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April 1997

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Introduction

Modern television age electioneering is sometimes called the 'new politics' in the United States. Elsewhere, similar practices provoke anxieties about 'Americanization.' Fashionable but loaded, the description 'Americanization' features increasingly both in media commentary and academic discussion of modern democratic campaigning. Americans themselves seem a little dismissive of the idea, partly because of its imperialistic overtones, maybe also because American campaigning is so severely criticized in the U.S.: 'empty ritual' according to Lance Bennett (1992:144); 'concocted pageantry for the *hoi polloi*' says Todd Gitlin (1991). If others choose to follow U.S. examples, they cannot say that they have not been warned. But there is a strong and commonly-held sense that this is precisely what is happening, in Latin America, in Europe, and, of particular interest here, in Britain, despite individual and often proudly- held distinctive political traditions. It is as predictable as revelations about the Royal Family that the media, in tones of suspicion, will highlight American-style salesmanship in the forthcoming British general election, especially in the presentation of 'New Labour' (Rustin, 1996).

In recent years academic research has started to come to grips with the question of Americanization and there are now the beginnings of a rigorous and eloquent debate (Mancini and Swanson, 1996; Negrine and Papathanassopoulos, 1996; Negrine, 1996), fuelled by the growth of interest in comparative research on electioneering worldwide (Bowler and Farrell, 1992; Butler and Ranney, 1992; Farrell, 1996). From this we know that there are striking similarities of campaigning styles around the democratic globe: the increasing professionalization of communication; campaigns designed for the mass media gradually eclipsing traditional forms of voter mobilization; the growth of 'image' politics aimed at voters perceived more or less consciously as consumers and so on.

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However, the literature tends to view these global changes as predominantly indigenously-driven developments, stemming mainly from mass communications, the collapse of great ideological cleavages and the weakening of traditional parties and voters' party identifications. There is some consensus about a degree of *'globalization,'* but much less about the extent and nature of American influence. The U.S. is universally acknowledged as the leader in campaign innovation, historically the *first* to embrace the paraphernalia of political marketing, but it is by no means necessarily the *source* of worldwide trends (Blumler et al., 1996).

Indigenous factors *are* most likely the main motors of change and, certainly, that is the case with respect to the history of British campaigning (Kavanagh, 1995; Scammell, 1995; Wring, 1995). That is not the end of the story of American influence, however. It is clear that there is massive global interest in U.S. campaigns, which news media report nearly as extensively as domestic stories (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1992). It is no exaggeration to speak of an alluring 'mythology of the great power of U.S. election campaign practices,' as Mancini and Swanson (1996) put it in their excellent introduction to *Politics, Media and Modern Democracy;* of a belief that Americans are 'much cleverer in the election propaganda,' as 1950s Conservative campaign advisor John Profumo once remarked (Cockerell, 1989:15) The attractions pile up to make the U.S. the Mecca of political campaigning: the burgeoning industry of political consultants with its associated and extensive campaign literature, and the extraordinary accessibility of these consultants and their willingness to proclaim their knowledge; the advanced state of communications technology and complexity of the U.S. media market; and the multiplicity of electoral races and their relatively high international profile. It is hardly surprising if campaigners around the world look to America for new ideas and innovations.

This article seeks some fresh purchase on the possibilities of American influence, on the prospects and potential for American campaigning strategies and techniques to travel abroad. It seeks to do this in two ways. First, by a critical examination of one of the defining characteristics of modern campaigns, 'professionalization.'

Second, and closely linked, by an investigation into the sources of ideas which underpin U.S. campaigning rationale.

Recent research is virtually unanimous in highlighting the global trend to increasingly 'professional' electioneering, and the U.S. with its industry of political consultants, is universally accepted as the professional exemplar *par excellence.* Curiously, however, the literature is much less precise and convincing about what professionalism means in the campaign context. The following pages focus on U.S. campaigning with these questions in mind: in what ways does it make sense to describe U.S. campaigns as 'professional,' how is this 'professionalism' manifested and what are the consequences for campaign practice? How valid, even in America, is this generally-accepted defining feature of American-style campaigns?

Our starting place draws on the extensive sociological literature in which professions are defined by certain criteria, most importantly: collective control over entry into the profession, a self-policed ethical code and core skills, and definable, theoretically-based bodies of knowledge. It is immediately obvious that the first two criteria are problematic. The third, however, may be more possible. A self-conscious quest to professionalize campaign communication has been a goal and a theme of trade literature at least since World War I (Bernays, 1923; Sproule, 1989). It is, indeed, the aim of much contemporary 'how to' campaigning literature, broadly to make the winning of votes less art and more science.

One might anticipate, therefore, that the more professional campaigning is, the more it will be possible to demonstrate clear lines from general theoretical principles to practice. Further, the more professional U.S. campaigns are in this sense, the more 'scientific' their campaigning knowledge, the more likely they are to offer exportable models and to present a picture of the future of the rest of the democratic world.

The investigation into the sources of campaigners' ideas should shed some light on the extent of professionalization of campaigning knowledge. It also leads us into other surprisingly under-explored territory, despite the recent upsurge of academic interest in campaigns. Most attention has focused on the 'what' questions of campaigns: what are campaigners doing, and with what consequences for political conduct, voter information and involvement, political discourse, leadership and democracy in general. There has been much less attention to the 'why' questions, except in rather particular terms, to explain strategies and tactics in specific campaigns, or retrospectively to apply theoretical models (e.g., rational choice, marketing theory) to explain campaign processes. There has been no systematic inquiry into the sources of the ideas which lie behind campaigning strategy, and thus little knowledge of the theoretical influences which are played out in practice.

The purpose here is to examine *why* campaigners behave as they do, by means of an investigation into the ideas and influences which underpin campaigners' thinking. In itself this may help us in the difficult process of separating out effects of media change from changes in campaigning practice. It may help correct the tendency of many accounts, almost by default, to over emphasize the force of technology and, especially, television in the transformation of political communication. The media/campaign nexus is clearly central but it is *only part* of the key to understanding modern campaigning. Equally crucial are perceptions of relationship between the party/candidate and the voters; that is to say, campaigners operate on the basis of views of the electorate, ideas about persuasion and the winning of elections which fundamentally shape their exploitation of the communication technologies.

The investigation is based on three main sources. First, content analysis and close reading of the U.S. political consultants' journal *Campaigns and Elections* since its inauguration in1980. Its contents are to a certain extent bound to reflect the particular interests of its various editors. Nonetheless, it is the leading trade journal in the U.S., an explicit 'how to' magazine and has branched out in recent years to run regular training seminars. It is reasonable to assume that it will provide a fair general guide to consultants' ideas. The second source is the leading 'how to win' guidebooks and articles, written by consultants themselves, rather than by others such as marketing professionals (Guber, 1988; Guzetta, 1981; Hiebert et al., 1975; Napolitan, 1972; Shadegg, 1972; Thurber and Nelson, 1995; Womack et al., 1988; Woo, 1980). The third is interviews with leading Republican and Democratic consultants.[1]

Before continuing, however, it is important to look at least briefly at the fundamental but problematic concept of Americanization.

Campaigning Worldwide: Globalization or Americanization?

There are three major strands to the debate thus far which may be summarized as follows: globalization equals Americanization; globalization does not equal Americanization; and globalization as modernization, in which the U.S. is the most modern country.

Globalization Equals Americanization

Americanization implies that the U.S. is leading trends in a direct way: through the *export* of American-style campaigning, through employment abroad of American consultants, by the education through participation and observation of foreign campaigners in the U.S.; through the export of campaigning ideas from America through the U.S. campaign literature and through global acceptance of the U.S. as the most important *role model* of how to run campaigns and how to manipulate media/technology to persuade voters (Mancini and Swanson, 1996). The booming market for U.S. political consultants across the world, especially in Latin America, lends some credence to this view (Angell et al., 1992). 'In country after country [American consultants] are bringing U.S. election technology and expertise to candidates and political parties,' according to a special international feature in the U.S. trade magazine *Campaigns and Elections* (West, 1989). 'Some of those involved are convinced that the potential in overseas markets is virtually limitless.'

