

## [Hillary Stuns--Four Theories](#)

Slate Magazine

December 31, 2007 Monday

Copyright 2007 Washingtonpost.Newsweek Interactive Company, LLC. All Rights Reserved

**Section:** KAUSFILES

**Length:** 32527 words

**Byline:** Mickey Kaus

### **Body**

---

There isn't another contested Democratic primary for [9 more days](#)? What are we supposed to do in the meantime? Can't they speed the process up? ... 12:09.A.M.

---

Only waterworks works: [Now he's crying](#). [via [Lucianne](#)] 2:36 A.M.

---

I'm as flummoxed as everyone else, having gone along with the near-universal consensus that Obama would win. [Mystery Pollster](#) has his work cut out for him. But I'm confident that soon enough there will be so many powerful explanations for what now seems an out-of-the-blue event that it will appear to be overdetermined. It's important to memorialize this moment of utter stupefaction.

That said, here are four possible factors:

1. Bradley Effect: It seemed like a nice wonky little point when [Polipundit speculated on the Reverse Bradley Effect](#)-the idea that Iowa's public caucuses led Dem voters to demonstrate their lack of prejudice by caucusing for Obama. Now this is the CW of the hour. Polipundit wrote:

I suspect that Obama may have scored better than he would have in a secret-ballot election, and benefited from a Reverse Bradley Effect.

New Hampshire, of course, is a secret ballot election. Voters might have told pollsters one thing but done another in private.\*\* New Hampshirites I ran into Tuesday night mentioned that the state was very late ratifying the MLK Holiday.

2. Lazio Effect. No ganging up on the girl! First, Edwards turns on her in the debate. Then Obama says she's merely "likeable enough." Then the press disparages her anger, mocks her campaign and [gloats over its troubles](#). They made her cry! And then that mean macho John Edwards goes and says the crying makes her unfit to be president. (I was told voter leaving Edwards in the closing hours went disproportionately to Hillary, not Obama.)

3. Feiler/Skurnik Effect: What's stunning is the ferocity and speed with which Hillary's fortunes turned around in those final hours. Kf has a theory to explain that! Actually, two theories. The familiar [Feiler Faster Thesis](#) holds that voters are comfortable processing information at the vastly increased speed it can come at them. Jerry Skurnik's "Two Electorate" theory holds that voters who don't follow politics are much less informed than they used to be, which causes polls to shift rapidly when they do inform themselves. Put these two together and you've got a vast

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

uninformed pool of voters that only begins to make up its mind until the very last minute--after the last poll is taken, maybe--and then reaches its decision by furiously ingesting information at a Feileresque pace. In fact, the percent of voters who made up their minds at the very end in N.H. was unusually large. (Add convincing statistic here!)

Two implications of the Feiler/Skurnik combo: a) Momentum from the previous primary doesn't last. When the early primary dates were set, the CW held that the Iowa loser would never be able to stop the Iowa "wave" effect in the five days between the two primaries. It was too short a time. In fact, it wasn't short enough. A three day separation and maybe Obama would have won. As it was, by the time the uninformed voters tuned in on Sunday and Monday, Iowa was ancient history.\*\*\* b) Instead, these voters saw clips of Hillary having her emotional tearing up moment. In other words, the Feiler/Skurnik Effect magnifies the significance of any events that occur in the final day or two of the campaign. After yesterday's election, expect more of these events.

4) The Congestion Alert Effect: I remember when the Southern California transportation authorities installed a state-of-the-art series of electronic signs alongside the freeways to give motorists instantaneous warnings of traffic delays. The signs don't do that any more. Why? It turned out that when you warned drivers of congestion on Route A, they all took Route B, leading the latter to become congested instead of the former. Similarly, independent voters in N.H. were told by the press that the Democratic race was a done deal--so they voted in the closer, more exciting Republican race. Which made the Republican race not so close and the undid the deal in the Dem race. (Brendan Loy [published this theory first.](#)) [ [via Insta](#)]

5) Bonus CD-only Theory--The Orthodox Shul Effect: Alert emailer B.L. writes:

The independents broke the way worshipers do at an orthodox (anything) religious ceremony. The ladies went left and the lads went right (most female indies voted in the Dem primary; most male indies in the Repub).

In other words, it wasn't the lower number of independents voting in Democratic primary that hurt Obama, but which independents voted Dem. McCain's race sucked away precisely those independents most likely to vote for Obama--men (and also, we might speculate, relatively conservative women).

Backfill: Halperin [has about 30 theories](#), including at least two of the above. ... [Here's a Slate piece on the Bradley Effect.](#) ...

