Media and Presidential Nomination Campaigns: When Bad News Becomes Good News (or at least a little better)

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This paper examines the research in media and presidential nomination campaigns as it has emerged during the post-reform era and moved into the new millennia. While there has been ample progress in the field, most notable has been the change in tone in the research from "bad" news to "good" news. Interpretations from the most recent research in the area suggest that the news media do not perform as poorly as judged in the earlier decades, at least in terms of providing information to voters. Moreover, voters are now portrayed not as naïve citizens who are easily manipulated by the media, but rather more resilient to media manipulation, and active consumers of information for political learning purposes

Review essays are often the point in time when scholars take inventory of the nature of the research in their area of study. These assessments can provide a more comprehensive view of the field with a focus on what has been accomplished, what has been neglected, and what questions are currently dominating the area. This essay will examine the progress made in the specific area of media and presidential nomination campaigns. It builds on the work of Barbara Norrander (1996). Her field essay on the post-reform era of presidential nomination politics is one of the most comprehensive and informative, tracking the development in the subfield from the post-reform period onward to the mid-1990s. One of the core topics of her essay focuses on the media and the nomination campaign and she provides a critical review of the work in the area. This essay will attempt to extend upon her work.

Media in the Post Reform Nomination Process

Given the shift in the nature of the presidential nomination campaign during the 1970s (from the convention system that produced a generally dynamic nominating convention to a primary system whose rules are in constant flux and whose outcomes are more dependent on candidate and voter interactions than party concerns) we have seen the potential influence of the media grow. Today, the news media are considered an undeniable player in the process, not only reporting on the events that encompass the campaign, but casting the candidates, creating expectations, intermediating

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the candidates' messages, setting the agenda in terms of the issues, and framing the campaign and the candidates as a whole. Researchers of the post-reform era conceded that the media played a more substantial role in the actual nomination process particularly due to the way the process had changed (Keeter and Zukin 1983; Marshall 1981; Matthews 1974). Research during this time gave a great deal of credit to the media in terms of their influence and promoted the idea that they were one of critical operatives in the process. Scholars also suggested that the media played a role in the dynamic nature of the process, being significant contributors to the creation of factors such as momentum (Aldrich 1980) and agenda setting (Wagner 1983). Today these assertions still hold true. The media is still thought to be a critical player in the process, but now there is greater recognition of the limitations as to the influence of the news media. While the notion of minimal effects has long been cast aside, the assertion is generally that media effects are conditional (Finkel 1993).

In the early period of the post-reform era, nomination researchers focused on describing and evaluating coverage and assessing its influence on the voter outcomes in primaries and caucuses as this was a new wrinkle in an old process. As will be noted later, during this time period there was less attention given to the other variables that played a role in the process of news creation and more emphasis was placed on the influence of coverage and change from the voter's perspective—how did the voters' information and subsequent preferences change over time as the campaign progressed. Survey data dominated and was most available, and it is likely that much of the self-reported exposure to media in these early studies contained significant measurement error (Iyengar and Simon 2000). There was a substantial growth in our knowledge of how the presidential nomination process worked and what structural and strategic factors affected the behaviors of candidates and voters. Media was often a variable of interest in the process and many of the most comprehensive studies of media under dynamic circumstances emerged (Popkin 1991; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Patterson 1980).

Exploring the New System and Beyond

One of the first and most comprehensive studies of the new process and the role played by the news media became Thomas Patterson's book, the *Mass Media Election* (1980). Here he examined how people's preferences changed over the span of the post-reform 1976 campaign—through the primaries to the day after the general election. He asked important questions such as how are voters' images of the candidates influenced by the coverage generated by the media. How well does the media inform the public, and so forth. He was critically aware of the increased potential for media influence

in the process as political party organizations and leaders were now positioned to play a much lesser role. In his assessment the media failed to fulfill the role of helping voters organize their choices. Patterson says,

> It [the news media] is in the news business, and its inadequacy as a linking mechanism becomes obvious once the nature of election reporting is understood. Election news carries scenes of action, not observations on the values represented by these scenes. Election news emphasizes what is different about events of the previous 24 hours rather than everyday political topics, . . . concentrates on competition and controversy instead of basic policy and leadership questions. The candidates' agendas are not readily evident in press coverage of the campaign.

