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The Views Of Political Consultants
DON'T BLAME US

*A Survey in Association with
the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies*

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Political consultants have clear consciences: Most do not think campaign practices that suppress turnout, use scare tactics and take facts out of context are unethical. They are nearly unanimous — 97% — in the belief that negative advertising is not wrong, and few blame themselves for public disillusionment with the political process.

Instead, consultants most often point fingers at the news media, the public, and even their own clients. According to these political pros, the news media is the leading cause of voter cynicism today. The media pays disproportionate attention to negative tactics and is harming the system by discouraging good candidates from running, they say.

Solid majorities implicate the public for campaigns turning negative, saying Americans are more responsive to this type of ad than to positive ones.

Most (66%) view the public as poorly informed and fault it for lacking good judgment about issues. As many as 42% of the consultants polled by the Pew Research Center think that with enough money in hand they can sell voters on a weak campaigner. Few see a major problem with political contributions influencing government policy.

Consultants have a mixed view at best of their own clients. While 52% rate congressional candidates as excellent or good, 48% say they are only fair or poor, and 42% believe candidate quality is slipping. As many as 44% say they have helped elect candidates who they were eventually sorry to see serve in office.

	Just No Outright Lies...			
	<i>Percent Rating as ...</i>			
	<u>Accep- table</u>	<u>Ques- tionable</u>	<u>Clearly Unethical</u>	<u>DK</u>
Focus primarily on criticizing opponent	82	18	*	*=100
Focus primarily on kind of person a candidate is, rather than issues	72	25	1	2=100
Using scare tactics about candidate's issue positions	36	46	14	4=100
Trying to suppress turnout	22	29	46	3=100
Making statements that are factually true, but taken out of context	13	60	26	1=100
Using push polls	7	20	70	3=100
Making statements that are factually untrue	*	2	98	0=100

But, consultants generally have few regrets. A candidate's ability to govern effectively is secondary in deciding whether to take on a race. Instead, a candidate's political beliefs and ability to pay are primary considerations. By a margin of three-to-one, political pros think that a weak message is a bigger barrier to electoral success than a weak campaigner.

Consistent with their world view, consultants are dubious about most political reform proposals. Majorities give negative ratings to ending soft money, limiting spending by issue advocacy groups and public financing of campaigns. Increasing individual contribution limits is a better idea, say 65%. A 51% majority favors free television time for candidates.

Most consultants believe there should be a code of ethics for their profession, and two-thirds are aware of the American Association of Political Consultants' code. However, few think it has much of an effect on their own behavior or on their peers.

Consultants rate their jobs highly, and they say they do what they do for the thrill of competition, the money and political beliefs. Very few say they are motivated by political power or influence.

There are sharp partisan differences between consultants. In general, Democratic consultants are not as happy as Republicans. Democratic consultants are much more concerned about the role of money in elections and are stronger supporters of campaign finance reforms; Republican consultants are more satisfied with their own jobs and with the quality of candidates for national office.

These are among the main findings of a survey of 200 professional political consultants, conducted by the Pew Research Center in association with the *Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies*. The survey of professional pollsters, fundraisers, media consultants, and general political consultants was conducted from November 1997 to March 1998.¹

If It Works, Do It

Political consultants say a candidate's message is the key to winning an election — and they place few limits on just what that message can be. Most consultants are unconcerned about personal attacks or other forms of negative campaigning. Rather, they see negative campaigning as an effective strategy, and fully 81% say when campaigns turn negative, it is usually because a consultant — not a candidate — recommends it.

¹ We are especially grateful to James Thurber and Candice Nelson for their suggestions concerning the sample design and survey topics.

Consultants do draw the line at making campaign statements that are factually untrue (98% say this tactic is “clearly unethical”) and at using push polls, which provide negative information about an opponent under the pretense of taking a poll (70% say this is clearly unethical). But consultants describe other tactics as “acceptable” or, at worst, “questionable.” Fully 82% say focusing primarily on criticizing an opponent is an acceptable campaign strategy, for example, and 72% say focusing mainly on the kind of person a candidate is — rather than on a candidate’s issues — is acceptable. More than one-third of consultants (36%) say using scare tactics is acceptable, while just 14% say it is clearly unethical.

Democrats Fret More, But Do The Same

Political consultants are divided over whether negative campaigning has increased in the last decade — 50% said campaigns are more likely to go negative today, while 46% said there has been little change from 10 years ago. But there are strong partisan differences in consultants’ views concerning negative campaigns. More Democratic consultants than Republican consultants say negative campaigning is on the rise, for example (57% vs. 38%), and more Democrats point to negative campaigning as a cause of voter cynicism (73% vs. 57%).

But greater concern does not mean Democrats are less willing to go negative. Regardless of party, consultants are virtually unanimous (95% among Republicans, 100%

among Democrats) in their belief that negative campaigning is *not* unethical. And Democratic consultants are at least as likely as Republicans to say that criticizing an opponent, using scare tactics, and trying to suppress voter turnout are acceptable or, at worst, questionable tactics. Some 42% of Democrats say scare tactics are acceptable, for example, compared to 29% of Republicans.

Asked to define negative campaigning in their own words, most consultants (74%) listed strategies that focus primarily on an opponent’s record or other perceived weaknesses. A substantially smaller share of the consultants (31%) defined negative campaigning as simply comparing the two candidates’ records.

