

## **Spinning Forward: Professionalization Among Campaign Consultants**

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*Scholars have argued that, as an occupation, campaign consultants' work is closer to an art than to a science. In order to learn whether consultants are professionals, or at least in the process of becoming ones, this study puts campaign consultants' professionalization to the test. Evidence from a 14-year-long, computer-assisted content analysis of Campaigns & Elections, the leading trade journal in the field, shows that campaign consultants are shifting away from an art and moving towards science, a clear indication that professionalization is underway.*

**KEYWORDS** *campaign consultants, campaigns and elections, professionalization, science*

In 1934, at the height of the Great Depression, Upton Sinclair challenged the incumbent Republican California governor, Frank Merriam. Fearing the former's social policies, the state's business establishment hired public relations professionals Clem Whitaker and Leone Baxter to mastermind a negative campaign, branding Sinclair as a communist who would transform California into a Soviet state (Mitchell, 1992). Over the next two decades, Whitaker and Baxter changed the way elections are run. They understood that their political clients must be marketed like any other commercial product (Medvic and Lenart, 1997). They were also the first ones to recognize the multiple elements a campaign requires, providing a full range of services to their clients, from research and strategy to speechwriting, and the production and placement of advertising (Friedenberg, 1997: 18). Following this strategy religiously,

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Whitaker and Baxter “had supreme confidence in their own ability and methods and an open contempt for traditional party organizations” (Rosenbloom, 1972: 48). Unlike the party operatives who preceded them, they were the first to make campaign consultancy their source of income or, in other words, their profession (Nimmo, 1970: 36).

Political professionals, journalists, and academics often refer to campaign consultants as “the industry” or “the profession.” Yet, for a business that runs a budget of over 5.3 billion dollars per election cycle, shapes the manner in which elections are run, and to a large extent determines the electoral success of all political candidates, from the president of the United States all the way down to school boards, we know very little about these professionals, or even if we can call them that (Petracca, 1989: 11; Thurber, 2000: 2).

In order to learn whether campaign consultants are professionals, or in the process of becoming ones, this study puts consultants’ professionalization to the test. Previous research has argued that, as an occupation, consultants’ work is closer to an art than to a science (Sabato, 1981). Evidence from a 14-year-long, computer-assisted content analysis of *Campaigns & Elections*, the leading trade journal in the field, will show that campaign consultants possess the most important professional trait – a cognitive base. The paper demonstrates that campaign consultants are shifting away from an art and moving towards a science, a clear indication that professionalization is underway. These findings have important implications for the electoral system in general and candidates in particular, implications that will be discussed in the conclusion.

### ARE CAMPAIGN CONSULTANTS PROFESSIONALS?

Political scientists were slow in recognizing the importance of these political actors for two reasons. First, because scholars thought for a long time that campaigns did not matter, or at least that their effects were minimal (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1944; Campbell et al., 1960), there was no reason to study those who ran them.<sup>1</sup> Second, obtaining satisfactory data is no easy task (Petracca, 1989: 11). Following in Theodore White’s footsteps, most of our knowledge is campaign – not institutionally – oriented. Unfortunately, this literature consists mostly of descriptive studies based on case studies and surveys of the industry and interviews, written either by journalists (Bloom, 1973; Blumenthal, 1980) or practitioners (Baus and Ross, 1968; Perry, 1968; Wycoff, 1968; McGinniss, 1969; Agranoff, 1972; Napolitan, 1972; Guzzetta, 1987; Matalin and Carville, 1994; Morris, 1997; Johnson, 2001) and contains little theory. The few scholars who have studied consultants (e.g., Kelley, 1956; Nimmo, 1970; Rosenbloom, 1972; Sabato, 1981; Hershey, 1984; Luntz, 1988; Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1997; Shea and Burton, 2001) helped us gain a greater theoretical understanding of who they are and what they do, but as Thurber (2000: 3) argues, their work was primarily descriptive in nature.

While more recent and rigorous studies have provided a greater understanding of who political consultants are and the effect they have on campaigns (Herrnson, 1992; Medvic and Lenart, 1997; Scammell, 1997; Medvic, 1998; Perlmutter and Wu, 1999; Thurber and Nelson, 2000; Medvic, 2001; Dulio 2004), for the most part it is unclear what these individuals actually do. Furthermore, there is little evidence about whether they operate on gut feelings and talent like craftsmen or artists, or in a systematic, knowledge-based manner like scientists.

Ever since the publication of Alexander Carr-Saunders and Paul Wilson's *The Professions* (1934), scholars have debated what makes a group a profession. In the eyes of these early labor scholars, professions were "organized bodies of experts who applied esoteric knowledge to particular cases. They had elaborate systems of instruction and training, together with entry by examination and other formal prerequisites. They normally possessed and enforced a code of ethics or behavior" (Abbott, 1988: 2). While more recent scholars criticize Carr-Saunders and Wilson and their "traits" models for closing their eyes to the motivations behind occupations in professionalizing, like the exercise of monopoly over status, they still agree with them about the sequential process itself (Larson, 1977: 208).

Some have tried to use these traits to determine whether campaign consultancy has risen to the level of a profession<sup>2</sup> (Scammell, 1997: 5; Medvic, 2001: 13). Others, like Negrine, albeit looking at party staffers, have questioned the purpose of fulfilling such a particular set of requirements and argued that in an era when most organizations have undergone reform, professionalization is probably an irrelevant question (Negrine, 2005: 114). In order to overcome this criticism, this paper employs a longitudinal method and offers an external benchmark to control for environmental change, as will be elaborated below.