V.O. Key (1966) had expressed the notion that the voice of the people would be reflective of the quality of information they were given. In order for voters to make quality decisions, they must have quality information. Patterson's work suggested that the expectation of scholars and the public that the media perform an informative and responsible role in the process was thoroughly out of place. News did not necessarily equate to informative analysis, at least based on Patterson's research. But Patterson's study was of one election year, and certainly what we have learned in the meantime is that campaigns and how the media cover them can vary. In some instances the candidate's agenda does not match up with the media's coverage. But there may be reasons for this to occur. Certainly we have found variation in the process. Hayes (2004), using data from a content analysis of candidate advertising and campaign news coverage in four major American newspapers between Sept. 1 and Election Day in 1992 and 1996, found substantial differences in the amount of issue agenda congruence in the two election years. Hayes found that in one election year the media literally parroted the campaigns' agendas while in another they did not. Thus, we find that there may be some conditions, yet unexplored, that create differentiation in the media's decision to convey the issues agendas of the candidates or create a different frame for the campaign.

Issues emerge independently as well. A report on the economy from the Federal Reserve may spur the media to shift the focus from issues the candidates have been promoting to economic issues, or simply issues that emerge—a crisis in another country, a scandal in the business sector, a domestic disturbance of some sort. It is important to note that campaign coverage is in itself a very dynamic entity. There is an internal environment consisting of reporters, editors, publishers, producers and the norms, routines, and constraints that accompany the organization. There is a vast external environment as well that includes the candidates and their organizations, the public, interest groups, and the world. While it seems that normatively candidates should have the ability to get their message out to

the public, there are also times when we would want the news media not to simply follow the agenda set by the candidates (see Ramsden, 1996, for a well done exploration of this question).

During this time period as well, political scientists were critically focused on the substance and frequency of messages about presidential candidates. The coverage generated by the media was thought to be critical to whether a candidate would succeed or fail electorally. And candidates bore some responsibility for the nature of their coverage. Scholars such as Arterton (1984) and others recognized that news coverage itself results from a collective negotiation between politicians and journalists. For this reason, much attention was focused on capturing the nature of the messages and seeing how the messages influenced voters' preferences. Bartels (1988) work pointed to the dynamic nature of these preferences, particularly the changeable nature. With so much uncertainty to be found in primary electorates, with limited shortcuts to decision-making, the value of information and the role of the media to deliver it were, at that time, believed to be tantamount to being able to determine the nominee. To some degree this assumption lingers, but again, is conditional in nature.

Media Coverage Patterns

During the post-reform era of nominations, scholars have delineated quite effectively the patterns of media coverage in presidential nomination campaigns (and campaigns in general). Scholars have described how the media cover campaigns (Heldman et al. 2005; Just et al. 1996; Marshall 1981; Arterton 1978; Bicker 1978; Crouse 1973) and detailed the coverage generated by important primary and caucus events such as the Iowa Caucus, the New Hampshire Primary and Super Tuesday (Mayer and Busch 2006; Lichter et al. 1988; Adams 1987; Buell 1987; Robinson and Sheehan 1983; Marshall 1983; Robinson and McPherson 1977). As Norrander (1996) notes, researchers have easily determined that early and important contests generate a tremendous amount of coverage relative to those contests that are later and uncompetitive or have too few delegates to be of any worth to the candidates (see also Steger 2002). Primaries tend to receive more coverage than caucuses, and they still do, with the exception of Iowa (Brady 1989; Castle 1991). Scheduling a primary or caucus at the same time as many other states can lead to less coverage for individual states, particularly in the event of a regional delegate event such as Super Tuesday in 1988 (Gurian and Wolfe 1994; Gurian 1993, 1991) even though it might generate more coverage for the event as a whole (Norrander 1992; Hadley and Stanley 1989). Researchers such as Robinson (1980) were already noting that states were switching to primaries and moving up their campaigns in order to

generate more media attention to their state, but what began in the 1980s has been exacerbated in the most recent nomination campaigns, particularly 2008. States do get more coverage if they move up their event, but at some point, when too many states are involved, then that coverage decreases for individual states (Steger 2002; Mayer and Busch 2006).