Partisan Views of Negative Campaigns		
<i>Democrats express more concern...</i>		
	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Democrats</u>
	%	%
<i>How much does negative campaigning cause voter cynicism?</i>		
Great deal/fair amount	57	73
Not much/not at all	43	27
Don’t know	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	100	100
<i>But they have no problem doing it...</i>		
	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Democrats</u>
	%	%
<i>Who recommends going negative?</i>		
Consultant	77	83
Candidate	4	2
Both/neither	18	14
Don’t know	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	100	100

More importantly, according to consultants, negative campaigning works. Nearly all (98%) agree the news media gives more coverage to negative strategies, and 83% agree that voters respond more to negative campaigning. In fact, while many of those who see negative campaigning on the rise blame consultants themselves (37%), nearly one-in-four (24%) say “the public” is most responsible for the change.

Message, Money Win Elections

The lack of concern about negative campaigning may reflect, more generally, professional consultants’ belief that the strength of a candidate’s message is essential to winning elections. Overall, the quality of a candidate’s message was ranked as most important to winning by a strong majority of the campaign consultants (82%) — substantially more than the percent who gave a similarly high rating to the partisan distribution in a state or House district (52%) or to a candidate’s abilities as a campaigner (46%).

	Keys to Winning Elections			
	<u>Most Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Least Important</u>	<u>DK</u>
Quality of the candidate’s message	82	17	1	0=100
Amount of money available to campaign	74	25	1	0=100
Partisan makeup of a state or House district	52	44	2	1=100
Candidate’s abilities as a campaigner	46	52	2	0=100

Democratic and Republican consultants emphasize the importance of a candidate’s message in roughly equal numbers (79% of Democrats rating as most important, 86% of Republicans), but Democrats say *money* is just as important. Fully 83% of Democrats rank the amount of money available to a campaign as a most important factor to winning an election, compared to just 65% of Republicans.

Weak Candidates No Shoo-In

While two-thirds of consultants say voters are poorly informed about major policy issues, they are divided over how easy it is to persuade voters to support weak candidates. Some 42% said it is relatively easy to sell a “mediocre candidate,” while more than half (56%) said selling a mediocre candidate is at least somewhat difficult. And dealing with a candidate’s unpopular stands on an issue is even harder: 62% said overcoming unpopular issue positions is relatively difficult, while 37% said it is relatively easy.

Roughly four-in-ten political consultants (42%) say they have a great deal of confidence in the “wisdom of the American people” on Election Day. Notably, consultants express less confidence than those who are actually elected — fully 64% of members of Congress interviewed in a separate survey said they have a great deal of confidence in

Trusting the Public on Election Day				
	Members of <u>Congress</u>	Political <u>Consultants</u>	Pres. <u>Appoint.</u>	Sr. Civil <u>Servants</u>
	%	%	%	%
<i>How much trust and confidence in American people on Election Day?</i>				
Great deal	64	42	34	34
Fair amount	31	42	51	44
Not very much	1	12	12	20
None at all	0	2	1	1
Don't know	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
	100	100	100	100

Americans’ electoral decisions. But consultants have more confidence in the public than do appointed government leaders in Washington. Just 34% of presidential appointees and senior civil servants said they have a great deal of confidence in the American people on Election Day.²

Although consultants say campaigns greatly influence the outcome of *elections*, few consultants believe their profession has much of an effect on the democratic process more broadly. Only 12% believe consultants have a great deal of impact on the U.S. public policy agenda, and just 10% think they have a great deal of impact on the way political leaders conduct themselves in office. While a significant number of consultants do believe they have a *fair amount* of influence on the policy agenda and the conduct of leaders (42% and 39%, respectively), just as many characterize their impact as *not very much*.

Consultants, Public Differ on Negative Campaigns

Just as they downplay their influence on the political system, consultants assume relatively little responsibility for widespread public cynicism. When asked about various factors which may contribute to voter cynicism, consultants place the most blame on the media. Nearly two-thirds (63%) say the way the news media reports on politics has a great deal to do with growing voter cynicism. Another 28% say media coverage contributes a fair amount.

² Figures for members of Congress, presidential appointees, and senior civil servants based on surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center between November 1997 and February 1998. See “Washington Leaders Wary of Public Opinion,” April 17, 1998.

Fewer than three-in-ten (27%) say politicians' poor performance while in office contributes a great deal to voter cynicism. Only 25% believe the way money is raised in campaigns is a major factor in voter cynicism — 36% say this contributes a fair amount to cynicism, though 38% say not very much or not at all. Democratic consultants are much more inclined than Republicans to link fundraising to public cynicism (77% vs. 38%).

Consultants assign the least degree of blame to the practice they are most responsible for — negative campaigning. When asked to what extent negative campaigning causes voter cynicism, only 24% of consultants say a great deal. Four-in-ten (43%) say a fair amount, 30% not very much and 3% not at all.

But the public disagrees with this assessment. Americans are most concerned about negative campaigning — 60% said this practice bothers them very much. They are also troubled by the amount of money politicians spend on campaigns (56%) and what politicians promise “to get elected” (53%). Political advertising is a much lower concern — only 32% of Americans said this bothers them very much. Finally, news coverage about campaigns — which among consultants is the top cause of cynicism — bothered the public very little in 1996. Only 15% said this bothers them very much, more than half (57%) said not too much or not at all.³

Differing Views of Media, Negative Campaigns				
<i>What bothers the American public...*</i>				
	Very <u>Much</u> %	Some- <u>what</u> %	Not much/ <u>Not at all</u> %	<u>DK</u> %
<i>Negative campaigning</i>	60	17	21	2=100
What politicians promise	53	25	21	1=100
Amount of money spent	56	17	26	1=100
Political ads on TV	32	24	43	1=100
<i>News coverage</i>	15	26	57	2=100
<i>What consultants say causes voter cynicism...</i>				
	Great <u>Deal</u> %	Fair <u>Amount</u> %	Not much/ <u>Not at all</u> %	<u>DK</u> %
<i>News coverage</i>	63	28	9	*=100
Politicians performance	27	46	26	1=100
Fundraising practices	25	36	38	1=100
<i>Negative campaigning</i>	24	43	33	0=100

* Based on national survey of 1,500 adults conducted February 1996.