The true extent of U.S. involvement abroad is almost impossible to pin down because client parties and candidates frequently prefer secrecy for fear of a damaging perception that their campaigns are being run by Americans (West, 1989). However, there is clear evidence that Europe is also a direct employer of U.S. expertise, dating at least from Joe Napolitan's campaign for Giscard d'Estaing in 1974. In Britain, the parties tend to deny any significant input from U.S. consultants, although there is no doubt that they look across the Atlantic, rather than the Channel, for campaigning ideas (Kavanagh, 1996; Scammell, 1995). Moreover, there is clear evidence both of imitation and of direct employment of U.S. expertise, e.g., the ground-breaking biographical Kinnock broadcast in 1987, based on Hubert Humphrey's *What Manner of Man;* Labour's current attempt to emulate Clinton campaign organization and to borrow, apparently fairly directly Clintonesque slogans ('New Labour'); the hiring of Reagan's pollster Richard Wirthlin who worked for the Conservatives in the early 1990s (Bruce, 1992); the use of hard-hitting negative advertising, such as Saatchi's demonization of Tony Blair in the summer of 1996, which is widely perceived as a lift from U.S. ideas.

Globalization Does Not Equal Americanization

Globalization may instead describe a process of convergence in which indigenous factors (most importantly television and changing patterns of partisan identification) are the driving forces. This is the predominant view and it emphasizes the diversity, richness and strength of national traditions and systems as resistance to Americanization. In this view of globalization, U.S. may still export and act as a role model but direct U.S. influence is far less important than indigenous factors. America may even act, as it sometimes does, as an *anti-role model* (Blumler et al., 1996). Moreover, the flow of campaign expertise is not entirely uni-directional. As Negrine (1996:164) points out some countries, for example, Greece, look more to Europe than the U.S. while occasionally the U.S. itself may import expertise. The British Conservative Party, for instance, supplied assistance and was apparently influential in the George Bush campaign of 1992, while the services of the Tories' advertising agency Saatchi and Saatchi have been engaged in Russia, for the Conservatives in Denmark, the Dutch Social Democrats and the Irish Fianna Fáil (Webb, 1992).

Globalization as Modernization

This is the most theoretically elegant, and contentious of the the three views. Put briefly, modernization (Mancini and Swanson, 1996) is driven by socio-political and technological changes which have resulted in the weakening of parties and the emergence of a powerful role for the mass media. These characteristics of 'modern' societies result in particular types of campaigning: political parties becoming less ideological, moving towards catch-all parties (Kirchheimer, 1966) which raise consensus at election times in the hope of being elected; personality becomes more important as ideology becomes less important; and at the same time parties pay more attention to campaigning techniques as the means to victory. These features of modernization, increasingly apparent in all democracies, are especially marked in the U.S. Americanization here is a kind of shorthand

term 'for describing a series of changes in the social, political, and economic makeup of the West . . . that prepares the ground for the adoption of American practices' (Negrine and Papathanassopoulos, 1996). Thus, the term 'Americanization' may still be descriptively helpful and moreover may provide clues as to the direction in which modernization everywhere will take democratic practice.

It is clear from this that both Americanization and globalization are contested terms. The key point for my purposes, however, is that there is some consensus that 'Americanization' is useful as a shorthand description of global trends and that the U.S. is the leading exporter and role model of campaigning.

Americanization and Professionalization

All the distinctive features of modern campaigning — political marketing, personalization, escalating levels of technological sophistication — share a common theme, 'professionalization' (Farrell, 1996). Blumler et al., (1996) characterize the modern campaign precisely as the *professionalized paradigm.* This approach may be criticized on historical grounds. Virtually any period of mass democratic electoral history, in the U.S. and Britain at least, will offer good evidence of increasing 'professionalization' compared to earlier campaigns, as politicians adapt to changing media and electoral environments. Present day concerns about the impact of advertising and public relations in politics echo the propaganda debates of the 1920s and 1930s (Sproule, 1989). However, there are two senses in which these authors, and others, suggest that modern 'professionalization' is qualitatively different.

Specialization: The explosion of new communication technologies over the last 40 years has fostered a profusion of specialist technical experts in such matters as polls, computers and software, the internet, television presentation and advertising. Farrell makes a useful distinction between capital-intensive campaigns and labor-intensive campaigns. The more capital-intensive the more professional (modern and 'American') the campaign because the new technologies require new sets of consultants and new batteries of technocrats. Labor-intensive campaigns are essentially 'amateur' run, relying heavily on party workers and volunteers for mass canvassing and public meetings. Thus, specialization is largely driven by technology, and of course, the money needed to hire the expertise. This is partly a quantitative argument, which is saying roughly, that the degree of specialization has accumulated to the point where campaigns qualitatively become altered.

Replacement/displacement: This takes specialization a stage further by arguing that party strategists have been replaced by non-party 'professional' strategists. Employed at first for their expertise with the technologies mentioned above, the professionals become increasingly central to campaign strategy and even policy-making. They claim and are perceived to possess expertise essential to the winning of elections. This links to what Swanson and Mancini (1996), after Habermas, call the 'scientificization' of politics. Scientificization entails more than the integration of technical expertise. It elevates electoral victory, rather than the pursuit of policy goals, as the prime aim of politics. The technological drive towards scientificization is compounded by the general weakening of the role of the party due to the decline in strong party attachments among voters. The decline is both cause and effect of the professionalization of electioneering. Parties wishing to extend their appeal beyond traditional constituencies are forced to off-load ideological baggage. The less clear the ideological divide between parties the more they need to rely on personality, packaging and other forms of manufactured difference. The more the parties grow alike the less likely they are to retain the strong commitment of voters. And so on. Otto Kirchheimer (1966) described this process as the transformation of Western Europe's mass parties into 'catch-all,' pragmatic voter-oriented parties. Bowler and Farrell's comparative study of electioneering (1992) notes a correspondence between catch-all parties and political marketing. At first sight there is an obvious kind of logic here, given some flesh by the experience of the British general election of 1992. According to then Conservative communications director Shaun Woodward: '. . . what we were confronted with was very much like a marketing exercise trying to establish a difference between brands that were basically alike. The answer was obvious — packaging' (Scammell, 1995:240).

However, the catch-all thesis is not entirely convincing and there is empirical evidence to suggest that parties have frequently remained ideologically distinct (Keman, 1994; Klingemann et al., 1994). Moreover, many of the leading patrons of professionalization, for example, Reagan and the New Right in the U.S. and

Thatcher in Britain, have also been the most ideologically committed. So where does this leave us with respect to professionalization? There is some agreement that modern campaigns are characterized by increasing specialization and replacement of party campaign managers by outside expertise. The causes of this seem to be a combination of new technology and a weakening of the role of parties, although the part played here by ideology, and the lack of it, is less clear-cut. Most importantly for our purposes, there is also the suggestion that the new campaign professionals possess uniquely a body of knowledge and 'consummate propagandistic skill' (Habermas, 1989:221) considered essential to electoral success. This takes us back to our original point of departure concerning the nature of professionalism in modern campaigning, to examine whether 'modern' campaigners are more professional, not simply in the sense of technical expertise but that they operate on the basis of an increasingly 'scientific' understanding of the political market and voter persuasion.

Professional Campaigning in the U.S.

The commonest measure of the growth of professionalism in U.S. campaigning is the emergence of the industry of political consulting over the last 30 years. Where once communications expertise was hired to parties and candidates from people primarily engaged in commercial work, now political consultation thrives as a form of business independent of other types of income production. The American Association of Political Consultants was established in 1969 and only a handful of people attended its founding meeting at Lincoln Center in New York. It now claims more than 800 active members, predicts more than 1,000 by the end of the century and boasts that it handles campaign business worth more than one billion dollars a year (AAPC, 1996). Ron Faucheux, editor of the trade magazine *Campaigns and Elections,* estimates that the industry is much bigger than even the AAPC claims, employing some 7,000 people who work for a living on campaigns.[2]

Undoubtedly, political consulting is now a flourishing business, but to what extent might it legitimately be deemed a profession? Our working definition of a profession includes the following elements: control over entry; a self-regulating code of conduct; definable bodies of knowledge, supported by a systematic body of theory; training and certification by recognizable standards that individuals are qualified in that body of knowledge; full-time employment of professionals in the field; and formal organization of professionals into societies which defend professional standards and protect members interests (Jackson, 1970; Norris, 1996; Vollmer and Mills, 1966).

Political consulting lacks one of the fundamental criteria of hard-core professions such as medicine or law: control over entry. There are sound reasons why this may never be desirable in a democracy. Anyone may run for elected office in the U.S., provided they meet relatively few legal requirements, and equally they may choose anyone to campaign on their behalf. This is commonly accepted as a democratic right. There are some parallels here with journalism, another disputed profession, where any attempt to license entry might threaten basic democratic freedoms of speech.