There is widespread agreement among occupational and labor sociologists that professionalization<sup>3</sup> is a process occupations go through that encompasses six characteristics or traits: 1) the maintenance of a professional association; 2) control over entry or licensing; 3) a self-regulating code of ethics; 4) institutionalized training; 5) work autonomy; and 6) a definable cognitive base (Abbott, 1988; Webb and Fisher, 2003).

For political consultants, the transition into a profession began when a handful of practitioners created the American Association of Political Consultants in 1969. Today the AAPC is an organization with over 4,000 members (Panagopoulos, 2006: 867) who, together with their non-member colleagues, make a living working in politics (Wayne, 2000). Unlike more established professions, campaign consultants have no control over licensing. They are not required to pass an exam, such as a bar exam. In fact, any individual who hangs a "Political Consultant" shingle outside his/her office automatically becomes one (Medvic, 2001: 12). The membership dues, currently at \$250, may be the most restrictive element of admission into the profession,

but membership is not mandatory. Numerous consultants, even some famous ones, like Dick Morris and Mary Matalin, are not among the association's members. Nevertheless, those who do join are expected to follow the code of ethics and the AAPC can hold members who violate it accountable. However, while a violation can result in removal from the association, no action can banish someone from the profession. In sum, the existence of an active organization and a code of ethics are clear signs of a profession in the making, yet the inability to control admission to the group through licensing diminishes the standing of campaign consultants as a profession.

The fourth characteristic of a profession is a system of training and learning. Most consultants in any profession would agree that they learn the most from experience, and learning on the job is the main and generally recognized method of learning (Kubr, 2002: 800). Until recently, most of the training has been hands-on, in a fashion similar to old-style guilds or apprenticeships. Yet, while this system is still in place, since the 1990s an increasing number of newcomers enter the profession through programs in applied politics, whose goal is to recruit, train, and graduate the next generation of political professionals (GSPM History). The premise behind the Graduate School of Political Management at George Washington University and seven other masters' programs is that politics can be formally taught, and research has shown they have been successful in doing so (Waismel-Manor, 2005)<sup>4</sup>.

As for work autonomy, the fifth professional characteristic, there is no consensus on whether consultants meet this criterion. Work autonomy is defined as "the discretion the worker is expected to exercise . . . in carrying out the assigned task activities" (Turner and Lawrence, 1965: 21). It was not long ago that campaigns, even presidential ones, were run by campaign amateurs (Johnson, 2001: xv-xvi). For example, many if not most of Kennedy's campaign team were friends, lawyers, and aides. They did not lack political knowledge, but had limited campaign experience. Those few professionals in the field were mostly generalists, experts in mass communication (Kelley, 1956: 4) or political communication (Napolitan, 1972: 2), advising candidates on most or all phases of the campaign and the technology employed in it (Sabato, 1981: 9; Friedenber, 1997: 202). In short, there were no clear boundaries that defined what it was that consultants do and who should do what.

Since the 1980s, we have witnessed a growth in the specialization within the field that has mushroomed into 34 specializations, which include, but are not limited to, media production and placement, direct mail development and production, polling and survey research, public speaking and/or communication training, fund-raising (event, phone, and mail), telephone voter contact, press/public relations, computer services, internet site design, software vending, voter and fund-raising list vending, news clipping and television monitoring, financial reporting, promotional products (e.g., buttons and yard signs), and legal services (Medvic, 2001: 12, 172; see also Dulio, 2004: 20-21).<sup>5</sup> Due to the fact that some of these specializations, such as pollsters, require a

great deal of expertise, some consultants have attained a degree of work autonomy. Moreover, the ever increasing media attention they have attracted since the 1970s (Panagopoulos, 2006: 868) has given them greater social recognition and a license to define their work for society at large (Hughes, 1959: 447). Despite these advances, it is still difficult to determine the overall degree of work autonomy granted to campaign consultants.

In sum, consultants meet at least three of the first five criteria defining a profession. They have a professional association, a self-regulating code of ethics, and institutional training, yet lack both a control mechanism for entering the profession and, to some degree, work autonomy.

### DO CAMPAIGN CONSULTANTS HAVE A COGNITIVE BASE?

To make the shift from a craft to a profession and legitimize that profession, practitioners must systemize and formalize their knowledge (Abbott, 1988: 103). To do so, professionals need to accomplish two goals. First, they must put their knowledge in writing, which consultants have been doing increasingly in the last 25 years, either through campaign manuals or in publications such as their professional journal *Campaigns & Elections*. Second, the professional language needs to become progressively more scientific, a process that “implies extensive academic research, based on the highest standards of rationality” (Abbott, 1988: 189) and elevates what has previously been regarded as how-to knowledge.

Dan Nimmo, one of the first scholars to study these political persuaders, saw no theoretical grounding in what they do. He went so far as to call their know-how a craft, not a real profession (Nimmo, 1970: 66). Larry Sabato reached a similar conclusion based on the disagreement political consultants displayed over what it is they actually do or know. If it cannot be quantified, he asserted, then “the profession of consulting is still far more an art than a science” (Sabato, 1981: 17). David Rosenbloom reached the opposite conclusion, maintaining that “the theoretical base upon which managers plan and run campaigns may not be well stated, or even completely accurate, but it does exist” (Rosenbloom, 1972: 106).

A more systematic method to test whether a profession has a cognitive base is through its writings. Professionalization requires the codification of professional knowledge and the depersonalization of its ideas and practices (Larson, 1977: 40). In the process of generating a body of relatively abstract knowledge and putting it in writing, a profession gives outsiders a glimpse of what it sees itself to be. Studying the writings of any profession, it is possible to test whether it possesses a cognitive base that is theoretically grounded and unique.