³ Pew Research Center, “Voters Know More Than in ‘92: Class Collisions in Response to Buchanan, Nationwide,” February 1996.

Consultants again blame the media for problems with the nation’s political system. Fully 55% of consultants said “good people being discouraged from running for office by the amount of media attention given to candidates’ personal lives” is a *major problem*. Substantially fewer consultants placed as much blame in other areas: 37% said “elected officials caring more about getting reelected than doing what’s best for the country” is a major problem, while 24% said “political contributions having too much influence on government policy” is a major problem.

Media Blamed Most	
<i>Percent rating as “major problem” for the political system...</i>	<u>%</u>
Good people discouraged from running for office by amount of media attention to their personal lives	55
Elected officials caring more about getting elected than doing what’s best	37
Political contributions having too much influence on government policy	24
Decline in moral and ethical standards among people in politics and government	14

In fact, four-in-ten (41%) said political contributions influencing government policy is not much of a problem at all.

Lukewarm Support for Campaign Finance Reform

Consultants express little enthusiasm for campaign finance reform. While a majority (65%) supports increasing individual contribution limits and half think providing free television time to candidates is a good idea, few support other proposals that would potentially rein in funding sources.

Only 26% think providing public financing to candidates who accept spending limits is an excellent idea; 16% say it’s a good idea. A majority says public financing is only a fair or a poor idea. Ending soft money is even less popular with consultants. Only 16% consider this an excellent idea, 17% say it’s a good idea. The vast majority (67%) say doing away with soft money would be only a fair or poor idea. The least popular campaign finance reform proposal is limiting spending by issue advocacy groups. Most consultants believe that campaigning by issue advocacy groups on behalf of a candidate generally helps the campaign — not to mention the fact that in many cases it represents free advertising for the candidate.

But there are striking partisan differences on the issue of campaign finance reform, reflecting Democratic consultants' heightened concern about the role of money in elections. More Democrats than Republicans say money is an important factor to winning elections, and Democrats overwhelmingly say the way money is raised in campaigns contributes to voter cynicism (77%, compared to 38% among Republicans).

	% Who Say "Excellent" Idea		
	All	Reps.	Dem.
Increasing individual contributions	38	54	30
Providing free TV time	29	9	42
Public financing	26	1	42
Ending soft money	16	5	23
Limiting issue advocacy spending	14	5	18

Given these partisan differences over the role of money, Democratic consultants — whose clients traditionally have a harder time raising money — favor each reform proposal more than the Republicans, with one exception. Some 42% of Democrats rate public financing of campaigns as an excellent idea, for example, compared to just *one* percent of Republicans. Similarly, 42% of Democratic consultants give strong support to free television time for candidates, compared to 9% among Republicans. Democrats are also more supportive than Republicans of ending soft money and limiting spending by issue advocacy groups. Nonetheless, even majorities of Democrats believe these ideas are only fair at best.

The one idea a majority of GOP consultants do endorse is raising individual contributions — 54% say this is an excellent idea, compared to 30% of Democratic consultants.

Misinformation Most Common Ethical Violation

Although consultants do not believe negative campaigning is an unethical campaign tactic, they do acknowledge that unethical practices occur in campaigns. In fact, 41% say unethical practices occur sometimes, and another 10% said they occur very often. Asked to list the most common unethical practices, half of the consultants (51%) mentioned the type of information campaigns provide to voters — tactics such as misrepresenting a candidate's issue positions, lying about an opponent, and false advertising. Other consultants listed unethical practices relating to fundraising and campaign spending (30%), and the way some consultants treat their clients (23%).

While push-polling — providing voters with negative information about an opponent under the pretense of taking a poll — has drawn increased attention in recent elections, just 11% of consultants mentioned push-polling as a common unethical practice. Similarly, only 21% of consultants said they knew of some or many campaigns that used push-polls in 1996.

Consultants are divided over the effectiveness of several strategies for curbing unethical campaign practices. For example, 56% said campaigns have become more careful about the content of their advertising because of “ad watches” — news stories that focus on the accuracy of campaign ads. In contrast, 43% said ad watches have not had very much impact.

The code of ethics of the American Association of Political Consultants seems to have even less impact. Roughly two-thirds of consultants (64%) said they are familiar with the Association’s code, but most doubted its effectiveness: 81% said it has little effect on the behavior of their peers, and 54% said it has little effect on *their own* behavior. At the same time, a strong majority of consultants (81%) said there should be a code of ethics and, among those who support having a code, 68% said the professional association should be able to censure consultants for violations.

Democratic Consultants Less Satisfied

For the most part, consultants are highly satisfied with their jobs. Fully 60% say they are very satisfied with their current job, and another 35% are mostly satisfied. They express much higher levels of satisfaction than the public — only 43% of employed Americans are very satisfied with their jobs.⁴

Consultants are similar to government leaders in this regard. In a recent Pew Research Center survey, 57% of members of Congress, 64% of presidential appointees and 56% of Senior Executive Service members said they were very satisfied with their jobs. Job satisfaction is lower among Democratic consultants than among Republicans: 54% of Democrats are very satisfied, compared to 70% of Republicans.