\*\*--The Reverse Bradley Effect, in other words, meant that the Iowa results, which seemed to show that the regular ol' Bradley Effect wasn't operating, were deceptive. As [this eerily prescient](#) post suggests:

If the Reverse Bradley Effect holds, then, Obama will do worse in New Hampshire than his Iowa triumph would lead you to expect, even if Hillary does nothing to change anyone's mind. ...

See , I knew it all along. [But you forgot it?--ed **No.** I actually never knew it. Always thought Obama would win big]. ...

\* \*\*--In this respect, New Hampshire was a replay [of the 2000 Michigan GOP primary between Bush and McCain](#) , in which Bush's momentum faded stunningly quickly. ... 1:10 A.M. link

---

Tuesday, January 8, 2008

Mark Blumenthal is [liveblogging the N.H. poll results](#). (Most recent entries are at the bottom.) ... 5:48 P.M.

---

Joe explains [John Edwards' brilliant strategy of losing Iowa and getting clobbered in New Hampshire](#). It's a huge load of BS! ... But why would Edwards drop out? What else does he have to do? And as long as Trippi keeps spinning these scenarios, he keeps getting paid, right ... P.S.: A respected emailer defends Trippi--

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

"if his client wants to soldier on, what's he supposed to say? "I know we can't win, but Edwards, the fool, wants to keep fighting?" Trippi knows what they're up against.

It's still BS. It seems to me there is a way to soldier on that doesn't involve selling elaborate bogus scenarios. In 2004, I actually bought some of them! ... P.P.S.: Luckily, as of 9:12 Eastern, Edwards is the big loser tonight, because Hillary is emphatically not out of the race. ... 3:20 A.M. link

McCain's 'Banana': Mark Krikorian [on "amnesty" semantics](#):

The perennial controversy over what to call McCain's s amnesty is silly. Every program in the world that has allowed illegal immigrants to stay has been called an "amnesty." McCain himself called it "amnesty" as recently as May 2003, when he told the Tucson Citizen "I think we can set up a program where amnesty is extended to a certain number of people who are eligible ... Amnesty has to be an important part ..." But once the focus-group results were in, "amnesty" became a four-letter word. ...[snip]

Real Straight Talk would be to say "Sure, it's an amnesty, but we don't really have any choice" ...

P.S.: The McCain, post-focus-group argument is that it can't be "amnesty" if it has some requirements--e.g., to pay a fine, learn English, etc. But it turns out that Ronald Reagan's 1986 "comprehensive" reform, which he and everyone else called an "amnesty," [had requirements too](#), including payment of fees. ...

It really is impressive that McCain still gets [fawning reporters to call his bus the "Straight Talk Express"](#) while his defense of his most significant recent domestic initiative depends entirely on the employment of cumbersome and obscuring PC euphemisms (e.g., "earned legalization," "comprehensive reform" "undocumented immigrants" ...sorry, make that ["Nonimmigrants in the United States Previously in Unlawful Status,"](#) etc.). That is, where it doesn't require outright untruths (i.e, that illegals would "not be in any way rewarded for illegal behavior"). The latter are, oddly, less annoying. At least they're straight lies. ...

If you care about the immigration issue, and oppose "amnesty" (or whatever you want to call it--"legalization," "regularization," or "banana" if you prefer), it's pretty important that McCain be defeated a) As a cautionary example to other pols, and b) to ensure that at least one party's candidates are skeptical of the merits of "comprehensive" reform. New Hampshire is the best place to do it. Go Mitt! ... 12:15 A.M. link

The anchoress [predicted the cryin'](#) on January 2:

What I dread most in this political season is the "genuine" moment - and it is coming, soon, sometime between today and tomorrow, or tomorrow and New Hampshire - when Mrs. Clinton, in her ongoing effort to turn herself into whatever the polls says she must be, cries in public. It's going to be genuinely ghastly.

Eerie! [via [The Corner](#)] 1:12 A.M.

Monday, January 7, 2008

The much anticipated train-wreck joint Bill and Hillary rally in Manchester was not a train wreck. The crowd wasn't huge--maybe 1000--but it was noisy. Bill just stood there and didn't talk. Hillary gave a long, impressively smooth stump speech that was oddly state-of-the-unionish in its inclusion of every policy initiative in her platform. Sort of the fantasy state of the union address she will probably never give! At least not in this election cycle. Aren't election eve speeches usually just short rousers? ... The other odd thing about Hillary's speech is that it contained virtually no reference to anything that has happened in the past weeks. No "we're behind in the polls but don't believe the polls," or "we're surging," or "they're saying dirty things about us" or "it's down to the wire--I'm counting on you,"

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

etc. She could have given virtually the same talk in New Hampshire two months ago. ...P.S.: She did add a bit of "future music by talking about all the great man-on-the-moonish things she'd help accomplish. That doesn't seem like a bad way to address her fabled "change" vs. "past" problem--though it obviously isn't enough. ... At one point I couldn't tell whether the crowd was chanting "Hillary" or "Four More Years." ... P.P.S.: Hillary now pledges to "end" No Child Left Behind. Is that new? ... 10:29 P.M.

