

# The Media's Role in Elections: Air Wars, Part I

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## Principal Ideas Here to Consider

- Why is the media important to the electoral process?
- What information should the media provide to voters about elections, campaigns, and candidates?
- Do you think the media provides that information now? Why or why not?

## Why are the media important to elections?

- Information important for holding officeholders accountable
- Help translate citizen preferences into policy by helping determine issue agenda
- Help candidates communicate with voters

What are the principles that guide reporters and publishers in their coverage of elections?

How well do these principles co-exist with the role we want the media to play in elections?

## Media Industry Incentives

- Publishers/editors: make a profit
- Reporters: write a story by deadline
- Reporters: maintain sources

## What does the media cover?

- *Not* politics
- Sexy politics
- High profile campaigns
- “The Horserace”
- “Inside baseball”

## How does media coverage affect campaigns?

## How do the media affect campaigns?

- Create name recognition
- Create a dominant storyline about a candidate
- Set expectations
- Create bandwagon effects
- “Prime” the electorate with issues
- Evaluate candidate strategies
- Report the outcome

How do campaigns try to affect the media?

### Free vs. paid media

- Free media: news organizations act as intermediaries and communicate the candidate's message in their own frame
- Paid media: candidates pay to communicate their message

## “Professional Politics” Industry Incentives

- General Consultants as “Gatekeepers”
- Specific, narrow segmented specialized consultants
- “Network” and party effects
- “Incentivized” spillovers
- Timeframes & movement of dollars
- Differences between candidate and non-candidate campaigns here

## Why Do Voters, Candidates & Campaigns Use Technology for Information Acquisition?

- Cognitive Needs – Desire (demand) for information, knowledge, understanding
- Affective Needs – Aesthetic, pleasurable, and emotional experiences
- Personal Integrative Needs – Inner-directed, deal with credibility, confidence, stability, and status
- Social Integrative Needs – Outer-directed, strengthening relationships with family, friends, the world
- Escapist Needs – Desire for tension release or diversion  
- Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, 2001

## Diffusion Theory

- Rogers (1995) has outlined four parts of “diffusion” through the tools of the media:
  - Innovation system
  - Social system
  - Time component
  - Communications channels to others in sphere
- And occurs through five steps:
  - Knowledge
  - Persuasion
  - Decision (adopt or reject)
  - Implementation
  - Confirmation

But what of the candidate &  
campaign side of the equation?

What decisions does a candidate  
have to make when deciding  
when & where to buy ad time?

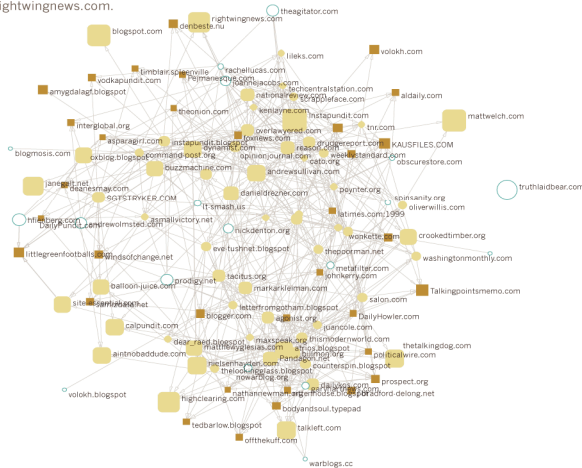
What decisions does a candidate have to make when deciding when and where to buy ad time?

- Ratings points vs. costs
- Level of race vs. “exposure” (two-fold concept here)
- Political geography
  - Media markets

## What Candidates & Campaigns See

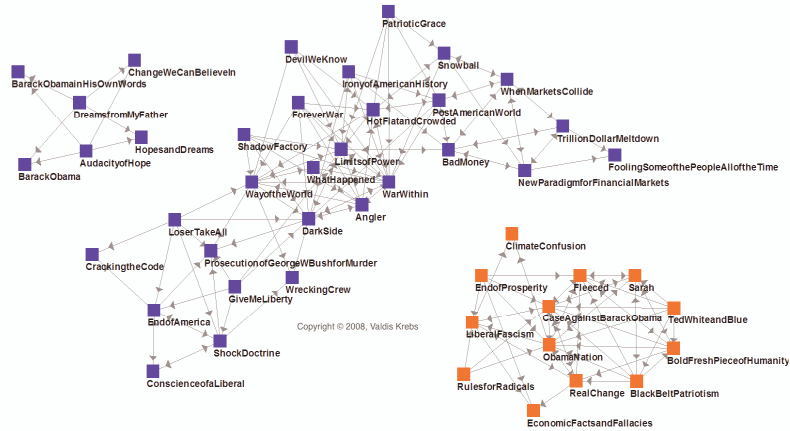
### Blogspace: The Most Popular Political Blogs on the Net

Map of space produced by John Hawkin's list of popular political blogs. List available at [www.rightwingnews.com](http://www.rightwingnews.com).