Democratic consultants are also less satisfied with the quality of the candidates running for the House and Senate these days. Overall, consultants give today’s candidates mixed marks: 52% rate them excellent or good; 48% rate them only fair or poor. However, the gap in opinion between Democratic and Republican consultants is striking. Fully 71% of GOP consultants characterize today’s candidates as excellent or good, compared to only 39% of Democratic consultants. In addition, Democrats

Partisanship and Job Satisfaction			
	<u>All</u>	<u>Reps.</u>	<u>Dems.</u>
	%	%	%
<i>How satisfied w/current job?</i>			
Very satisfied	60	70	54
Mostly satisfied	35	27	40
Mostly dissatisfied	4	2	5
Very dissatisfied	0	0	0
Don’t know	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	100	100	100
<i>Rate quality of House and Senate candidates</i>			
Excellent/Good	52	71	39
Only fair/Poor	48	29	60
Don’t know	*	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
	100	100	100

⁴ Pew Research Center, “Jonesboro Compels News Audiences: Democratic Congressional Chances Helped By Clinton Ratings.” April 1998.

are much more likely than Republicans to say the quality of congressional candidates has gotten worse in the time that they have worked in politics (52% vs. 27%, respectively).

Republican and Democratic consultants alike are critical of the journalists who cover their trade. Only 32% of consultants rate the quality of political journalists as excellent or good. Fully two-thirds (67%) give them an only fair or poor rating. Nearly half (49%) say the quality of political journalists has gotten worse in the time they have worked in politics; only 10% say it has gotten better.

But political consultants give *themselves* relatively high ratings: 56% rate the quality of professional political consultants as excellent or good; 42% say it is only fair or poor. A plurality (36%) say the quality of consultants has gotten better over time, 32% say it has gotten worse, and the remaining 31% say it has stayed about the same. Slightly more Republican consultants than Democrats rate their profession as excellent or good: 63% vs. 53%.

Why They Do It

What motivates consultants most is the thrill of competition. This factor outweighs political beliefs, money and political power. Nearly one-third (32%) cite competition as the primary motivator; 26% say political beliefs, and an equal percentage say money. Another 9% say power and influence are what most motivate consultants.

What Motivates Consultants?	
	<u>%</u>
Thrill of competition	32
Money	26
Political beliefs	26
Political power/influence	9
All of the above	2
Don't know	<u>5</u>
	100

Indeed, while consultants earn substantial incomes — over 70% of them have family incomes of \$100,000 a year or more — money does not appear to be a leading reason for consultants' job satisfaction. Consultants who are not at the top of the earning scale (those with family incomes of less than \$150,000) are no less satisfied with their work than are those who earn more.

Democrats and Republicans both cite the thrill of competition most often. However, Democrats place slightly more importance on money as a primary motivator than do Republicans (30% vs. 22%, respectively). GOP consultants see political power and influence as a somewhat greater lure (14% vs. 5% of Democratic consultants).

In considering whether or not to take on a race, consultants place almost as much importance on a candidate's ability to raise money and pay the bills as they do on his or her political beliefs. Fifty-five percent say the candidate's financial situation is a very important factor in considering

taking on a race; 58% say the candidate’s beliefs are very important. Democratic consultants place somewhat more importance on political beliefs than do their GOP counterparts (62% vs. 53%, respectively.)

Consultants place less importance on the candidate’s ability to govern effectively. Fewer than four-in-ten (39%) say this factor is very important in deciding to take on a race; another 40% say it is somewhat important. Nearly one-in-five say the candidate’s ability to lead is not important.

A candidate’s chances of winning are of even less concern to a consultant in considering whether to take on a race. Only 16% say this is a very important factor in choosing a potential client. Most consultants say the candidate’s chances of winning are somewhat important.

Who Are They?

Political consultants are disproportionately white, male and wealthy. More than half have annual family incomes of more than \$150,000 — one-third make over \$200,000 a year. They are highly educated: 94% graduated from college and 40% have graduate degrees. They are also relatively young. More than three-fourths (78%) of the principals and senior associates are under the age of 50; nearly four-in-ten are under 40.

Consultants are less religious than the public at large. Fully 22% describe themselves as atheist or agnostic, compared to just 8% of the public. One-in-ten consultants say they are born-again Christians, far fewer than the 33% of Americans who place themselves in that category.

Most consultants have prior experience working in politics or government. Nearly two-thirds (62%) worked for a national, state or local political party or party committee at some time. More than half (54%) worked in the office of a federal, state or local elected official. And an equal percentage have worked in government. Less than one-third (30%) have experience working for the news media.

Consultants: A Demographic Profile	
	<u>%</u>
Sex	
Male	82
Female	<u>18</u>
	100
Race	
White	98
Non-white	<u>2</u>
	100
Age	
< 40	38
40-49	40
50 +	21
Refused	<u>1</u>
	100
Education	
< College Grad.	6
College Grad.	54
Master’s Degree	26
Law Degree	6
Ph.D.	<u>8</u>
	100
Family Income	
< \$50,000	6
\$50,000-99,999	16
\$100,000-199,999	40
\$200,000 +	32
Refused	<u>6</u>
	100

Many consultants started in the profession with hands-on campaign experience. Nearly two-thirds (65%) said in their first paid campaign job they were part of the staff; 30% started out as consultants. More started on local and state races than on congressional or presidential contests (45% vs. 32% and 14%, respectively).

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Results for the survey are based on telephone interviews conducted with 200 professional political consultants under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates between November 1997 and March 1998.

Political consultants were selected through a two-stage process. In the first stage, a list of 302 political consulting firms was created. This listing included all general, media, polling, and fundraising firms listed in *Campaigns & Elections* magazine's 1992, 1994, and 1996 post-election reports as being associated with one or more campaigns for president or Congress in any of these election cycles.

