

Political Communication: Perspectives on the Future of the Field

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Political Communication as a Field: interdisciplinary from the outset

- sociology, political science, communication, psychology, anthropology, cultural studies
- micro- (individual), meso- (organizational), macro- (system) level research
- RQs power and influence
- Multiple methods: content analysis, surveys/panels, experiments, observation and interviews
- Added value in cross-national comparative research



Political communication research: the past

- Traditional models of political campaigning have been mass media dominated
- advertising-driven
- assumed agenda-setting and framing effects on issue perceptions
- agenda-setting effects=salience of issues in the news reflected in public opinion 1960s, 1980s
- framing effects: most evident in issues that are far away (Dutch 1998 experimental study of Poland's 2004 EU entry)

Comparing media and elections in democracies

- Impartial and balanced reporting of politics and parties in broadcast media is often mandated
- Election campaigns are often high points for political communication in the life of democracies
- Main evening TV news often reaches widest audience with the most undecideds or potential vote switchers
- Content analysis of election campaign news compared across national elections over time in one country, and between countries
- Two independent dimensions applied to political actors in the news: visibility and tone
- Main topics or issues in news stories may also advantage or disadvantage parties



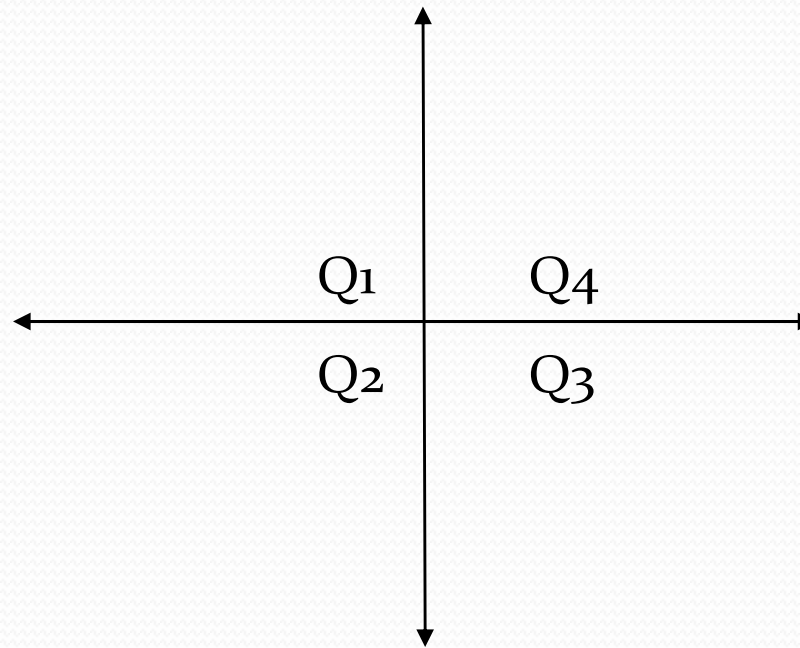
Content analysis uses in election research

- Over time comparisons of key aspects of election news to identify the range and quality of information available to citizens at election time
- Links to survey data: measures of exposure to media linked to measures of media content in analysis
- Examples from EU elections, and past national elections in UK, Germany, Poland, Turkey, Canada & U.S.
- UK 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005: volume of political news declining in these mass media outlets, visibility of parties and candidates
- UK 2010: televised political debates among top three party leaders, content analysis in progress



High Visibility

Very
Negative
Tone



Very
Positive
Tone

Low Visibility



my research: bringing content in

- Methods: content analysis, surveys/panels, experiments, observation and interviews
- Perspective: cross-national comparative
- What is the: quality & quantity of information in election campaigns, the balance of party/media forces in shaping campaign agendas? With what effects?
- International news and public diplomacy in war and crisis—Iraq war on TV news in US, UK, Germany, South Africa, Czech Republic , Al-Jazeera
- International TV news compared: PSB, geographic & cultural proximity
- Predictors of front page news in China



Political communication research: the future

- Decline of the mass media era
- Moving from advertising-driven to consumer-driven models of political communication
- Political marketing on political participation is everywhere: buying fair & organic coffee, making socially responsible investments
- Scammell (2002): “Branding is both a cause and effect of the shift toward a thoroughly consumerized paradigm of political communication”
- Move from agenda-setting and framing to political public relations and political branding



The Sage Handbook of Political Communication

- Political communication broadly construed
- For a global audience
- Enduring questions
- Challenges
- Opportunities
- Research agendas for the future

The Sage Handbook of Political Communication

- **I. media industry, technology & political systems**
- **II. citizens, media & political engagement**
- **III. methodological advances**
- **IV. power**
- **V. national, regional, international contexts**

I. Media Industry, Technology & Political Systems

- **Entertainment & political information**
- **Trends in international perspective**
- **Blogs and the future of news**
- **Political organizations & campaigning online**
- **Government communications**
- **Popular culture**
- **Evaluating standards of performance**



II. Citizens, Media & Political Engagement

- **New media**
- **Young people and political engagement**
- **Knowledge & visual learning**
- **Personal networks & political socialization**
- **Democratic citizenship & the internet**
- **Gender & political representation**
- **Political values & media**



III. Methodological Advances

- **Analyzing Moods and Emotion**
- **Experiments and Surveys Online**
- **Explaining News Content**
- **Social Networks and Political Knowledge**
- **Approaches to Framing**
- **Ethnographic approaches**



IV. Power and Political Communication

- **The power of rhetoric**
- **Political communication in war and conflict**
- **Social movements**
- **Empowerment and social media**
- **The power of everyday conversation**
- **Powerful concepts: agenda-setting, priming, framing**

IV. National, Regional, International Contexts

- Democratization and political communication in South Korea
- Latin American media and democratization
- Russian and post-Soviet contexts of political communication
- New democracies in east-central Europe: Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic
- Grassroots political communication in India
- Arabic al Jazeera, transnational identity & influence
- Communication & elections in the new South Africa