---

Dana Milbank falls into the [McCain bus swoon](#). McCain's s "on a roll," you see. But what I've heard from reporters who've been to McCain's s rallies is that the crowds are smaller and less enthusiastic than expected. .... If Romney pulls off a N.H. win after really only turning around in the Fox debate Sunday night, it will be a stunning confirmation of both the [Feiler Faster Thesis](#) and [Jerry Skurnik's theory](#) that because uninformed voters are more uninformed than ever they only learn enough to actually make up their minds very close to the Election Day. ... 10:07 P.M.

---

Heading into Manchester, I heard a strong radio ad, excoriating the leading Republicans for being soft on illegal immigration, from ... Ron Paul. Is that the official libertarian position? ... P.S.: The ad said Paul doesn't want illegals to get Social Security benefits. I believe it! Does he want anybody to get Social Security benefits? ... P.S.: Objectively, as we Marxists say, this is an anti-McCain, therefore pro-Romney ad at this point, no? ... Update: John Tabin says, "There is no 'official libertarian position' on immigration," and charges Paul with ... well, read the item ... 3:54 P.M.

---

'I'm just so upset that someone who's not ready from day one might lead our country': [Crying!](#) Why didn't she think of that before? ... Update: Phony or not? Well, [it seems studied](#), if effective. And Hillary does manage to work in her talking points. ("And we do it, each one of us, because we care about our country. But some of us are right and some of us are wrong. Some of us are ready and some of us are not, some of us know what we will do on day one and some of us haven't thought that through enough.") It's not like she dropped her facade. ... 11:10 A.M.

---

Monday's s Must-See Event--The Train Wreck Tour: The reporters I talk to are looking forward to the final pre-election [joint Bill and Hillary Clinton rally](#) Monday evening with the same lascivious delight you might encounter before a Britney Spears/Amy Winehouse double bill. Everyone expects it to be a gruesome night for the Clintons; their aides have been lashing out at the press uncharmingly. Anything could happen! ... 1:30 A.M. link

---

Sunday, January , 2008

Sunday Fox debate: Romney won decisively over McCain in Luntz's s undecided 'focus group.' Romney's s attack on McCain's s immigration plan sent the dial-meters into the stratosphere. ... Update: Though some of those Luntz focus-groupers seem a bit [familiar, in a Greg Packeresque](#) kind of way. [Thanks to emailer W.B.] ... Not So Fast: I ran into Luntz at the Radisson, and he said he intentionally uses some people at more than one successive focus group, which lets him track their opinions over time. He concedes a downside, which is that when voters become part of his focus-grouping machine their thinking changes. He said the ratio was 20% repeats, 80% fresh faces. ... 6:41 P.M. link

---

Straight Talk on Illegal Immigrants and Social Security: Mitt Romney's s failure to hang "comprehensive immigration reform" around John McCain's s neck in [last night's debate](#) may have been the defining failure of Romney's s

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

candidacy. We'll see if he does better in the Fox debate that just started. [Update: He did, but maybe not better enough.]

It's been my impression that McCain has been locked by the realities of the issue into a tactic of gruff testy dissembling--e.g., saying that illegals he'd legalize would "not be in any way rewarded for illegal behavior" (of course they would--how many people around the world would like to pay a fine and come and live here legally?) or that they'd have to go to the "back of the line behind everybody else" (nope-they get to short-circuit the most important line, the line to get into the "citizenship" line).

One issue I wasn't clear on, though, was whether--or, more precisely, when, exactly-- illegals would have qualified for Social Security benefits once they were legalized under McCain's various "comprehensive" plans. Several MSM 'truth-checkers,' such as the NYT's Marc Santora, have claimed that McCain would let illegal immigrants get Social Security when they

come forward, pay fines, then wait their turn to become citizens ... but only after they are citizens.

