴ See the Lake Research Partners website, accessed online on June 4, 2009 at: <http://www.lakeresearch.com/services/index.asp>

⁷⁵ Perry, *The New Politics*, pp. 71-106

were conducting. The literature said, "we use the most sophisticated analytical tools available to understand the motivations of consumers and voters so we can intervene in their decision-making processes to produce the outcomes our clients want."⁷⁶ Whilst pollsters may wish to be accurate in their information-gathering, they have some license to create an effective message in their capacity as consultants.

Message Dissemination: Television

Delivering the agreed-upon message to the voting public is the campaign team's next priority. As the modern electoral campaign increasingly revolves around exposing one's self to a diverse and dispersed audience in the bare minimum of time, there has been an accompanying rise in experts possessing a technical or creative mastery of the most penetrative media. It is unsurprising that media consulting and television production has been the most lucrative sector of campaign consultancy, because that technology has the highest potential of transference to the audience. As the Oscar-winning documentary director Charles Guggenheim said of the presidential campaign, the American people "expect drama, pathos, intrigue, conflict, and they expect it to hang together, as a dramatic package."⁷⁷ Whereas the ability to convey one's message over the airwaves was an advantage before the household penetration of television, candidates are now only taken seriously when they can show that they have as much mastery of the airwaves as they have of policy. When Lamar Alexander said of his 1996 Republican primary opponent that "he's not going to be doing any of the TV interviews the rest of us are doing... [T]here have been more sightings of Elvis than Senator Dole", he was suggesting that those politicians in tune with the televised campaign made for better nominees than those who relied on their governmental experience.⁷⁸ Alexander was largely correct in that election campaigns are now produced especially for television

This mode of campaigning is heavily criticised. Candidates are forced to compete for airtime against other candidates, against other programming, and against the news companies and

⁷⁶ See Mellman Group website accessed online on June 3, 2009 at: <http://www.mellmangroup.com/win.htm>

⁷⁷ Phillip John Davies, "The Drama of the Campaign: Theatre, Production, and Style in American Elections", *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 39, No. 1. (Jan., 1986), p. 98

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Kolbert, "The Presidential Race Is Its Own Biggest Fan", *The New York Times*, (Feb. 20, 1996)

channels that are reluctant to give time to political races that they deem are boring their viewers. Perhaps the most respected American news anchor, Walter Cronkite believed that important political campaigns were not getting the time and attention they deserved. Shortly before his death in 2009 he said of campaign coverage that "in the last election, I think the time, the average time, given to any statement by a presidential candidate, was around eight seconds. Well, for heaven's sakes, you can't get a noun and a verb into eight seconds, let alone an entire sentence."⁷⁹ Furthermore, television campaigning is a medium of communication dominated by those campaigns that have the most money. Like the fees of media advisors, airtime is costly and so front-runners and incumbents have an advantage over lesser-known candidates, whose potential for expansion is feared to be jeopardised by an inability to fund a television-oriented campaign.

Whilst these criticisms are perfectly valid, television also has an obvious upside as the most penetrative medium of communication. Frank Luntz put it best when he said, that "if the two Senate candidates in Florida could shake the hands of 120 people an hour for twenty-four hours a day, it would take three years to meet every individual who voted in the 1986 election. If they made ten speeches a day to audiences of 100 persons, it would take eight years to reach every voter."⁸⁰ In this age of candidate-centred politics, when local party organisation is weak, television is the most effective means of reaching the people. As for the charge that time allocation is unfair in that it allows front-runners to cement their advantage, there are two possible rebuttals. Firstly, one could argue that the purchase of television time does not necessarily equate to victory. Many times it has been the most creative ad, rather than the one which has been seen most often, which has drawn the most attention. Napolitan confirmed this to be the case when he said that "television is there. Everyone can use it. Some use it more effectively than others. And I don't think the ones who are imaginative enough to use it effectively should be penalised."⁸¹ The "Laughter Track" ad he produced for the Humphrey campaign in 1968 (with a disembodied voice laughing at what is revealed to be the announcement of Spiro Agnew's vice-presidential

⁷⁹ This quote is taken from an interview with Cronkite which was repeated as part of the obituary broadcast by the BBC on its website on the day of his death, July 18, 2009. The website was accessed on that day at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/8157052.stm?ls>

⁸⁰ Luntz, *Candidates, Consultants, and Campaigns*, p. 232

⁸¹ Napolitan, *The Election Game and How To Win It*, p. 73

nomination) continues to be referenced in studies of campaign communication today, whereas it would be hard to recall one of Nixon's ads despite his campaign being the better-organised and better-financed one. The second possible rebuttal could be that, thanks to FECA, one can be almost certain that the candidate with more money to spend on television has received more small and incremental donations than has the candidate without it. If money-raised equates to popularity among the electorate, can we begrudge the front-runner his or her status? Isn't it just democracy in action?

The debate over the fairness of television rages on, and media advisors receive their share of criticism within this debate. They also receive more attention for the negative ads that a campaign runs than they do for their technical and creative contributions. Many see the rise of media consultants as having been a causal factor in a perceived growth of negative campaigning, claiming it to be a case of post hoc ergo propter hoc ("after this, therefore because of this"). However, aside from the fact that negative campaigning has plagued American elections since the campaigns of Jefferson and Adams, doesn't modern journalistic coverage and commentary serve to curb this negativity? Allegations-made are now more easily traced to their origins, as John Sasso (Dukakis' chief advisor) learnt after sullyng Joseph Biden's presidential campaign with allegations of plagiarism in 1988. The fear of retaliation and of a backlash from the public can be enough to dissuade a campaign from launching a negative attack. It is for this reason that campaign professionals who do produce negative ads do so rationally and when the situation requires it: such as when the campaign is running behind in the polls. In 2007, Francia and Herrnson found that "professionally run" campaigns were more likely to attack opponents on their legal or professional backgrounds, but that their heightened awareness for what the voters will tolerate means that they stop short of personal attacks. Their study concluded that the blaming of consultants for any increase in negative campaigning was "misplaced" and "misdirected".⁸²

If there has been an increase in negative advertising, it has not necessarily come from the campaign's in-house television operations. Increasingly, outside actors are attempting to

⁸² Francia and Herrnson, "Keeping it Professional", pp. 246-272

influence the outcome of a campaign by unofficially impinging on it. Independent expenditure groups, or "527s" as they are also known, can be highly disruptive to the opposition campaign (and even to the campaign which they seek to help) when they produce their own un-coordinated advertisements. In 1993, ads commissioned by the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA) against Bill Clinton's proposed healthcare reforms prompted hundreds of thousands of voters to contact their congressmen and object, causing the reforms to fail. More recently, Republican consultant Stuart Stevens criticised the "527" which produced and aired the "Swift-Boat" ads attacking John Kerry's war record, saying that it had nothing to do with the official Bush campaign and that "everybody in the Bush world was furious, and sort of stunned."⁸³ In 2008, both the Clinton and McCain campaigns were bolstered by "527s", and must, privately at least, have been grateful for the advocacy, as they could not compete with Obama's fundraising operation.⁸⁴ However, "527" involvement can often lead to negative campaigning and can be counter-productive, so each campaign must be more equipped and better financed as they must deal with attacks from outside of the normal channels.

Campaign consultants must therefore possess more than a sharp tongue. The large media budgets are not handled by novices, but are purposefully entrusted to individuals or firms with proven records of success. Firstly, a technical knowledge of when and where the media resources would be best utilised is required. The purchase of airtime is complicated by date and time, and by the cost of the media market in which one wishes to broadcast. For example, campaigning in New Jersey is disproportionately expensive as that state receives its television from the media markets of New York City and Philadelphia, and to air an ad via those media markets is to show it to a number of people who are not eligible to vote in the election you are plugging. The campaign consultant must therefore measure expense against efficiency. Knowing when to go on air is equally important. In 2004, the Kerry campaign decided not to retaliate to attacks made against it with paid media after the Democratic Convention. The campaign had accepted federal funds and wanted to keep as

⁸³ CPI interview of Stuart Stevens conducted by Jules Witcover on March 7, 2007 and accessed online on April 4, 2009 at: http://www.buyingofthepresident.org/index.php/interviews/stuart_stevens/

⁸⁴ Michael Luo, "Facing Obama Fund-Raising Juggernaut, Clinton Seeks New Sources of Cash", The New York Times, (April 20, 2008); Jonathan Weisman, "Obama's Response Ad Reflects Lessons of 2004", The Washington Post, (Aug. 27, 2008)

much money as possible for the later stages of the campaign. In doing so, the charges against the candidate went unanswered; a campaign crime which, as was noted earlier, the Dukakis campaign committed and the Clinton campaign did not.⁸⁵

Creatively, media consultants can be even more important. Television's potential and the expense of airtime mean that consultants need to maximise the impact of the slots they purchase on behalf of the candidate. The effective scripting and production of television spots has the ability to turn a campaign around overnight. In each cycle, media advisors aim to produce the most emotional, humorous and thought-provoking commercials which will then serve as a portfolio in future business. In a chapter of his book entitled "The Textbook Campaign", Joseph Napolitan recalled how a thirty-minute documentary produced for Senate candidate Mike Gravel of Alaska in 1968 made a significant impact in the Democratic primary. Gravel trailed two-to-one on the Saturday; the documentary profiling him was aired extensively on the Sunday; Gravel was up by ten points in a poll on the Monday.⁸⁶ Elections have been won and lost on short and powerful television commercials, and on the back of the free media that these unique or controversial commercials attract (see, for example, Tony Schwartz's "Daisy" advert from Johnson's 1964 campaign, or the "Willie Horton" ad from 1988).

James Perry's case-study of Governor Nelson Rockefeller of New York's 1966 re-election campaign serves to underline this point. Polls informed Rockefeller's team that the governor was not earning credit for his major accomplishments during his eight years in office, and that he was being criticised for tax hikes he had ordered to pay for highway, health and university improvements. To sell the governor's accomplishments, the Jack Tinker & Partners ad firm omitted his face from the innovative and memorable advertisements they made advocating his re-election. For example, one ad featured a cartoon fish being interviewed on the decrease of water pollution during Rockefeller's governorship. These ads were broadcast seven hundred times before the September nominating convention and four thousand times, on twenty-two channels, in total. Together with a campaign literature

⁸⁵ CPI interview of Tad Devine conducted by Jules Witcover on June 11, 2007 and accessed online on April 5, 2009 at: http://www.buyingofthepresident.org/index.php/interviews/tad_devine/

⁸⁶ Napolitan, *The Election Game and How To Win It*, p. 66

effort that targeted voters by interest and region, they re-educated New Yorkers on the governor's achievements and led to his re-election in November 1966.⁸⁷

The 2008 primary campaign serves as a good example of these creative and technical skills merging in harmony. Barack Obama's campaign needed a) to introduce the candidate to an electorate that was far more familiar with his principal primary opponent and b) to allay fears that he was too inexperienced for the office. In Iowa and New Hampshire, his media advisors created ads that stressed his role in arms control legislation and ethics reform in the Senate. Obama used the fundraising advantage he had built in January 2008 to smother his opponent's message, and he was able to put these ads on cable television: something John Kerry had not done until he had clinched the nomination in 2004.⁸⁸ In the lead up to the two major contests after Super Tuesday (Ohio and Texas on March 4), Obama eroded Clinton's double digit lead by outspending her two-to-one (\$10 million to \$5 million in Texas, and \$5.3 million to \$3 million in Ohio).⁸⁹ Clinton's campaign was steadied when the "It's 3 a.m." ad (asking the viewer who they wanted answering a cold-war style red telephone) was aired extensively before the Texas and Ohio primaries. Though she won in both states, the small margins of victory counted for less as the Democrats allocate their convention delegates proportionally. In the remaining contests, Obama continued to brand Clinton as the consummate Washington insider who offered "more of the same old negative politics", while she accused him of attacking her policies to disguise the fact that he has no original ideas.⁹⁰ His message resonated more than hers did with North Carolinians and almost as well as hers did with Hoosiers in Indiana.

Television is therefore an essential tool to master in a political campaign. For all of its faults, it remains the most penetrative media. The consultants who specialise in its use must be aware of its technical and creative potential and limitations, and must be ready to respond to its use by the opposition. Consultants are not anxious about airing negative messages when they must, but they do so rationally as they recognise the pitfalls more clearly. One could easily devote whole studies to recounting illustrative examples of both good and bad

⁸⁷ Perry, *The New Politics*, pp. 107-137

⁸⁸ Jacques Steinberg "Democrats Are Testing Messages in Flood of Ads", *The New York Times*, (Jan. 25, 2008)

⁸⁹ Adam Nagourney, "Spending Heavily, Obama Attempts Knockout Blow", *The New York Times*, (March 2, 2008)

⁹⁰ Jim Rutenberg, "Attack and Counterattack", *The New York Times*, (May 6, 2008)

television usage, and such studies do exist. However, this brief examination should suffice to suggest that expertise is a necessary thing in its utilisation.