Over the years, most scholars have claimed that consultants possess no cognitive base (Nimmo, 1970; Sabato, 1981), yet the former offered nosystematic inquiry or empirical evidence to support their claims. This

was common wisdom until Margaret Scammell put that wisdom to the test (1997), examining what it is that consultants know and whether that cognitive base amounts to what we expect from a profession. Based on interviews with leading consultants, “how to win” guidebooks, and a content analysis of the journal for political consultants – *Campaigns and Elections (C&E)* – Scammell found the profession’s cognitive base underdeveloped, closer to an art than to a science (Scammell, 1997: 12-16).

Closer examination of Scammell’s method and findings reveals several factors that may have biased her conclusions. First, she excluded 57% of the articles in her data set (all articles which dealt with specific campaigns, special reports, areas, groups, news, and historical items), focusing solely on general lessons from campaigns. Second, she did not exploit the full potential of her own content analysis, generally categorizing articles by headlines, descriptors, and authorship, without probing deeper into their content. Indeed, she does not elaborate on her definition of analysis in general or content analysis in particular. Last, and most important, by looking at all of the articles as a whole, without controlling for specialization and time period, Scammell gives the impression that the profession is static, when in fact it may be in a state of transition. Only an analysis of scientification across time will enable us to test whether professionalization is underway.

The remainder of this paper will examine empirically whether campaign consultants have this last trait—a cognitive base—in an effort to test whether campaign consultancy “is still far more an art than a science” (Sabato, 1981: 17).<sup>6</sup> Scientification is one of the processes an occupation goes through in its long road towards becoming a profession (Selander, 1990). As a vocation morphs into a profession, it codifies its knowledge, shifting from gut feelings and artistic language into more scientific terminology. Hence, it is possible to hypothesize that the use of scientific language among consultants, exhibited through their writings in *C&E*, will increase over time, while no change is expected in their use of artistic language. Moreover, given that all professions evolve from generalists to specialists (for example, from doctors to pediatricians and neurologists), we should expect significant linguistic variation across professional specializations (pollsters, media consultants, direct mail specialists, etc.). This linguistic segmentation is a second indicator that campaign consultants are becoming more professional.

#### COMPUTER-ASSISTED TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS

In the inaugural issue of *Campaigns and Elections*, Stanley Foster Reed, its first publisher, explained the journal’s purpose:

Only one in six political candidates wins. What makes the difference between winning and losing? It is management of resources: money,

media, people. That's what *Campaigns and Elections* is all about, and will be about: how to manage . . . political campaigns. *C&E* is and will continue to be a "how-to" journal, bringing you the best strategies and tactics—what works and what doesn't, where, why, and under what circumstances (Reed, 1980: 4-5).

Newspapers and magazines are a reflection of their writers and the way they view their readers. As such, they are immensely useful in the study of those two groups across time (Weber, 1990). *Campaigns and Elections* is such a magazine: close to two-thirds of all articles in the sample (see below) were written by political consultants. Moreover, the journal also has a wide readership: in a recent survey, 81% of consultants reported reading it.

Content analysis is a research technique for making valid inferences from text by systematically identifying and analyzing specified characteristics within that text (Holsti, 1969: 14). Unlike the impressions a researcher may accumulate while reading texts, content analysis's strength lies not only in its ability to process lengthy volumes of text, but also to do so impartially and systemically (GAO, 1996).

Computer-Assisted Textual Analysis (CATA) has been available for decades (Sebeok and Zeps, 1958). However, only recently, with the increasing number of software packages and especially with the growing availability of text in digital form, has it taken its place alongside traditional human content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980: 15). At the heart of all content analysis software packages is the premise that word frequencies can help scholars understand the meaning of a text (Shanahan, 2000: 29). The software construct tests and helps refine schemes that classify texts into operator-defined, mutually exclusive, and exhaustive categories (Weber, 1990: 37; GAO, 1996: 20) or *dictionaries*, which the software searches and categorizes as it reviews the texts.

The advantages of CATA are quite evident. First, it can process large amounts of text, too large for human coders to handle, and do it much faster. Second, it is an unobtrusive and nonreactive research technique, as neither the sender nor the receiver of the messages is aware that the messages are being analyzed, eliminating the possibility that the measurement itself will influence the data (Bengston, 2000: 1). Third, the explicit coding rules facilitate the replication of its empirical findings. Fourth, words that are seemingly insignificant to the human eye may be particularly telling once we aggregate them to reveal patterns unpredicted or expected in human coding. Finally, since the software counts tokens faultlessly in every single run, reliability is perfect (Krippendorff, 1980: 259; Shanahan, 2000: 30). This capability allows the researcher to "guard against the bias which so often results when something as volatile and emotional as politics is examined by something as volatile and emotional as a human being" (Hart, 1984: 101).

However, CATA is also subject to a number of drawbacks. First, the software extracts all relevant words, yet is unable to determine whether their

meaning or context have changed over time and different contexts. Second, reliance solely on frequencies gives the impression that high-frequency words are more important or meaningful than infrequent ones. Notwithstanding, computerized content analysis has yielded promising results; in fact, various studies have shown that when compared to human content analysis, CATA performs satisfactorily (Nacos et al., 1991).

In order to learn whether campaign consultants think themselves to be artists or scientists, and to test the hypothesis that their professionalization brought a more scientific approach to political consultancy, I examined the profession's leading journal, *Campaigns and Elections*. The prevailing consensus among scholars suggests that it is possible to select a few random issues per year in order to infer a year's worth of content (Riffe, Lacy and Drager, 1996). However, in order to guard against temporal or systematic variations in content, I chose a more conservative procedure and included all articles within the data set, thereby guaranteeing the inclusion of all dimensions of political consultants' rhetoric.