That was clearly BS (citizenship isn't a requirement). But what was the truth? I emailed someone who actually knows the details, Mark Krikorian, and got back this response:

Citizenship is most assuredly NOT required to collect Social Security -- only legal status. There's actually two questions -- 1) can you collect benefits if you're illegal, and 2) can you accrue credits toward future Social Security benefits from illegal work. ... [snip]

[T]he Senate bill required that amnesty applicants (probationary Z visa holders) be issued Social Security numbers "promptly." So, technically, McCain is right in saying that he's against letting illegals get Social Security checks, but that's just a dodge, since he'd legalize them all, \*then\* give them Social Security. The answer to the second question is "maybe" -- illegals have in fact been able to use "unauthorized work," in the Social Security Administration's parlance, to count toward future benefits; see: <http://www.cis.org/articles/2004/back904.html> , scroll down to "SSA Law Inconsistent on Illegals". But S1639 wouldn't have allowed that because of an amendment; see here <http://www.numbersusa.com/hottopic/senateaction0507.html> and scroll down most of the way down to "Hutchison SA 1415" which "Prohibits the granting of Social Security credit for wages earned by illegal aliens prior to their being granted amnesty under this bill" and passed by voice vote. Though, as Sessions Loophole thing points out, visa-overtaying illegals who'd been issued a Social Security number when they arrived (as workers or students) \*would\* have been able to use the credits from wages they earned after they fell out of status (i.e., became illegal aliens) toward collecting future benefits. McCain was even worse in 2006, when he voted against an amendment by Ensign to that year's successful amnesty bill that would have done the same thing as Hutchison's 2007 amendment. So, he says he's now aware that the people want enforcement first -- has he also learned that the people don't want illegal work counted toward Social Security? Because he was for that before he was against it. McCain's comment [here](#)

I do not support nor would I ever support any services provided to someone who came to this country illegally, nor would I ever and have never supported Social Security benefits for people who are in this country illegally, that is absolutely false.

is simply a lie. The second part is a weasely, politician lie, because he'd amnesty the illegals first, then give them SS, but the first part is a normal unambiguous lie. In fact, as Sessions points out, even Z visa holders who would have been \*rejected\* for amnesty could have accrued credits toward future Social Security, because they would have had legitimate SSNs. And if there were no effort in the future to root out and arrest rejected Z-visa-holding applicants (as if!), then they'd have kept on working and accruing credits toward future SS benefits. And no one even seems to have asked McCain whether he supports the Totalization Agreement with Mexico, which would count work in \*Mexico\* toward future SS benefits here, and is commonly seen as the next step after legalization. [E.A.]

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

In other words, illegals wouldn't have to pay fines and wait to become citizens to get Social Security. They'd qualify for Social Security almost immediately, as soon as they got their quickie "probationary" Z-visas. But most might not get credit for earlier work done here illegally, at least immediately. That depends on whether you're talking about the 2006 McCain or the 2007 McCain. ... 5:19 P.M. link

---

Huck's Secret: I don't particularly like Huckabee--he's slick, and sells a bleeding heart approach--but his invocation of social equality in [last night's debate](#) was moving, and would seem to provide a firm basis for going national:

In that sense of equality, the greatest principle is that every human being and every American is equal to each other. One person is not more equal because of his net worth or because of his I.Q. or because of his ancestry or last name.

That was a radical idea when those 56 signers put their names on that document, knowing that if their experiment in government didn't work, they were going to die for it.

Makes Fred Thompson's grumbled lawyerly mention of "constitutional principles"--"the checks and the balances, the separation of powers"-- seem kind of dessicated, no? ... Someone should write [a book about how social equality needs to be the basis of American politics in an era of globalization and rising income inequality](#)! ... 3 P.M. link

---

Big Pimpin' in N.H.: Gave three women a ride to their motel from the Radisson. Was pulled over by police who suspected we were ... part of America's growing service sector. Where is Ron Paul when you need him? ... 2:45 P.M. link

---

I was surprised by all the talk in the debate spin room about Hillary's angry little speech after Edwards took Obama's side in the great "change" debate. The talkers assumed it was a potential [Rick Lazio election-losing moment](#), an audience turnoff--a judgment echoed [here](#) and [here](#) ("dogmatic ... angry ... vicious"). ... I was surprised because when it happened, I thought to myself, "pretty good response." I've seen it again--[here](#)--and I still don't get what's wrong with it. Unconvincing, maybe. Heated, yes. But not overheated or uncontrolled or unhinged. This isn't the sort of thing I usually say--but isn't Hillary's outburst exactly the sort of forceful putdown male candidates not only get away with, but are expected to come up with? ... Maybe have a high tolerance for confrontation. I thought Lazio won that debate. ...

P.S.: But if it's true that Hillary's the big loser tonight, is it possible that she'll actually get beaten for second in New Hampshire by Edwards? He's [not that far behind in some polls](#). He was effective in the debate at the end, alas. ... If he does catch Hillary, he'll be very hard to get out of the race, even if he loses in South Carolina. Rielle Hunter could [make it out of the undernews](#) after all. ... Update: First Read's [Chuck Todd adds](#)--

Clinton may now be the candidate who needs to get Obama in a one-on-one; Edwards and Richardson are now distractions and are complicating her ability to go after Obama; Obama, meanwhile, needs the extra candidates.