Next, the firms on this list were divided into two groups. One group included all firms which were involved in one or more presidential campaigns, or more than five Senate campaigns, or more than 30 House campaigns over the course of the three election cycles. The second group included all other firms. Every firm in the first group was contacted for an interview. In addition, a sample of the firms from the second group was randomly selected for interviewing.

The individual consultants to be interviewed at each selected firm were identified from the list of principals or partners associated with each firm, as reported in the 1996 *Political Resource Directory*. For firms with two or more partners, one of the partners was randomly selected to be interviewed first. At the completion of an interview with the first person interviewed at each firm, that person was asked for the names of the firm's "other principals or senior associates who work on political campaigns." These individuals were subsequently contacted for interviews, as well.

Each person selected for an interview was sent a letter requesting their participation in the survey. Subsequently, every selected person was contacted — several times, if necessary — to schedule and complete an interview.

The following table presents the disposition of sampled persons for the survey:

Total Individuals	339	
Ineligible ⁵	<u>25</u>	
Effective total	314	
Completes	200	64%
Incomplete interviews	1	*
Refusals	19	6%
No answer ⁶	40	13%
Could not be contacted	54	<u>17%</u>
		100

⁵ Individuals no longer employed or screened out (did not personally work on 1992, 1994, or 1996 campaigns, or not a principal or senior associate.)

⁶ Individuals not contacted for whom messages were left (with a secretary or on an answering machine or voice mail) more than 10 times.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
CAMPAIGN CONSULTANTS SURVEY
— FINAL TOPLINE —
 November 1997 – March 1998
 N=200

INTRODUCTION: Hello, I am _____, calling for Princeton Survey Research Associates on behalf of The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press in Washington, D.C. May I please speak with (RESPONDENT). (WHEN RESPONDENT IS ON PHONE:) (REPEAT INTRODUCTION IF NECESSARY.) Is now a convenient time to conduct the interview that Andrew Kohut wrote to you about? (IF NO: ASK TO SET UP AN APPOINTMENT.)

S.1 About how many Congressional, Senate, or presidential races did you personally work on in the 1996 election cycle? Would you say fewer than five, five to 10, 10 to 15, or more than 15? (INCLUDE ANY TYPE OF WORK ON A CAMPAIGN.) (IF DID NOT WORK ON ANY 1996 RACES ASK: Did you work on any Congressional, Senate, or presidential races in either the 1992 or 1994 election cycles?)

35	Fewer than five
37	Five to 10
13	10 to 15
14	More than 15
1	Didn't work on any 1996 races (VOL)
<u>0</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

S2. Was your role in these races primarily as a pollster, a media consultant, a fundraiser, or a general consultant? (IF RESPONDENT VOLUNTEERS MORE THAN ONE ROLE, PROBE: Which one role did you play the most? Pollster, media consultant, fundraiser, or general consultant?)

28	Pollster
40	Media consultant
11	Fundraiser
19	General consultant
1	Other (VOL—RECORD)
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

S3. In your firm, are you currently a principal, a senior associate, or a junior associate? (PROBE "OTHER" FOR PRINCIPAL, SENIOR ASSOCIATE, OR JUNIOR ASSOCIATE.)

89	Principal
11	Senior associate
—	Junior associate (TERMINATE)
—	Other (VOL—RECORD; TERMINATE)
—	Don't know/Refused (TERMINATE)

Q1. In what year was your first PAID campaign job? (RECORD FOUR-DIGIT YEAR)

7 Pre-1970s
 36 1970-1979
 42 1980-1989
 14 1990-1997
1 Don't know/Refused
 100

Q2. In that job were you part of the campaign staff or were you a consultant?

65 Campaign staff
 30 Consultant
 5 Other (VOL—RECORD)
0 Don't know/Refused
 100

Q3. What type of campaign was it? Local, state, national House or Senate, or presidential? (IF NECESSARY: How did you spend MOST of your time?)

21 Local
 24 State
 32 National House or Senate
 14 Presidential
 8 Other (VOL—RECORD)
1 Don't know/Refused
 100

Q4. All things considered, how satisfied are you with your CURRENT job overall? Very satisfied, mostly satisfied, mostly dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

		---Government Leaders ⁷ ---			
		General	Pres.		Civil
		<u>Public</u> ⁸	<u>Congress</u>	<u>Appoint.</u>	<u>Servants</u>
60	Very satisfied	43	57	64	56
35	Mostly satisfied	48	39	34	38
4	Mostly dissatisfied	5	0	1	4
0	Very dissatisfied	3	0	0	1
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
100		100	100	100	100

⁷ These figures are from a survey of 81 members of Congress, 98 Presidential Appointees and 151 members of the Senior Executive Service conducted by the Pew Research Center October, 1997 through February, 1998.

⁸ General public figures are from a nationwide survey of 1,206 adults conducted by the Pew Research Center March 25-29, 1998.

Q5. Thinking now about political consultants as a group—that is, general campaign managers, pollsters, media consultants and fundraisers—which of the following do you think MOST motivates professional consultants? (READ)
(RANDOMIZE 1-4:)

- 26 Political beliefs
 - 32 The thrill of competition
 - 26 Money
 - 9 Political power and influence
 - 2 All of the above/Other (VOL—RECORD) (DO NOT READ)
 - 5 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)
- 100

Q6. When you consider taking on a race, how important (INSERT ITEM)? Very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important? ... How important (INSERT ITEM)? ... (RANDOMIZE:)

	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Not too Important</u>	<u>Not at all Important</u>	<u>DK/Ref.</u>
a. Are the political beliefs of the candidate	58	36	3	1	2=100
b. Is the candidate's ability to raise money and pay bills	55	42	3	0	*=100
c. Is the candidate's chances of winning	16	61	15	6	2=100
d. Is the candidate's ability to govern effectively	39	40	12	6	3=100