All of the articles were retrieved from the Lexis-Nexis online commercial database for the 14 years for which the articles were available in electronic format (*Campaigns & Elections*, 1990–2003). Like various contemporary non-academic magazines, *C&E* includes many short texts that bear little relation to content that could be considered the profession's cognitive base; these include snippets on who has been hired or fired and notices about events, electoral developments, and results. To avoid including these short segments in the data set, I excluded all texts shorter than 500 words.

The final data set included 1,317 articles (1,736,042 words), the year each article was published, and the profession or professional expertise of each article's author. As can be seen in Table 1, more than a third of all articles were written by the *C&E* staff or journalists working for the magazine. The rest of

**TABLE 1** Number of Articles by Professional Field

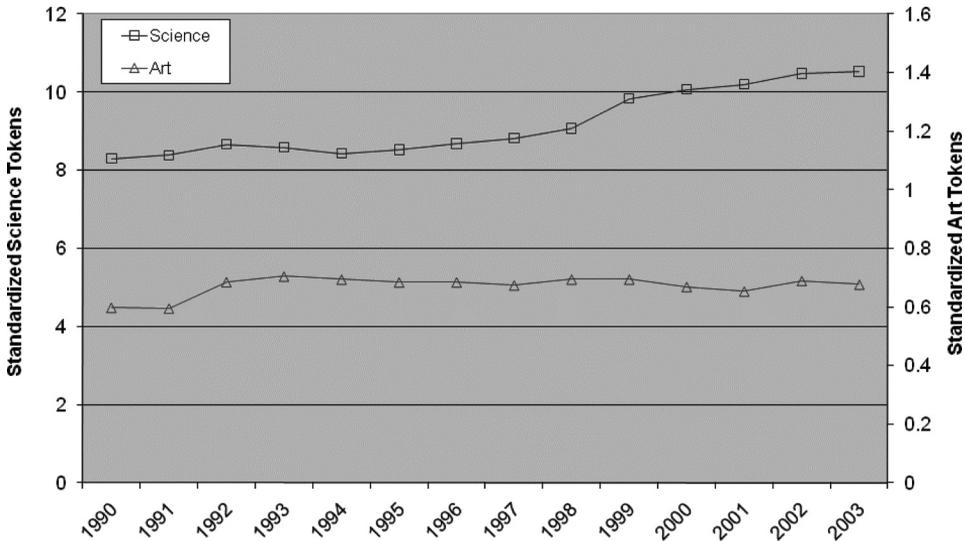
Profession	Number of articles	%
<i>C&amp;E</i> /Journalist <sup>10</sup>	495	37.5
Generalist	138	10.5
Media	138	10.5
Pollster	126	9.6
Academic	92	7.0
Unknown/Other	89	6.7
Mail/Voter Contact	68	5.2
Tech	45	3.4
Fundraiser	34	2.6
PAC/Interest Group/Affairs	33	2.5
Initiative/Issue Advocacy	31	2.4
Lawyer	17	1.3
Public Relations	11	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1317</b>	<b>100</b>

the articles were generally written by members of the more prominent specialties such as general consultants, pollsters, media consultants, and academics who work in the field, and to a much lesser degree by members of other specialties, ranging from tech specialists to public relations professionals.

## RESULTS

The lack of time series data on campaign consultants' attitudes or practices creates, probably artificially, a static impression of the profession. Over the last 10 years, scholars have taken many snapshots of consultants, but the variation across these studies does not allow us to test whether political consultants have changed over time. A content analysis of *C&E* cannot tell us whether the professionals themselves have changed in some way. However, by analyzing the use of Art and Science tokens across time we can determine if there was any change at all (see the appendix for an explanation of the content analysis methodology).

Figure 1 presents the use of Art and Science tokens in *C&E* from 1990 until 2003, controlling for the total length of the articles (number of words) in a single year (the frequency of Art tokens per year, divided by that year's total number of words, times 1000), standardized using Holt's exponential to smooth out outliers and seasonal effects. The figure reveals that for Art there is no visible trend. Political consultants' cumulative knowledge as reflected in their writings shows no increased use of artistic knowledge.



**FIGURE 1** *C&E*'s standardized use of Art and Science tokens by year. (Color figure available online.)

When it comes to scientific language, however, a different picture emerges. The Science time series clearly shows that since the mid-1990s there has been a significant increase in the standardized frequency of Science tokens. Looking at the smoothed time series, we see an increase of about 25% in the use of Science tokens in *C&E* articles across this period.

Notwithstanding, it is still possible that this trend is either societal or rhetorical rather than professional. In other words, it is possible, on the one hand, that the language of Americans in general, or more likely, the language of politics, in particular, has become more scientific, and that the trend observed in Figure 1 is nothing more than a reflection of society at large.

On the other hand, it is also possible that the increased use of scientific words is a discursive rhetorical strategy. In other words, consultants may have strategically adopted scientific language for its transactional value (Prelli, 1989: 186-205; Gross et al., 2002: 9). Put differently, the scientific discourse may be nothing more than a persuasive tool through which consultants obtain legitimacy from their peers, clients, and the public.

To test these possibilities, I created a second data set of articles. Using Lexis-Nexis, I searched *Newsweek* magazine for all domestic political articles 500 words or longer that appeared from 1990 to 2003 (N = 1,061). If the change is societal, due perhaps to new technologies such as surveys, we should expect an increase in the use of scientific words within these articles. If, on the other hand, the change is strategic, we should also find a linguistic scientification in *Newsweek's* political articles over time, as there is no reason to expect political reporters to seek any less legitimacy than their colleagues in the political consulting industry (Bledstein, 1976).