Put these two thoughts together, and you reach the conclusion that Obama may soon want Hillary to stay in the race. ... Meanwhile, if Hillary now wants Edwards gone, and Sid Blumenthal's email is still functioning, that might give the Rielle Hunter story the MSM-busting oomph it needs. ... 1:21 A.M. link

---

Friday, January 4, 2008

Is Ezra Klein young enough to be [this pompous](#)?



## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Obama's finest speeches do not excite. They do not inform. They don't even really inspire. They elevate. They enmesh you in a grander moment, as if history has stopped flowing passively by, and, just for an instant, contracted around you, made you aware of its presence, and your role in it. He is not the Word made flesh, but the triumph of word over flesh, over color, over despair. The other great leaders I've heard guide us towards a better politics, but Obama is, at his best, able to call us back to our highest selves, to the place where America exists as a glittering ideal, and where we, its honored inhabitants, seem capable of achieving it, and thus of sharing in its meaning and transcendence

Actually, pompous isn't really the word for this passage. There's a sort of hectoring naivete, as if Klein's too inexperienced to know that "call us back to our highest selves" is a drained cliché. And why do the whippersnappers always have to lecture? ... P.S.: The [whole post](#) isn't this bad. It's actually worse. And pompous! ... [via [Corner](#) and reader N.B.] ... 9:19 P.M.

Mo' Iowa: 1) Polipundit suggests Obama may have benefitted in Iowa from [a "reverse Bradley effect."](#) The open, public voting of the caucuses provided Democrats with

"a golden opportunity to show your next-door neighbors just how enlightened and progressive you are, by supporting the liberal black candidate."

On a secret ballot, Obama wouldn't do as well. If the Reverse Bradley Effect holds, then, Obama will do worse in New Hampshire than his Iowa triumph would lead you to expect, even if Hillary does nothing to change anyone's mind. ...

2) I haven't heard any MSM pundit mention another possibility a [Polipundit reader](#) mentions: that Romney may have done worse than the polls indicated because the Republican caucuses did use a secret ballot--and people who wouldn't tell a pollster they weren't going to vote against a Mormon in fact voted against a Mormon. This is not a reverse Bradley Effect. It's the regular ol' straight Bradley Effect;

3) Wasn't the Iowa Dem outcome a vindication of the [beleaguered Incumbent Rule](#), which holds that undecideds break overwhelming against an incumbent at the end. Hillary was the functional equivalent of an incumbent. [Thanks to alert reader K.B., who a) emailed it days before the vote and b) suggested that between Edwards was more of an "incumbent" than Obama, so the latter would have the edge among late-breaking anti-incumbent undecideds.]

4) Reader T.F. notes that Edwards did not improve on--or even match-- his 2004 Iowa performance.

In 2004, Edwards got 32% of the caucus in Iowa in a four-person field.

In 2008, Edwards got 30% of the caucus in Iowa in a three-person field.

Richardson, Biden, et al might object to calling 2008's race a "three-person field," but you get the point. ... P.S. Defining Nonviability Down--The [Union Leader's John DiStaso](#) on Edwards and New Hampshire:

John Edwards? Should he finish a strong third - close to the second-place finisher - he's in good shape. But should he drop below Bill Richardson, which is unlikely but possible, he's in trouble.

Huh? If the result is Obama 42, Hillary 21 and Edwards 19, Edwards is in "good shape"? He has to lose to Bill Richardson to be in trouble? ... Update:Politico's Josh Kraushaar [has some standards](#) ("at least a strong second-place performance")! ...

5) Note that [Richelieu, a McCain booster](#) (even in the highly unlikely event that he's not Mike Murphy) predicted McCain would finish third with 17%--a "surging third." He [came in fourth with 13%](#)--a ["disappointing](#)

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

[4th,](#)" wrote NBC's [s](#) First Read, in an honest assessment you don't find many other places in the MSM. Somehow, the press never requires McCain to actually match the "comeback" hype it generates about him. ...

\*\*--I once speculated that Harold Ford might benefit from a different kind of Reverse Bradley effect in his Tennessee senate race, in the form of conservative white **voters** who don't want to admit to their buddies or to pollsters that on the secret ballot they were going to vote for the black Democrat. I don't think this effect actually materialized, however. ... Update--Not so fast: Chris Richardson [argues Ford did get a boost](#) when many whites "voted for him because of his skin color." But wouldn't this show up in the polls? Not entirely, apparently. The [late preelection polls showed Ford an average of 6 points behind](#)--and he lost by only 3. ... 8:36 P.M. link