Message Dissemination: Direct-Mail

As Stuart Spencer noted, while “starving artists have produced great paintings, starving campaigns produce few winners.”⁹¹ The role of money is more important in American elections than in most other liberal democracies. At the federal level alone, there are 536 independent politicians who must worry about their re-election every two, four or six years. Being susceptible to primary challenges, they build their war chests as deterrents because fundraising ability is a sure indicator of popularity and momentum. In the 1996 presidential election, President Clinton’s early fundraising simultaneously scared off any potential Democratic challenger and meant that he could fundraise without impinging on the campaigns of Democratic candidates lower on the ticket, who would otherwise be competing with him for donations.

Raising the money to sustain a modern campaign was complicated by FECA in the 1970s, which necessitated the disclosure of significant contributions and placed limits on the amount contributors could give in an election cycle. Thus, campaign fundraising became less about tapping a few key supporters and more about taking the message to a larger population. Campaign consultants have therefore become even more important in recent years and there is certainly evidence to suggest that the campaigns in which they are involved fare better financially. Paul Herrnson found that big contributors are more likely to donate to “professionally run” campaigns because they do not want to see their donations squandered. Even those smaller contributors who do not factor campaign personnel into their decision to donate will be more impressed by the quality of the campaign’s message and its broadcasting, and will therefore be inadvertently contributing towards a campaign that is “professionally run”.⁹²

⁹¹ Luntz, *Candidates, Consultants, and Campaigns*, p. 26

⁹² Herrnson, “Campaign Professionalism and Fundraising in Congressional Elections”, 1992

From the need to build larger war chests from smaller contributions, the direct-mail consultant was born. Direct-mail is both a medium of message dissemination and an important fundraising tool. It has an American history dating back to the campaigns of William Jennings Bryan, but it achieved great popularity as a campaign tool alongside the deterioration of traditional political participation, as it complemented the "armchair activism" that much of the electorate chose to adopt. Whilst cultivating a constituency through direct-mail is generally a long-term investment which poses the danger of over-solicitation, there are several advantages to contacting potential donors in this way. Most importantly, it is message-dissemination free from media commentary or opposition rebuttal. Richard Viguerie, the pioneer of modern direct-mail operations in the 1970s and 1980s, expressed surprise not at how much money he was able to make for his Republican clients, but at how long it took the mainstream media and the Democratic Party to appreciate the impact he was having.

When Republican Senator Jess Helms of North Carolina and Senate candidate Oliver North of Virginia were campaigning in 1990 and 1994 respectively, they claimed in their direct-mailings that donations were needed urgently or else they would be beaten by their liberal opponents when, in fact, both men had much more money to hand than these opponents had.⁹³ Through direct-mail, candidates can cater to an audience that is tuned, for a time, solely to them. They can be more colourful in their language and messages than they can be on television, because they have a clearer idea of who their audience is and how they will react. The direct-mail consultant cultivates a community which may be synthetic in that the members do not meet or interact, but in which there is a pleasurable and shared experience that makes people donate. Furthermore, the messages that the members of this community receive can be tailored to compliment their commitment and their prior participation in it. As Nicholas J. O'Shaughnessy said in "The Peevish Penman", "targets of a political message who are already evangelised receive renewal without alienating possible subscribers who might need a less vociferous approach."⁹⁴

⁹³ Johnson, *No Place For Amateurs*, p. 155

⁹⁴ Nicholas J. O'Shaughnessy, "The Peevish Penmen: Direct Mail and U.S. Elections", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 22, No. 6, (1988), p. 37

Though direct-mail has had to adapt as email has become the preferred means of contacting individuals with a personalised message, it has shown great resilience. In 2004, \$40,088,335 passed through the nine direct-mail firms that George W. Bush retained. Of this amount, the bulk (\$34m) went to Olsen and Shuvalov/Praxis Lists of Austin, Texas, the principals of which had all worked for Karl Rove & Co. at some point in the 1990s: furthering the idea of generational development and professional evolution. Their online literature explains that they “understand that direct mail is both an art and a science.”⁹⁵ If the Kerry campaign understood the importance of direct-mail as much as did the Bush campaign, its expenditure did not reflect it. His campaign spent \$10,937,971 across seventeen different companies: almost a quarter of what the Bush campaign spent. However, both of these totals were calculated by adding only those amounts paid to companies whom the CPI labelled “direct-mail” specialists. If one factors in the money spent on sending direct-mail via email or even automated phone-messages, these sums could be higher still.

Message Dissemination: The Internet

Whilst it may not yet have superseded television in communicative importance, the Internet has become just as essential a feature of the modern campaign. Every activity that consultants have carried out in the past now has an online counterpart. Campaign spots can be viewed as viral videos online on demand; donations can be solicited and submitted easily online; polling can be conducted between the campaign’s pollsters and online respondents; direct-mail can be sent to individuals via their online email addresses rather than their residential ones. “Political tech” has not attained a level of investment close to that of television (perhaps because Internet services require little investment other than the time to interact with the online community) but press attention disproportionate to this investment has been lavished on its use. If one believes the hype, the Internet is fostering a process of civic re-engagement. The popularity of websites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube show that people want to be connected and so campaigns can no longer be as prescriptive as they have been in the past. The thirty second sound-bite worked well on television viewers, but Internet users spend hours online and favour elaboration over

⁹⁵ See Olsen-Shuvalov website accessed online on June 5, 2009 at: www.olsen-shuvalov.com/about_set.html

brevity. Said Dick Morris of the traditional media consultant, "we are basically like silent-movie actors having to adjust to an era of talkies."⁹⁶ And adjusting they are. Even seasoned consultants have equipped their firms with the latest technical knowledge for the 21st century.

The potential of the Internet in strengthening political campaigns was harnessed fairly soon after it became available to the public. The national parties may not have done much to coordinate or draw attention to them, but two-thirds of the candidates for Senate and open House seats had web sites in 1998.⁹⁷ However, it was on Howard Dean's 2003-2004 Democratic presidential primary campaign that the Internet's advantages were fully appreciated. Thanks mostly to the online community, the former Governor of Vermont spent the autumn and winter of 2003 as a front-runner and gained the support of such notables as former Vice-President Al Gore, before his incompetency on the airwaves brought the campaign to an end. Joe Trippi, Dean's chief strategist, was a self-confessed "geek" of the same generation as the founders of Google, eBay and other successful Internet start-ups. No stranger to computer technology, he did not share the opinion of many in the mainstream media that the burst of the tech-bubble in 2000 and 2001 signalled the end of the Internet. Trippi and his team harnessed its power and attracted "Deanie Babies" (young, technologically-minded volunteers) to Burlington, Vermont. They set up web logs ("blogs") to inform supporters of Dean's activities; they set up "HowardDean.tv" as a collection of behind-the-scenes videos of Dean on the campaign trail; they organised the "Sleepless Summer" tour of ten cities which brought in \$1 million in online contributions in four days.⁹⁸

But the Dean campaign was less about prescriptively directing the voters than about engaging them in the campaigning process. It encouraged "civic re-engagement" by drawing attention to MeetUp.com: a website which allows a person to find like-minded people with similar interests in their communities, and then allocates them a time and place to meet.

⁹⁶ CPI interview with Dick Morris, conducted by Jules Witcover on November 16, 2007 and accessed online on April 6, 2009 at: http://www.buyingofthepresident.org/index.php/interviews/dick_morris/

⁹⁷ David A. Dulio, Donald L. Goff and James A. Thurber, "Untangled Web: Internet Use During the 1998 Election", *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 32, No. 1, (March, 1999), pp. 53-59

⁹⁸ Trippi, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*

Some 600,000 voters signed up to the Dean campaign's grouping on that site. When the candidate arrived in New York City in early March 2003, he was received by the first of many crowds of supporters who would gather under their own steam to see him. Indeed, several of Dean's campaign stops were scheduled according to the demand for his presence at an event organised by his online supporters. Furthermore, these supporters looked to do more than just vote for the man. They involved themselves in all aspects of the campaign, from lawn poster design to opposition research. The Dean campaign's online efforts also led to unprecedented fundraising operations. His was the first campaign ever to publicise its fundraising targets, and the campaign surpassed a target of \$4.5 million for one financial quarter and actually raised \$7.2 million online.

One MeetUp.com member organised a donations drive that brought in an unsolicited \$400,000 and this financial support had the further dynamic of real-time connection. When Dean was bruised after an interview with Tim Russert on a June 2003 edition of Meet The Press, supporters donated \$90,000 online on that day (compared to an average Sunday intake of \$3,000).⁹⁹ After Dean dropped out of the race, the remaining campaigns looked to follow his example but it was not until 2008 that Dean's efforts were superseded. Hillary Clinton's team saw Dean's success as a fad and the Internet as a medium for teenagers. Barack Obama's team, however, compiled a database of over thirteen million email addresses and sent over one billion messages over twenty-one months. His team was highly interactive in that it imbibed those external elements which could strengthen it. One Facebook group was so effective at mobilizing college voters that it was made an official part of the campaign.¹⁰⁰ For the attention he paid to the online community, Obama was rewarded with both money and votes.

It seems unlikely that political candidates at any level will get away with ignoring the Internet from now on. Not only has it been shown to be a great fundraising tool, but it is becoming the primary means for the electorate to follow the campaign. Online donations are now easier and safer transactions than they ever were. Voters can read about the candidate or his policies and ideas unabridged on the official website. Daily updates and

⁹⁹ Trippi, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*, p. 130

¹⁰⁰ Jose Antonio Vargas, "Obama Raised Half A Billion Online", *The Washington Post*, (Nov. 20, 2008)

direct appeals from the candidate create an interactive feel, and the public can make suggestions on the website's chat rooms and message-boards. Of course, the Internet is not without pitfalls. David Axelrod said that "anybody can create a story, and that story can become determinative in a campaign," and that "today, everyone with a camcorder is selling themselves as a media consultant."¹⁰¹ The Internet serves to facilitate this kind of impingement. The YouTube campaign means that outsiders can post viral videos, pictures, messages or blogs. The implications of Internet use for the election campaign are therefore clear, as are the implications for campaign consultancy.

The new-found enthusiasm for using the Internet as a campaign tool is representative of a progressive movement within the campaign consulting profession. Peter D. Hart thought that the "Boys on the Bus" have been replaced by the "boys in the blog", while Dick Morris declared that "we will be able to look back on the period from 1972 until 2004 as the media age of American politics," and the period thereafter as a new era of campaigning.¹⁰² Becki Donatelli, John McCain's Internet advisor in 2008, believed that she and her colleagues were "the new media consultants." Jay MacAniff, an advisor with Aristotle Publishing, said "the traditional media advisor... the guy who buys a ton of ads for a campaign and makes serious money off TV – that guy's nervous."¹⁰³ Even long-established media consultants have re-oriented towards Internet operations. Doug Bailey, a Republican consulting stalwart since the 1960s, established FreedomChannel.com for political candidates to post viral videos, and suggested to incumbents that they host online town hall meetings, explain important voting decisions in videos, and allow the online community to design campaign paraphernalia.¹⁰⁴

However, many would counter Morris' enthusiasm and would say that he declared the end of the media age prematurely. Republican consultant Charles R. Black Jr. believed that whilst the Internet is useful for fundraising, it only reaches "young people and a few baby boomers", and Democratic consultant Tad Devine did not see it replacing television anytime

¹⁰¹ Susan Page, "Political Ads Take Center Stage in Debate Between Parties", USA Today, (Sept. 29, 2006)

¹⁰² CPI interview of Peter D. Hart conducted by Sara Fritz on March 12, 2007 and accessed online on April 4, 2009 at: http://www.buyingofthepresident.org/index.php/interviews/peter_hart1/. See also the CPI interview of Dick Morris as referenced above.