In other ways, however, political consulting carries stronger claims to professionalism. It is now a full-time occupation in the U.S. and there are signs of an emerging common identity, of political consulting with its special sets of skills as distinct from other trades and crafts. The growth of the AAPC bears witness to this, and is in itself a sign of professionalism. A second indicator is the development of specialist campaign knowledges. The last 30 years have seen a proliferation of different kinds of specialties. At first these depended almost completely on technical expertise, for example polling advice or advertising production, but now have expanded across a much wider range of campaign activities, which require few or no particular technical skills: e.g., direct mail fund-raising, media buying, conference, event and meeting planning, political researching, and so on. These have become sufficiently accepted so that growing numbers of consultants can earn livings providing these services to candidates on a more or less contractual basis.[3]

A third sign is the self-conscious attempt to professionalize the business of campaigning through training and education. Outside the U.S., in Britain for example, election campaign training is the near exclusive preserve of the parties and bookstore 'how to' manuals are largely aimed at non-party pressure groups and lobbies. In the U.S., despite the fairly extensive programs offered by the major parties, training is increasingly privatized. *Campaigns and Elections* 'Political Pages' (1996-7) lists 50 organizations and universities offering campaigning education courses and seminars. Despite opportunities here for a smart and relatively painless

buck, there is also evidence of genuine attempts to improve the general competence of campaign management, to bring cool analysis and thoughtful order to the chaos of campaigning. *Campaigns and Elections,* for instance, was established precisely with all of these goals in mind: to be a profitable 'how to' journal 'by making modern management techniques available to the many instead of the few' (Reed, 1980). The Graduate School of Political Management, now at the George Washington University, was founded explicitly in 1987 to be 'both a stimulus to the creation of a profession and a benchmark by which progress towards a profession could be measured.'[4] The school advertises itself as the 'nation's only master's degree program in professional politics.' There is something peculiarly American about the term 'professional politics.' In common usage among consultants it seems to mean primarily campaigning: persuasion, the winning of votes and popularity, lobbying and issues management. Questions of public policy and governance are not entirely unrelated but are considered separate matters. Mark Goodin, former Republican Communications Director, offers an extreme version of this view, claiming that the skills of campaigning are 'directly antithetical' to the skills of good governance.[5]

This leads us to a fourth and crucially defining characteristic of professionalism, ethics. Typically professions operate ethical, normally self-policing codes. In his discussion of journalism, Broddason (1994) links ethics to the notion of sacredness of occupations: ethical codes are underpinned by ideas of the nobility of professional goals and of self-sacrifice in their pursuit. This is a tricky area for political persuaders who wallow in a reputation as unscrupulous, Machiavellian manipulators popularized in such Hollywood films as 'Bob Roberts' and 'The Candidate.' In Britain recently, a leading Labour politician, Clare Short, called Tony Blair's advisers, 'the people in the dark' (Short, 1996), a turn of phrase which recalls that 'Old Nick' Machiavelli was once synonymous with the devil.

Contrary to popular myth, the business is not without ethical concerns. The AAPC requires its members to sign a copy of a code of professional ethics which proscribes, among other things, activities which degrade the practice of political campaigning, which foster racism or unlawful discrimination, or lie about opponents and misuse clients' funds. It also has claims to nobility of purpose. 'American political consultants are, in a sense, informal officials of the nation's democratic electoral system,' who provide millions of dollars worth of pro bono service to candidates and parties and 'work diligently to improve opportunities' for women and minorities (AAPC, 1996). However, as Chris Arterton, dean of the Graduate School of Political Management, acknowledges ethics are relatively undeveloped within political consulting, even by comparison with journalism or commercial advertising. 'I think what has not yet been born is a set of professional responsibilities, ethics, guidelines or constraints which surround the application of techniques . . . You get ethics in politics, in terms of campaign finance and conflict of interest in terms of lobbying and disclosure of sources of lobbying money and so forth. But that doesn't go to the kind of personal comportment and standards of thought that we ought to require of a profession. It doesn't go to the sacredness of what is meant by a group of people who ought to think of themselves as the centurions of democracy.'[6]

Are such standards really possible or, more importantly, voluntarily enforceable in a business which of its nature is fiercely competitive and where the only marketable measure of success is victory? Ethical considerations often appear arbitrary, at the mercy of the candidates' scruples, or imposed from outside by media exposure and public opinion. Articles concerning general ethical principles are rare, almost to the point of extinction, in the 16-year publication history of Campaigns and Elections (*pace* Faucheux, 1996; Tucker and Heller, 1987). They are equally unusual in the 'how to' guides, although there are sometimes justifications of the democratic benefits of modern campaigning (Faucheux, 1995; Luntz, 1988; Maarek, 1992; Napolitan, 1972; Steinberg, 1976). One is left with the impression that the ethical code for modern campaigning is 'what we can get away with.' Public embarrassment due to press exposure is probably the largest single influence on U.S. campaigning conduct. 'Do you want to read about yourself doing this,' as Dan Carol, research director for the Democratic National Committee during 1992, put it, in his practical guide to ethics for political researchers.7 It follows then, that the dirtiest campaigns should be found mostly in the lower order electoral races, which are relatively free from vigorous media scrutiny and the truth tests of the 'ad-watch' columns and there seems to be some evidence, certainly anecdotal, that this is indeed the case,8 supported by the experience of the 1996 second-order races.

As yet, then, the emergence of a full-time occupation, a common identity and development of unique and definable sets of skills may be more properly described as *commercialization* rather than professionalization, despite some fledgling attempts to create consensus around professional norms. It would also be naive to underestimate the importance of money as a motive in the growth of political consultancy as a full-time business. In 1976 veteran consultant Sanford L. Weiner could boast that he and his colleagues were in it for love: 'In our short history, no one has ever walked away rich' (Weiner, 1976). Since then money has flooded into campaigning, not so much at the top end where always expensive presidential races have been brought under some control by federal spending limits, but in the relatively unregulated lower-order contests. It has been calculated that total campaigning costs for all candidates at all levels of U.S. government have increased from some 425 million dollars in 1972 to 3.2 billion in 1992 (Polsby and Wildavsky, 1996:67). It *is* possible now to make money in the business. In private, consultants tell tales of those who encourage their candidates to funnel campaign funds, not into areas of anticipated effectiveness but into high profit-margin sectors. Privately, also, consultants frequently work with each other, so that if one is hired s/he will channel business to another in a kind of kickback arrangement, which, as Arterton argues, is unethical precisely because there is no prior disclosure of the deal to the candidates.[9] Moreover, there are signs that the 'professionalization' wheel is turning full circle: 30 and 40 years ago expertise was fed into the political process from mainly commercial consultants in the market research and public relations fields; then emerged an independent trade of full-time political consultants; now increasingly these same consultants are tapping into corporate markets to top up profits squeezed by increasing competitive pressures in the political field (Segal, 1996).

Professionalization, then, so often treated unproblematically as the hallmark of American-style modern campaigning, is itself highly problematic in the U.S. Moreover, the mushrooming of the political consultancy business highlights just how untypical American politics is. It is no coincidence that political consultancy originated as a cottage industry in the vast state of California with its diverse and transient population, weak party organization and tradition of non-partisanship (Sabato, 1981). Throw money and high-tech mass media into this mix and it is clear that there are both incentives and imperatives for the growth of political consultancy which are peculiarly American. In most established European democracies the opportunities simply do not yet exist for a flourishing independent political consultancy market. Electoral contests are fewer; European parliaments normally every four/five years compared to every two for the U.S. House of Representatives, to say nothing of the many statewide and other public offices. 'It is estimated that there are more than 50,000 public elections in the United States of America each year . . . Our nation is a living laboratory for democracy in action' (AAPC, 1996). With some exceptions, the traditional Western European parties remain relatively strong, both organizationally and in terms of voter identification, parliamentary rather than presidential systems are predominant, there is less room to maneuver for individual candidates and generally far less money in the system. Most European countries prohibit paid political advertising on television, which alone accounts directly and indirectly for the bulk of U.S. campaign spending.[10] Thus commercialization on the U.S. scale is not likely in the near future in Western Europe, despite the emergence of individual political consultants and agencies who sell their skills internationally.[11] The business has emerged more strongly in Latin America, where the conditions seem more conducive (presidential systems, weak parties, paid advertising permitted, etc.) and observers have noted that 'electoral campaigns are arguably much more Americanized now than in Europe' (Angell et al., 1992)

However, if the business of U.S. campaigning is more commercial than professional, there remains claims that at least campaigning knowledges are becoming more 'scientific.' Campaigning in the U.S. has become sufficiently specialized and its skills sufficiently codified to enable the creation of a master's degree program and embryonic public educational and training system. In this sense of professionalism, the U.S. remains the world's clear leader.