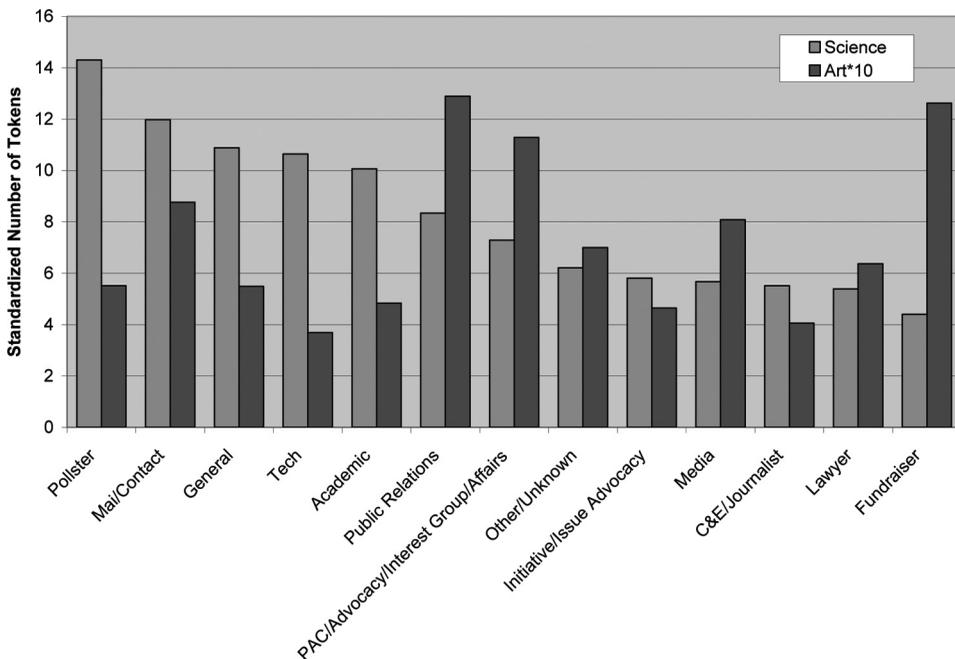
The standardized use of Science tokens in *Newsweek* magazine political articles between 1990 and 2003 (controlling for the total length of the articles per year) shows a very modest increase of about 5% for the whole period. This increase, which may be attributed to the increased use of new technologies, is almost insignificant, reinforcing the strength of the trend in Figure 1. In sum, the scientification of consultants' language demonstrates an evolving cognitive base, which in turn indicates that this occupation is moving towards becoming a profession (Selander, 1990).

The evolutionary path of professions takes them from a single occupation into a profession with ever increasing subdivisions. Up until the twentieth century, for instance, most doctors were generalists, who took care of all of their patients' needs, even when these patients were cattle or other domestic livestock (Schwabe, 1978). Segmentation of professional work is quite a recent phenomenon (Bucher and Strauss, 1961) and is the product of a growing consciousness among professionals, a subdivision of members based on particular bodies of expertise (Ben David and Collins, 1966:453), a jurisdiction of service (Abbott, 1988: 81), and an intra-professional competition which fosters the monopolization of certain areas of specialty (Leeming, 2001: 462). Scientific language usage across professional specializations can

therefore also help us test the profession's cognitive base, as divergence across specializations is an indication that each specialization has a separate cognitive field.

The usage of scientific language should obviously come more naturally to certain specializations. Those trained in universities, mainly in the fields of political science, communications, and statistics, should be willing and able to incorporate the scientific terminology they became familiar with during their studies into their writings. In Figure 2 we see that this is actually the case. Specializations that entail strong scientific training or proficiency, such as pollsters, mail specialists (targeting is highly micro-data driven), generalists (for their well-rounded knowledge), tech experts and academics are all heavy in scientific terminology. On the other hand, media consultants, journalists, lawyers, and fundraisers are masters of language and creativity, not science.

Looking at the use of Art tokens, one would expect, if not the mirror image of Science, at least some divergence with Science across specializations. Some specializations, such as pollsters, fundraisers, generalists, academics, and tech specialists, seem to confirm this hypothesis. However, the divergence is not as clear as I theorized it to be. The reason may lie in the limited number of Art tokens in the Art dictionary and the small number of Art tokens in the articles themselves. As a result, the number of Science

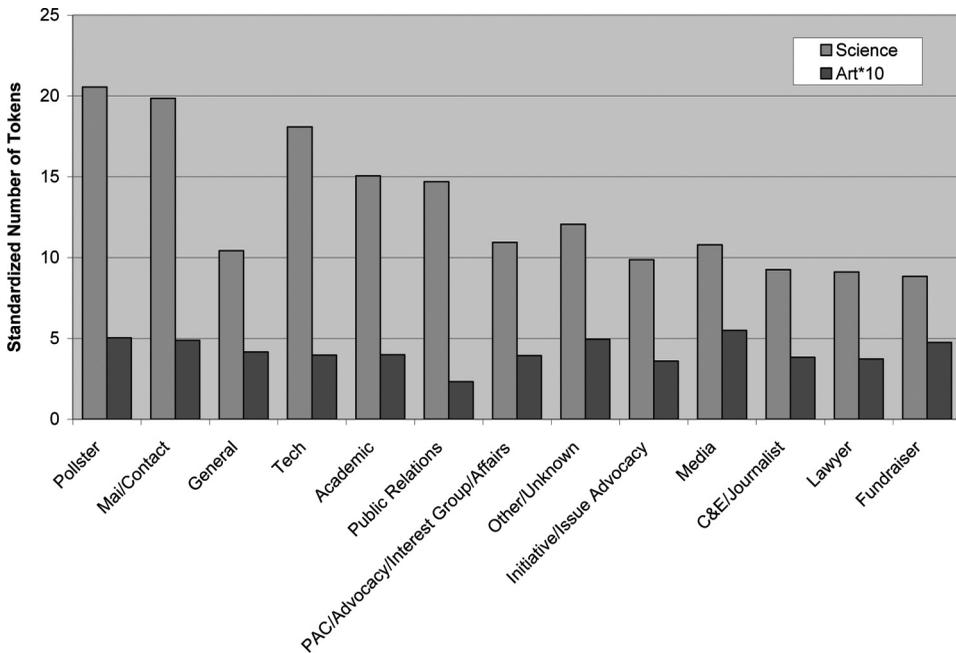


**FIGURE 2** Standardized use of Science and Art tokens by specialization. (Color figure available online.)

tokens is 10 times higher than the Art tokens, which in turn make up only about 0.1% of the total number of words in our data set.