Q7. How much of an impact do you think professional political consultants have on (INSERT ITEM)? A great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all? ... How about on (INSERT ITEM)? (RANDOMIZE:)

	<u>Great Deal</u>	<u>Fair Amount</u>	<u>Not very Much</u>	<u>None At all</u>	<u>DK/Ref.</u>
a. The public policy agenda in the United States	12	42	43	2	1=100
b. The way political leaders conduct themselves once in office	10	39	43	4	4=100

Q8. From your perspective, how would you rate the quality of (INSERT ITEM) these days? Excellent, good, only fair, or poor? ... How about the quality of (INSERT ITEM)? ... (RANDOMIZE:)

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK/Ref.</u>
a. The candidates running for the House and Senate	6	46	42	6	*=100
b. Professional political consultants	6	50	37	5	2=100
c. Political journalists	2	30	49	18	1=100

Q9. In the time that you have worked in politics, has the quality of (INSERT ITEM) gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same? ... How about the quality of (INSERT ITEM)? ... (RANDOMIZE:)

		Gotten <u>Better</u>	Gotten <u>Worse</u>	Stayed About <u>The Same</u>	DK <u>Ref.</u>
a.	The candidates running for the House and Senate	16	42	42	*=100
b.	Professional political consultants	36	32	31	1=100
c.	Political journalists	10	49	40	1=100

Q10. Have you ever helped elect a candidate who you were eventually sorry to see serve in office, or not?

44 Yes
56 No
0 Don't know/Refused
100

Q11. Turning now to the specifics of political campaigns, on a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 represents a factor that is most important to winning an election and 1 represents a factor that is least important to winning, where would you place (INSERT ITEM)? ... How about (INSERT ITEM)? ... (RANDOMIZE:)

		<u>1-4</u>	<u>5-7</u>	<u>8-10</u>	<u>DK/Ref.</u>	<i>Average Rating</i>
a.	The amount of money available to a campaign	1	25	74	0=100	8.3
b.	The quality of the candidate's message	1	17	82	0=100	8.5
c.	The candidate's abilities as a campaigner	2	52	46	0=100	7.3
d.	The partisan makeup of a state or House district	3	44	52	1=100	7.6

Q12. In your experience, generally which is the more serious problem for a campaign—a candidate with a weak message or a candidate who is a poor campaigner?

75 Weak message
22 Poor campaigner
2 Neither (VOL)
1 Don't know/Refused
100

Q13. Generally speaking, if you have enough campaign resources, how difficult is it to sell a mediocre candidate to voters? Is it very easy, somewhat easy, somewhat difficult, or very difficult?

8 Very easy
34 Somewhat easy
48 Somewhat difficult
8 Very difficult
2 Don't know/Refused
100

Q14. And if you have enough campaign resources, how difficult is it to handle a candidate's unpopular stands on issues? Is it very easy, somewhat easy, somewhat difficult, or very difficult?

5	Very easy
32	Somewhat easy
56	Somewhat difficult
6	Very difficult
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

Q15. Now thinking about the role that candidates play in deciding campaign strategy, in what percentage of the campaigns you've worked on did the candidates play the leading role in deciding campaign strategy?
(RECORD NUMBER)

22	Under 25%
21	25% to 49%
28	50% to 74%
27	75% or more
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

48.7% Average

Q16. In your experience, does the campaigning of an independent issue advocacy group ON BEHALF OF a candidate help or hinder his or her campaign?

65	Help
12	Hinder
19	Depends (VOL)
2	No effect (VOL)
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

Q17. To what extent do you think adwatches—that is, press coverage focusing on the accuracy of particular ads—have made campaigns more careful about the content of their ads? A great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or not at all?

24	Great deal
32	Fair amount
31	Not very much
12	Not at all
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

Q18. Thinking back to the 1996 election cycle, how many campaigns, if any, do you know of that used push polling—that is, disseminating false or misleading information about a candidate under the pretense of taking a poll? Would you say many, some, a few, or none?

8	Many
13	Some
48	A few
28	None
<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

THERE IS NO QUESTION 19.

Q20. I'd like your opinion on some possible problems that might keep the national political system from working as well as it should. First, what about (INSERT ITEM)? Do you think this is a major problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem? ...And how about (INSERT ITEM)?...(RANDOMIZE:)

		<u>Major Problem</u>	<u>Somewhat of a Problem</u>	<u>Not much of a Problem</u>	<u>DK/Ref.</u>
a.	Elected officials caring more about getting re-elected than doing what's best for the country	37	36	27	0=100
b.	Good people being discouraged from running for office by the amount of media attention given to candidates' personal lives	55	35	10	0=100
c.	Political contributions having too much influence on government policy	24	35	41	0=100
d.	A decline in moral and ethical standards among people in politics and government	14	32	52	2=100

Q21. How much trust and confidence do you have in the wisdom of the American people when it comes to making choices on election day? A great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

		<i>---Government Leaders---</i>		
		<u>Congress</u>	<u>Pres. Appoint.</u>	<u>Civil Servants</u>
42	Great deal	64	34	34
42	Fair amount	31	51	44
12	Not very much	1	12	20
2	None at all	0	1	1
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
100		100	100	100

Q22. What about on domestic policy issues? How much confidence do you have in the judgment of the American people about major domestic policy issues? A great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

30 Great deal
 49 Fair amount
 18 Not very much
 2 None at all
1 Don't know/Refused
 100

Q23. In your opinion, how well INFORMED or poorly informed are voters about major policy issues? Very well informed, somewhat well informed, somewhat poorly informed, or very poorly informed?