Iowa: 1) Was Hillary lucky she finished third, [by .28%](#), instead of second? Had she finished second, Edwards might have fallen out of the race, leaving her to face Obama one-on-one, a confrontation she'd almost certainly lose right now. If she could subsidize Edwards' campaign at this point, she probably would. 2) Reading: John Ellis is [surprisingly tough on Romney](#) for failing to "run as a Republican Gary Hart." Suddenly everyone wants to be Gary Hart (except Gary Hart). ... Peggy Noonan is bracingly vicious [about Ed Rollins](#). ... Rachel Sklar notes an insufficiently remarked on Obama advantage: [The press is very cautious about going against him](#). ("[E]ven as I write this I feel the need to check and recheck to make sure I don't somehow **say** this wrong. Obama is that candidate - the one you are careful writing about. I don't think it's just me") ... 3) This is [Mary Matalin "angry"?](#) She must get angrier than that. 4) Des Moines Register pollster Ann Selzer, who correctly predicted the big turnout and the big Obama victory, may now become a near-mythic figure. As [Mark Blumenthal put it](#) before the vote:

If Ann Selzer had wanted to play it safe, she could have weighted her results by past caucus participation or party identification (or both) as many other pollsters do. Her results would have been in line with other polls, far less controversial and no one would have questioned her judgment. But she didn't do that. As an Iowa based survey researcher, she put her own reputation and that of her most important client on the line because she believes in her methods and trusts her results....

Hillary chief strategist Mark Penn, on the other hand, [looks like a sad spinner](#). But he has bigger problems. ... 5) In what is becoming a tradition, the network "entrance" polls were apparently [a debacle](#). ... 6) If Iowa had been an authentic real primary election, instead of a hard-to-attend caucus, would Obama's [s](#) win have been bigger, or smaller? Bigger, no? ... 7) Best unchecked rumor of the evening: Did Edwards bring in Pat Caddell for advice toward the end? That would explain the anger! ... 12:37 A.M. link

Thursday, January 3, 2008

Edwards aide Joe Trippi [on RCP](#):

"Third place is going to be a big problem for anybody - we're not denying that - it'll be a big problem for us."

[Kinsley gaffe](#) ? 1:34 A.M.

JustBlogging: Mark Blumenthal has an impressive **number** of useful things to **say** about Iowa polling in his [exhaustive braindump](#). Note especially a) he [casts aspersions](#) on the Des Moines Register's two-day rolling trendline; b) but if Obama wins and the DMR poll is vindicated, many of the things other candidates' aides have **said** [may take on a new meaning](#):

What if an influx of first-time caucus goers propels Obama to a modest victory margin? Given their spin yesterday, it will be quite a challenge for the other campaigns to shrug it off as an inconsequential result they saw coming all



## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

along. Now, if Obama wins with the help of a wave of caucus newcomers, it's not just a "win," it's an "unprecedented departure," a result "at odds with history," perhaps even a "[revolution](#)."

A.M. link

---

Heed the [Undernews](#) ! Just a note to the tiny unrepresentative minority of Iowa **voters** who are going to participate in the Democratic caucus later today: If you want to vote for a Democrat who will actually make it to the White House, you have to think not only about their issue positions and their rhetorical skills and their personality but also about the scandals that might surface, even distasteful scandals you'd rather dismiss. This concern would be a subset of the oft-mentioned "electability" issue. You obviously don't want to pick someone the GOPs might blow out of the water in late August, right after he or she gets the nomination.

If you read this blog you know I think John Edwards is facing an unaddressed (or insufficiently addressed) potential scandal in the person of Rielle Hunter, about whom the National Enquirer has made [some](#) sensational [allegations](#) and about whom the Edwards camp has [behaved very strangely](#) . (Relevant denials included in the [second Enquirer link](#) .) I'm not worried that this scandal will surface in August after the convention. I think the scandal will surface in a matter of days or weeks should Edwards win in Iowa. Right now the MSM is giving him a pass because--hey, why bring it up and hurt his wife if he's going to lose anyway.

Because he's gotten a pass, Edwards has had weeks to figure out the best way to defuse any press coverage--or, if any of the accusations prove to be accurate, how to play them. The worry, then, is that Edwards might stave off a scandal effectively enough to get the nomination from the sympathetic party faithful, but be a far weaker general election candidate for it.

(I admit, I also think he'd be a terrible president. He can give an effective, heart-tugging closing argument. If governing were a trial, he'd be a good bet--though he did manage to lose a debate with Dick Cheney in 2004. But is there any evidence he actually knows how to run a large, bureaucratic organization? Some of his ideas, like his fake-tough [plan to demand that congressmen give up their own health plan if they don't support his universal plan](#) , suggest he either doesn't know where the federal government's pressure points are or else he's cynically trying to fool equally clueless **voters**. I vote for 'cynical fooling,' but either way, the idea that President Edwards will actually be able to enact a big national health insurance plan seems a little far-fetched to me--even compared to the also-inexperienced Obama and the mal-experienced Mrs. Clinton.. If Edwards does somehow talk his way into the White House, I think the public will see through him--and he'll be ineffective--within six months.. ...

