Political Actor Agency, Public Opinion, and Negative Media Frames
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Research Questions
How do negative media frames impact political campaigns?
What role can political actors play in managing frames?
How did the Jeremiah Wright media frame and candidate response impact the 2008 Democratic primary campaign?
How does the Wright frame compare to other negative frames?

Game Theory: Negative Media Frames and Candidate Responses

Media Effects Literature
Hypodermic Model
(Lazarsfeld, 1927) - the media injects info into a pliant public.

Minimal Effects
(Lazarsfeld et al., 1944) - the media has a modest impact b/c of selective perception and exposure.

Not-So-Minimal Effects
(Iyengar, Shanto, and McClysh, 2007; Tarkishen and Schon, 1997; Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000) - the media has specific effects: agenda setting, framing and priming.

Media Coverage

Assumptions:
1. Each voter’s perception of the candidate differs.
2. Political filters like partisan identification impact these perceptions.
3. Specific media events and actions can shape parts of the voter’s perception.
4. There ranges a degree of misperception among voters about candidates, events, and issues.
5. One strongly held misperception may cause a voter to vote against any one particular candidate.
6. A candidate’s response and actions can alter future news media stories and thus alter the narrative.
7. Candidates attempt to maximize positive frames and narratives for themselves.

Methods and Data
2. Lexis-Nexis media accounts - times series.
3. Content analysis of media coverage - times series.

Findings
#1 Public perceptions of Wright-Obama frame shaped by Partisan ID and Ideology
#2 Partisans deemed Wright story as more important to their vote decision than non-partisans

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In sum: Agency is limited and constrained, but possible.