2 Very well informed
 30 Somewhat well informed
 48 Somewhat poorly informed
 18 Very poorly informed
2 Don't know/Refused
 100

Q24. Now a few questions about the causes of voter cynicism. To what extent do you think (INSERT ITEM) causes voter cynicism? A great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or not at all? ... And to what extent do you think (INSERT ITEM) causes voter cynicism? ... (RANDOMIZE:)

	<u>Great Deal</u>	<u>Fair Amount</u>	<u>Not very Much</u>	<u>None At all</u>	<u>DK/Ref.</u>
a. Negative campaigning	24	43	30	3	0=100
b. Politicians' poor performance while in office	27	46	26	0	1=100
c. The way the news media report on politics	63	28	7	2	*=100
d. The way money is raised in campaigns	25	36	32	6	1=100

Q25. As I read you some changes that have been proposed to reform the way political campaigns are financed, please tell me how you would rate each in terms of benefit to the country. First, how would you rate (INSERT ITEM)? Excellent, good, only fair, or poor? ... In terms of benefit to the country, how would you rate (INSERT ITEM)? ... (RANDOMIZE:)

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK/Ref.</u>
a. Providing public financing to pay the costs of campaigns for candidates that accept spending limits	26	16	12	46	0=100
b. Providing free TV time to candidates	29	22	19	30	*=100
c. Ending soft money	16	17	34	33	*=100
d. Increasing individual contribution limits	38	27	14	20	1=100
e. Limiting spending by issue advocacy groups	14	14	23	47	2=100

Q26. How common are unethical practices in the political consulting business? Do unethical practices happen very often, sometimes, not very often, or rarely?

10	Very often
41	Sometimes
36	Not very often
12	Rarely
*	Never (VOL)
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

Q27. In your own words, what are the most common unethical campaign practices?
(OPEN-ENDED. RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE. PROBE ONCE FOR CLARITY.)

51 CAMPAIGN PRACTICES (Net)

16	Distort/mislead/misrepresent issues or positions
13	Distortions about opponent
10	Lying/not telling the truth
6	False/irresponsible advertising
3	Distort own candidate's positions
3	Leaking false information
3	Releasing negative material late in campaign
2	Inflaming racial issues/playing "the race card"
2	Negative campaigning
*	Using unauthorized endorsements
*	Personal attacks
*	Attacking candidate's family

30 FUNDRAISING AND SPENDING TACTICS (Net)

17	Raising and not reporting money/skirting campaign finance rules
9	Getting kickbacks/"back door" deals
3	Too much consideration of contributors/"selling" positions
3	Improper coordination between candidates and independent groups
*	Funneling money

23 TREATMENT OF CANDIDATES/CLIENTS (Net)

12	Wasting money/overcharging clients/improper billing
3	Overselling your abilities/making promises can't keep
2	Encouraging candidates to do things not good for candidate, but good for consultant
2	Taking on clients with competing interests/working for different clients in same race
2	Telling candidates what they want to hear, not the truth
1	Taking on too many clients
1	Breaking confidence of a client/disloyalty to a client
1	Keeping candidates in races they can't win
1	Carrying on an agenda that is not the client's
*	Encouraging candidates to adopt positions they don't believe in
*	Poor campaign management
*	Stealing clients

13 POLLING TECHNIQUES (Net)

11	Push-polling
1	Releasing false/misleading poll results
1	Skewing the polls
*	Conducting unauthorized polls

3 Other mentions

4 Don't know/Refused

Q28. Please tell me whether, in your opinion, each of the following campaign practices is something you feel is acceptable, questionable, or clearly unethical. First, how about (INSERT ITEM)? In your opinion, is this acceptable, questionable, or clearly unethical? ... How about (INSERT ITEM)? ... (RANDOMIZE:)

		<u>Acceptable</u>	<u>Questionable</u>	<u>Clearly Unethical</u>	<u>DK/Ref.</u>
a.	Focusing primarily on criticism of the opponent	82	18	*	*=100
b.	Focusing primarily on the kind of person a candidate is, rather than on issues	72	25	1	2=100
c.	Making statements that are factually untrue	*	2	98	0=100
d.	Making statements that are factually true, but are taken out of context	13	60	26	1=100
e.	Using scare tactics about a candidate's issue positions	36	46	14	4=100
f.	Using push polls	7	20	70	3=100
g.	Trying to suppress voter turnout	22	29	46	3=100

Q29. In your opinion, is "going negative" an unethical campaign practice?

2	Yes
97	No
1	Depends (VOL)
<u>0</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

Q30. In your own words, what does "going negative" mean?
(OPEN-ENDED. RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE. PROBE ONCE FOR CLARITY.)

74	EMPHASIZING OPPONENT/CRITICIZING OPPONENT (Net)
41	Pointing out weaknesses in opponent/providing information about opponent
26	Pointing out opponent's positions
8	Emphasizing opponent's personal life
3	Running negative advertisements
3	Personal attacks/character assassination
3	Focus on character instead of issues
*	Characterizing opponent pejoratively
31	COMPARING AND CONTRASTING CANDIDATES
24	Comparing records of two candidates
4	Comparing opponent's record to constituency/voter concerns
1	Comparing opponent's words with actions
3	False information/lies or misrepresentations
1	Other
*	Don't know/Refused

Q31. Are campaigns today more likely to “go negative” than they were 10 years ago, less likely, or about as likely?

50	More likely
2	Less likely
46	About as likely
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

BASED ON THOSE WHO SAID "MORE LIKELY" IN Q.31 [N = 100]

Q32. Who is most responsible for this change? The candidates, their campaign consultants, the media, or the public? (IF RESPONDENT VOLUNTEERS MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE, PROBE: Who is MOST responsible?)