To try to overcome this limitation, a second set of dictionaries was created, this time with more lenient rules (see appendix). As can be seen in Figure 3, there is almost no difference in the use of Science tokens when compared to the use of Science tokens in Figure 2. Pollsters and those who create contacts through mailings are the most scientific in their language (pollsters for their use of survey methodology and measurement and mail creators for their large, sophisticated databases that they use to mine information about voters and contributors and target appropriate messages). Generalists are the only specialists who, using the restricted dictionary, appeared to be artificially too scientific (generalists are jacks-of-all-trades and unlikely to be as science-oriented as tech specialists and academics). As expected, among the three major specializations (media, pollsters, and generalists), media consultants' usage of scientific words was the lowest. Science has little bearing on the creativity and originality needed to create campaign ads.

The flat pattern across specializations generated by the new Art dictionary suggests that the differences across specializations in Figure 2 are the product of low frequencies. The data in their expanded version show media consultants as the most artistic, but with little if any differences across specializations. Hence, we must be cautious in reading too much into the expanded



**FIGURE 3** Expanded standardized use of Science and Art tokens by specialization. (Color figure available online.)

Art data because the ratio of Art tokens to the total number of words in all of the articles is still quite low (0.2%–0.5%). In addition, any relaxing of the rules in creating the dictionaries is expected to increase the tokens' frequency at the expense of accuracy. In conclusion, the differences across specializations indicate that there is a degree of linguistic segmentation within the profession.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Political consultants have been able to convince most observers, from Washington to the media, that they have acquired “a constellation of characteristics we have come to accept as denoting a profession” (Ritzer and Walczak, 1986: 62). Scholars, however, have been reluctant to give consultants such a status (Nimmo, 1970: 66; Sabato, 1981: 17; Scammell, 1997: 16; Medvic, 2001: 13; Negrine and Lilleker, 2002: 321), claiming that they lack, among other things, a professionalization of knowledge, i.e., a cognitive base.

Employing content analysis, this paper tested this element of professionalization. First, by looking at the language of consultants across time, we observed an increase in the use of scientific language. Second, in comparing the language of consultants across specializations, the paper shows that there is indeed segmentation within the field, which is understood to be part of the professionalization process.

Professionalization is “a process with an end-state towards which certain occupations are moving and others have arrived” (Johnson, 2001: 22). Political consultants may have not reached the status of a profession, but as the analysis presented in this research seems to suggest, they are getting closer. While the line between a craft and a profession is not clear-cut (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1997: xix), the cumulative evidence presented here shows that political consulting is indeed a profession, even if it is a profession in the making.

The weakening of political parties together with the rise of the individual candidate and the increasingly important role of the mass media have professionalized campaigns, transforming them from an amateur, mostly part-time, essentially local affair directed at party loyalists to a permanent marketing campaign directed at the general electorate (Farrell, Kolodny and Medvic, 2001: 12). In a sense, the professionalization of campaigns may be viewed as the re-equilibration of electoral politics (Green and Smith, 2003: 323). The question remains as to the effect of this professionalization on campaigns and, more generally, on American democracy.

Given that low voter turnout, the public's general cynicism toward politics, and the decline of political parties seem to coincide with the rise of consultants, many scholars and commentators infer that consultants are the source of much of what is wrong in American politics. Some critics have argued that consultants have homogenized campaigns, made them lengthier

and more expensive, and degraded the public discourse by exploiting gimmicks over issues, personality over substance, and emotions over rational discussion (Sabato, 1981: 6-7; see also Petracca, 1989: 12-3; Johnson, 2001: 18). These assertions, while abundant, remain mostly untested (Dulio, 2004: 8).

However, professionalization has brought about two major negative outcomes. First, it has driven up the price of campaigns (Witcover, 1999: 27; Sussman, 2005: 20). According to Trevor Potter, a former federal elections commissioner, the reason is that “campaigns are like arms races . . . you didn’t know you needed another battleship until the other country had one” (Wayne, 2000). Therefore, if the opponent has acquired a new technology or service, be it direct mail, internet, databases, telemarketing, or polls, the candidate must also acquire that technology or service to keep a competitive edge. Moreover, as the industry segmented, it brought about an even larger campaign staff and with it greater expenses.

The second negative outcome of professionalization is its contribution to a further waning of local party organizations (Shea, 1999: 45). Several decades ago, campaigns were run by local party operatives and grassroots activists. It was in their best interest to create a fixed campaign capacity, like a state-wide grassroots operation. That is not the case with the “rambling” consultant (Green and Smith, 2003: 334; see also Petracca, 1989: 13). Trained by their peers, consultants lack the know-how and the incentive to nurture local party organizations. If they can win by just persuading potential voters to support their candidate, then so be it.<sup>7</sup>

The professionalization of campaign consultants has also brought about two significant positive changes to the electoral system. First, it has increased the number of consultants in the industry, leading to greater competition and, in many cases, a stabilization of prices charged for professional services (Johnson, 2001: 10). Second, and more importantly, professionalization has also led to the creation of more competitive races. Until the 1980s, many candidates still ran campaigns without the help of a consultant or, when their budget permitted it, with the help of an inexpensive, less experienced one. Professional knowledge has disseminated from a few practitioners to all those in the business and to those who are eager to learn and join it. The competency level of the average consultant today is far higher than it was 30 years ago, so candidates, even challengers with limited funds, are likely to hire a competent consultant to run their campaign. Doing so by itself is no guarantee of victory, but it creates a more level playing field on which to compete.

