

## Media's shaping of the election

Covering, changing outcome of campaigns a fine line

Presidential politics is a different game, even from 10 years ago.

And we know what the older folks in the crowd might be saying about us, a bunch of college students in a no-swing state, preaching about politics going a different way. But we see it. And the game has changed significantly.

What else could describe the plight of Republican George W. Bush in the last six days, going from fearful to high to low to unknown to whatever else — depending on what university the election analyst is from, what newspaper is writing the story, which TV talking head is spewing which invective from which side of the aisle on which channel, which gets a certain rating at a certain time and is, no matter what anyone else says, the one you turn to for news.

Imagine a basketball game where the announcers had an effect on the outcome ...

So who's running for president? You wonder if it's Bush, a man who was told, cajoled and assured he had to win the South Carolina primary Saturday or he'd bow out to Sen. John McCain. Suddenly, South Carolina, a state without much importance attached to it otherwise, became a make-or-break for the multimillion-dollar man.

So Bush went out and won the hard-line Republicans, losing his place close to the middle. He made statements and curried favor and sided with people who assure he will never go back to his compassionate conservatism. He can claim it, but not without being called a

liar by McCain or a possible Democratic opponent in the future.

Tuesday, Bush lost in Arizona and Michigan to McCain, mainly because independents and Democrats came out in droves to vote for the senator. Bush might have won those votes before South Carolina. Not now. Bush won the election among Republicans. But he didn't win the primary. And this is what the election is coming to.

Somewhere along the way, our vicarious enjoyment — our meaning the pundits, the media and the academics — went across the line from covering the election into shaping the election. Imagine a basketball game where announcers had an effect in the outcome. Bush, and of course, President Clinton, have fallen prey to the public.

It's hard to say how much we've cost him and how much he's cost himself. But at what point does the race become about the candidates — and not our coverage of their commercials?

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### Obermeyer's VIEW



### Letters to the EDITOR

#### Don't ask, don't Bell

In response to Rodney A. Bell's letter about gay rights on campus, should all armed services, active or ROTC, be disbanded because they don't allow gays? Gays are allowed in the military under the "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

What people seem to forget is that it is the military that allows them to voice their opinions. Not the Constitution, not Congress, not the president, but the military. Without the military, their personal freedoms wouldn't exist. I think Rodney would do well to remember that the next time he asks for the removal of the institution that protects him.

Chris Rodgers  
computer science  
freshman

#### Hetero scholarships

Mr. Bell, I understand that you have your own personal preferences when it comes to sexuality, and more power to you for standing up for what you believe in.

First of all, Mr. Bell, I do not discriminate against you, I simply discriminate against things that you uphold that negatively impact me.

It's great that people realize that they are gay, but as long as we base scholarships or funds on being gay, why don't we give scholarships to those who are heterosexual? Or housing support for those young heterosexual couples? Along your line of thinking, that wouldn't be very far off.

Johanna Ollerich  
Russian/international affairs  
junior

#### Who's the hussy?

To a certain extent, I can understand Ms. Brown's disgust of what

she saw happening on "Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire." However, I felt she was using the column more to vocalize the plight of gays in America, rather than giving any constructive criticism to what was, basically, just a really bad idea for a TV show.

I have to wonder if Ms. Brown did any research into the backgrounds of any of the contestants before simply denouncing them as "bimbos" and "hussies."

She claims one young lady, after describing her as young, dumb and blonde, said the word "fun" 586 times. Is that accurate? Did she actually sit there and count? I would think as a film student she would realize that there are directors, producers and studio executives who would never allow one word to be used that many times.

Perhaps some or all of these contestants were college-educated, or came from loving, productive, moral families. Whether they were intelligent or not is only the smaller issue here.

There are some women who, for reasons of their own, prefer to marry wealthy men. I do not judge them for that. We all have the right to our priorities. Maybe if I had married for money instead of for love, I would have taken more vacations, had a nicer car to drive and could afford a lot of the things I am doing without now.

At any rate, I do not condemn their right to pursue a rich man if that is what they want for themselves. To pursue him on national television, while unconventional, risky and in poor taste, was simply a different method of achieving that end.

Brown also seemed to take offense to not only the show's premise and its contestants, but also to its announcers. I doubt the female

announcer got to decide what she wore, and as for the male, I can't really comment until I understand exactly what a "slime-ball-o-rama" actually is.

Finally, if Brown wishes to "sit back and laugh at straight people who misuse their powerful gift," that is certainly her prerogative. But I should point out that this gift is not really a gift, it's a right to choose your life partner, in whatever form that takes. This choice is available to every American, gays included.

Kerry Grammar  
Lincoln

#### Wit Without Substance

Regarding David Baker's column ("University's multicultural attempts poor"), I have to admit I'm a little uncertain about his message.

The fact that Mr. Baker has elected to address the plight of "black Nebraskans" is admirable, and I'm sure the fact that he "goes to Africa often" gives him additional insight. However, by launching into a worn-out role-reversal analogy, he may be displaying his journalistic wit but does very little for the supposed issue at hand — how the university deals with cultural diversity issues.

It may be both amusing and eye-opening to consider David's hypothetical "National Association for the Advancement of Whites," but it fails to say anything about what is lacking in university multicultural policies. And Mr. Baker, if you're REALLY on top of your game, you may even enlighten your readers with some suggestions on how to improve the situation for minorities at UNL.

Chris Sommerich  
graduate student  
political science

### P.S. Write Back

Send letters to: Daily Nebraskan, 20 Nebraska Union, 1400 "R" St., Lincoln, NE 68588, or fax to (402) 472-1761, or e-mail letters@unl.edu. Letters must be signed and include a phone number for verification.