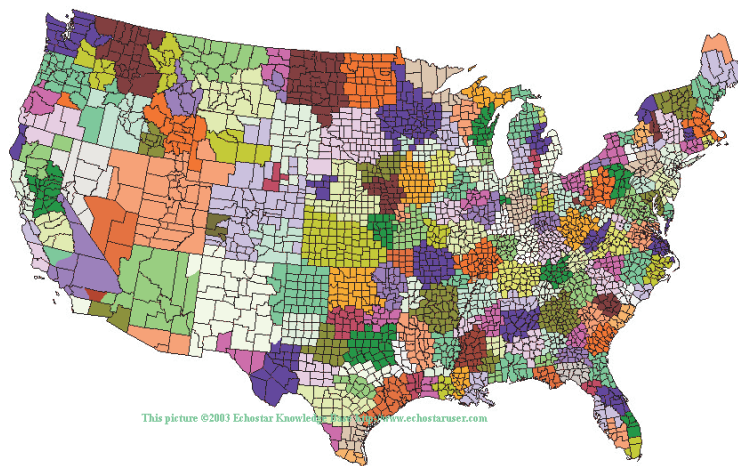




# How They “Map” This View: A Debate



# Media Markets in the U.S., 2003-2004



What decisions does a candidate have to make when deciding when and where to buy ad time?

- Ratings points vs. cost
- Political geography
- Few or many messages
- How often to air them
- To attack or not, and if so, when

## The role of the free media

- Controversial ads get media coverage!
  - The “Daisy Spot” (1964)
  - Revolving Door (1988)
  - The “Swift Boat Veterans for Truth” ads (2004)
  - The “3 am” spot (2008)
- Ad-watch boxes
- Response: “ads with footnotes”

## Air Wars, Part II

What do positive ads do for campaigns?

- Create familiarity, name recognition
- Build favorability ratings
- Create impression of electability

## How can a campaign respond to negative ads?

- Hit back
- Play the blame game

## Negative Ads

- Positive Ads
- Contrast Ads
- Attack ads
- Outside groups:
  - Swift Boat Vets, Texans for Truth, Progress for America, New Democrat Network, MoveOn.org
- Shadow and web ads

## To what degree do campaigns control the agenda?

- Fixed vs. fluid agenda
- Priming
- Defusing

### Links to Consider, Use

- **Advertising**
- [http://webserve.govst.edu/users/ghrank/Advertising/Pitch/how\\_to\\_analyze\\_ads.htm](http://webserve.govst.edu/users/ghrank/Advertising/Pitch/how_to_analyze_ads.htm)  
How to Analyze Ads
- <http://www.adage.com/century/>  
Advertising Age's collection of ads over the past 100 years
- <http://www.adbusters.org/home>  
Adbusters home page featuring spoof ads and serious commentary
- <http://www.pbs.org/30secondcandidate/>  
PBS's "30-second Candidate" including "Tricks of the Trade" for TV ads
- [http://www.uiowa.edu/~commstud/resources/pol\\_ads.html](http://www.uiowa.edu/~commstud/resources/pol_ads.html)  
University of Iowa's links to political advertising including QuickTime movies
- **Visual Persuasion**
- [http://www.medialit.org/reading\\_room/article80.html](http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article80.html)  
The Power of Images: Creating the Myths of Our Time
- <http://nuovo.com/southern-images/analyses.html>  
Basic Strategies in Reading Photographs
- <http://www.pbs.org/ktca/americanphotography/index.html>  
PBS's "American Photography: A Century of Images"
- [http://www.archives.gov/exhibit\\_hall/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/powers\\_of\\_persuasion\\_home.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/powers_of_persuasion/powers_of_persuasion_home.html)  
A great resource of images, including American propaganda poster of WWII
- <http://www.medialit.org/>  
The Center for Media Literacy
- **Resources**
- <http://www.kamous.com/site/references-umich-edu-83253>
- Dictionary of symbolism
- <http://www.nizkor.org/features/fallacies/>  
and [http://www.answers.com/topic/logical-fallacy-2.](http://www.answers.com/topic/logical-fallacy-2)  
Comprehensive guides to logical fallacies
- <http://www.seussville.com/university/reasoning/>  
Test your power of reasoning with Dr. Seuss
- <http://www.iep.utm.edu/g/greekphi.htm>  
Information on the Greek philosophers
- <http://advertising.utexas.edu/research/law/catholic.html>  
The Vatican's take on advertising