¹⁰³ Susan B. Glasser, "Consultants Pursue Promising Web of New Business", The Washington Post, (May 3, 2000)

¹⁰⁴ Doug Bailey, "The Y2K Political Explosion", Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, Vol. 5, No. 1, (Winter, 2000), pp. 86-88

soon.¹⁰⁵ More money than ever is being channelled into television advertising and Howard Dean's success has not caused consultants to adapt to online operations as quickly and as fully as they adapted to television. Many consultants say that whilst it may be easier than ever to amass a war chest from incremental online contributions, the message that encourages the contributor to give still needs to be of a high quality. It is easier and cheaper to send direct-mail electronically, but it must be just as persuasive as those in hard-copy need to be. It is easier than ever to research an opponent's record, but the results need to be presented as effectively as ever. In short, they say that the essential skills that consultant already possesses need little adjustment. For now at least, creative consultants reared in the "media age" are managing in the new one.

An Ongoing Functional Evolution

The above is by no means a comprehensive catalogue of the functions of campaign consultants. Several other activities such as phone-canvassing, press relations ("spin"), image consulting, and opposition research could have been added and rationalised. Written above are simple explanations of the most obvious and visible of the activities that consultants perform. Together these explanations should highlight a) the complexity of modern electoral campaigning and b) the consequent necessity of having professional expertise to guide campaigns in this complex system. As has been suggested so far and as will be stressed later, the consulting profession was born of necessity and has continued to thrive because there has been constant need for the talents of its practitioners. Those who would reminisce of the old days before professionalized campaigns, or who would outline plans for a return to an age of amateurism need reminding that (with the possible exceptions of fundraising and direct-mail) the campaign activities detailed above had no history outside the "modern" campaign. Scientific public-opinion polling, television and the Internet were all developed as campaign tools during the lifetime of the campaign consultant: these tools have been as useful as they have been not in spite of, but because

¹⁰⁵ CPI interview of Charles R. Black Jr. conducted by Jules Witcover on February 21, 2007 and accessed online on April 4, 2009 at: http://www.buyingofthepresident.org/index.php/interviews/charles_r_black_jr/. See also the CPI interview of Tad Devine as referenced above.

of, campaign consultants. Simply, "with the techniques have come the technicians."¹⁰⁶ Therefore, with new techniques shall come new technicians and the more complex those techniques are, the more qualified the technicians shall be.

¹⁰⁶ Kelley, Professional Public Relations and Political Power , p. 2

Chapter 4: Party Goers

The Impact of Campaign Consultants on American Political Parties

In 1888, James Bryce noted that party feeling in the United States was "strong enough to carry in on its back a man without conspicuous positive merits. . . because in America, party loyalty and party organisation have been hitherto so perfect that any one put forward by the party will get the full party vote if his character is good and his 'record', as they call it, unstained."¹⁰⁷ In the raging party era, machine "bosses" patronised and elections were won by the party which could most effectively turn out its base on polling day. However, the decline of partisanship in the twentieth century has created a more demanding electorate in which voters are neither dependent on the patronage of the political party for advancement nor satisfied with loyalty and tradition as reasons for consistently voting one way or the other. This decline is said to have eroded both the party's functionality in the electorate and its capacity to function as a national organisation. The increased importance of the primary campaign; the allowance of non-partisans into the nomination process; the presence of external campaign consultants who are contracted to carry out work previously done in-house: all are said to have brought about a reallocation of power.

Disseminating messages and guiding candidate-centred campaigns, consultants are often thought to be inherently anti-party and detrimental to their development. However, evidence will be presented in the course of this chapter that suggests that parties have a more equal footing in their relationships with consultants. Firstly, their relationship is more of a partnership in which the parties act as enablers to consulting firms and plug the gaps in campaign activities that these firms leave. Rather than having forfeited their organisational functions, the parties have professionalised and adapted so as to be able to compliment the candidate-centred campaigns that the new electoral rules foster. Arguably, they are stronger than their status in the electorate, or the levels of partisanship in Congress would suggest. Secondly, the evidence suggests that this relationship has been more mutually beneficial for the Republican Party and its consultants. A striking disparity has existed

¹⁰⁷ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*: Vol. 1, Cosimo Inc., 2007, p. 79

between the Republican and Democratic parties with regards their professionalisation and adaptation. For several reasons that shall be outlined, Republicans have been more advanced both in the retention of external consulting expertise, and in the application of the new technologies at which these consultants are adept. This has had, and will continue to have, major implications for the consulting profession and for the parties themselves.

Is The Party Over?

The decline of the political party in the electorate has been a long and laboured affair. During the final decades of the nineteenth century, two-thirds of the potential national electorate were "core" voters and in many of the larger industrial states like New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, this figure was closer to four-fifths. Swings and landslides were uncommon as the votes of few people were ever up for grabs. However, there were dramatic changes as America entered a new century, characterised by a decline in mean estimated turnout from 75.1% between 1848 and 1872, to 51.7% between 1920 and 1928. Furthermore, the fraction of the electorate classed as "peripheral voters" (independents and those with weak partisan ties) rose from one-sixth in the late nineteenth-century to one-quarter by 1965. A once vibrant participatory spirit had seen Americans, in huge numbers, play roles in voluntary membership associations. During the "New Deal" party-era, however, volunteerism fell as government took over the social functions of the political party. Since the "long 1960s", when vast and unstructured social movements concerned with post-material issues attracted participants in droves but quickly disbanded after achieving their goals, there has been a decrease in unionisation, church attendance, and the like. Bureaucratic bodies with formal rules and regulations which were easily mobilised by the party they leaned towards have become few and far between.¹⁰⁸ A combination of affluence and cynicism has bred apathy. As Walter Dean Burnham concluded in 1965, the aggregate data on both the national and state levels "point to the existence and eventual collapse of an earlier political universe in the United States."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Norris, "The Evolution of Election Campaigns", p. 9

¹⁰⁹ Walter Dean Burnham, "The Changing Shape of the American Political Universe", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 59, No. 1, (March, 1965), p. 22

By the 1970s, political science was showing little faith in the ability of the political parties to rise from the mat to which they had been knocked by these changes. David Broder boldly declared that "The Party's Over" and others followed suit. Few of those students who studied the professionalisation of election campaigns considered "party agency" as a causal factor, preferring the "systemic variables" like the frequency of elections and fundraising laws as explanations.¹¹⁰ As a consequence of the changes in nomination procedures, for example, candidates must raise more money to compete in more primaries and must manufacture pseudo-events for the media so as to distinguish themselves from colleagues within their own party with whom they tend to agree on core issues. Insurgencies like that of Jimmy Carter's and Barack Obama's have become the ideal model, and in putting together their own external teams rather than being assigned personnel by the national party infrastructure, the candidate necessarily seeks those who can best disseminate a message and create name-recognition where once there was none. In this light, it often seems that parties are valued only for their ability to circumvent the FECA's rules on fundraising to effectively launder money: valued as a party-in-service and party-as-banker.

However, though his *Bowling Alone* is perhaps the most conclusive commentary on the loss of civic and political participation over the last half century, Robert Putnam could not conclude that the drop in civic participation preceded a decline of the national party organisation. On the contrary, he said that over the last forty years "these organisations have become bigger, richer and more professional," and concluded that it was a "bizarre parody" that as the grassroots party declined its national infrastructure was strengthened.¹¹¹ Putnam's conclusion was also supported by research at the state level. In 1983, Gibson et al. measured the organisational strength of a sample of fifty-four state parties between 1960 and 1980. They found that there had been a growth in permanent headquarters, a greater division of labour, a growth in bureaucratisation and staffing, and increased budgets. They also measured the "programmatic capacity" - whether a state party organisation could cultivate a constituency and support itself and its candidates - and found the parties to be strong in fundraising and voter mobilisation. Aside from candidate

¹¹⁰ Rachel Gibson and Andrea Römmele, "A Party-Centered Theory of Professionalised Campaigning", *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (Fall, 2001), p. 32

¹¹¹ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 38

recruitment and delegate selection, parties were found to be in greater health than they had been. Whilst there may have been dealignment at the bottom, there has been realignment at the top.¹¹²

An Antagonistic Relationship?

Why then are consultants still perceived as being detrimental to the national organisational capacities of the parties? Why are they perceived to have turned the parties into “giant campaign consulting firms or super PACs”?¹¹³ In his article on the “Parties’ Diminishing Relevance for Campaign Professionals”, Fritz Plasser argued that consultants now see themselves as more important than the parties to which their clients belong. He used the findings of a Global Consultancy Survey conducted in 1999, which surveyed 592 consultants in 43 countries. The respondents, Plasser said, see the campaign as zero-sum and choose winning races over enriching the party. Indeed, it would be difficult to ignore the “adversarial” relationship that has at times existed between the party and those it contracts. Whitaker and Baxter, the first of the modern consultants, disliked the party organisation for its inefficiency and expense, and so they appointed and paid their own campaign chairpersons in each county and region of California when they needed such point-men on the ground.

Such circumvention does not endear the consultant to those who fear the eclipse of the political party. Neither does the consultant’s freedom to work for clients of either party. As Arthur Schlesinger Jr. put it, these specialists, “working indifferently for one party or the other, reduce campaigns to displays not of content but of technique.”¹¹⁴ Also worrisome is the idea that consultants circumvent the parties in the nurturing of talented candidates. Consultants can actively solicit business independent of the party apparatus, and Gillian Peele warned that “it is a short step from that solicitation to the encouragement of primary

¹¹² James L. Gibson, Cornelius P. Cotter, John F. Bibby and Robert J. Huckshorn, “Assessing Party Organisational Strength”, *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 27, No. 2, (May, 1983), pp. 193-222; Morris P. Fiorina, “Parties and Partisanship: A 40-Year Retrospective”, *Political Behaviour*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Special Issue: Parties and Partisanship, Part One, (June, 2002), p. 101

¹¹³ Fiorina, “Parties and Partisanship”, p. 103

¹¹⁴ Sabato, *The Rise of Political Consultants*, p. 3

bids and the extension of referendum campaigns.”¹¹⁵ The selection of Dan Quayle as George H. W. Bush’s running mate in 1988 (a selection heavily conditioned by Bush’s consultants, Bob Teeter and Roger Ailes) was perhaps an example that validated Peele’s concern. Furthermore, Walter de Vries told us to recognise that “the people who run the campaigns, who write the policy speeches and advise the candidates often become those who govern when the candidates get elected – and now are beginning to run the political parties.”¹¹⁶ Warnings like this suggest something conspiratorial, as if an infiltration of the parties is close to completion.

These concerns are to be expected, but there is evidence to suggest that they are unnecessary. Plasser’s notion that winning races and strengthening the party are mutually exclusive goals, of which a consultant must choose one, is incorrect. In 2006, for example, David Axelrod and Joel Benenson helped Congressman Rahm Emanuel, in his capacity as chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), to recapture the U.S. House of Representatives. In successfully doing so, Axelrod and Benenson strengthened their own business credentials whilst helping the party, and they are far from the only consultants to have done so. There is more strength to the allegation that parties have less control over the recruitment of candidates. However, it is more of a case of potential candidates competing to retain the services of consultants independent of the party, rather than a case of consultants persuading people to run for office so as to be able to charge them for their services. In attempting to democratise the nomination process through new electoral rules inaugurated in the late 1960s, the parties (particularly the Democratic Party) relinquished much of the organisational strength and control they possessed over who could run under their banners: when surely the recruitment of candidates who share a political affinity with it is the central purpose of the organised political party. Of course this has meant an increase of business for consultants, but it does not mean that they have been poaching candidates from the party organisation.

As for Schlesinger’s suggestion that consultants flit across party lines, this is unsubstantiated. Though some consultants have worked for both Republican and

¹¹⁵ Gillian Peele, “Campaign Consultants”, *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 1, (1982), p. 358

¹¹⁶ De Vries, “American Campaign Consulting”, p. 24

Democratic clients simultaneously (the most notable example being Dick Morris when he worked for President Clinton and Republican Senate Majority Whip Trent Lott), the CPI interviews strongly suggest that those consultants are exceptions to the rule, and that “switchers” do not exist. Perhaps Larry Sabato put it best when he said that “it is a delicious commentary on the American system that some of the least ideological professionals take their chosen political party dead seriously...”¹¹⁷ Money is no doubt a motivating factor in the decision to become a consultant. 11.2% of interviewees gave it as their primary reason for choosing the profession when questioned on their motivation by David A. Dulio. However, a majority of Dulio’s respondents (53.5%) reported that their beliefs and ideologies motivated them and kept them anchored within one party. Doug Bailey told Dulio of his and John Deardourff’s professional benchmark. He said that “unless we generally shared the candidate’s philosophy, we would feel so uncomfortable it would be a non-productive and unpleasant relationship.”¹¹⁸ Both their testimonies and their actions suggest that consultants are not as flippant with their party loyalty as is generally believed.