But even if you disagree with this analysis, Rielle Hunter is a potential problem to consider! Please read the [Enquirer story](#) and decide if you think the semi-official pro-Edwards line about who is the father, etc. seems convincing to you, despite it's [contradictions](#) . I don't trust the Enquirer, but they've gotten some big stories right in the past. )

I have faith that you will make the right decision. ... Actually, **no**. I have zero faith that you will make the right decision. You thought Kerry was electable! Iowa caucusers have a track record as miserable judges of political horseflesh. I'm counting on New Hampshire, a real primary where more than a super-motivated minority actually does the deciding. ... 12:08 A.M. link

---

Wednesday, January 2, 2008

Why are "Thompson campaign ... sources" stabbing him in the back by [telling reporters he may drop out](#) ... just as a poll (OK, [Zogby](#), still) shows him surging a bit in Iowa? Is currying favor with reporters that important? ... P.S.: I've always been suspicious of some [Thompson "advisers."](#) George W. Bush [wasn't wrong about everything](#). ...

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Update: Thompson [responds](#) to the story ("made up out of whole cloth"), as does his aide [Rich Galen](#). See also [Lowry](#) ("I know Jonathan Martin and Mike Allen and they don't make things up.") ... 11:07 P.M.

---

Maybe Obama is the black Gary Hart after all: [Marc Ambinder](#)--

\*\* Obama's closing argument is more audacious than it seems; it's an end-run around the established interests of the Democratic Party. He is angering -- often deliberately -- some of the party's core constituencies; Markos "Daily Kos" Moulitsas and my Atlantic colleague, Matt Yglesias, have both (sort of) withdrawn their endorsements of Obama because of his penchant for allegedly using right-wing talking points to smear his Democratic rivals.

Oh no. He might lose Yglesias! ...

P.S.: There he goes echoing Republican talking points again --To his credit, Yglesias [argues](#), contra [Krugman](#):

I don't see any need for liberal pundits to get in the business of denying that labor unions are, in fact, "special interests." Indeed, it's impossible to understand the dynamics of American politics without acknowledging them to be special interests. They're special interests who sometimes take the "wrong" side of policy debates when what's "right" for the country is "wrong" for the sector in which they work.

I think the problem with unions--or, more precisely, with legalistic, work-rule-generating Wagner Act unions--is rather more general than this. But even Yglesias' concession is enough to condemn, say, the sacred cow Davis-Bacon Act, which effectively requires union wages for government construction projects. (What's "right" for the country is that it be as inexpensive for the government to build something as it is for private industry. That's "wrong" for construction unions, who want the law to artificially boost wages in the government-construction sector above what the private market pays. Who should win?) Not to mention the teachers' unions. (What's "right" for the country is that mediocre teachers can be fired as easily as you'd cut a mediocre tight end from a football squad. What's right for the NEA is ...) ... 4:23 P.M. link

---

I'm reluctant to write skeptically about the NYT's David Leonhardt--I owe him one, having failed to answer his reasonable response to a criticism of several years ago. (All in good time!) His [contrast between](#) Hillary Clinton's domestic policy approach ("narrowly tailored government policies, like focused tax cuts," relying on rational economic incentives) and Obama's (broader, "simpler" programs that acknowledge people don't act rationally) seems highly useful.

But I don't see how the great health care "mandates" debate fits this typology very well Isn't it Hillary who is proposing the broad, simple program: 'Everybody has to buy insurance!' And isn't this mandate at least somewhat similar to Obama's semi-mandatory ("opt out") employer-deduction savings plan in that it acknowledges people, if left to their own devices, won't do something that might in fact be good for them or at least for society,\*\* even if given a seemingly sufficient incentive? Won't Obama need lots of little complex subsidies to enable people to afford the insurance he won't require them to buy? And if he [actually adds a penalty for those who buy insurance later](#), when they get sick, isn't he relying on the "idea that people respond rationally to financial incentives"?

That said, Leonhardt does make Hillary's vision seem dreary ("She has proposed new tax credits for savings, tuition, health care, elder care and renewable energy use. ...") Her husband's best moments as president weren't his little targeted tax breaks but his big, simple notions: "Make Work Pay," "End Welfare As We Know It," "Save Social Security First." ...

Update: Yglesias [makes a similar point](#). ...

