

## RESEARCH REPORTS

*Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions*

### *“Campaign Warriors: The Role of Political Consultants in Elections.”*

Brookings Institution Press, 1775 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

216 pp. \$42.95; paper, \$17.95

Editors: James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson

When the *New York Times* described the 1993 New Jersey gubernatorial contest as a clash of “campaign titans,” it had in mind not the incumbent Democratic governor and his Republican opponent but rather their well-known consultants, James Carville and Ed Rollins. As political parties have receded in importance in recent decades, professional political consultants have come to the fore, advising candidates on polls, media, fundraising, and what to say (and not say) to the voters. Though perhaps not the omnipotent evil geniuses they are sometimes made out to be, political consultants clearly bear watching. In this volume, a host of political scientists put them under scholarly scrutiny.

The typical political consultant in what has become a multibillion dollar industry is white, male, fortyish, well paid (in excess of \$150,000 a year), and ideologically moderate, according to James A. Thurber, Candice J. Nelson, and graduate student David A. Dulio, all of American University. In a 1997–98 survey of 200 of the hired guns, they found that many take a dim view of their clients. More than 60 percent of the Democratic consultants rated today’s congressional candidates only “fair” or “poor,” and 53 percent said candidates for office have gotten worse in recent years. GOP consultants (perhaps reflecting greater recent success at the polls) were more upbeat: 71 percent deemed their candidates “excellent” or “good,” and only 27 percent thought candidate quality had deteriorated. But more than 40 percent of the Republicans (and 47 percent of the Democrats) regret having helped certain candidates get elected.

The consultants also are not in awe of the electorate’s knowledge. Seventy-five percent of the Democrats and 56 percent of the Republicans regard the voters as “somewhat poorly” or “very poorly” informed about major policy issues. Yet 77 percent of the

Democrats and 82 percent of the Republicans claim to have “a great deal” or “a fair amount” of confidence in the judgment of these dunces on major domestic issues. Go figure. (Perhaps the consultants agree with the theorists who surmise that voters take “shortcuts” around their ignorance, picking up cues that let them make the correct choice at the polls.)

Ranking much lower in consultants’ eyes than either voters or candidates are the journalists covering the contests. Republican and Democratic consultants stand shoulder to shoulder on this, with more than two-thirds giving political reporters only a “fair” or “poor” rating for their work. However, 56 percent admitted that media “ad watches” (dissecting particular ads) have affected campaigns at least “a fair amount.”

How much of an impact on election outcomes do consultants—their self-serving boasts aside—really have? Analyzing the 1992 campaigns for the U.S. House of Representatives, Paul S. Herrnson of the University of Maryland, College Park, found that 92 percent of the incumbents who waged highly “professional” campaigns won reelection—but so did *all* those who ran “less professional” ones. Of course, he notes, incumbents in “safe” seats had no need to buy consultants’ costly services. With challengers (who are often strapped for cash), however, the situation was different: The candidates who ran “amateur campaigns” all lost, while six percent of those with “moderately professional” campaigns, and 14 percent of those with “highly professional” ones, won. And in contests without incumbents, 30 percent of the amateur campaigns resulted in victory, compared with 48 percent of the moderately professional ones and 63 percent of the highly professional. Sometimes, Herrnson concludes, the hired guns do “make the difference between victory and defeat.”

*“Investing in Our Children: What We Know and Don’t Know about the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Intervention.”*

RAND, 1700 Main St., P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, Calif. 90407–2138. 159 pp. Paper, \$15.

Available free online at <http://www.rand.org>. Authors: Lynn A. Karoly et al.

Since the early 1960s, Project Head Start and other programs have sought to boost the learning ability, social skills, and health of disadvantaged youngsters in their earliest years, when most physical brain development occurs. Reviewing studies of Head Start and nine smaller programs, RAND researcher Karoly and her colleagues conclude: “In some situations, carefully targeted early childhood interventions *can* yield measurable benefits in the short run and [some] persist long after the program has ended.”

Evaluations of Head Start, which has served more than 15 million children since 1965, are hampered, the authors say, by the absence of any national randomized control trial, and by other factors. Head Start may lift youngsters’ IQs, but the gains don’t seem to last. Some studies, however, show that participants did better in school, made “socioemotional” gains, and were healthier.

Karoly and her colleagues find “favorable effects” common, some of them large, some of them lasting, in other closely studied programs. Participants in three programs had a 10-point or

higher IQ advantage (though typically short-lived). Children who took part in the preschool Carolina Abecedarian program in North Carolina scored significantly higher on reading and math tests at age 15 than their control-group counterparts; they also much less often had been held back a grade or placed in special education classes. Graduates of the famous Perry Preschool program in Ypsilanti, Michigan, had 60 percent higher earnings at age 27 than members of a control group. Most evaluations, however, did not involve such long-term follow-ups.

With “more than 95 percent” certainty, Karoly and her co-authors say that the later savings from reduced demand for special education and other public services outweigh the costs for the Perry Preschool program and for participants from “higher-risk” families in the Elmira, New York, Prenatal/Early Infancy Project. But “big unknowns” remain, including why some model programs work—and whether they could be replicated on a large scale and do as well.

*“Workers without Frontiers: The Impact of Globalization on International Migration.”*

International Labor Organization Publications Center, P.O. Box 753, Waldorf, Md. 20604–0753.

161 pp. Paper, \$18.95. Author: Peter Stalker

Discussions of globalization usually focus on international trade and investment, not global labor migration. This is not surprising, since global exports amounted (in 1996) to about 29 percent of world gross domestic product, while the 120 million workers who went to foreign lands were only 2.3 percent of the world’s population. But if globalization fails to reduce the wide gap between rich and poor countries, pressures for massive labor migration are likely to grow, warns Peter Stalker, a writer associated with the Geneva-based International Labor Organization.

While global per capita income tripled between 1960 and 1994, some 100 countries now have per capita incomes lower than in the 1980s, or in some cases, the 1970s or ’60s. Mainly seeking higher wages, people are moving about the world in much more varied and complicated patterns than in the past. Between

1970 and 1990, the number of major “receiving” countries increased from 39 to 67, while the number of major “sending” ones went from 29 to 55—and the number in both categories jumped from four to 15. Foreign workers have flowed in recent years into the newly industrializing countries in East and Southeast Asia. Singapore in 1995 had 350,000 foreign workers—one-fifth of its labor force.

Thus far, Stalker says, globalization “has been very lopsided. . . . The least-developed countries, with 10 percent of world population, have only 0.3 percent of world trade—and that is half the proportion of two decades ago.” Meanwhile, the labor force of low-income countries is growing, from 1.4 billion in 1995 to a projected 2.2 billion in 2025. If enough adequate jobs are not available, many workers will look for them elsewhere in the global village.