Campaigning Knowledge in the U.S.

It is an old adage that there is no general theory of campaigning and that first-hand experience is the only truly valuable teacher. Campaigners are notoriously reluctant to talk in general about the forces that influence voters and are much more comfortable dealing in

detail with the specifics of particular races. Yet, if campaigning knowledge is becoming more professional it should be moving precisely in the direction of general theory, much as modern marketing has done. What follows is an attempt to make sense of the rather nebulous area of campaigning ideas to discover to what extent U.S. campaign managers are influenced by:

academic theory
commercial marketing theory
political folk wisdom, broadly defined to include personal and collective campaign experience, custom, habit and gut instinct.

A fundamental premise is that these three categories provide the main repositories of knowledge for campaigners.

Social science offers campaigners the most rigorous sources of knowledge, providing a corpus of empirical research, spanning more than 50 years, into voting behavior, media effects and the processes of individual and mass persuasion. Yet, examinations of British campaigning reveal a gulf between campaign practice and academic theory.[12] One would expect a similar finding in the U.S., and this has been largely confirmed by research for this article. The worlds of academic inquiry and campaign management 'rarely overlap, and when they do, the basis of knowledge and evidence is often quite different' (Thurber, 1995:1-2). They are driven by quite different goals, time frames and standards of validity, and campaigners are usually operating precisely in the margins which are not well explained by the broader frameworks of academic analysis. Campaigners, searching for practical solutions and clear-cut answers, claim to be frustrated by the jargon, by the mass of judicious qualification and reluctance to simplify characteristic of political science analysis. Ann Lewis, deputy communication manager of Clinton/Gore 1996, identifies a major drawback of political science from a campaigner's point of view: the data is too old. It uses 'large amounts of material from years past, and that's a long time ago. Voter behavior changes very quickly.'[13] This is not to say that there is no social science in campaigning, but that its overt and explicitly acknowledged influence is relatively minor. However, some consultants believe that this is a weakness. Charlie Black, for example, strategist for Bush in 1992, believes that the best consultants (the late Lee Atwater, working for Bush in 1988, and the recently-disgraced Dick Morris for Clinton, 1994-6) have the edge precisely because they do pay attention to academic literature, particularly on history, socio-demographics and patterns of voting behavior.[14] *Campaigns and Elections* also made conscious efforts to bridge the academic/campaign divide. Articles by university professors in media and communications, marketing and political science were featured regularly during its first six years, but have noticeably reduced since. Current editor, Ron Faucheux, argued that with the best will in the world it was difficult to maintain regular links: 'Practitioners think that political scientists are not studying problems of interest and are therefore not helpful.'[15]

Commercial marketing theory, less scientific but more dynamic, seems to offer a promising source of ideas for campaigners: research tools to understand the political market and generalizable rules for the development of strategies and communication campaigns. A number of studies have traced the development of political marketing, both in the U.S. and elsewhere over the last 30 or so years (Bowler and Farrell, 1992; Kavanagh, 1995; Luntz, 1983; O'Shaughnessy, 1990; Sabato, 1981; Scammell, 1995). Some have recommended its use as the most appropriate way to turn the art of campaigning into a 'partial science' (e.g., Kotler, 1981; Luntz, 1988; Maarek, 1995; Mauser, 1983; Steinberg, 1976). The application of marketing has also been cited as a prime reason for electoral success: 'marketing made the difference between winning and losing [in the U.S.] in 1992' (Newman, 1994). The introduction to the inaugural issue of *Campaigns and Elections* (Reed, 1980) made the point in more general terms:

> Only one in six political candidates wins. Only one in six businesses succeeds. What makes the difference between winning and losing in a political campaign? Is it the same thing that makes the difference between succeeding and failing in business? Yes! In political campaigns and in business, it is management that makes the difference. Management of resources: money, media and people.

For Philip Kotler (1981) political campaigning has always had a marketing character, and similarities of the salesmanship processes in business and politics far outweigh the differences. Collins and Butler (1996) suggest further that marketing theory teaches political science lessons in party behavior. 'Marketing is not an activity which political parties may indulge in

at their discretion; it is a constant and necessary political function which they attend to implicitly or explicitly, successfully or otherwise.'

That is, even if parties are not explicitly aware of it, they behave in a strategic fashion within the political market that is 'analogous to commercial organizations,' working to become market leaders or challengers, or content to be followers or hold a niche position (Porter, 1985).

Marketing strategy seems to offer campaigners the Holy Grail of a general theory of campaigning and this is the point made by Kotler: 'Marketing strategy is at the heart of electoral success because it forces a campaign to put together, in a very short period of time, a winning relatively stable coalition of diverse and sometimes irreconcilable groups' (1981). Gary Mauser (1983) draws upon the 20-year-old body of marketing knowledge to offer 'strategic positioning procedure' as the professional approach to campaign management.

'Strategy' is a much-worked word by U.S. political consultants but a reading of the trade literature suggests that its meaning is not well-understood and that its implementation is by no means common, even in the better-funded electoral races. Consultant Joel Bradshaw (1995) complains that most campaigns lack a clear strategy, by which he means a clear sense of what they are trying to accomplish. While generally true, this is especially apparent in lower-ballot races, according to Republican consultants Hargrave and Snodgrass (1992). The evidence of the trade literature supports them. *The Road to Victory* (Faucheux, 1995), the 'best of the best' from *Campaigns and Elections,* devotes only 64 (11 percent) of its 592 pages to the chapter on general strategy, message and planning and much of this could not be properly termed strategy, for example: pages of lists of 'do's and don'ts' tips, articles of advice on how to overcome your candidate's odd-sounding name (rhymes are useful, we are told, 'on duty with Schuette'), and how to combat eleventh-hour attacks. Content analysis of the magazine over 16 years suggests that this probably overestimates the attention paid primarily to questions of general strategy.[16] While some 25% of the journal's articles were devoted to the organization of campaigns, most of these concerned polling, research, computers and communications technology. One might assume that questions of strategy would feature prominently in the various educational curricula, but the George Washington School, for example, offers just two courses on campaign strategy and planning compared to five on polling and data analysis, three on fund-raising and two on computer applications for politics (GSPM, 1995-6). It seems fair to conclude that strategic thinking among campaign consultants is far less developed than within commercial marketing. After 10 years 'political marketing has almost caught up with . . . dog food' (Meyer, 1990). Not quite.

The third category, *political folk wisdom,* is anticipated to be the most significant source of ideas for campaigners. Folk wisdom is taken to mean that campaigning knowledge is based largely on experience and observation, learning by results (Hershey, 1984). Winning campaigns provide the models to copy and losing ones the examples to avoid. However, campaigns are notoriously imprecise learning situations. It is difficult to isolate and measure with any precision the impact of particular tactics and strategies. The increasing use of polls, tracking surveys, focus groups, dial groups and 'mall testing' can only partially overcome this difficulty. The cost of research, in any event, is prohibitive outside the top-of-the-ticket races and even there the campaigners' need for rapid decisions restricts survey possibilities. Democratic pollster Peter Hart claimed that the results of just one focus group changed Walter Mondale's entire communication strategy during the 1984 primaries.[17] In ideal circumstances there would have been at least six focus groups. In practice, surveys may be most useful as quick and rough guides to campaigners' intuitions. The notorious prison furlough ads on behalf of Bush in 1988 were decided ultimately not by polls but by Lee Atwater's idiosyncratic methods for gauging public opinion, in this case eavesdropping on family conversations at a Harley Davidson convention.[18] While the general trend is towards increasingly research-driven campaigns, this as yet has not lessened the need for battle-steeled consultants with an instinctive flair for politics. Strategy and tactics do not emerge self-evidently out of research data which inevitably require skilled and politically experienced interpretation.

Even with polls, then, campaigners and candidates operate on the basis of uncertain information about the electorate and uncertainty about future responses to particular tactics. Equally, they cannot be precisely sure which campaign events turned elections. Typically, explanations of election results are constructed shortly *after* the event, mainly by the elite actors, campaign participants and media, and *not* academics, because, as Ann Lewis reminds us, academics work slowly. One or more of these verdicts will

eventually become the accepted wisdom and provide models for future campaign activities. To some extent, then, campaigners cannot help but be fighting the last war. The lack of certainty about what and how votes may be won has important consequences for the political consultancy business. It leaves an explanatory lacuna from which consultants, those skilled at self-promotion, may profit. One result is the rise and fall of campaigning fads. A current example is 'rapid response' and counter-attack ads. The modern rule that every attack must be countered despite ambiguity of evidence and even experience (Doak, 1995), has clear commercial benefits for consultants in advertising production. Another example is the internet, and all 1996 U.S. major primary presidential candidates used web sites, despite the absence of any evidence at all about its impact with voters.