A Symbiotic Relationship

A by-product of the work conducted by the CPI was the highlighting of the bond between the party and the consultant. The database that it compiled suggests that, far from leaving candidates to their own devices when it comes to consultants, parties are involved in financing professional talent. In 2004, the DNC, DCCC and DSCC spent \$248.6m, \$52.2m and \$85.4m respectively on the services of campaign consultants. On the Republican side, the Bush campaign paid \$177m in media consulting fees to Maverick Media, which also took \$296,369 off of the Republican National Committee (RNC). Campaign Mail and Data Inc was paid \$2.2m by the Bush campaign, and a further \$3.8m by the RNC. Voter/Consumer Research Inc (a polling firm) was paid \$1.2m by the Bush campaign, around \$1.5m by the RNC, and between \$40,000 and \$50,000 by the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) and the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC). In total, the RNC passed \$181.5m out of a campaign budget of \$382.4m through consultants, whilst the

¹¹⁷ Sabato, *The Rise of Political Consultants*, p. 28

¹¹⁸ David A. Dulio, *For Better or Worse? How Political Consultants are Changing Elections in the United States* State University of New York Press, 2004, pp. 52-56

NRSC and the NRCC spent nearly \$96.3m and \$129m respectively. Every other company that George W. Bush used was paid some amount by one of the party committees, suggesting that consulting firms are as closely linked to the party of their clients as they are to the clients themselves.¹¹⁹

The sums of money that the parties hand out to consultants do not suggest that they are actively looking to restrict the influence of consultants on electoral campaigns. On the contrary, they suggest that parties should be seen as incubators of consulting talent. In 1998, Kolodny and Logan found a predictable pattern in party-consultant relations. After gaining some experience inside the party infrastructure, those who would become consultants chose to work outside of the strictures of the party machinery so as to escape the bureaucracy and to be able to pick and choose the races which they worked on. This did not mean that they then accepted the business of any who would solicit them. They tended to gravitate back to the party in which they were reared because they did not leave it ideologically.¹²⁰ In 1998, Candice Nelson illustrated this rule-of-thumb with case-studies from inside of the Beltway. Her first example, Martin Hamburger, had grown up in the anti-nuclear and wildlife advocacy movements before becoming a congressional staffer. He was then hired into, and promoted to deputy political director within, the DCCC.

Frustrated with the turnover of staff (as working within the national party committees is seen as more of a training experience than a career) and with such a heavy workload that he could pay scant attention to any individual race under his supervision, Hamburger established himself privately. He continued to work exclusively for Democratic clients at all levels of government. The same can be said of Nelson's second subject, Kim Alfano. Having worked for the RNC as a student in 1988, she established Alfano Productions and managed Frank Keating's media in his 1994 run for Governor of Oklahoma. She envisaged the relationship between the party and the consultant as symbiotic and cyclical in that people work for party committees to gain experience, establish themselves privately, and then

¹¹⁹ This information was retrieved from the CPI's database, accessed on April 5, 2009 at <http://projects.publicintegrity.org/consultants/search.aspx>

¹²⁰ Robin Kolodny and Angela Logan, "Political Consultants and the Extension of Party Goals", *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (June, 1998), pp. 155-159

return as executives.¹²¹ Alfano's testimony would seem to confirm what Walter de Vries said about the party being increasingly run by consultants, but her take on the matter supposes a more cooperative integration of consultant with party. Indeed, in her version, the party is helped by the leadership of consultant-executives who know something about electing candidates to office – the primary goal of an organised political party. Candice Nelson's choices of case study were not unrepresentative. In 2001, Farrell, Kolodny and Medvic confirmed that over half of today's consultants have followed this route from the party into private practice.¹²²

If the presence of the campaign consultant is not as antagonising to the political party as it may at first seem, it is certainly transformational. Parties must now act in co-ordinated partnership with them and an unspoken division of labour has taken place. After interviewing staff from the national campaign committees and candidates from the 1984 and 1986 House and Senate elections, Paul Herrnson found that the parties had three important roles to play. Firstly, they are important in directing aid to campaigns in the form of management, polling, communications, fundraising, legal advice, opposition research, tracking polls and so on. Second, they are brokers between the campaigns and the consultants, drawing candidates' attentions to consultants and vice-versa. Thirdly, the parties are in charge of "non-allocable expenditures" or "soft money" (money that the party spends on behalf of the candidate but that does not need reporting to the FEC) and can coordinate financial activity in conjunction with the campaign so long as it falls under the remit of "party-building" activity. Using these resources, the parties excelled in Get-Out-The-Vote drives, voter registration, and issue advertising. The consultant-respondents in Kolodny and Logan's survey suggested that whilst parties can be awkward and cumbersome bodies that ignore the nuances of particular races, they are in fact better than they themselves are at this mobilisation task.¹²³ There is general agreement on this division of labour between consultants and traditional party workers.

¹²¹ Candice J. Nelson, "Inside the Beltway: Profiles of Two Political Consultants", *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (June, 1998), pp. 162-166

¹²² Farrell, Kolodny and Medvic, "Parties and Campaign Professionals in a Digital Age", pp. 11-30

¹²³ Paul S. Herrnson, "The Importance of Party Campaigning", *Polity*, Vol. 20, No. 4, (Summer, 1988), pp. 714-719; Kolodny and Logan, "Political Consultants and the Extension of Party Goals", pp. 155-159

A Striking Disparity

To varying degrees, both of the major parties in the U.S. have chosen to allocate money and resources to the new campaign technologies, and to invest in their partnerships with campaign consultants. However, whilst the systemic variables that some students use to explain the decline of the national party organisation may explain differences across international boundaries, they do not explain the discrepancies that exist when parties differ in this allocation.¹²⁴ In his 1968 collection of case studies on the New Politics, James Perry explained that it was no coincidence that he had considered the work of only one Democratic consultant (Joseph Napolitan). He said, "it's simply because there are no others, none, at least, of that quality that we have been seeking...It is a fact that the Republicans have pre-empted the new technology."¹²⁵ Perry was certainly justified in making this claim. Whitaker and Baxter's pioneering firm had, after all, worked exclusively for Republican candidates, as had its initial imitators. The reasons for the discrepancy in consultant-retention between the Republican and Democratic parties are varied and necessary to examine if we are to understand the impact that consultants have had on the party.

One reason is that, since the age of Jefferson, the Democratic Party has drawn a majority of support from rural areas where field organisation was always more important than mass media advertising. This helps to explain both why Democrats have been more reluctant to hire external expertise, and why they dominated the Congress and the nation's state houses (but not the presidency) in the twentieth century. Another reason may be simple economics. With more industrialists and wealthy backers (not to mention the personal wealth many of the candidates possessed), Republican candidates could afford to experiment more than could Democratic candidates. Nelson and Winthrop Rockefeller, for example, experimented with television in New York and with early computer technology in Arkansas respectively. When FECA mandated drastic cuts in the amounts individuals and committees could donate to candidates and parties, it was the Republican Party which needed to alter most. While the political-left still had the unions, the right had only its grassroots after large contributions were disallowed and so (necessity being the mother of

¹²⁴ Gibson and Römmele, "A Party-Centered Theory of Professionalised Campaigning", pp. 31-43

¹²⁵ Perry, *The New Politics*, p. 215-216

invention) Republicans were quicker to tap it.¹²⁶ With money fundraised primarily through direct-mail, the Republicans were able to pay for more staff and equipment and the party developed a technological superiority that could not be surmounted within a single election cycle.

Perhaps the foremost reason for the Republican Party's technological dominance, however, is its internal ideology and structure. Despite being the minority party, Republicans have benefitted most from the centralisation of activity that has followed the decline of partisan activism. In true Jacksonian fashion, the Democratic Party has a pluralistic and polycentric structure which prizes proportionality and openly encourages in-fighting, disunity, and internal criticism.¹²⁷ The democratising reforms of the 1960s and 1970s served only to fragment that party even further, and its presidential nomination practices are indicative of the cultural difference. The Democratic contest tends to attract candidates who lack name recognition. For example, four-fifths of American adults had never heard of Carter, Dukakis, or Clinton a year before the Iowa Caucuses. The Republicans, meanwhile, tend to nominate the person whose time has come or whose turn it is, i.e. Reagan after Ford; Bush after Reagan; McCain after Bush 43.¹²⁸ Dick Morris said that the keyword in Republican nominations "is not conservative or pro-life or pro-gun or even fiscal-conservative. The key word is legitimate."¹²⁹ The Republicans have tended to be the more unified party as theirs is a less precarious balance of coalitions and competing interests.

For all of these reasons, Republicans have been more co-ordinated and have better utilised the new technologies available to them than have Democrats. In 1952, Eisenhower's staffers bought up the best television spots and his media advisors used varied formats in their advertising. In contrast, 96% of Stevenson's television time covered traditional political speeches.¹³⁰ With a personal fortune at his disposal, one might have expected John F. Kennedy to have had a strong contingent of commissioned advisors around his 1960

¹²⁶ See the CPI interview of Richard Viguier as referenced above.

¹²⁷ Jo Freeman, "The Political Culture of the Democratic and Republican Parties", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 101, No. 3, (1986), pp. 327-356

¹²⁸ Jason D. Berggren, "Two Parties, Two Types of Nominees, Two Paths to Winning a Presidential Nomination, 1972-2004", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 2, (June, 2007), pp. 203-227

¹²⁹ Morris, *Behind the Oval Office*, p. 267

¹³⁰ Kelley Jr., *Professional Public Relations and Political Power*, p. 162

presidential campaign, but his was always more of a politics of personal involvement, and he preferred the counsel of the handful of staffers who had survived a vigorous vetting process. David Broder highlighted this with the example of Kennedy's primary campaign organisation in Raleigh County, West Virginia, where Kennedy deployed Ben Smith (a Harvard roommate) and Cecil Saunders (a P-T Boat training-school roommate) to coordinate his effort.¹³¹ President Johnson was equally unhelpful to the cause of professionalised campaigning. Upon discovering a debt of \$2 million at the DNC, he sought to rectify it by taking away the electioneering resources of freshmen Democrats (e.g. television studios, direct-mail campaigns, phone banks). In doing so, Broder concluded, Johnson damaged the Democrats' campaigning ability in the 1966 midterms, in which they lost forty-seven House and three Senate seats.

At the same time as these Democratic presidents were hindering the development of a professionalised party organisation, the liberal vehemence of the social-movement-packed 1960s was precipitating the growth of the articulate "New Right" which nostalgically yearned for an older America and sought to provide a conservative response to direct action. Finding their access to all three branches of the federal government blocked, the followers of this new ideology sought to extend their message to the public without interference. Through the emerging technology of direct-mail, Richard Viguerie targeted the "silent majority". Mailing around 110 million letters annually in the 1970s, his advertising complimented the emotive issues that conservatives wanted to publicise, such as the contentious *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision on a woman's right to choose.¹³² With a donor list of 2.7 million by the early 1980s, the Republican Party raised huge sums of money. It raised \$30 million in 1980, as opposed to the Democrats' \$2.5 million.¹³³ Their "outmoded liberalism" kept the Democrats in a New-Deal frame of mind and hindered their progress in consultant-recruitment and message diversity.

With this fundraising superiority, the national Republican Party infrastructure was equipped with both the personnel and the technology needed to cope with rising demands. Under the

¹³¹ David Broder, *The Party's Over: The Failure of Politics in America*, New York: Harper and Row, 1972, p. 20

¹³² Peele, "Campaign Consultants", p. 358

¹³³ Luntz, *Candidates, Consultants, and Campaigns*, p. 119

leadership of Bill Brock between 1977 and 1981, the RNC funded created regional party directors and an organisational director post in each state. It launched technical assistance programs to teach candidates about fundraising. It created a local election campaign division to focus on district analysis, recruitment, and on-site assistance. After Brock, more chairmen saw improvements during their tenures. What with "[Jim] Nicholson's investment in the Internet and World Wide Web in the late '90s, [Haley] Barbour's investment in TV and radio studios in the early '90's, [Lee] Atwater's investment in opposition research in the late '80's, and [Frank] Fahrenkopf's investment in voter files in the early '80's", the campaigning ability of Republicans was far in advance of that of the Democrats.¹³⁴

This professionalism was most evident in the campaign committees.