The professionalization of campaign consultancy and the proliferation of the knowledge in the field are likely to continue due to external pressure, uncertainty, a search for legitimacy and victories (Barnett and Goldstein, 2002: 14; Grossmann, 2004: 8; see also Swanson and Mancini, 1996; Plasser and Plasser, 2002). In professions such as medicine, professionalization brought with it better, yet impersonal, care. The alienation many voters feel towards politics may have begun prior to the arrival of consultants, but it has

surely not improved since. For these professionals to reverse this trend and finally to spin forward, they must take additional steps, such as demanding formal training, regulating their own profession, and enforcing their code of ethics.

As for the scholars who study them, we must probe deeper into consultants' daily discourse, especially on the campaign trail and in the electronic media, and test whether the linguistic scientification reported above takes place in settings where there is less opportunity to structure it strategically. It would be especially useful if we could compare the language of consultants with their actions and test whether the latter follow the former. More generally, we would do a greater service to democracy by empirically testing what it is that consultants actually do and what effect, if any, they have on the electoral system.

#### APPENDIX CONTENT ANALYSIS METHOD

Creating the coding scheme or the dictionaries is the most crucial and time-consuming element of CATA. As previously mentioned, dictionaries are lists of character strings, or words that are placed in common categories, much like thesauri group words with shared meanings on different levels of abstraction (Krippendorff, 1980: 284). The dictionaries enable us to define and quantify Art and Science expressions across the text.

The first step in generating the Art and Science dictionaries was running the complete list of all articles through Wordstat, a text analysis software package specifically designed to study textual information. The software extracted a list of 1,736,042 words, out of which there were 45,909 unique words. Once I ran the built-in exclusion list (stop list) used to remove words with little semantic value, such as pronouns, conjunctions, etc., I was left with 45,319 unique words. I generated a list of words from which the coders would be asked to pick all tokens that bore any relation to Art or Science. The universe of 45,319 tokens was too large to feasibly ask coders to review. Therefore, I excluded all words whose total magazine usage frequency was very low. I set the threshold conservatively at 20, meaning that if a certain word appeared fewer than 20 times across the entire universe of article words (1,736,042), whether in a single article or 20 different articles, it was excluded from the list. This process yielded 5,653 unique words.

To generate all of the possible tokens for Art and Science, I provided five coders, all graduate students in the social sciences, with a list of all remaining words and asked them to follow these instructions:

This project seeks to understand whether campaign consultants view their profession as art or science. Please select from the list attached all words that fit these terms as defined below. Each word must be assigned to only one category; that is, these categories are mutually exclusive.

Art: Characterized by originality and expressiveness. Imaginative or intuitive. Based on creativity and gut feeling. Skill arising from the exercise of intuitive faculties, non-transferable by learning.

Science: The observation, identification, description, investigation, and theoretical explanation of phenomena, applied to an object of inquiry or study. Knowledge gained through learning and experience. General truths or the operation of general laws. Based on facts and data. Knowledge that is acquired by learning and is transferable.

The procedure used to generate these tokens was somewhat unconventional. Traditionally, the creation of dictionaries is performed using a sample of the actual texts. Coders are provided with the dictionary definitions and are required to mark all tokens that fit the definitions. Using this method may or may not pick all tokens, based on the size and representativeness of the sample. The strength of using a list over the text is in its inclusiveness; the whole universe of words is there. However, because the list is composed solely of words, it is likely that some multiple word tokens, which may have been picked up employing a text and not a list-based method, will be excluded from the final list. To compensate for this weakness, I used a thesaurus and looked for all multiple word tokens I could find for Art and Science, such as Gut Feeling and Know-How. I found that none of these multiple word tokens achieved the 20 token frequency threshold, and as such would make no contribution to the dictionaries.

The coders classified 253 tokens for Art and 347 for Science, but had little agreement over many of them. Once I excluded all words that were selected by only a single coder, such as Quebec and Chance for Art and Spock and Web for Science, I narrowed the selection down to 109 tokens for Science and 63 for Art.

The next step was to test the coding validity, to make sure that “different people...code the same text in the same way” (Weber, 1990: 12). I excluded all tokens that were not selected by at least three out of the five coders (words such as Academics, Policy and Software for Science and Insight and Talent for Art), arriving at a final total of 54 tokens for Science and 15 tokens for Art.<sup>8</sup>

The list was ordered alphabetically and given to five new coders, all graduate students in the social sciences, who were asked to assign each of the tokens to one of two columns, Art or Science, based on the definitions used in the first step. Of the 69 tokens on the list, there was complete agreement over 43 of them and 80% agreement over 21 others. Five tokens that failed to reach 80% agreement across the coders (Analysis, Chutzpah, Design, Innovation, and Symbol) were excluded, leaving 64 tokens overall.

To assess the agreement among the raters over these words I computed Cohen's kappa for each pair of coders. While there is no agreement over the acceptable cut-off for kappa coefficients in content analysis, researchers usually view a kappa above .70 as substantial agreement above chance

**TABLE 2** Intercoder Validity

Coder	1	2	3	4
2	.828	–	–	–
3	.934	.765	–	–
4	.939	.777	.873	–
5	1.000	.828	.934	.939

(Gardner, 1995) and a score above .80 as a good fit (Landis and Koch, 1977: 159).

