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Book Note: When Politicians Attack! Party Cohesion in the Media, by Tim Groeling

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evaluations of political marketing. First, from an Ipsos MORI pollster's perspective, and second, Temple offers a critique of the Lees-Marshment model's capacity to enhance democracy; this leads to a conclusion that draws together the themes of the book, testing the robustness of the propositions and drawing out themes for future research.

The chapters offer an interesting overview of how marketing is both a feature of politics across disparate national contexts as well as illustrating how marketing concepts can be used to explain political behavior. Whether a model can be applied universally is questionable, and there is never a justification for choice of nations, so one can wonder if systems such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, and Ghana can be usefully compared. One does get the sense of concept stretching at times in terms of fitting a range of behaviors into a marketing framework. However, in terms of testing the extent to which systemic factors influence political behavior, this offers useful insights. Equally, the book seems more focused on testing the Lees-Marshment model and comparative propositions than assessing the value offered to politics by marketing as a practical or theoretical construct. The Temple critique would make an excellent third conceptual chapter, as opposed to being chapter eighteen, directing authors to consider the democratic implications of the evolving marketization of politics in their respective nations. Therefore, while this is a valuable addition to understanding how marketing is used as a strategic tool, and what systemic factors act as drivers of marketization, the work fails to explore the wider implications and the key question of whether marketing offers simply a means of gaining power or if marketization can lead to a more developed form of democracy. The evidence presented here suggests the former prevails and that on the whole political marketing is far more about selling than listening.

Tim Groeling

When Politicians Attack! Party Cohesion in the Media

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 256 pp.

Reviewed by: Paul R. Brewer, *University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

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For some, the title of Tim Groeling's book may evoke images of legislators engaging in fisticuffs on the floor of their chamber (which does happen from time to time in some nations). In truth, his research focuses on verbal attacks rather than physical ones—an emphasis that makes for a no less entertaining and much more enlightening account. Specifically, the author explains how the U.S. news media cover what members of Congress say about the president and one another, as well as how mediated partisan communication influences the public and, ultimately, the political process.

The book begins with a pair of useful metaphors: Groeling presents party labels as “brand names” and individual politicians as “franchisees” who can benefit by associating themselves with these brands. Unlike McDonald's, however, “McParties” exert

only weak control over their franchisees. As a result, the author argues, party members will sometimes follow incentives to send messages that weaken the overall brand name. Furthermore, the news media's own incentives should lead them to treat intraparty criticism and cross-party praise as particularly newsworthy.

Groeling uses content analysis data to capture how television news covers statements that members of Congress make about the president and one another. Coding the tenor of such statements is a formidable challenge (as reflected in the somewhat low intercoder reliability scores for his analysis), but the author bolsters his case by drawing on two independent data sets. He finds that congressional criticism of the president is much more common in the news than congressional praise of the president, even in statements from members of the president's own party. Building on this result, Groeling argues that journalists present a biased sample of congressional statements; for example, intraparty praise of the president by members of Congress is underrepresented in news coverage. The author also demonstrates that when the news media cover what members of Congress say about one another, they present more (and more favorable) coverage of the party that does not control the White House than coverage of the president's partisan allies in Congress, particularly when partisan control of the government is divided.

Next, Groeling turns to the effects of mediated partisan communication on audience members. Drawing on a pair of experiments, he shows that the "costly talk" of intraparty criticism produces clear effects, presumably because audience members find it especially credible. In contrast, the "cheap talk" of intraparty praise produces little impact. A similar pattern emerges when the author uses the content analysis data and approval ratings from Gallup surveys to test the impact of partisan messages at the aggregate level.

The book concludes with its most counterintuitive and provocative conclusion: namely, that it can work to the disadvantage of presidents when their party holds control of Congress. Groeling argues that such an arrangement leads to intensified media coverage of intraparty criticism, whereas divided government leads to a more congenial news environment for the White House. The former scenario places total responsibility on the president's party without necessarily providing total control or unity; the latter scenario, on the other hand, divides not only power but also responsibility. Indeed, the author suggests that divided government can facilitate a "conspiracy of incumbents" in which a president and a nonpresidential party that controls Congress cooperate to enhance their respective electoral prospects—at expense of the president's fellow partisans in Congress and the nonpresidential party's presidential nominee.

All in all, *When Politicians Attack* is a theoretically and methodologically rigorous work that provides a model of multimethod research. At the same time, it is also an engaging read that makes good use of illustrative anecdotes. Moreover, its conclusions could not be timelier. The swift end to the unified control of government that the Democrats enjoyed from 2008 to 2010 dovetails with the author's warning that his results carry "ominous implications about the potential political viability of unified government on the national state" (p. 96). Looking forward, it will be fascinating to see whether divided government leads to more favorable coverage of President Barack

Obama, as the book's theory would predict. One can only hope that Groeling revisits his ideas, perhaps in a sequel titled *World's Deadliest Swarms of Politicians*.

Yu Haiqing

Media and Cultural Transformation in China. London: Routledge. 2009. 212 + xi pp.

Reviewed by: Shuyu Kong, *Simon Fraser University, Canada*

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In the last decade or so, Chinese media studies has fast developed into an emergent field, both in China and around the world, encompassing many different disciplines. Scholars are exploring methodologies and theoretical frameworks to better understand the rapid growth of the Chinese media industry and its increasingly diverse roles in Chinese society. Yu Haiqing's book makes a useful contribution to this intellectual enterprise with its careful research and theoretical insights.

The book utilizes empirical research on media spectacles to discuss the roles of media in China's social and cultural transformations. Although many of the author's arguments are not necessarily new, such as that "the media have played a central role in presenting and facilitating these transformations" (p. 1) and that there is a "complicated dynamics of contestation, conjunction and incorporation between the state and the non-state in their creative production and use of media in their old and new forms" (p. 1), what distinguishes this book from other research is the author's rich and theoretically informed analysis of media cases. Combining methods and theories from media and communication studies with critical theory, Yu's study manages to attend to the empirical details of individual media events while simultaneously adopting a broader perspective on developments in the Chinese mediascape.

The book is neatly divided into seven chapters according to their subjects, with its main chapters (chap. 2, 3, 4, and 6) dealing with a series of media spectacles: the new millennium celebration, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) reportage, urbanites' uses of the new media around AIDS and SARS, and Falun Gong's media campaign with the Chinese state. After the introduction, which provides a broader context for her case studies, such as describing the formation of media conglomerates in a postsocialist society and the changing dynamics between media institutes, texts, and audiences, in chapter 1, the author further clarifies her approach to media as a shift from dichotomy to interplay, from state to society, underscoring the significance of this shift for understanding media modernity in China. The following chapters each focus on one specific case. Chapter 2 analyses the propaganda function of media events, while chapter 3 discusses new media as social spaces. Chapter 4 focuses on journalistic practices, and chapter 6 on nonstate negotiation and even challenge through media campaigns. Through these multifaceted "thick descriptions," the dynamics and complexity