Thus, basic patterns of coverage of primaries and caucuses have remained relatively constant. The simple theoretical premise that early and important states will receive more coverage because they are the first major events of the process, and thus considered newsworthy, still holds. New Hampshire and Iowa remain dominant in total news coverage given to particular state contests. What we have learned is that moving up earlier, if done with a substantial cohort, can diminish coverage. It is likely that in large, regionally bundled primaries, the states with the largest delegate totals, the potential to make or break a candidate's candidacy, or some other newsworthy factor may still generate greater coverage, but less so than if they stood alone or in smaller cohort. Perhaps changes in coverage patterns may emerge as new dynamics emerge, such as the extremely frontloaded calendar experienced in 2008. One change that may have occurred is the emergence of much earlier campaign coverage as well as a much earlier shift to horserace coverage than in years prior.

Structure of the News Media

One area that has seen tremendous change from the 1980s to the 2000s has been the nature of news organizations. When Patterson was studying this process, the major news networks dominated political news coverage and analysis, with the major daily newspapers, such as *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* among others, also playing a strong role in determining the nature of the news coverage—basically providing cues for the lesser news organizations' coverage (Haynes and Murray 1998). But with the emergence of cable news networks (CNN, FOX, MSNBC, and so on), the flagging ratings of the major network newscasts, and a host of other changes, we have seen the creation of a new media structure. West (2001) suggests that the result was a fragmentation of the news media. And now, with the Internet and the 24 hour cable news model, the influence of the old dominant networks and newspapers may have declined significantly. West suggests that there is more narrowcasting or niche reporting. The consequence of this, according to West, is creation of more biased and more heterogeneous news coverage. However, one of the other activities that has seen a great deal of growth is the consolidation and conglomeration of media. Whether it is television, radio, newspapers or magazines, there are a limited number of corporate owners today. While we may see more niche

reporting on various issue or topic specific websites, the end result of all this activity, according to McChesney (1999), is not issue or topic or niche reporting, but a focus on appealing to the masses, even in terms of the news. More recent work that examines the presidential nomination campaign coverage by traditional media versus blogs suggests there is a great deal of similarity, at least in terms of who is receiving coverage during the nomination campaign (Haynes and Pitts 2008). And in terms of the Internet, researchers have mapped the connections and "authority" of a variety of websites—what do they find at the hub? They find major commercial news enterprises: CNN, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, CBS News online, and so on (Linkfluence's Presidential Watch '08). There has been discussion as well as to the implications of the multitude of information choices that exist in today's news information explosion (discussed later in this article). How the media structure impacts the nature of the news and our choices is one that must be revisited as the structure changes.

The Horserace Frame

Another finding that has maintained its prominence relates to the nature of the coverage. The presentation of the campaign as a horserace has dominated the news coverage of presidential nomination campaigns (Robinson and Lichter 1991; Robinson and Sheehan 1983; Marshall 1981; Patterson 1980) and continues to do so. For over 30 years the game perspective has maintained itself with candidate strategy and subsequent winning and losing providing the thematic structure for most reporting and analysis of the campaign. Historically, the horserace has always been a thematic favorite of election coverage (Kendall 2000). A recent study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism and the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy demonstrated that in the early months of 2008 nearly 63 percent of all the campaign stories run in the first few months of the campaign, often the time period where coverage focuses on who the candidates are, their backgrounds, and so forth, focused instead on political and tactical aspects of the campaign. Only 1 percent of the stories examined the candidates' records or past public performance. Notably, in most instances, researchers have focused on the news and not other content. Steger (1999) found that when one examined the commentary, the horserace theme, while present, did not dominate. Rather, greater diversity in areas covered emerged. Whether news analysis on television or editorial and analysis in newspapers, this content should not be ignored as it is part of the information that voters often seek.