This is not to say that there is not skill and logic in political folk wisdom. There may be a case for understanding campaigning as *craft,* perhaps especially in pre-'modern' times when the local political boss or party agent had substantial control over the whole campaign process, which was primarily directed at getting out the vote. However, it is to suggest that campaigning wisdom emerges in particular ways, which are not theoretically-developed, nor, as crafts often were, scientifically-based, and in which there is a strong element of folklore. For instance, there is now some social scientific support for consultants' common belief that it is more effective to attack one's opponent than to promote one's own program (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991:10-15; Kern and Just, 1995). Yet, there is little evidence that the trend to negative campaigning emerged as a result of scientific knowledge (see below). It seems reasonable to hypothesize that, of its nature, political folk wisdom is less likely than the previous sources to be capable of successful transference across borders into new and different campaign situations. Successful here means the more or less permanent inclusion in campaign plans, regardless of its proven effectiveness with voters.

Campaigning as Warfare: Modern Folk Wisdom in Practice

Anyone who spends any length of time listening to consultants or reading the trade literature is likely to be struck by the frequency and forcefulness of military analogies. Military metaphors, of course, have long been common in political campaigns and are by no means limited to the U.S.. The word 'campaign' itself has a military origin. Nonetheless, there is enough evidence to speculate that campaigning perceived consciously as a kind of bloodless warfare is emerging as a distinctive approach among U.S. consultants. I would suggest further that campaigning-as-warfare has developed out of a hybrid of commercial marketing ideas and political folk wisdom, with the latter more significant. True, there is a body of marketing theory which draws on the work of military strategists, Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, Liddell-Hart among others, to explain competitive success (Saunders, 1987). These same names occur occasionally in electoral campaigning literature, Sun Tzu's especially, despite the obscurity of much of his key 2,000-year-old text, *The Art of War.* Yet, consultants themselves seem to believe that war, in many ways, offers more appropriate analogies than marketing. Electoral contests for the major candidates in the U.S. first-past-the-post system are winner-takes-all affairs, rarely true for commercial products. 'Victory' is the goal, and market share, equivalent to percentage vote, is less important than the result. Consultants perceive campaigns as 'duelling images,'[19] in which one's loss is another's gain, whereas commercial competitors are more likely to have a common interest in expanding the market as a whole. The strategic concepts of offense and defense, while important in both commerce and politics, are thought fundamental to success in electoral campaigns. According to David Wilhelm: 'an important part of campaigns is to put your opponent on the defense. If you are defining the terms of the debate you are winning, if you are on the backfoot explaining, you are losing.'[20] Again, consultants view the 'offense imperative' as a distinguishing feature from marketing, which is more fundamentally concerned with self-promotion. The electoral environment is viewed as less stable, more unpredictable and more treacherous than for commercial products, partly because of the tactics of opponents and partly because of the scrutiny of a sometimes hostile media. Kotler (1981) dismissed this as a myth held by consultants who do not completely understand marketing. Nonetheless, campaigns are relatively short and particularly intense conflicts in which warfare-like virtues of speed, anticipation and tactical flexibility are at a premium.

Many of the tactics employed and lauded by consultants are explained better by the warfare, or perhaps war games, analogy than by marketing. It is fairly common for instance, for cam-

paigns to engage in gamesmanship to mislead or confuse opponents. Campaigns organize elaborate feints to throw opponents off track, for example, by reserving air time early in a campaign cycle in the hope that opponents will try to match the buy and be drawn into spending too much too soon (Arterton, 1992). In the 1996 primaries Bob Dole's consultants used a variation on the theme to outwit Lamar Alexander, who they believed was their most dangerous opponent. They deliberately talked up the threat from Pat Buchanan while at the same time organizing an eleventh-hour advertising blitz against Alexander which gave him no chance to respond *(Washington Post).* According to Charles Black, Lee Atwater turned the deliberate feint into an art form: 'He would do a lot of feints and misleading moves to psychologically screw up the other guy, which I sometimes questioned the value of. He put a lot of energy into things that probably weren't all that worthwhile. Occasionally one might be. But the thing with Lee was that he was always working so hard that he wasn't giving up anything else that he should have been doing.'[21] It is near impossible to measure the effectiveness of these tactics, a factor which in itself might render them suspicious to marketing theorists with their emphasis on efficient management of resources. However, they have clear military value: deception and surprise being two key principles of successful warfare for Sun Tzu (1971:53-4).

Advertising is one area where marketing/politics links are not only clear but have been fundamental to the increasing influence of marketing in politics and to the growth of the political consultancy industry. Yet even here marketing falls short. The current U.S. predominance of negative advertising in politics does not seem likely to have marketing origins. Advertising within marketing theory is generally framed in terms of self-promotion: branding exercises, establishing market position, supplying added value to the product and so on (Crosier, 1991). In 1972 the Federal Trade Commission encouraged advertisers to use comparative advertising, which it was argued, would furnish the consumer with more information and encourage competition. However, research estimates that comparative advertising comprises only about 5-10% of product ads in the U.S. (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991:19-25). Even allowing for some increase since these estimates, this is a relatively paltry amount compared to political campaigns in which, over the last 20 years, negative appeals have come to dominate, up from roughly 30-60% (Tarrance). Politicians are less inhibited than commercial marketers, both about the content of the message which is relatively unregulated and about possible shrinkage of the overall market. In fact, some may be more likely to win with a low turn-out (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1996).

Negative campaigning has deep roots in politics. Aggressive advertising and sometimes crude personal attacks on opponents are not innovations of modern times and their historical use is well documented (Jamieson, 1984; 1992). However, consultants and observers have reported a change in U.S. politics. Until the mid-1970s-early 1980s the consultants' rule of thumb was that negative ads were not smart politics and should be generally reserved for a candidate in trouble (Diamond and Bates, 1988:359-62; Johson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991:8). As veteran consultant Doug Bailey put it: 'Old Rule Number Three: beware using negative ads; they generally are not credible and are seen as a sign of desperation.' (Bailey, 1995) The new rule is that negative ads are the most effective means of persuasion and are increasingly used by candidates and challengers alike. According to Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1996: 147):

> Candidate after candidate has turned to negative advertising and once the gates of negative campaigning are opened, they are difficult to close. The best way to answer an attack is with another attack and journalists, who thrive on political conflict, echo the negativity . . . in their own increasingly critical and cynical reporting.

Related to the attack ads phenomenon has been the rise of opposition research as a distinct branch of political consultancy, the fastest-growing subfield in the business (Shalit, 1994). Now, this research is rather different from marketing's emphasis on polling and focus groups to identify voter perceptions of candidates' and opponents' strengths and weaknesses. That type of canvas, a direct influence of marketing, is fairly routine in higher-profile U.S. races and used to determine what Gary Mauser (1983) calls the 'strategic positioning' of candidates. Opposition research has more combative aims: to investigate an opponent's public record, background and character to provide propaganda ammunition for use in advertising, direct mail and speeches, for rapid response to opponents' attacks, for release to the press, or to third par-

ties (e.g., web sites, pressure groups or even non-threatening rival politicians) when it is deemed advantageous to publish material without being identified as the source.[22] The flip side of the same coin, 'vulnerability studies,' involve subjecting one's own candidate to the same severe scrutiny, sometimes employing private detectives for the more delicate matters. These types of inquiries, which David Tel, research director for Bush/Quayle 1992, calls 'partisan political science,'[23] appear closer to military intelligence than to market research as normally understood.

The examination of campaigning-as-warfare might be pursued down other avenues, which can only be mentioned here, for example: intelligence-gathering operations, which range from espionage-like infiltration of an opponent's camp to the high-tech use of voice-recognition software to locate exactly where, how much and to which audiences opponents are advertising;[24] the use of ads, not just for persuasion, but as a kind of psychological warfare to scare or provoke an opponent, an example of which might be the Boston Harbor spots for Bush against Dukakis (Arterton, 1992); and in advertising messages themselves which seek to polarize issues into moral/emotional questions of good and bad, and are liberal in the use of patriotic symbolism (the flag, the pledge of allegiance), again reminiscent of war propaganda. More broadly, it may be that political advertising texts are more akin to propaganda than modern commercial advertising, with little evidence of the latter's embrace of ambivalent story-lines and messages (O'Shaughnessy, 1996).