Frank Luntz wrote of the NRSC that during the 1980s it was "the only national party organisation with the resources to fund every candidate under its jurisdiction up to the maximum amount allowed by federal election law, which ranges from \$102,800 in the smallest states to \$1,720,861 in California."¹³⁵ The NRCC was equally impressive. In the 1984 House elections, for example, it proved itself to be far superior to the DCCC. The NRCC was more business-like, employing one-hundred-thirty full-time staff compared to the DCCC's forty-five, and having an operating budget of \$60 million to the DCCC's \$10 million. Whereas the NRCC had a field staff that served as a link between the national and local parties, the DCCC had no such intermediaries in place.¹³⁶ This disparity was also present at the state level. Gibson et al. found that Democratic state parties were pivotal in the recruitment of far fewer candidates than were the Republican state organisations. They found that "70 percent of the Republican organisations recruit candidates for Congress, [while] only 22 percent of the Democratic organisations do."¹³⁷ Indeed, the only things that Republicans could not purchase were the votes at the ballot box. Their party only picked up fourteen House seats in the 1984 elections, and they did not take back the House and Senate until 1994, despite conducting more professional campaigns in the mean time. One could attribute this paradox to Democratic dominance at the district level or to a lack of support

¹³⁴ Terry McAuliffe, with Steve Kettmann, *What A Party! My Life Among Democrats: Presidents, Candidates, Donors, Activists, Alligators, and Other Wilds Animals*, Thomas Dunne Books, 2007, pp. 280-286

¹³⁵ Luntz, *Candidates, Consultants, and Campaigns*, p. 125

¹³⁶ Paul S. Herrnson, "National Party Decision Making, Strategies, and Resource Distribution in Congressional Elections", *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 3, (Sept., 1989), pp. 301-323

¹³⁷ Gibson, Cotter, Bibby and Huckshorn, "Assessing Party Organisational Strength", p. 206

among swing voters. That Republicans were more effective in professionalising, however, is beyond doubt.

Democrats have freely admitted that they trailed the Republicans in many areas of modern party development for much of the last half century. Democratic consultant Robert Strauss said that “the Republicans punch a button every four years, and all the old pros show up...The Democrats bring out a bunch of bright, gracious people, who reinvent the wheel.”¹³⁸ Furthermore, David Axelrod (in a thinly disguised criticism of Bob Schrum in particular) believed that Democratic consultancy had been too formulaic. He noted how the party has suffered from “a Wizard of Oz syndrome among Washington political consultants who tend to come to candidates and say: I have the stone tablets! You do what I say, and you will get elected. And they fit their candidates into this rubric.”¹³⁹ Substantial improvements were made after the 2000 election cycle. When Terry McAuliffe became chair of the DNC, he recognised the need for an overhaul of the infrastructure and applied his fundraising talents to raise the money to do it. For example, the DNC had a register of only 70,000 e-mail addresses, when Al Gore had received almost 51 million votes. They did not have a single voter file and their direct-mail appeal list of 400,000 was outdated, with the average age of the recipient being 68.¹⁴⁰ It was under McAuliffe’s leadership, Richard Viguerie believed, that all this changed and that the Democrats finally caught on and surpassed the Republicans as a campaign-orientated party.¹⁴¹ The successes of 2006 and 2008 certainly support this conclusion, though it remains to be seen whether the internal culture of the Democratic Party will allow for a continuing professionalisation.

A Professionalised Party

Commenting on the turmoil within the Republican Party in a June 2009 edition of his nightly MSNBC show Countdown, Keith Olbermann noted that “no organisation, political or otherwise, collapses only from the top: just as you have to screw it up nationally, so too do

¹³⁸ Unknown, “It’s The Year of the Handlers”

¹³⁹ Wallace-Wells, “Obama’s Narrator”

¹⁴⁰ McAuliffe, What A Party!

¹⁴¹ CPI interview of Richard Viguerie (as referenced above).

you have to unravel it down to the grassroots.”¹⁴² It has been the conventional wisdom that both the party-in-the-electorate and the national party organisation have been in decline for decades. However, this chapter has presented evidence that suggests that whilst the party-in-the electorate has suffered from apathy, the national party infrastructure seems to be doing well. To meet the needs of candidates in modern election campaigns, it has professionalised and has imbibed the technologies necessary to conduct them. When disputing the deterioration of the national organisation, Putnam noted that in 1996 more voters than ever were contacted by the respective Get-Out-The-Vote drives of the two major parties. Whilst they may not be able to stem the apathy of the non-voting public, the parties are making a positive impact on voting turnout, which would no doubt be lower still if it were not for their professionalism. Furthermore, the parties have imbibed the skill of the technicians who have a mastery of the new technologies. The relationship between the two is mutually beneficial: parties receive the expertise of consultants who are overwhelmingly loyal to them, whilst consultants receive patronage and references from the parties. The financial links between the two suggest that their relationship is more symbiotic than antagonistic.

The disparity that existed between the Republican and Democratic parties was indicative of the political culture of each that either hastened or slowed their acceptance of the new state of affairs. Since the 1950s, Republicans have invested much more money into the party's campaign infrastructure, and therefore the consultants who share its ideological leanings have found a more willing partner in the electoral process than have Democratic technicians. Several possible reasons can account for the disparity: that the Republican Party was better financed by wealthy candidates and then by pioneering direct-mail consultants; that its centralized political culture puts more emphasis on winning elections; that its nomination contest is less fractious and makes for a more unified political party. Whatever the reason, the GOP has until recently been more able to finance the activities of pioneering consultants, and has given them clearer instructions and demanded more precision from them. The GOP has been much more comfortable with the idea of consultancy as a business, and has been happier to contract work out to those external

¹⁴² Keith Olbermann, Countdown with Keith Olbermann, MSNBC, Broadcast on June 06, 2009

players who can guarantee efficiency. One seldom hears of the professional feuds among Republican consultants that have been a feature of the almost operatic history of Democratic consultants, suggesting that the former are more professional in their conduct.

One would have thought that there would be accompanying success at the federal ballot box for the Republican Party during its period of financial and technological dominance in the 1980s. That there was no accompanying success is an anomaly that could be explained by suggesting that its professionalisation was a long-term investment that matured in 1994, or by suggesting that the party has achieved more aside from electing candidates, e.g. the cultivation of a loyal constituency. Regardless, we must conclude that the Republican Party was keener to embrace change. That party fits the criteria that Gibson and Römmele found to be essential for professionalisation to occur. They said that "the move toward professional campaigning is seen as most likely to take place in a well-funded, mainstream, right-wing party with significant resources and a centralized internal power structure that has recently suffered an electoral defeat and/or a loss of governing status."¹⁴³ Defeated by Roosevelt, Kennedy, Johnson and Carter, but remaining well financed throughout, the Republican Party returned reinvigorated and professionalised each time. Whether the Republican Party will return from its defeat in 2008 with a refreshed campaigning arm, or whether the Democrats will continue in their campaigning dominance now that they have realised the potential of external expertise, is something that remains to be seen.

¹⁴³ Gibson and Römmele, "A Party-Centered Theory of Professionalized Campaigning", p. 37

Chapter 5: Message Men

The 2008 Presidential Election

It may not have been “critical”, but the presidential election of 2008 was certainly preceded by a campaign of firsts. Aside from the obvious significance of the first African-American at the top of a major party ticket and the first female vice-presidential nominee for the Republican Party, it was also the first time since Eisenhower’s election in 1952 that neither a president nor his vice-president were candidates. Also, the refusal of a major party candidate (Barack Obama) to accept public funding for the general election was an unprecedented act in the thirty-two year history of the FEC. In fact, the \$21.7 million paid to primary candidates who did accept public funding in 2008 was the lowest amount given to the field since 1976, suggesting that the resounding success of the Internet in facilitating small donations had bred confidence in all but the most insignificant candidates.¹⁴⁴ With George W. Bush’s popularity rating below 30%, the Republican field of nominees was seemingly at a disadvantage. However, a divisive Democratic primary (that party historically being less likely to recover after a conflict-ridden nomination contest such as those of 1968 and 1980) levelled the playing field somewhat.

Whereas John McCain had received the Republican nomination for president by March 5, the Democratic contest continued for a further three months, until Barack Obama became the nominee on June 4. His primary opponent, Hillary Clinton, had been the favourite to win that nomination since her formal candidacy began in January of the preceding year. Throughout 2007, she had led in all nationwide polls and had raised more money than any other candidate in either party. The reversal of her fortunes is widely attributed to her campaign’s inability to distance her from a lengthy career in Washington, when the mood of the electorate was hostile to professional politicians. In Obama’s decision not to accept federal funds, in Joseph Biden’s references to his nightly trips home to Wilmington, in McCain’s emphasis on his “Maverick” reputation and in Sarah Palin’s allusions to her

¹⁴⁴ A summary of the Federal Election Commission’s information was published on June 8, 2009. accessed on June 10, 2009 at: <http://www.fec.gov/press/press2009/20090608PresStat.shtml>.

“outsider” status, one read a rhetorical response to the fear for the loss of the citizen-legislator that Clinton’s campaign could not allay.

Despite the prevalence of this public distaste for professionalism, campaign consultants were as heavily involved in the campaigns of 2008 as they had been in any other cycle. Documenting this involvement so soon after the conclusion of the cycle is a difficult task. The small amount of scholarly literature published since November 2008 has focussed primarily on the personalities and weaknesses of the main contenders and there is, as yet, no database of consultant involvement like the Center for Public Integrity’s 2006 issue. However, by cross-referencing staff listings against the online literature of the practitioners they name, and by following the campaign coverage of the major news publications (many of which published behind-the-scenes exposés on the main strategists in each campaign), we can construct a picture that validates the definition and evolutionary history of campaign consultancy established elsewhere in this study. Furthermore, a closer examination of the processes of message creation in 2008 suggests that the major consultants may have left a stronger professional imprint on their candidates’ messages than has been done in any other election cycle (including the ones in which Karl Rove steered George W. Bush’s campaigns).

Campaign Consultant Retention in 2008

The pattern of events in the 2008 presidential election campaigns was not out of sync with the continuing evolution of campaign consultancy. Predictably, those consultants specializing in online operations were sought after in line with the increased importance of their medium. The advantages of maintaining a “real-time connectedness” and in cultivating an online constituency were repeatedly demonstrated, such as when Obama raised \$10 million online within twenty-four-hours of Governor Sarah Palin’s address to the Republican National Convention.¹⁴⁵ However, old-media figures still predominated and they continued to earn great profits that were a contentious issue. Democratic consultants had come under pressure in 2000 and 2004 for taking high commissions that could have been redirected to

¹⁴⁵ Vargas, “Obama Raised Half A Billion Online”

other activities in the campaign. In 2008, Democratic candidates emulated their Republican counterparts (who have generally kept their consultants within tighter restraints) and introduced flat-fees and caps. Joe Trippi, a leading strategist to John Edwards' campaign in 2007-2008, believed that for the new generation of campaigners "the old commission structure will be dead, and everyone will have flat fees," thanks in large part to cheaper online resources and increased competition.¹⁴⁶

There certainly was increased competition in 2008. Unable to pay the salaries of the long-established firms from the coasts, those candidates with less money and less name-recognition called on smaller, state-level firms. Republican Senator Sam Brownback hired David Kensinger, "the true Machiavelli of Kansas", whose firm was based in Topeka.¹⁴⁷ Democratic Governor Tom Vilsack of Iowa hired his senior communication strategist from Link Strategies: a firm based in Des Moines. Of course there must be exceptions as some long-shot candidates hail from states and districts with large consulting markets (New York, Los Angeles, and Washington D.C.) but it became clear in 2008 that campaign consultancy is no longer an exclusive profession. The increased competition in even the smallest states has emancipated parties and candidates in their negotiations.

The more established candidates were able to hire more recognizable and distinguished names in campaign consulting. With a personal fortune that was tapped extensively in his bid to become the Republican nominee, Mitt Romney hired experienced men and women with histories of success. He hired Alex Castellanos, who was known for the controversial advertisements he had produced as a media advisor to George W. Bush in 2000 and 2004 and to Senator Jesse Helms in 1990. Romney also hired Stephen C. Meyers, a four-time "Pollie" (the AAPC's annual awards) winner, as his direct-mail advisor. Meanwhile, Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas was a long-shot candidate who surprised many by winning the Republican Iowa Caucuses in January. It is quite possible that he did so because he had retained the services of Dick Dresner, a long-established media-consultant who had produced commercials for presidents in the United States and elsewhere, and who had won

¹⁴⁶ Christopher Drew, "Democrats Try To Rein In Fees On Consulting", The New York Times, (Dec. 25, 2007)

¹⁴⁷ See the Kensinger & Associates website, accessed online on June 5, 2009 at: <http://www.kensingerandassociates.com/David.html>

multiple “Pollie” awards for his commercials. For Huckabee, Dresner produced what Time magazine called the “best campaign ad of the cycle”, which was humorous and memorable in the trend of Joseph Napolitan and Tony Schwartz.¹⁴⁸ Meanwhile, former mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani, was extensive in his hiring of consultants, retaining Michael McKeon of Mercury Public Affairs, Jim Dyke of Jim Dyke & Associates, Scott Howell and Heath Thompson of Scott Howell & Co., John A. Brabender of BrabenderCox, and Patti Heck of Crossroads Media.