Why the continued focus on the horserace when the media are continuously criticized for this type of coverage and those surveyed say they

want more substantive coverage? Iyengar et al. (2004) find support for the marketplace view of horserace coverage. They found voters more drawn to stories of this nature, particularly among those with higher levels of political engagement. In a related item, much of the negative coverage that is generated is usually horserace in nature, and indeed, the media's negative evaluation of a candidate's performance may influence preference. However, research in the context of presidential nomination campaigns suggests that viewing negative ads does not deter participation (Freedman and Goldstein 1999).

There is also support suggesting that simply because the game frame is utilized it does not mean that there is an absence of substantive information on policy, experience or other important information. Just et al. (1996) and Haynes et al. (2002) found that horserace coverage does not eliminate issue coverage, although it dominates the discourse. Journalists often refer to issues when presenting news about candidates' strategies. Candidates often discuss issues while promoting their own viability and electability. However, Just et al.'s (1996) focus group work suggested that while horserace coverage did help voters determine who was viable, it was also the type of content that provoked little conversation and was often perceived of as biased. The assessment of viability is one implication of the horserace coverage that may have a critical impact on outcomes. Mutz (1995) found that the horserace spin produced by the news media can have an impact on the dynamics of the race via campaign contributions. Damore (1997) determined there were similar effects relating to the media's coverage and fundraising, but found that the impact was far greater for longshot candidates. Haynes et al. (2004) determined that news coverage is far more critical to the winnowing decisions of longshots early in the campaign even if they have limited resources. Moreover, news coverage has more of an impact when the race is more dynamic. Once the campaign has winnowed to a more limited field of established candidates, the relationship of negative news coverage (primarily relating to the horserace) to dropping out is far more limited. In other words, established candidates who can weather the early portion of the nomination campaign can withstand the negative coverage that may emerge later when the field has narrowed.

The sequential process of the campaign is one of the most significant factors in the nature of the coverage generated. Just et al. (1996), in one of the most comprehensive treatments of campaign coverage and the processes that produce it, found that the process itself has much to do with media congruence, (i.e., how similar media coverage is across news outlets). Depending on what point of the process one is examining, there may be variation in how the news media covers the campaign. For example, early in the campaign during the primary period, the coverage of the candidates varies a

great deal among news outlets in terms of who gets more coverage, the tone of the coverage, and the content. As the process unfolds, this coverage begins to become more similar with the narratives of the press finally seeming to merge into one. For this reason, we see greater variability in coverage early in the process, and by the time the general election is under way, the news media converges.

Coverage of Individual Candidates: Who is Newsworthy?

As mentioned earlier, one of the functions the news media perform in the often crowded nomination campaign process is that of ranking the candidates. Poll standings and outcomes are generally utilized by the media to provide this ranking (Buell 1996, 1991; Ross 1992; Lichter et al. 1988; Adams 1987; Patterson 1980). The rankings are generally into tiers of big shots, long shots, and also-rans. Big shots tend to be intermediated more by the news media. While they receive more coverage, Flowers et al. (2003) found that often their messages were less likely to make it to the public via the media intact. However, the also-rans, often referred to as agenda-setters as they have little chance of winning but do move the issue agenda, while generating less coverage than their competitors are more likely to see their message placed in the news with little if any intermediation.

The nature of the field can also influence who receives more or less coverage relative to others. If there is no frontrunner, news coverage is more likely to be relatively even during the early days of the process before actual events take place (Johnson 1993). Once primary results become available, frontrunners will receive the bulk of the media's attention (Patterson 1980). When candidates become frontrunners, the nature of their coverage will often change. It will increase as well as become more negative in nature (Robinson and Lichter 1991; Matthews 1978). Some of this is explained by the reaction to their competitors as the race narrows and opponents begin to attack the frontrunner (Haynes and Rhine 1998; Hagen 1996). These attacks may be incorporated into news coverage of the frontrunner (Haynes and Rhine 1998).