If it is true as Kotler says, that campaigning has always had a marketing character, then equally it has probably always had the whiff of warfare. To invert Clausewitz's famous dictum: politics is a continuation of war by any other means. This is not unique to the U.S., and the history of British campaigning offers evidence of espionage and black propaganda (Scammell, 1995:29-31) while advertising which cast opponents as more or less unwitting dangers to the nation have been fairly common Conservative appeals in both the Thatcher and Major eras. Moreover, campaigning-as-warfare may be a useful corrective to the view, especially common in Europe, which sees modern campaigning as the submission or merger of politics to business marketing methods (Franklin, 1995; Maarek, 1995; Newman, 1994). It may be that marketing has played a part in encouraging the warfare approach; the marketing literature certainly allows for that possibility. However, that is not the weight of evidence of either the political consultants' trade literature or of interviews conducted here. Rather, it seems that warfare (or war games) are viewed as part of the logic of politics. The important influences for the tactics mentioned above come from campaigns themselves, in other words political folk wisdom or 'learning by results.' The example of Lee Atwater's masterminding of Bush's come-from-behind 1988 victory offered an object lesson in the effectiveness of negative campaigning. James Carville's war room for Clinton's 1992 campaign helped entrench as common wisdom the idea of rapid response, rebutting opponents' attacks as quickly as possible. These approaches are examples of the new style in U.S. campaigning, which were not the conventional wisdom of 10 and fewer years ago. Trade journal articles of advice on how to 'nail the opposition' (Galen, 1988) and how to mount 'great attacks' (Cooper, 1991) only began to appear with regularity in *Campaigns and Elections* from 1988. There is some evidence of the direct influence of military theory (Blydenburgh, 1995). Oriental strategy in particular, has become fashionable in U.S. politics. For example, ancient Chinese military theory, summarized in Harro Von Senger's *The Book of Stratagems: Tactics for Triumph and Survival* (1991), is taught to students at the Graduate School of Political Management of the George Washington University. Lee Atwater, among the most influential and controversial of political consultants, enjoyed a reputation as a student of military history and admirer of the teachings of Sun Tzu and Machiavelli,[25] and doubtless his example rubbed off on others, including Clinton's erstwhile Svengali, Dick Morris, who claims Atwater, along with Winston Churchill, as his political heroes (*Campaigns and Elections,* March, 1995). However, the trade literature reviewed here contained no equivalent of the marketing literature's analysis of the potential usefulness of military strategy. There are some signs that military thinking is becoming a greater direct influence upon consultants, as yet campaigns themselves, political folk wisdom, appears the strongest source.

U.S. Campaigning: Sources of Ideas

I have suggested that U.S. campaigning knowledge *is* more professional than elsewhere although it continues to be dominated by folk wisdom and remains more art than science. I want to suggest now that this trend would be

demonstrated by a more detailed investigation of campaigners' sources of ideas, broken down into the various elements of campaigning under such headings as: can campaigns win elections and in what circumstances; what constitutes a good campaign; who among the electorate are persuadable and how are they persuaded? Such an investigation is a vast undertaking and beyond the scope of these few pages. However, by way of illustration, let us look briefly at campaigners' perspectives on just two aspects: what constitutes a good campaign and how are voters persuaded.

What Constitutes a Good Campaign?

One is immediately struck by the gulf between political science and campaigners' thinking. Social science offers a wide variety of perspectives although increasingly the focus is on normative concerns: about the quality of campaign discourse, the offering of clear political choices, the provision of sufficient information for voters to make rational choices, and so on (Jamieson, 1992; Mancini and Swanson, 1996; Popkin, 1991). For consultants, *winning* is the necessary but not quite sufficient criterion of a good campaign. The trade literature makes clear that there are degrees of difficulty in campaigns. *Campaigns and Elections* publishes an annual scorecard of consultants' performances which it weights according to incumbency, previous party control, campaign competitiveness (judged by expenditure) and office visibility. Theoretically, it should be possible that some losing campaigns could also be good ones, in the sense of over-achievement of expected possibilities. However, the trade literature tends overwhelmingly to review losing campaigns as case studies of mistakes and examples of what *not* to do. A number of interviewees claimed that the literature did not reflect their personal experiences: losing campaigns created the more lasting memories and taught more useful lessons. However, all agreed that it was extremely rare for campaign teams in either winning or losing situations to engage in any rigorous post-race analysis. Thus, by default winning has become the public yardstick of success. In the competitive world of political consultancy, management of a losing campaign is unlikely to enhance one's career prospects, no matter how sharp the strategy or disciplined the organization.

Some wins are better than others, of course. *Campaigns and Elections* 'scorecard' awards top points for a challenger win against an incumbent in a high visibility race (presidential, governor or Senate), followed by a switch of party control in an open race. According to scorecard, the easiest race to win is a relatively low-profile state legislature contest against a poorly funded non-incumbent opponent.

It is no easy matter to decipher from the literature an order of priority for factors which contribute to success. Consultants claim the winning edge for almost every and any aspect of campaigning from strategy to the mobilization of absentee ballots. However, Napolitan's (1995) claim that 'strategy is the single most important factor' is probably the common wisdom. The definition of strategy, 'how you will win . . . who will vote for you and why' (Bradshaw, 1995), puts a premium on the quality of audience research to identify target voters and the campaign message, or theme. Discipline in campaign organization and communication, that is, concentrating resources on the targets and staying resolutely 'on message' are other key elements. Field operations and get-out-the-vote activities, traditional aspects of campaigning the world over, continue to feature prominently in the trade literature.

Given that personalization is an American-style campaigning trademark, it was surprising to find that the candidate him/herself emerges as a curiously ambivalent figure and is rarely cited in general advice as the key to a good campaign. Rather, he or she is another input who brings strengths and weaknesses, to be exploited or overcome. Interviews with consultants offer a slightly different perspective, encapsulated in Roger Ailes' view (1988): 'Show me a man or woman with a mission, and I'll show you somebody that's tougher to beat.' Just as commonly, however, consultants infer that the candidate can impede a good campaign, and all too frequently lacks the discipline to stay on message, a big problem for, among others, George Bush, according to his press secretary, Marlin Fitzwater.[26]

How are Voters Persuaded?

This simple question has spawned a vast amount of research, from social science and theories of voting behavior and theories of media effects, to theories of persuasion drawn from sources ranging from political philosophy to cognitive psychology. It is an immense subject and clearly these few pages cannot do it justice. Instead, we focus here on paid advertising on television, the predominant tool of persuasion in U.S. campaigns.

The social science orthodoxy is that advertising has minimal effects upon voting behavior.

The effects research, neatly summarized by McGuire (1986), suggests that at most advertising has only 'slight' effects which are noticeable mainly among late deciders and for obscure candidates and in minor races. Psychology laboratory and field experiments confirm that ads are most effective when recipients have little personal concern (low involvement) about the outcome of the race, for example, primaries or contests for state and local offices (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991:53). Consultants, unsurprisingly, argue that advertising does work. They believe it is essential to achieve name recognition, especially in primary and lower order races, that it can alter candidate images and, crucially, that it can help set the agenda. Academics may continue to doubt the effectiveness of advertising, but 'time and again' consultants report gains in popularity and visibility for candidates able to afford sufficient advertising (Arterton, 1992).

However, there is growing academic support for consultants' belief in the effectiveness of negative advertising, here defined in line with Johnson-Cartee and Copeland to include comparative ads (1991:17). There is, for example, evidence that recipients weigh negative information more heavily than positive; that negative information is more able to alter existing impressions; that images designed to prompt negative emotions are better recalled than positive ones (Jamieson, 1992: 41). Just and Kern (1995) highlight the importance of advertising rather than news, especially negative and affectively-laden messages, in the construction of candidate images. Ansolabehere and Iyengar's experiments (1995) also concluded that negative advertising may significantly drive down the vote. Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, academics who double as consultants, argue further than the most effective negative advertisement is the direct comparison of candidates' records, experience or issue positions, and they warn consultants against over-reliance on emotional appeals (1991:43).

There is, then, some academic support for some of the current wisdom of political advertising, but the trade literature betrays scarcely any debt to social science. Most striking, in fact, is how little attention is paid to general questions of persuasion in the pages of *Campaigns and Elections:* just six percent of all items since 1980, compared to eight percent for electoral law, 25 percent for campaign organization and 18 percent for analysis of specific campaigns. Some of these articles offer illuminating counsel into the use of, for example, negative advertising (Doak, 1995) or the development of candidate image (Sheenan, 1988). Consultants pay homage to the influence of commercial advertising (Bailey, 1995) but there is no real indication that political advertising is anywhere near as theoretically developed as its commercial counterpart. There is no equivalent, for example, of the attention paid in modern marketing texts to theories of consumer behavior and psychology (Foxall and Goldsmith, 1994).