3	Candidates
37	Campaign consultants
15	The media
24	The public
15	All of the above (VOL)
4	Other (VOL—RECORD)
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

Q33. Some consultants say that (INSERT ITEM). Do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree? ... How about that (INSERT ITEM)? ... (RANDOMIZE:)

		Completely <u>Agree</u>	Mostly <u>Agree</u>	Mostly <u>Disagree</u>	Completely <u>Disagree</u>	DK/ <u>Ref.</u>
a.	Voters respond more to negatives than positives	31	52	14	2	1=100
b.	The news media pay more attention to negatives than positives	64	34	2	0	0=100

Q34. In the typical campaign that goes negative, is it more likely that the candidate or his or her staff will tell the consultants to “go negative” OR that the consultants will make that recommendation to the candidate?

2	Candidate or his or her staff will tell consultants
81	Consultants will recommend to candidate
16	Neither more likely (VOL)
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

Q35. On another subject, are you a member of the American Association of Political Consultants?

51	Yes
48	No
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

Q36. Do you think there should or should not be a code of ethics for professionals who work on campaigns? **(IF ANSWERS "Already is one," ASK: Do you think there should or should not be a code of ethics?)**

81	Should
12	Should not
<u>7</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

IF RESPONDENT DOES NOT ANSWER "ALREADY IS ONE" IN Q.36, ASK: [N = 185]

Q37. As you may know, the American Association of Political Consultants, or AAPC, does have a code of ethics. Do you happen to be familiar with this code?

61	Yes
39	No
<u>0</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

IF RESPONDENT IS FAMILIAR WITH CODE OF ETHICS (Q.36 = 2 OR Q.37 = 1), ASK: [N = 128]

Q38. How much of an effect do you think this code has on the behavior of your peers? A great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

0	Great deal
12	Fair amount
45	Not very much
36	None at all
<u>7</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

IF RESPONDENT IS FAMILIAR WITH CODE OF ETHICS (Q.36 = 2 OR Q.37 = 1), ASK: [N = 128]

Q39. And how much effect does this code have on your own behavior? A great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

19	Great deal
25	Fair amount
22	Not very much
32	None at all
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

**IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS THERE "SHOULD" BE A CODE OF ETHICS (Q.36 OR Q.36A), ASK:
[N = 163]**

Q40. Should a professional organization be able to censure those who violate a code of ethics for campaign professionals, or not?

68 Yes
22 No
10 Don't know/Refused
100

Finally, I'd like to ask you a few background questions.

D1. Enter respondent's sex:

82 Male
18 Female
100

D2. Have you ever (INSERT ITEM)? ... How about (INSERT ITEM)? ...

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/Ref.</u>
a. worked in the office of a federal, state, or local elected official	54	46	0=100
b. worked for a national, state, or local political party or party committee	62	38	0=100
c. worked in government	54	46	0=100
d. worked for a news media organization	30	70	0=100

D3. Over the past two-year period, that is since 1996, about what percentage of your professional income has come from candidate or political-issue consulting as opposed to corporate work? (RECORD NUMBER.)

6 Under 25%
18 25% to 49%
25 50% to 74%
51 75% or more
* Don't know/Refused
100

D4. What is your age? (RECORD AGE)

7 18-29
31 30-39
40 40-49
19 50-59
2 60 +
1 Don't know/Refused
100

D5. What is the last grade or class that you completed in school? (DO NOT READ)

0	High school graduate (Grade 12), equivalent, or less
0	Technical, trade, or business school after high school
6	Some college (no four-year degree)
42	Four-year college degree (B.A., B.S.)
12	Some graduate school (no graduate degree)
26	Master's degree (M.A., M.S.)
6	Law degree (J.D.)
8	Ph.D. (doctorate)
<u>0</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

D6. Are you of Hispanic or Latino descent, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Spanish background?

2	Yes
97	No
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

D7. (IF NOT HISPANIC:) What is your race? Are you white, black, Asian, or some other race?
(IF HISPANIC:) What is your race? Are you white Hispanic, black Hispanic, or some other race?

98	White
0	Black
*	Asian
2	Other or mixed race (RECORD)
<u>*</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

D8. What is your religious preference? Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, or an orthodox church such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church?

37	Protestant (Baptist, Christian, Episcopal, Jehovah's Witness, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian)
23	Roman Catholic
12	Jewish
1	Mormon (include Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)
2	Orthodox Church (Greek or Russian)
0	Islam/Muslim
1	Other (RECORD)
22	No religion/Atheist
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

D9. (IF NOT JEWISH, ISLAM/MUSLIM, NO RELIGION/ATHEIST:) Would you describe yourself as a “born again” or evangelical Christian, or not?

10	Yes
56	No
1	Don't know/Refused
<u>33</u>	NOT ASKED
100	

D10. In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

40	Republican
58	Democrat
2	Independent
*	No preference (VOL)
*	Other (VOL)
<u>0</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

D11. In general, would you describe your political views as very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal?

7	Very conservative
26	Conservative
28	Moderate
26	Liberal
12	Very liberal
1	Other (VOL)
<u>*</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

D12. Thinking about your total family income in both 1996 and 1997, if you were to AVERAGE the total across these two years, what was your annual family income from all sources before taxes? Just stop me when I get to the right category. (READ)

0	Less than \$30,000
6	\$30,000 to under \$50,000
16	\$50,000 to under \$100,000
20	\$100,000 to under \$150,000
20	\$150,000 to under \$200,000
17	\$200,000 to under \$300,000
9	\$300,000 to under \$500,000
6	\$500,000 or more
<u>6</u>	Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)
100	