When a candidate is deemed newsworthy due to doing well in the polls or the primaries, the media will cover the candidate. Brady (1987) found that voters could easily learn who was ahead or behind, but that it took more effort and time to learn about a candidate's stands on the issues. What was more important in terms of the research was the discovery that the voters not only knew more about viability than the issues, but that they acted upon this knowledge. Bartels (1988) found that voters would incorporate viability into their preference estimation. If their first preference was not expected to do well, rather than wasting their vote, they would cast a vote for their lesser

ranked, but more viable preference. Thus, a linkage was made between the coverage generated by the media and the likelihood that a voter would give that candidate his or her vote. In a dynamic process like the presidential nomination campaign, with its sequential primaries, the news media has ample opportunities to recast the field. Expectations based on a candidate's prior performance, resources, underlying support in a state, and so forth were created and then if they were met. Winning candidates who receive less than expected vote outcomes are likely to suffer (Ridout 1991). Later, Bartels (1993) would further the case for persuasive effects of media and argue that measurement error and other methodological reasons were responsible for earlier nonfindings in this area.

Media coverage is often more harsh toward frontrunners (Haynes and Murray 1998; Robinson and Lichter 1991; Matthews 1978). Moreover, the national news media appear to be more critical than local news organizations (Haynes and Murray 1998). In this same study, Haynes and Murray found that the national news media organizations that were examined varied more in terms of which candidates they covered more than the state news media did, however, the state news media were generally more positive in the tone of their candidate coverage. Just et al. (1996) also found that local television was generally more positive toward individual candidates than local newspapers. Certain aspects of the nomination campaign invite continuity of coverage—the pack journalism, the stump speeches, etc. But there is likely variation among outlets that may be dependent on candidate behavior (extent of time in a region or state and thus interacting with that news media, contacts with the campaign) as well as media tendencies, such as ideological leanings, resources, etc. Evidence from PIPA/Knowledge Networks Poll (October 2, 2003) that examined the association between news information sources and knowledge related to the Iraq War found there were real knowledge variations among viewers of certain news organizations.

Candidates who stand out in some way may receive coverage that varies from the norm. Heldman et al. (2005) found that Dole's coverage levels and the type of coverage generated by the print media that covered her campaign was different from that of the other candidates, particularly in its gendered nature. They suggest that perhaps the novelty of her campaign and the resultant coverage may have hindered her campaign to some degree. Given the 2008 presidential nomination campaign is one that contains the possibility of many "firsts"—the first woman, black, Mormon, Italian-American, the oldest nominee—we may see more attention given to how the news media cover candidates who differ from the norm and how this may influence voter attitudes but also the actions of candidates. One area that has been little explored is response by candidates to news coverage. This is the concept of spin. We are aware that candidates attempt to cast

their performances in the best light possible (Arterton 1984), but little systematic attention has been given to how candidates act in response to particular framing of their campaigns and to whether their adjustments can successfully alter the nature of the coverage they are given in the context of nomination campaigns. Hacker (1995) provides a thorough discussion of candidate images in presidential elections and of their importance to voters. But again, in terms of assessing the process by which candidates attempt to alter the images constructed by the media, the give and take, and the outcome, we know much less.

Voter Learning

Given the nature of our inquiries and reasons for which we make them, it is no surprise that one of our greatest concerns is whether or not voters are able to make informed decisions in the voting booth. And for this reason, political scientists have dedicated significant resources to examination of the process by which voters take in information about candidates and issues and how they respond. Given the news media's role as primary conduit for political information, particularly in an uncertain and dynamic context such as the nomination campaign, much of this research has centered on the nature of the information, receptivity of the audience, choice of information source, and how this information is used in determining preferences in (Brady 1989; Brady and Johnston 1987; Keeter and Zukin 1983). Research in the 1980s found that voters could easily recall who was ahead or behind in the race much better than they could recall the issue positions of the candidates (Robinson and Clancy 1985; Patterson 1980). Others found significant information gains across the board (Bartels 1988). In his later study, Bartels (1993) found that after he had accounted for measurement errors, the respondents in the panel survey had absorbed substantial amounts of information during the 1980 presidential election campaign. However, early on there were disagreements as to how voters learned and at what pace. There was no controversy, however, in the repeated findings that voters who lived in competitive states learned much more about the candidates and issues than those who did not (Kahn and Kenney 1997). This is likely a result of heavy media coverage within the state and well as greater interpersonal discussion among those who live in states (Jamieson et al. 2000; Lenart 1997).