Celinda Lake, known as the “super-strategist or, better yet, the Godmother” of public-opinion polling, had been a protégé of Stan Greenberg’s before establishing Lake Research Partners.¹⁴⁹ In 2008, her firm conducted Joe Biden’s polling operations. Biden also had as his senior advisors Ted Kaufman of Public Strategies, and John Marttila, who had consulted for him in his first successful election to the Senate in 1972. John Edwards hired several practitioners from Joe Trippi’s firm. His Deputy Campaign Manager and National Field Director were both employees of Trippi & Associates, and Trippi himself conducted Edwards’ media operations. Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico hired Andre Pineda, a pollster who had spent fifteen years under the tutelage of renowned Democratic pollsters like Stan Greenberg, Peter Hart and Geoff Garin before establishing himself independently. As for media specialists, Richardson hired the firm of Murphy Putnam Media who produced what George Stephanopoulos called the “single best ad” leading up to the Iowa Caucuses.¹⁵⁰

Overall, surveying the field of 2008 goes a long way to validating what has been established in previous chapters. Firstly, most of the consultant-client relationships of 2008 can be characterised as detached. Consultants worked in pursuit of profits, tended not to be the campaign “chairs” or “managers”, and were not serving in a capacity as party officials. After

¹⁴⁸ The spot that the Time magazine writer praised was one in which the action-movie star Chuck Norris recounted favourable facts from Huckabee’s governorship whilst Huckabee reeled off hyperbolised facts about Chuck Norris that are popular amongst his fans. The ad received almost three million views on the viral website YouTube.com. The Time quote is used as a promotional tool on the Dresner, Wickers & Associates website, accessed online on June 4, 2009 at: <http://www.dresner-wickers.com/portfolio.htm>

¹⁴⁹ See Lake Research Partners website (as referenced above).

¹⁵⁰ The spot that Stephanopoulos praised was one in which Richardson was questioned as if a candidate in a job interview for the presidency. The quote is used as a promotional tool on the Murphy Putnam Media website, accessed online on June 4, 2009 at: <http://www.mpsmedia.net/our-team/53>

the nomination contests had ended, the majority of consultants returned to their firms to continue their non-electoral work or were hired by the campaign of the victor to consult for the general election campaign. Though this detachment is somewhat complicated by the bonds that have been forged between long-established consultants and their clients, and by the fact that more and more party officials and congressional staffers are establishing themselves independently of their former employers, it nevertheless remained the defining characteristic of the consultant in 2008. Secondly, the assertion that consultants act in partnership with the parties that was laid out in the previous chapter is also validated by the 2008 examples. There was no evidence to suggest that consultants were dismissive of party boundaries or that they worked indiscriminately for either party. It was not unusual to find that different principals of a consulting firm worked for opposing clients in 2008, a good example being the associates at Mercury Public Affairs. Kieran Mahoney worked for Governor Jim Gilmore; Michael McKeon and Mike DuHaime worked for Rudy Giuliani; Greg Strimple, Steve Schmidt and Terry Nelson worked for Senator John McCain. However, all the consultants remained within the boundaries of their past ideological leanings.

Further evidence of the close relationship that consultants had with the parties in 2008 is that almost all those paid for their services had served within the party infrastructure at some point. Rudy Giuliani's pollsters, for example, were the principals of The Tarrance Group. All three principals had at some point worked within the NRCC: Ed Goeas as its National Political Director, Brian Tringali as Director of the Research Division, and Dave Sackett as a Political Director. Furthermore, Giuliani's senior communications advisor, Jim Dyke, had been Director of Communications at the RNC during the 2004 campaign, and had been its Press Secretary before that. Kristen Fedewa, Governor Mike Huckabee's Director of Communications, had been Press Secretary to the Republican Governors' Association, and his fundraising consultants from LCM Strategies had been the Director of Finance and Administration, and the Director of Marketing at the NRSC respectively. But it was not only Republican consultants who had matured within the party. A consultant to Senator Chris Dodd, Stephanie Berger had been the National Finance Director for the DNC before establishing her own communications firm. Were we to add to these examples those consultants who had matured within party-government itself (the consulting field of 2008

having representatives in it from every White House from Richard Nixon's to George W. Bush's) the ties between consultants and parties would be shown to be even stronger.

As has been noted, the quantitative impact that campaign consultants have on an election campaign is generally lost in the multitude of factors that contribute to its final conclusion. However, the qualitative evidence from 2008 serves to validate what has been established thus far, and also suggests that the campaign professionals in each party made a significant imprint on the campaigns of the three main contenders in that race: Democratic Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, and Republican Senator John McCain. Whilst their personalities were not eclipsed by the operating procedures of their consultants, each candidate's message certainly reflected the portfolios and preferred operating strategies of their chief consultants. Barack Obama was a heavily-packaged candidate whose vague and sweeping rhetoric championed his ideological freshness rather than innovative policies or governmental experience. Hillary Clinton's message was of experience and readiness. Her Washington credentials and policy itinerary were publicized as if her campaign sought a referendum for her presidential agenda, rather than her election to that office. Both messages were in large part recycled from their previous campaigns and, more importantly, from the campaigns of other candidates who had retained the same consultants. Before examining these campaigns in more depth, however, the McCain campaign should be examined. If their consultants' influence conditioned the messages of the Obama and Clinton campaigns, then the lack of consistent leadership among McCain's campaign team led to a muddled and inconsistent message throughout.

McCain et al.

With his war-hero status and a wealth of experience in the U.S. Senate, John McCain was a well-respected figure who had lost out on the nomination in 2000 like a "plucky independent film that ultimately could not compete for audiences against the Bush campaign's summer blockbuster".¹⁵¹ In true Republican Party fashion, he succeeded to the nomination in 2008, defeating Mitt Romney's well-financed but rudderless campaign.

¹⁵¹ Robert Draper, The Making (and Remaking and Remaking) of the Candidate, The New York Times, (Oct. 26, 2008)

However, McCain's accession was not without a change of personnel. Whilst one can easily compile a list of John McCain's staffers, the instability of his campaign team makes it difficult to identify those who had influence at any given time. Mike Murphy, a consultant to McCain's presidential bid in 2000 and to his senatorial campaigns, sat out the campaign because he had also consulted for Romney in the past and did not want to be accused of having a conflict of interest. As if the loss of this vital advisor was not enough, McCain lost several high-ranking officials to resignation after several months of poor fundraising in 2007. Terry Nelson stepped down as National Campaign Chairman on July 10, as did John Weaver, the architect of McCain's "Straight Talk Express". Political Director Rob Jesmer and Deputy Campaign Manager Reed Galen also left the campaign at that time.

From then on, Rick Davis (a managing partner of Davis Manafort Lobbying Co.) took over the management of the campaign but further reshuffles were to come. On July 2 2008, Davis was replaced by Steve Schmidt (a senior advisor up to that point) as the day-to-day manager of the campaign. A partner in Mercury Public Affairs, Schmidt had served as an assistant to President Bush and Vice-President Cheney, acting as "point-man" on the confirmation of Justices John Roberts and Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court, and conducting rapid-response operations during the 2004 campaign. Also, from April 1, Charlie Black of BKSH & Associates became a senior advisor to McCain, as he had been to presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush. On top of all of this reshuffling, the McCain campaign imbibed talented staff from the campaigns of his primary opponents: the Republicans being traditionally quicker to repair the damage caused by the nomination campaign than are Democrats. Both his Political Director and his National Field Director (Mike DuHaime and Bill Stepien) came to his general election campaign from similar positions in Rudy Giuliani's campaign.

The net effect of this staffing instability was an inconsistent message. As Robert Draper wrote in a New York Times article entitled "The Making (and Remaking and Remaking) of the Candidate", John McCain's narrative became "increasingly murky" as the campaign went on. His initial "metanarrative" was that of the post-partisan statesman who put the "Country First". After attacking Obama's celebrity status and Hollywood connections, McCain began favouring the image of the "Maverick" against the old-style Washingtonians. His choice of Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska as his running-mate secured this image: she was a dynamic

choice, galvanizing the Republican base that had theretofore been lukewarm in their support for the candidate. However, Palin's lack of national (and international) political experience demanded a "rather jolting narrative shift" from "readiness" to "change" in order to accommodate her. This inconsistent message was coupled with the McCain campaigns desperate attempts to regain ground lost to Obama's organizational and financial juggernaut by going aggressive and negative. In early September, his campaign accused Obama of sexism, claiming that he had referred to Governor Palin as a pig, and launched an ad about how Obama favoured sex education in kindergarten that said: "Learning about sex before learning to read? Barack Obama, wrong on education, wrong for your family."¹⁵²

These negative efforts, combined with those of an independent expenditure group which financed an \$18 million advertising campaign against Obama's election, seemed wholly inconsistent with McCain's message of "Country First" or with his status as a "Maverick". The loss of direction became quite clear when one McCain advisor (Greg Strimple of Mercury Public Affairs) told The Washington Post in early October 2008 that "we are looking for a very aggressive last 30 days..We are looking forward to turning a page on this financial crisis and getting back to discussing Mr. Obama's aggressively liberal record and how he will be too risky for Americans."¹⁵³ For the last two months of the 2008 presidential campaign, the meltdown of the global economy dominated the political landscape and superseded even the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in importance amongst voters. Strimple's assessment was illustrative of the McCain campaign's confused message and media strategy, largely caused by an inconsistency in key campaign personnel. Whilst, the internal dimensions of his campaign cannot be blamed entirely for McCain's defeat, it cannot have helped that his team was in almost constant disarray. There were too many people pulling the candidate in different directions for a consistent narrative to emerge.

¹⁵² Jonathan Weisman and Peter Slevin, "McCain Camp Hits Obama On More Than One Front", The Washington Post, Sept. 11, 2008

¹⁵³ Michael D. Shear, "McCain Plans Fiercer Strategy Against Obama", The Washington Post, Oct. 4, 2008

Clinton and Penn

Throughout 2007, it seemed as if Hillary Clinton would clinch the Democratic nomination for president the following year. As the matriarch of the only Democratic White House in a generation, she held the allegiance of most of those who had worked for her husband's administration. Terry McAuliffe served as her campaign chair. As a fundraiser for the Clinton-Gore re-election effort in 1996, McAuliffe scared off any potential challengers who were doubtful that President Clinton could recover from his midterm defeat. McAuliffe shocked many observers when, in September 1995 (fourteen months before Election Day), he declared that the campaign had already raised the maximum legal amount.¹⁵⁴ In 2007, McAuliffe returned to fill Hillary's (I use her forename not colloquially, but to avoid confusion with her husband who, of course, was involved in the 2008 campaign) campaign coffers as early and as effectively as he had filled her husband's. Her campaign had taken \$107 million in contributions by December 2007, and it raised a total of \$223.8 million all together. To utilize these funds most effectively, Clinton appointed as her head of media relations Mandy Grunwald: Bill Clinton's Director of Advertising in his 1992 campaign. Harold Ickes, a former deputy chief of staff in the Clinton White House, was also brought on as a senior advisor. Since leaving the White House, both had gone on to found their own consulting firms: Grunwald Communications and the Ickes & Enright Group.

