

Poll finds general public more cynical than press

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Cynicism and distrust toward government, corporate executives and religious leaders is greater among the American public than the media, according to a poll contrasting the views of newspeople, opinion makers and the general public.

However, nearly two-thirds of the public, and the same percentage of opinion leaders, see the media as too adversarial, according to the poll by the Times Mirror Center For the People and the Press.

Even Republicans said there was too much emphasis on President Clinton's character, apparently reflecting "a measure of public frustration with ... the press practice of doing 'gotcha' journalism," said Andrew Kohut, director of the Times Mirror Center.

On the other hand, the public gave Mr. Clinton only a slightly better job-approval rating than the media — 44 percent said they approved of his performance; 42 per-

cent of the newspeople did.

The negativity voiced by the general public appeared to be based not only on media preoccupation with covering wrongdoing but also on the way politicians are portrayed in movies, on TV and in books, Mr. Kohut said.

Clear generational patterns emerged within both the public and the media, with those 60 and older, along with the youngest respondents, expressing the least cynicism.

The most cynical were those age 30 to 39, followed by those 40 to 59. Poll analysts dubbed the latter group the Vietnam-Watergate generation, because they came of age during turbulent social times.

One of the sharpest differences emerged over the question of accepting homosexuality. Eighty-three percent of the national press corps said homosexuality should be accepted by society, while only 41 percent of the general public voiced that same acceptance.