One of the most interesting developments in the research runs counter to the image of the naïve individual being fed information by the news media and primed in a particular manner. Rather, it seems that the more politically knowledgeable and engaged an individual, the more likely they are to seek out information from the news media (Lenart 1997; Kennamer and Chafee 1982). Miller and Krosnick (2000) found that politically knowl-

edgeable consumers of news reflect inferences made from what they view as a credible institutional source of information. Thus, priming only occurred for politically informed people who trusted the media source. Their study suggests that media information may be taken in by individuals as part of the process of learning and this informs their preferences. Zaller's (1992) work suggests that the highly attentive tend to be minimally effected by news because they tend to have well formed belief systems and therefore filter in consistent information and filter out inconsistent information. Low-attention individuals are susceptible to information conveyed in the news but generally do not pay much attention to it and thus appear unaffected. Zaller argues that the most likely to be influenced are moderately attentive people who tend to pick up some information but tend not to have a well-developed belief system to act as a filter. These studies once again suggest that perhaps priming and any subsequent learning are conditioned not only upon the individual, but also upon the nature of the news source and the nature of the news.

Thus, voters have moved from being manipulated by the media to actually using the information provided by the media for learning processes. But can the media influence voter choice by virtue of media favorability? Baker and Lawrence (2006) found mixed results for television, but stronger results for those who listened to talk radio. Talk radio listeners tended to be more receptive to cues provided by talk radio hosts. Sadly, it seems that "dittoheads" really has some meaning, particularly, as they found in their results that Rush Limbaugh listeners seemed to be very receptive to cues from the talk show host. Perhaps this is due to self-selection and the generally more ideological format of talk radio as well as the interpersonal nature of the host and listener relationship.

Best and Hubbard (1999) suggest that early in the primary season when voters possess limited information and potentially malleable political attitudes, watching the debates may have the capacity to influence viewers' campaign engagement, issue appraisals, and candidate evaluations. This stands in contrast to some earlier work on the impact of debates that found less influence, but timing of the studies was called in question. Debates during the general election period may not have significant influence, but during the primaries, particularly among crowded fields, the debates as well as the coverage they generate, may. Work by Shaw and Roberts (2000) also suggest that events such as debates and the coverage that is generated by them can influence how voters think about candidates and thus the candidates' chances for electoral success.

One area that has seen some potentially negative news that goes to Patterson's original assertion is that of the potential for the "new" media to expand opportunities for political learning. While all are in agreement that

for those who have access to the Internet, there is more information out there to be had. However, some researchers have suggested that the knowledge gap that exists between the politically knowledgeable and the politically ignorant will continue and perhaps even widen (Prior 2005). The basic result is that those who are already interested will use the Internet and all of its sources to further gain knowledge, while those who are not politically interested will use the Internet for the uses and gratifications that they are interested in. One other area of interest has emerged as surveys are finding that more and more people are getting their news from blogs rather than typical news organizations. Sunstein (2001) produced the argument that the ability to choose your news would create a situation where individuals insulated themselves from ideas. Sunstein's assertions encouraged others to look more closely at issues of political and ideological polarization in political blogs. Adamic and Glance (2005) found that that top political bloggers were far more likely to link to bloggers with similar ideologies than to cross ideological lines. But they also found some significant linking across ideological lines, suggesting that even in a circumstance where bloggers have full control over the media they create, they will, in some cases, point to ideologically divergent views. Hargitai (2007) found that although people turn to a variety of sources for information online, their actions seem to resemble offline media consumption patterns.