Hillary's choice of chief strategist was an unsurprising one. Mark Penn had been close to the Clintons since Dick Morris had brought him to the White House to consult on the 1996 re-election campaign. As a Harvard-educated pollster, Penn worked closely with Morris to find the issues upon which Clinton could gain most ground over his hostile Congress. With his business partner Doug Schoen, Penn remained a constant presence at the White House during Clinton's second term: advising the President on the best way to win support for his initiatives. Penn divided the electorate up into interest groups susceptible to certain appeals, and sold each one some minor but appealing policy: precisely the same tactic he used with Hillary's campaigns. According to one New York Times reporter, Penn had used these same incremental measures in her campaign for the U.S. Senate seat in New York in

¹⁵⁴ McAuliffe, *What A Party*, p. 113

2000. He envisaged the role of a U.S. Senator as more of a local representative than a national statesman and reportedly antagonised many officials within the campaign by focussing on minute policy detail at the expense of the over-riding theme. One reporter described Penn's strategy as "a politics of discrete problem-solving and assiduous service, a sort of concierge politics," and concluded that, "in essence, Penn-ism is post-health-care Clintonism – for both Clintons." As if to underline a reliance on polling, Penn told that same reporter that it would be hard "to come up with a topic that I haven't polled on."¹⁵⁵

This was precisely the strategy that Penn championed in 2008. Unable to conduct significant research until after Hillary's re-election to the Senate (lest her New York constituents think her presumptuous), Penn was late in finding that whilst people thought her capable, they did not like Hillary on a personal level. Rather than tackling this problem with a campaign aimed at reintroducing her to voters, Penn believed it was better to appease those groups whose support she would need with policies that would benefit them. On March 19 2007 he wrote to campaign staff: "The modern buzz word is that it is not about policies but positioning. This of course plays right into Obama's territory. He is all sizzle and no steak. And he wants to convince everyone that's all you need."¹⁵⁶ Penn believed that Hillary's campaign should target the "Invisible Americans" of the lower and middle classes, and that it should attempt to undermine Obama's strength with independents and higher class Democrats. This was not a bad strategy, but Hillary Clinton was tainted by association: with her husband, with Washington, and with George W. Bush's unpopular war in Iraq, for which she had voted. Penn continued to urge Hillary to campaign on a theme of leadership and experience when the American people were quite obviously unhappy with the status quo.

As a direct result of Penn's strategy, Hillary's campaign became increasingly dysfunctional. Penn clashed with Ickes, Grunwald and the campaign's Communications Director, Harold Wolfson, who all favoured a more humanizing message to assuage those who thought Clinton was unscrupulous in her pursuit of the presidency. Penn continued to advocate a message based on Clinton's experience in Washington. In an October 2006 strategy memo

¹⁵⁵ James Bennet, "The Guru of Small Things", The New York Times, (June 18, 2000)

¹⁵⁶ Joshua Green, "The Front Runner's Fall", The Atlantic, (Sept., 2008): accessed on June 4, 2009 at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200809/hillary-clinton-campaign>

disbursed throughout the campaign, he wrote that “experience has shown that her consistent, issue-based campaigning is effective at winning over voters...”¹⁵⁷ Penn was confident in this assessment because he was, first and foremost, a pollster “and pollsters tend to look at campaigns as a series of dissectible data points that either attract voters or drive them away.”¹⁵⁸ He had reportedly been asked to leave the Gore campaign in 2000 because the candidate wanted to “move beyond the small-bore issues” but, unlike Gore, Hillary chose to follow Penn’s option of a measurable and quantitative strategy.¹⁵⁹ Whilst this strategy may have worked in a different context or against different competition, it was ineffective against Barack Obama. Frank Rich of The New York Times believed Hillary’s vision seemed like a “long itemized shopping list of government programs...that are nakedly targeted to appeal to every Election Day constituency.”¹⁶⁰ More damningly, Republican consultant Mike Murphy said told his interviewer from the CPI that Hillary “talks like a polling questionnaire...Obama is speaking English, she is speaking polling questionnaire....[You] can just tell it came right off a printout. It makes her like a robot.”¹⁶¹

As bad as having the wrong message for the times, Penn had also shown scant awareness of presidential primary procedure. He was reportedly unaware that Democratic delegates were allocated proportionally and thus that victory in California could not put Hillary beyond reach. Perhaps as a result of this confusion, the campaign had focussed its resources on the biggest state primaries and had ignored the smaller caucuses (which allocate around one-fourth of the delegates to the national convention) in which Obama had significant organisational commitments. The Clinton team had reasoned that their supporters (the elderly and the blue-collar workers) were not going to be able to spare an evening to debate and vote and so they missed out on delegates in Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, and other states.¹⁶² The desperation felt by the campaign as the contest wore on manifested itself in negativity, with Penn pondering rhetorically in a strategy memo of March 20 2008, “won’t a single tape of [Jeremiah] Wright going off on America with Obama sitting there be a game

¹⁵⁷ Green, “The Front Runner’s Fall”

¹⁵⁸ Matt Bai, “In the Clinton-Obama Race, It’s the Pollster vs. the Ad Man”, The New York Times, (March 16, 2008)

¹⁵⁹ Bennet, “The Guru of Small Things”

¹⁶⁰ Frank Rich, “Haven’t We Heard This Voice Before?”, The New York Times, (Jan. 13, 2008)

¹⁶¹ See the CPI interview of Mike Murphy (as referenced above).

¹⁶² Karen Tumulty, “The Five Mistakes Clinton Made”, Time, (May 8, 2008): accessed on April 16, 2009 at <http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1738331,00.html>

ender?"¹⁶³ Furthermore, Harold Ickes' warnings that the campaign should place resources in the caucus states were not heeded until December 2007, by which time Obama had opened up a substantial lead. Penn stepped down as chief advisor to the candidate on April 6 2008. He was replaced by respected Democratic pollster and president of Peter D. Hart Research, Geoff Garin. Campaign officials hoped that Garin would finally bring "consistency to a message that has been too focussed on the daily give-and-take between their candidate and Barack Obama."¹⁶⁴

Obama and Axelrod

Barack Obama's campaign team was very different in character to that of Hillary Clinton's. It was a more comfortable mix of old-time experience and new technological expertise. Mark Leibovich of The New York Times said that many on the Obama team "viewed themselves as 'game-changers'...avatars of a New Way organisation that had more in common with a Silicon Valley start-up – think Google or YouTube – that with any traditional political campaign that came before it."¹⁶⁵ As his "new media" director, Obama hired Joe Rospars, who was a founding partner of the Blue State Digital Internet strategy firm and a key contributor to Howard Dean's "Blog for America" in 2004. Obama also hired the co-founder of Facebook, Chris Hughes, who created the MyBarackObama.com social networking site to which over two million people signed up and from which 200,000 off-line events and 35,000 volunteer groups were established. As for the more traditional consultants, Obama had as a senior advisor Anita Dunn of Squier Knapp Dunn, one of the most respected Democratic media firms. His fundraising was conducted under the leadership of Finance Director Julianna Smoot: The Washington Post's "MVP for the first fundraising quarter" in 2007. Obama had a number of pollsters, the most significant of whom was Joel Benenson, who had been a partner to Rahm Emanuel during the 2006 midterms in which the Democrats had taken back Congress. Benenson and Emanuel were therefore more in touch with the national mood than Clinton or McCain's pollsters were.

¹⁶³ Green, "The Front-Runner's Fall"

¹⁶⁴ Karen Tumulty, "Can Geoff Garin Save Clinton?", Time, (April 7, 2008); accessed on April 4, 2009 at <http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1728594,00.html>

¹⁶⁵ Mark Leibovich, "Between Obama and the Press", The New York Times, (Dec. 21, 2008)

The third man in that triumvirate of 2006 was David Axelrod, Obama's Chief Strategist. In 2008, Axelrod received some of the celebrity that Carville and Rove had done. In the print media, he was variously referred to as "Obama's Narrator", "Obama's Media Maven", "The Man With Obama's Game Plan", "Barack Obama's On-Point Message Man" and "Obama's Political Protector". In a New York Times feature of April 2007, Axelrod was noted as being "perhaps the consultant with the tightest grip on his party's future", having steered campaigns for four of the five Democratic candidates in contention during the 2008 primaries (Obama, Clinton, John Edwards, Chris Dodd, and Tom Vilsack). Axelrod had decided to move into from working as chief political correspondent at the Chicago Tribune in the early 1980s. When U.S. Representative Paul Simon ran for the U.S. Senate seat from Illinois in 1984, Axelrod signed on to assist him. Soon after, he established Axelrod and Associates and made his name championing liberal and African-American candidates. He worked for Harold Washington, the first black mayor of Chicago, in his 1987 re-election campaign and, more recently, worked for Deval Patrick who was elected Governor of Massachusetts in 2006. With regards Barack Obama, Axelrod had been in partnership with him since he had decided to seek the U.S. Senate seat for Illinois after his unsuccessful campaign to win a House seat in 2000.

Axelrod's success in all these races has been attributed to his mastery of personal storytelling. As the Chicago-based direct-mail consultant Peter Giangreco said, "David breaks them down....Who is your mother? Who is your father? Why are you doing this?"¹⁶⁶ A good example of this was an ad Axelrod produced for Rahm Emanuel, who returned to his native Chicago to run for the U.S. House of Representatives in 2002 after having served as a senior advisor in the Clinton administration. The ad featured a Chicago police officer telling the audience, "I've seen it all – the guns, the gangs, the drugs.." The officer then recounted the role that Emanuel had played in President Clinton's early crime initiatives. He ended his advocacy with the line, "That's why the Fraternal Order of Police and Chicago Fire-fighters back Rahm Emanuel for Congress, and I'd tell you that even if I weren't his uncle."¹⁶⁷ Axelrod knew that Obama needed a similar kind of personal introduction to the wider

¹⁶⁶ Wallace-Wells, "Obama's Narrator"

¹⁶⁷ Robert G. Kaiser, "The Player at Bat: David Axelrod, the Man With Obama's Game Plan, Is Also the Candidate's No. 1 Fan", The Washington Post, (May 2, 2008)

electorate. He knew that 2008 was the year for an insurgent, saying of the Clinton strategy that "being the consummate Washington insider is not where you want to be in a year when people want change."¹⁶⁸

Axelrod also knew full well that Obama would lose out to Hillary Clinton in a conventional race in which governing experience was the key issue, and so he used the themes that had served his clients well in the past. He saw the candidate's personality as a "coordinating presence, a basic story to wrap the campaign around." Indeed, at the announcement of his candidacy on February 10, 2007, "a lot of sharp players of the political game thought they detected something Axelrodesque": an infusion of Axelrod in both the candidate's speech and the announcement video that accompanied it.¹⁶⁹ As one New York Times columnist noted, "when you finish watching the video, you don't have a particularly good sense of Obama as a politician...but there is an intimacy – you have been drowned in his life, and you feel as if you know him."¹⁷⁰ The initial ads that the campaign aired in Iowa followed this pattern. They did not highlight the candidate's high-profile work in the Senate, but documented his years as a community organizer in Chicago and his eight years in the Illinois State Senate.¹⁷¹ Further ads described how his mother's death from cancer at a relatively young age had inspired his plan for universal health care and how growing up without knowing his father had taught him the value of an education.¹⁷²

Far from tampering with this message during the course of the campaign, Obama was consistent. Frank Rich wrote that "whether you regard it as inspirational or pabulum, Mr. Obama's vision has been consistent since the 2004 convention speech that introduced him to the country well before his presidential candidacy."¹⁷³ The Obama strategy of inserting policy initiatives into the spaces between personal stories did not come without criticism. Many did not think it was working against Clinton's campaign and urged a change, which Obama and Axelrod denied them. Furthermore, Axelrod was accused of plagiarising himself: a common criticism of consultants who are seen as indiscriminately applying an

¹⁶⁸ Tumulty, "The Five Mistakes Clinton Made"

¹⁶⁹ David Montgomery, "Obama's On-Point Message Man", The Washington Post, (Feb. 15, 2007)

¹⁷⁰ Wallace-Wells, "Obama's Narrator"

¹⁷¹ Jeff Zeleny, "Obama, in New TV Ads, Focuses on His Pre-Senate Years", The New York Times, (June 26, 2007)

¹⁷² Steinberg, "Democrats Are Testing Messages in Flood of Ads"

¹⁷³ Rich, "Haven't We Heard This Voice Before?"

interchangeable message to multiple candidates. It was inevitable that this criticism should arise with Axelrod, as he had managed campaigns for various black candidates and had expounded the theme of change with many of them. Similarities existed between the Obama campaign and Deval Patrick's 2006 campaign in that both used the "Yes We Can" slogan and the themes of a lack of leadership and an "empathy deficit". Axelrod defended the similarities by saying "I don't bring these messages to candidates...I look for candidates who exemplify and reflect those messages... It's like riffing with great musicians."¹⁷⁴

A Deep Imprint

The above is not an indictment of campaign consultants for manipulating political candidates or for substituting their own ideals onto the campaigns of public officials. If it appears at first to be so, it is not. Instead, it serves to suggest that the modus operandi of Mark Penn and David Axelrod shone through their candidates. Each consultant had a distinct operational history and the messages of their candidates reflected this. Of course, this does not mean to say that Obama's personal story was exaggerated, or that Hillary Clinton did not care deeply for the policy initiatives that she spoke of. What it suggests is that campaign consultants had a great deal of influence over which aspects of this personal story and which policy initiatives were emphasised above the rest. It is safe to say that the shaping of a message in this way is not unique to these two candidates, or to these two consultants. Both their records of success and their longevity ensure that campaign consultants are invested with a great amount of trust on the part of the political candidate: especially those with little or no experience of political campaigns. Rightly or wrongly, there is an awful lot of deference to consultants when it comes to crafting a campaign's narrative.