Table 2 presents the measure of agreement between both sets of coders. Most intercoder agreements were quite high. With the exception of coder number 2, whose kappas just reached the level of substantial agreement, all of the coders were in almost perfect agreement. Indeed, one pair (coders 1 and 5) was in perfect agreement. Cohen's kappa averaged across coders was .882, a good indicator that the tokens included in the dictionaries accurately reflect the concepts they claim to represent.

The last step was to review the list of remaining tokens/roots and run a Key-Word-In-Context (KWIC) search to verify that the tokens really bear the meaning the coders assume they have. In its KWIC search mode, Wordstat allows users to conduct word or string searches across the entire data set. All instances of the searched token are displayed in a special window within their contexts, enabling the researcher to test whether the token captures the intended meaning, and does not carry with it additional unintended and

**TABLE 3** Art and Science Dictionaries

Dictionary	Terms
Art	Artistic, Beautiful, Creative, Creatively, Creativity, Emotion, Emotions, Ethical, Feeling, Feelings, Personalities, Personality
Science	Conduct, Data, Explain, Explanation, Explanatory, Facts, Information, Logic, Logical, Measurable, Measurement, Method, Methodologies, Methodology, Percent, Percentage, Precise, Precision, Predict, Probability, Procedure, Procedures, Qualitative, Quantitative, Research, Researched, Researcher, Researchers, Results, Sample, Sampled, Samples, Sampling, Statistic, Statistical, Statistically, Statistics, Studying, Technical, Technique, Techniques, Technological, Technologies, Technology, Test, Tested, Testing, Theories, Theory
Art Expanded	Ad, Ads, Advertising, Advocacy, Art, Artistic, Beautiful, Beauty, Care, Caring, Chutzpah, Creative, Creatively, Creativity, Cultural, Culture, Designing, Emotion, Emotions, Ethical, Experience, Experiences, Expressive, Fashion, Feeling, Feelings, Felt, Film, Humor, Humorous, Idea, Imaginative, Imagine, Innovative, Insiders, Insight, Intelligent, Lobbying, Magic, Movie, Paint, Painting, Passion, Passionate, Personal, Personalities, Personality, Quality, Relation, Relationship, Reputation, Sense, Strategies, Strategy, Studio, Symbol, Talent, Talented, Tone, Vision, Visual, Writer, Writers

irrelevant meanings. For example, most coders assumed that MD referred to medical doctors, whom they believed to be scientists, while in fact most MD references referred to the State of Maryland. Similarly, the token Act failed because the term generally dealt with acts of Congress. In addition, on several occasions the token Acting referred not to actors but to acting governors, acting mayors, and such. All individual tokens were searched using KWIC, and all those that did not achieve the intended meaning 80%<sup>9</sup> of the time were excluded from the dictionary list. The final dictionaries included 49 tokens for Science and 12 for Art (see Table 3).

Since the number of Science tokens is 10 times higher than the number of Art tokens, which in turn make up only about 0.1% of the total number of words in the data set, a second set of dictionaries was generated, this time with more lenient rules. Instead of using the commonly accepted 80% threshold (agreement of 4 out of 5 coders), the expanded set included all words that generated 40% agreement or higher across coders (2 out of 5).

## NOTES

1. It was not until scholars began to question the validity of the minimal effects theory that campaign consultants began to matter. One of the first to notice them argued that “campaigns may no longer be battles between candidates but between titans of the campaign industry working on behalf of those personalities” (Nimmo, 1970: 50).

2. Campaign or political consultancy is yet to be recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor Dictionary of Occupational Titles (Survey Researchers and Public Relations Specialists are on the list; see Occupational Information Network at <http://online.onetcenter.org>).

3. We depart here from the common use of the word “professionalization,” which in the campaign consultants’ literature is often used to describe the increased utilization of political professionals in electoral campaigns. Used in such a manner, professionalization is associated with increased fundraising success (Herrnson, 1992), and an increase in the total vote (Medvic and Lenart, 1997).

4. A further manifestation of this learning and training is the burgeoning industry of “how-to” books that teach the essence of modern campaigns and the steps required to run and win an election.

5. See Medvic (2003) for an excellent conceptualization and operationalization of the profession.

6. One possible method for answering this question would be to ask political consultants directly whether they think their profession is something of an art, as Sabato argues, or closer to a science. Even if we could discount their subjectivity and interest in claiming that they were scientific, with no previous data to which to compare their responses it would be impossible to ascertain whether consultants are moving towards a greater degree of professionalization.

7. A somewhat less sinister explanation for their unwillingness to pursue the entire electorate may be resistance to change and the uncertainty involved in a campaign. Since campaigns are an uncertain environment in which it is very difficult to determine what component exactly won the campaign, some consultants are reluctant to modify their overall strategy (Green and Smith, 2003: 334).

8. Art and Science capture the most prominent dimensions of professionalization. Surely other dimensions exist independent of scientification, such as impartiality and codification. However, the coders identified them as elements within scientification, hence no other dictionaries were created.

9. Rule of thumb commonly used in KWIC tests. See, for example, Bengston and Xu, 1996: 10.

10. Forty-five stories had no author attributed to them. Since these articles were mostly reports about acts of Congress, laws from around the nation, reports on what people said, awards, and news from the field (who hired/fired who), I was hesitant to place them in the unknown category whose articles had more substance. Due to their informative nature, it was safe to assume they were written by *C&E* staff or freelancers. Therefore, I collapsed them with the *C&E* articles.

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