Presidential Nominations and Media Research in the New Millennium

There has been a great deal of research that has emerged in the field of presidential nomination campaigns, and a good portion of this has focused on or incorporated the news media as a variable. Regardless of the phenomenon to be explained, the news media and the coverage it generates about the campaign, appears to be an important component. However, as we move beyond three decades after the reforms of the 1970s, we may question how far we have really come in understanding the role and influence of media on the process itself and what has stood in our way. I would propose that we have come much farther than we could have imagined, primarily due to the creation of new organizations that are focused on capturing and coding media coverage and the emergence of new technology and new methods of analysis. Institutions such as the Pew Center for People and the Press, the Stanford Political Communication Lab, the Wisconsin Advertising Project or the Annenberg Public Policy Center provide significant sources of data for research in the area of media. Data has always been problematic in our studies of the news media and their influence on nomination campaigns. When we have been able to collect a record of media coverage, we often are lacking in terms of knowing who saw or heard it. When we have individual

level preference data, we often lack information on the sources of information that accompanied it. Even with greater sources of data available, one of the problems researchers find occurs with measurement and comparability. How do we measure media coverage? Often this will vary from study to study, with the one similarity being that *The New York Times* was utilized. What was the unit of measurement—the story? The paragraph? Column inches? There is little discussion of this issue within our subfield, and it merits some concern for reasons of comparability. Media coverage is a complex phenomenon, yet we have little discourse among ourselves as to the proper, or at least consistent, manner, in which it should be collected. This is one avenue that I believe we should take. In the field of presidential nomination campaigns, where news media coverage is thought to be so critical to the process, particularly early when so much uncertainty exists, our models must take care to measure the important variables with precision. We argue about viability and momentum and how these should be measured, but media coverage is often taken as is, primarily because we all know how difficult this data is to collect. In addition, we need more theory in relation to candidate behavior to the media and vice versa. Once again, we have significant theoretical development in the avenue of voters, but less so in regard to the other players in the process.

As to questions for the future, the candidate portion of the equation and the news organization portion of the equation seem to deserve greater attention. Voters have been examined greatly, and certainly more thoroughly than the other areas. We have done well with understanding the structural elements of the nomination campaign as they relate to the media, but we have paid much less attention to the interaction of candidate and news media, at least in terms of our empirical research. Of course, now there is the new media to contend with. The newest questions laid at our feet deal with the role that bloggers and websites play in the process. What will be the impact of social networking and YouTube for candidates? How will they incorporate these tools into their campaign strategies?

Ironically, as one thinks about all of the questions that should be revisited given new data, methods, and theory—perhaps to solidify finally what we "know" about the media and the nomination, we are at once bombarded with new questions that take us down a new path, revisiting similar questions but in a different time with new rules and players. And thus we ignore the past and focus on the future until someone writes another review essay.

NOTES

[1]This review focuses primarily on the research on media within the context of presidential nomination campaigns. For a more comprehensive review of the political communication research see Graber (1993).

[2]The news media have always played a role in general elections, but a much lesser role in the nominating phase as the party organizations had dominated.

[3]For example, Kahn and Kenney (2002) find that editorial preference for Senatorial candidates bleeds into the news coverage of these candidates. In circumstances where the races are very competitive, and there is a great deal of coverage, and when voters rely on their local newspaper, this can have an impact on the outcome of the race.

[4]See "The Invisible Primary- Invisible No Longer: A First Look at Coverage of the 2008 Presidential Campaign," Project for Excellence in Journalism and the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy.

[5]One potential explanation for the increased amount and the earlier starting point for horserace coverage has been the increasing frontloading of the primary and caucus calendar. However, an alternate explanation might be found in the changing nature of news coverage. With the emergence in the 1990s of round the clock news channels, news organizations, such as CNN, need material for their 24/7 news shows. The strategic and tactical activities of the campaign and the movements of polls all provide easy and cheap "news" for the continuous news cycle. Today, more material from the candidates, both substantive and competitive, makes it into the news cycle because the news hole provided cable news has become so large.

[6]Coding may be at play here as well. Often studies force stories into one category—substance versus horserace, for example. However, as Flowers et al. (2003) demonstrated, candidate messages and news stories can contain a mix of both. In fact, most news stories combine a variety of information elements within them. So there might be a tendency to inflate the amount of horserace coverage generated.

[7]The agenda setting research initiated by McCombs and Shaw (1972) has spawned an enormous amount of activity that has developed into research into the effects of priming voters and framing candidates and issues. Coverage of this area would require a review essay of its own.

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