Arterton (1992) was surprised to discover that, for all the importance attached to advertising, media consultants described their work in a language that was neither 'very rich nor precise,' relying on a few rough categories: 'bio-spot,' 'person-in-the-street,' 'comparison spots' or 'attack ads.' That is not to say that ads are all intuition and political folk wisdom. A good deal of research, pre- and post-testing, of variable quality, goes into the creation of advertising, and increasingly in the higher-order races, into the tracking of voter responses. However, its prime purpose is to discover *what* works; consultants seem much less concerned with *how* it works. For example, David Beinstock, media buyer for Pete Wilson's California gubernatorial campaign, explained that 'verbatims' are regarded as indications of effective advertising; that is, success was judged by whether people in the campaign's daily focus groups volunteered words or phrases that were verbatim in the ads. It was not at all important whether the ad was actually the source.[27]

The same few elements recur consistently when consultants talk or write about the component's effective advertising: simplicity of the message; emotional connection with voters through the message, visual imagery and symbolism; and repetition. 'Great ads, like great ideas, are simple at their core. Simplicity is the road to clarity. Simple concepts, simple images, simple words.' (Rindy, 1995) Ads should ring true factually with the target audience, and be emotionally compelling. According to Bradshaw (1995), 'in politics emotional motivation prevails over rational motives every time.' Consultants profess belief in the importance of 'symbolic communication,' messages supported by visual cues and symbols which convey emotional and value-laden meanings. And the message must be repeated. Staying 'on message,' is considered a vital dimension of a good campaign. 'When we have said something for the 10,000th time and are bored to tears, somebody else is hearing the message for the first time,' according to David Wilhelm.[28] However, some consultants argue that repetition is increasingly

difficult to sustain on television without risk of boring or irritating viewers. According to Doug Bailey (1995), perceptive consultants have followed commercial advertisers in recognizing the dwindling shelf-life of any one particular ad. Nonetheless, modern wisdom, money permitting, is to buy enough ratings points until one can be reasonably sure that the target audience has been exposed to an advertisement for at least 2-10 times.[29]

The lessons of simplicity, emotional connectivity and repetition stem from conceptions of voters as generally uninformed and uninterested in politics. To the extent that the target audience is the uncommitted independents, this view echoes in exaggerated form the findings of academic research that the non-partisans tend to be less attentive and informed than partisans. The model of the audience and how it is persuaded is strongly reminiscent of the inter-war propaganda theories. As Arterton observes (1992) consultants perceive their audience as a collectivity, as a *mass* audience. By contrast, modern theories of persuasion, rooted in cognitive psychology, concentrate on *individual* responses to communications stimuli. Arterton further suggests that, strictly speaking, most political advertising is not persuasion at all, in the sense of providing information to develop an argument with the aim of changing attitudes. Campaigners 'do not feel that, in the midst of a campaign, they have the capacity to reshape substantially voters' beliefs and attitudes.' Instead ads are intended primarily to set the agenda, to steer the audience towards issues and concerns where the candidate is most in tune with public sympathies, as judged by opinion polls. Setting the agenda is less about winning arguments and more with restricting public discussion to a limited range of issues that favor the candidate and least favor his or her opponent. This characterization rings true, although much advertising could be described as propaganda, as defined by O'Shaughnessy (1996), with an emphasis on re-enforcement of already-held views, rather than attitude change. Consultants themselves, however, seem to believe they are in the business of persuasion, more loosely defined, for example: persuading people to turn out to vote, convincing voters that their candidate is more trustworthy and competent than the opponent. However, this point leads to another contribution of marketing, the 'marketing concept', in which the customer is put at 'the beginning rather than the end of production-consumption cycle' (Baker, 1991). Broadly, the easiest product to sell is one that the consumer wants, and product development should be conducted accordingly. Translated into politics, the task is to tailor the candidate according to public opinion, not the other way round.

In practice it is often thought easier to demonstrate that an opponent is *not* what voters want than to persuade them that s/he is, especially in a climate of cynicism about public officials. Consultants cite Watergate as the pivotal event which made negative ads work (Doak, 1995; Weiner, 1976), although there are additional strategic advantages of attack rather than self-promotion, most importantly, when it is necessary to court the centre ground without alienating strong partisans. There is some dispute among consultants concerning the most effective focus of attack, issues or candidate qualities. For Mark Goodin, who ran Ollie North's Virginia Senate contest, issues do not work, 'people don't connect with them' at an emotional level.'[30] For Charles Black the emphasis on personality or issues 'varies from race to race but issues do matter because they are vehicles for defining the candidate and creating the candidate's image.'[31] Doak (1995) argues the conventional wisdom is changing towards issues and comparison rather than purely attack ads. People have become cynical about negative advertising and dislike personal attacks: 'In modern campaigns, negative ads are increasingly about issues.' However, the post-1988 upsurge of media criticism and 'fact check' columns has had a double-edged effect on consultants' thinking, encouraging them to be more careful before going negative but also supplying new ammunition for the counter-attack ad, courtesy of the press. The public criticism does not seem to have stemmed the negative tide, according to early verdicts from the 1996 races (Peters, 1996).

Conclusion

It is widely accepted that 'professionalization' is the hallmark of modern campaigning and the U.S., the world's most professional campaigners. Yet, this investigation found that professionalization is problematic in the U.S. There are some emerging signs: the growth of a common identity, specialist knowledge, efforts to establish specialist education and training, and even to develop a common code of ethics. In these respects the U.S. is further down the professional road than the rest of the democratic world. However, as yet, U.S. political consultancy is

characterized more by commercialism than professionalism. It is less the *professional paradigm* and more the *commercial* paradigm. In higher-profile races, the traditional party campaign management has been largely displaced by full-time consultants offering an ever-wider range of technical and other specialisms. Political consultancy is a prospering business. Yet, it falls short of the mark of professionalism in two crucial respects: a self-policing ethical code and in the professionalization of campaigning knowledge. The examination of the 'how to' literature found campaigning to be largely undeveloped in any theoretical sense and the sources of campaigners' ideas dominated by political folk wisdom. There is little evidence of any overt influence of social science in the campaign war room. Despite the mass of social scientific research into elections and voter behavior, U.S. consultants seem relatively uninfluenced by academic labors. A number of authors (e.g., Arterton, 1992; Thurber, 1995) note that consultants frequently complain about academic irrelevance while simultaneously being unwilling to study the literature. The most significant single source of ideas continues to come from within campaigns themselves. Experience, one's own and the experience of others as reflected in common folk wisdom, remain the predominant influences. Lessons from commercial marketing also emerge as a force in campaigners' thinking, particularly in strategic planning, in the increasing reliance upon market research methods and in the management of resources. The marketing influence is clear, although interviews suggested that campaigners do not believe that the marketing approach is entirely appropriate for the special circumstances of electoral combat. It can assist but not replace the skills and experience necessary for success in the warfare-like conditions of political battle.

The point is not merely to suggest that studies of comparative campaigning have over-estimated the degree of professionalism in modern campaigning, but to argue that there are consequences for 'Americanization.' We suggested that political folk wisdom would be less likely to travel well abroad than the more 'scientific' and theoretically developed aspects of campaigning. Of its nature, folk wisdom develops from experience and learning by results and is thus tied to specific campaign circumstances and environments in a way that social science and marketing theory are not.

Generally, then, this investigation supports the prevailing academic consensus which emphasizes the *limits* of American influence on overseas campaigns. The usefulness of American campaign knowledge is restricted precisely because it is U.S.-specific wisdom, and largely undeveloped on a wider theoretical plane. American-style methods are likely to be most fully incorporated into foreign electioneering in those countries where electoral conditions are most similar to the U.S. This again is the consensus view of research into comparative electioneering. The degree of convergence around American-style campaigning is largely dependent on a number of contextual factors (Swanson and Mancini, 1996; Farrell, 1996): the electoral system and structure of party competition (e.g., presidentialism as opposed to parliamentary systems, candidate-centered or party-centered campaigning; two-party or multi-party systems, first-past-the-post or proportional representation); the structure of regulation (campaign finance and obligations and restrictions on media and paid advertising); the structure of the media (the penetration of television into the home market, the development of satellite and cable television, media competition and forms of ownership); the development of information technology; and the strengths and distinctiveness of national political cultures.