The example of 2008 therefore validates what has been suggested in this study so far. More consultants are being retained than ever before, and candidates must have a full complement of expertise and skills in order for their campaigns to be taken seriously. Even the smallest of campaigns are hiring consultants and consulting firms are being established in areas of the country that would not have been thought profitable in the past.

¹⁷⁴ Christopher Hayes, "Obama's Media Maven", *The Nation*, (Feb. 6, 2007): accessed on April 6, 2009 at: <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20070219/hayes>

Furthermore, the examples of Axelrod and Penn confirm beyond doubt that the consultant is not merely a peripheral actor but a potentially dominant force in a political campaign. Having followed Obama to the White House, Axelrod at least could be a noticeable consultant for at least four more years and his presence is likely to alter the perception of campaign consultants in general. Obama's success and the ensuing hysteria; the mentioning of Axelrod in Obama's victory speech as the chief strategist "who's been a partner with me every step of the way"; the fact that Axelrod was not as obviously ruthless as Rove or as crass as Carville: all of these factors could contribute towards a new perception of campaign consultants.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The Present and Future Impact of Campaign Consultancy

There are, Edward Bernays noted in *Public Relations*, several common stages in the development of any profession. First, external forces bring about the need for services that no one has theretofore provided. When the initial practitioners are successful, others seek to emulate their example. The greater number of professionals means that there is an increased likelihood that some will disappoint those in need of their services or those observing from outside. Though awareness of and demand for the services grow, the public come to distrust these practitioners. This stage leads directly to the next: a cleaning-up stage whereby either the free-market or the joining together of conscientious practitioners into voluntary regulatory organisations eliminates the marginal practitioner. In the final stage, these efforts bring public opinion back around and the law sanctions these standards.¹⁷⁵ The fully-developed profession therefore shows itself to have “collective control over entry into the profession, a self-policed ethical code and core skills, and definable, theoretically-based bodies of knowledge.”¹⁷⁶

Bernays concluded that, like the legal and medical professions, the public relations profession had followed this path. The campaign consultant has done so too. External forces (i.e., the difficulties of campaigning in the non-partisan environment of California) were the catalysts to the initial practitioners whose success was soon envied and emulated by others. These new practitioners found no shortage of custom for their services. Access to the profession was unrestricted and consultants were a secretive brood. These reasons, combined with a penchant for “process stories” amongst an investigative political press, have meant that the messier and louder fringe element received a disproportional amount of press attention than did the run-of-the-mill figures, and so public opinion turned against the participation of consultants in election campaigns. Campaign consultancy has not yet reached the cleaning-up stage outlined above. Try as it may, the American Association of

¹⁷⁵ Bernays, *Public Relations*, p. 6

¹⁷⁶ Margaret Scammell, “The Wisdom of the War Room: U.S. Campaigning and Americanization”, Research Paper R-17, The Joan Shorenstein Center for Press, Politics and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, (April 1997), p. 2

Political Consultants (or for that matter the International Association of Political Consultants) has created no jurisdiction for itself over the activities of those that call themselves "campaign consultants". A consultant, after all, relies on his record of success and not his references from this voluntary membership organisation to drum up future business.

With regards to public opinion therefore, campaign consultancy is at an impasse. Unlike other professions, such as the legal and medical ones, the services that campaign consultants provide are not publicly available but are exclusive to political candidates. As their services are continually sought after regardless of the profession's reputation, there is little impetus on anyone's part to counter the allegations that their contribution to political campaigns is either negative or negligible. It is the domain of the social scientist to investigate these allegations. Bernays quoted Harold Laswell's Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences which said of the public relations counsel that he is "no mere errand boy", but a qualified professional whose work demands great awareness. Laswell concluded that they make a significant contribution as "no detail of operation (communications appeal, market policy, credit practice) is immune from review and criticism by an expert objectively engaged in discovering a profitable sphere of activity for a client. That propagandists have induced important policy changes is well known..."¹⁷⁷ Bernays believed that the profession demanded character, judgement, logic, creativity, intellectual curiosity, objectivity, intuition and problem-solving ability, as well as training in the mechanics of public relations.¹⁷⁸ It was never a profession for the unskilled, and campaign consultancy is not either.

Summary

As was noted in the introduction to this study, it was not undertaken either to condemn or to defend the campaign consulting profession but to address the deficiencies in the existing literature. The first deficiency was the lack of appreciation for the complexities of the profession and the functions its practitioners carry out. It is a more complex, more diverse and more important profession than many students realise. Since Whitaker and Baxter

¹⁷⁷ Bernays, Public Relations, p. 4

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 126

established their firm in 1933, the goalposts have been periodically moved on political candidates. Asked first to create a message independent of party, then to pay increasingly more for its distribution and, most recently, to take this message to a new online community, it is unsurprising that candidates have been overwhelmed. The rationale behind the campaign consulting profession can be explained within this systemic context, and the functions that consultants carry out are as subject to these external forces as is the profession's growth. Consultants are variously asked to advertise, to raise money, to advocate, and to pioneer new avenues of communication with the electorate. Never mind the difficulty that a student has in defining what a campaign consultant is or does, the consultant himself must at times struggle to define it. The likelihood is that the way any long-serving consultant performs a function will bear little resemblance to the way he performed it when he entered the profession; such is the pace of change. Increased competition and "occupational specialisation" have led to consultants narrowing and refining their practices so as to concentrate their skills.

The second deficiency this study has sought to address is the misunderstanding of the impact that campaign consultants have on the party and on the campaigns for which they work. As quantitative investigation of this impact is almost impossible, revealing qualitative sources must be consulted. Chapter 4 looked at the long-held notion that external expertise is detrimental to the political parties. At first, this seems to be an obvious criticism as consultants are known for guiding candidate-centred campaigns. However, the accusation does not stand up under scrutiny. The consultant-party relationship is a healthy, respectful and symbiotic one that both sides have an interest in maintaining. Those consultants who flit across ideological boundaries in the pursuit of profit may be worthy of column inches and process stories, but they are not indicative of the vast majority. Indeed, most consultants are as combative as any declared partisan in the defence of their chosen party: more combative, perhaps, as it is in their financial interests to be so. The disparity in the professionalisation of the Republican and Democratic parties was also examined, with the conclusion that Republican consultants have been better utilised than have Democratic ones, and that they have helped the GOP to a higher standard of technological appreciation. Chapter 5 then looked to cap the institutional and functional histories written earlier in the study and to highlight the imprint that the foremost consultants left on the Obama and

Clinton campaigns in particular. Their mimicry of previous Axelrod and Penn campaigns suggests that consultants have a great deal of input over direction and message: dispelling any idea that their impact was negligible.

The course which campaign consultancy will follow in future is unknown, but there are some indications. Firstly, as the older public servants come to the end of their careers, they leave behind younger colleagues in whom there is an ingrained recognition of the importance of professionalised campaigning. Therefore, the retention of consultants will continue to be one of the first, if not the first step, in launching an election campaign. Even those incumbent politicians who have fared well thus far will need to seek out consultants eventually because when they are challenged in primary or general elections, they are likely to be pitted against challengers who have hired consultants. Equally, those politicians or candidates who would like to rid themselves of the services of consultants would not be able to do so, because campaign consultants are the nuclear weapons in the electoral Cold War: to disarm unilaterally would be a foolish act. The profession is therefore likely to expand both numerically and geographically. As for the functions that these consultants will carry out, they are unlikely to change drastically in the short term because television's penetrative power is too extensive, and its versatility too attractive for it to be made redundant anytime soon. However, media consultants will have to show an appreciation for the Internet and have some sector of their businesses dealing with online communication. A campaign can poll, email and advertise over the Internet for a fraction of the price that it costs offline, and so consultants will have to work to a higher standard, produce better ads and target them more efficiently if they want to continue to make the kind of money that they have been making.

Debate

The impact that Axelrod and Penn had on the Obama and Clinton campaigns will undoubtedly raise concerns in many observers who will ask, why should unelected consultants be allowed to shape democratic discussions? This is a fine question, to which the answer should be, "because nobody else is doing it." The first consultants did not hoodwink politicians into believing that they were necessary; they have not since duped

public officials into investing in empty promises. Consultants were born at the intersection of the declining political parties and the increasing technological complexities of modern campaigns. Arguably they have aided the parties in their organisational resurgence and they have surely educated through entertainment the voting public at important junctures. Those expecting democratic purity, however, expect too much of the consultant and the system in which he works. As Ian Shapiro argued, whilst the technical knowledge of experts is pure in diagnosis (much as a mechanic's or a surgeon's is), social and economic considerations condition the remedies that they propose.¹⁷⁹ This is most likely true of the campaign consultant, but it is equally true of the politicians they help to elect. There is no purity in a pursuit like politics.

Do the critics of campaign consultants have alternative plans with which to reform the electoral process? They prefer instead to reminisce of the time when the candidate's brother or best friend managed the campaign and of when his personal advisors had known him for years (as if these personal connections inhibited the corruption of the candidate or others). Of course, candidates still have these people as advisors, as a kitchen cabinet, but James Carville contested the idea that personal connections made for purer campaigns. When external operatives are contracted into a campaign, he said, nobody can hound them for patronage after the election has taken place. Carville said, "I submit the system where you have hard political professionals that come in has got its merits... It's the people who offer their services for free who need to be watched. They're getting paid from somewhere, and their benefactors may have agendas."¹⁸⁰ The campaign consultant, powerful though he may be once retained by a campaign, has very little influence over politicians as an outsider and his role is fairly transparent. He may be working for profit, but his allegiances, goals and motivations are fairly clear from the outset.

Rationalisations like this exist for almost every criticism that can be raised against campaign consultancy. When these criticisms are countered, we see a side of campaign consultancy that is usually hidden behind the secrecy of its practitioners and the hyperbole of those who

¹⁷⁹ Schudson, "The Trouble With Experts – And Why Democracies Need Them", pp. 491-506

¹⁸⁰ CPI interview of James Carville conducted by Jules Witcover on April 27, 2007 and accessed on April 5, 2009 at: http://www.buyingofthepresident.org/index.php/interviews/james_carville/

scrutinise it. It is for the social scientist and the investigate journalist to penetrate these barriers and draw out the rationalisations. Students should take the Center for Public Integrity's study that has been much referenced in this study as a starting point. As mentioned, the hard work that went into it will be hard to replicate, but others have ample opportunity to do so. The biennial election cycle of the United States means that every two years there is fresh opportunity to investigate the activities of campaign consultants. If we had similar editions of the CPI study for the 2006 and the 2008 election cycles, we would be in a position to compare and contrast. Based on the idea that consultants mature within the parties themselves, more effort should be made to investigate the national committees of the two major political parties as the primary training ground for those who will become campaign consultants. Perhaps, one day, there may even be enough interest in the topic that the histories of individual firms will be documented, much as corporation have had their histories transcribed.

In a study such as this, one could easily end by pondering the abstract: by exploring the subject matter philosophically and wondering what the ancients or J.S. Mill would have made of professional campaigners. To do so in the case of campaign consultants, however, would be redundant. When studying those men and women, you must deal with the practical and the concrete: just as they do themselves. Theirs is not a profession ruled by emotion, but by success, innovation and creativity. This study has been written as impartially as possible. Where it has failed it has been because, having studied the topic in depth for some time, the author recognises the complexity of the profession which too many students skim over in their rush to adhere to the populist hysteria. Is it naivety that makes one defend campaign consultants against these criticisms? On the contrary, it is surely more naive to think that their contribution to the modern election campaign is minimal enough to be able to dispose of their services. It is naive to think that their disappearance from the modern campaign would cause voters to participate more, or would reinvigorate partisanship. By all means, we should debate the conduct of consultants and even the necessity of some of their functions. But even if this study's analysis of the growth and evolution of campaign consultancy is entirely wrong or misconceived, campaign consultants are an entrenched force and so the time for debating whether or not they should play a role in campaigns has long passed.

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