There are considerable structural constraints on the wholesale import of American methods, to which should be added the knowledge-base itself of U.S. campaigning. Equally, however, the examination of the source of campaigners' ideas can help us identify more precisely those U.S. practices which might be successfully imported and adapted elsewhere. There are a number of practices, incorporated into the general U.S. political folk wisdom, which nonetheless rely on a body of broader theory and/or have been given the stamp of credence by academic research. Most of these come from marketing: the importance of strategy, identifying target voters and of concentrating campaigning resources on those targets. Correspondingly, market research becomes increasingly significant, to establish the target market and the 'positioning' of the candidate/party in relation both to the targets and the opponents. Marketing theory translated for politics encourages two dominant aspects of U.S. campaign communication which now increasingly feature abroad: messages disciplined tightly on a narrow range of themes and issues which market research suggests appeal to the target audience; and communication designed less for persuasion and more for driving the agenda towards issues which favor one party and disfavor opponents. One might expect also lessons of U.S. political advertising will also will be adopted elsewhere. First, that advertising matters; there is enough scientific evidence now to support the

folk wisdom that ads are an important source of voter information. Second, that judicious repetition does increase the prospects of voter influence (Just et al., 1996). Third, that negative advertising is the most effective. The type and style of the most potent negative advertising (emotionally-laden appeals versus cooler styles, character attacks or issue comparisons) is in dispute, although the trend to issue comparisons favored by some consultants has been lent social scientific weight. In short, the marketing approach, strategy and research tools, and the reliance on advertising, especially negative advertising, are features which promise to flourish abroad, even where structural conditions are vastly different from the U.S. Britain, for example, with its strong party and parliamentary system, tightly regulated media and ban on paid TV political advertising, is often considered resistant to American methods (Blumler et al., 1996). Yet the last two elections have demonstrated clear evidence of the marketing approach to strategy and communication, and for the Conservatives, especially, of increasing faith in the value of advertising and negative appeals (Scammell and Semetko, 1995).

Campaigning-as-warfare was offered as a description of much modern U.S. electioneering. It was characterized as predominantly folk wisdom, yet there is a logic to it and an intellectual attraction of the war games aspects which might appeal to campaigners abroad. The apparent effectiveness of negative advertising might also enhance its charms. However, many of its features, the deliberate feint, intelligence-gathering, the emphasis on opposition research have little independent evidence of effectiveness and are clearly less appropriate in countries with strong parliamentary systems where opposing leaders and party programs and images are well-known and formed long before the campaign. It is not clear whether campaigning-as-warfare is any more than a temporary fashion, boosted by the mythic appeal of the metaphor and by the apparent success of negative campaigning. However, there is a fund of military strategic thinking to draw from and signs that campaigners are increasingly interested in it. It is possible that the literature of warfare could become, much as marketing, an important and continuing theoretical source of campaigning ideas.

These examples, the marketing approach, advertising and campaigning-as-warfare, are by no means a definitive list of the possibilities of American influence, whether by export or by role model. However, they are intended to illustrate the value of an approach which stresses the importance of understanding campaigners' thinking. This does not replace, but it does supplement the existing comparative research emphasis on the manifestly observable features of campaigns, the *what* rather than the *why*. It can offer us more precise clues to the direction of modern campaigning, and fresh insight into its commonly-agreed key characteristics: 'professionalization,' 'personalization,' increasing importance of image and TV presentation and so on. It can help us separate more clearly changes in campaigning processes from effects of media change. Swanson and Mancini (1996), for example, are unusually careful in their use of the term 'professionalism,' but less so about 'personalization' which they identify as the 'centre-piece' of modern campaigns (p. 251). Setting aside qualms at the modernism of personality-led campaigns, there is a potentially confusing conflation here of TV reporting and campaigners' strategies. My reading of the trade literature finds personality emerging in surprisingly ambiguous ways. In fact, it may even be that the more 'professional' the campaign, the more likely that emphasis on leader/ candidate qualities will be variable from race to race, depending on campaigners' assessments of the electoral market.

Finally, a word of caution. One should be careful not to assume that campaigners' ideas, as reflected in the literature, are played out smoothly in practice. Even in the U.S. (and certainly in Britain) consultants commonly gripe that politicians refuse to heed their advice (Faucheux, 1996). Moreover, this article cannot claim to be more than an introductory survey, based on a relatively small and necessarily selective sample of vast territory, and it raises a number of questions which go well beyond its turf. The other side of the equation, the ways in which foreign campaigners choose to interpret, adapt or ignore U.S. example, is clearly an area for investigation. So too is the way that campaigning knowledge is developed elsewhere. One might imagine, for example, that winning might be a less dominant yardstick of success in multi-party and proportional representation systems. Stronger party systems may also foster greater continuity of campaign staff across elections and encourage, as in Britain, fairly intensive private campaign post-mortems which feed into campaign wisdom in slightly different ways than in the more ad hoc campaign arrangements of the U.S. One might expect too that campaign ethics will develop differently across cultures and party systems, especially where campaign managers can be held more or less directly to account by party members.

Endnotes

1. A total of 25 consultants were questioned in connection with this project.

2. Ron Faucheux, interview, 8 May 1996.

3. *Campaigns and Elections* lists 22 major categories and 67 sub-categories of consultants in its 'Complete Guide to Political Products and Services.' February, 1990 10:4.

4. Interview with Christopher Arterton, Dean of the Graduate School of Political Management of the George Washington University, 7 May, 1996.

5. Mark Goodin, 'Communicating from the Campaign War Room to the White House,' Seminar, JFK School of Government, 20 February, 1996.

6. Chris Arterton, interview, 7 May, 1996.

7. Dan Carol, 'Art of Political Research' seminar, JFK School of Government, 12 March, 1996.

8. Charles Black, interview, 9 May, 1996.

9. Chris Arterton, interview, op cit.

10. Paid political advertising is on the increase on European television. Countries which now allow it include Austria, Germany, Italy and Sweden.

11. Jacques Segeula from France has advised Austrian and Swedish Social Democrats; the Saatchi brothers from Britain, riding on the strength of four successful campaigns for the Conservatives, have advised Danish, Dutch and Irish conservatives and have had some involvement in Latin America. Interestingly, there is now an association of professional political consultants in Britain, but their membership is almost entirely composed of lobbyists, not election campaigners.

12. The point, which has not been expressly researched in this form, is nevertheless clear from studies of British election campaigning (Kavanagh, 1995; Scammell, 1995).

13. Interview with Ann Lewis, 5 May, 1996.

14. Charles Black, interview, op cit.

15. Interview with Faucheux, op cit.

16. Articles in *Campaigns and Elections* from 1980-April 1996 (excluding 1994) were analyzed by: headlines, by descriptions of contents and by analysis of all articles geared primarily to *general* lessons of campaigns, as opposed to the details of individual campaigns. A total of 1,107 items were categorized according to the following main subjects: persuasion 6%; electoral law 8%; money and fund-raising 4%; campaign organization 25%; specific campaigns 18%; other 39%. The rather large 'other' category includes all news items, personal profiles, reviews, special reports on issues, countries, regions, demographic groups and historical articles.

17. Peter Hart, seminar, 26 February, 1996.

18. Interview with Leslie Goodman, Deputy Communications Director Bush/Quayle 1992, 20 February, 1996.

19. Faucheux, op cit.

20. David Wilhelm, political campaigns seminar, JFK School of Government, 20 March, 1996.

21. Black, op cit.

22. Dan Carol, research director for the Democratic National Committee, 1992, and David Tel, director research, Bush/Quayle, 1992, Seminar 'The Art of Political Research,' JFK School of Government, 12 March, 1996.

23. Seminar, JFK School. Ibid.

24. Larry Thomas, media consultant for California Governor Pete Wilson, 1994, explained that with the use of a computer encoder and voice recognition software it was possible to record and then focus group test every advertisement aired on behalf of the Democratic opponent Kathleen Brown. Seminar 'California: A case study in message discipline,' JFK School of Government, 19 March, 1996.

25. Leslie Goodman, op cit.

26. Marlin Fitzwater, 5 March, 1996.

27. David Beinstock, 19 March, 1996.

28. Wilhelm, op cit.

29. A gross ratings point refers to that percentage of the viewers within a particular market reached by a program, determined by the audience ratings systems of A.C. Nielsen or Arbitron (see Arterton, 1992).

30. Goodin, op cit.

31. Black, op cit.

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