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

\*\*--You could argue that mandating health insurance is designed to get young, healthy people to do something that might not really be in their rational economic self-interest, namely pay for health insurance they probably won't need. But you could also argue that the social interest in having a decent rate of savings is greater than the interest in any poor individual in putting aside money he or she could really use now. My college professor, Stephen Marglin, speculated that individuals would never voluntarily save enough to meet a society's investment needs. If I remember right either the savings had to be extracted artificially (e.g. involuntarily) or else the economic growth had to be so rapid that individuals saved simply because it took them a while to learn how to spend all their money. ... 1:02 A.M.

---

Tuesday, January 1, 2008

On Samizdata, Paul Marks offers [a fairly common defense](#) of Fred Thompson:

Fred Thompson is in the middle of a 40 town Iowa tour - so he is hardly lazy. And he does go on television shows - thus dealing with critics, such as myself, who attacked him for not going on enough shows. But what sort of person would enjoy all this? A lunatic.

I dunno. Sounds kinda fun to me! Being rushed from interview to interview, where reporters (who may not know a whole lot less about government than you do) hang on your every nuance, jot down each pence? Waging an underdog campaign against unfair, flimsy media expectations? Occupying the center of attention wherever you go? Having an eager staff devoted to making you, you, you look good. Sounds like a the world's greatest book tour, only better. You don't need an emperor's ego to enjoy that sort of thing, or even a blogger's ego. A normal attorney's or reporter's or college professor's ego should do. ... There may be reasons why sane people are discouraged from running for president--e.g., fundraising, holding lower office--but the horrible experience of campaigning in Iowa for a month wouldn't seem to be among them. ... [via [Instapundit](#)] 10:17 P.M.

---

To show he's not an Iowa-only candidate, self-described "[angry and confrontational](#)" candidate Edwards releases a [list of his "leaders and advisors" in Feb. 5 primary states](#)." [T]he list is not exactly overwhelming," [says CBS's David Miller](#). Maybe Edwards will beat him up! ... [via [Huffpo](#)] 12:50 A.M. link

---

Monday, December 31, 2007

I want to like Fred Thompson--or, rather, I like him and want to see him as a potential effective President. But I zoned out at around the 7:00 mark of [his 17-minute closing "message to Iowa voters"](#). ... 17 minutes worked for "[Sister Ray](#)." It works for a convention speech. Maybe it works at a time of national crisis. It doesn't work staring at a camera and broadcasting on the web a few days before an election. ... At the least, if you're going to talk that long you can't read from a text. ... 11:25 P.M. link

---

Do I detect a [tacit](#) [media](#) [conspiracy](#) to make the Iowa caucuses inconclusive, and even irrelevant? I'm for that! ... P.S.: It's like the moment in mafia stories when the cops just get tired of the mobsters they've been corruptly cooperating with for years and decide it's time to kill them. ... The Iowa caucuses--shot while trying to escape. ... \*\*

Update: The conspiracy to dismiss Iowa will be harder to maintain if the final [Des Moines Register poll](#)--showing non-trivial Huckabee and Obama leads--proves an accurate predictor. But the poll was taken from last Thursday through last Sunday. Hasn't there been a lot of ongoing movement since then? Tom Bevan at RCP [notes the](#)

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

[trends](#) in the poll's two-day rolling averages--which show both Obama and Edwards moving up, Clinton moving down. ...

More: What did the DMR poll show in 2004? [It "turned out to be quite predictive, notes Michael Crowley](#). It had Kerry leading and Edwards surging, which was the actual result. But in 2004 it came out only a day before the caucuses--not three days before. (Correction: The actual polling in 2004 was finished on the Friday before a Tuesday election--same interval as this year, [Mark Blumenthal notes](#). The 2004 poll was just released closer to the vote.)... Plus this year's poll seems to assume that an awful lot of independents are going to turn out and vote in the Dem caucus (especially for Obama). [Ambinder](#): "Obama's internal polling does not show this high a proportion of independents choosing to caucus." ...

Update: [Blumenthal and his commenters](#) thoroughly masticate the issues surrounding the DMR poll, with bonus anti-Zogby sniping! ... Note also the anti-Burkle-like paranoia surrounding the ownership of polling outfit Opinion Research by Clinton supporter Vinod Gupta. As the [NYT put it back in July](#):

[Some critical investors] have also questioned Mr. Gupta's decision to pay a substantial premium last December to acquire the Opinion Research Corporation, which has done opinion surveys for CNN since April 2006. In January, CNN began using Opinion Research for its presidential polling, leading conservative bloggers to ask if Mr. Gupta, as a Clinton supporter, should have influence over CNN's polling.

Mr. Gupta called Opinion Research "a natural fit" for his business, adding that he had no involvement with its polling operations. A review of its poll results over the last six months found them mostly in line with other campaign surveys. [E.A.]

Not any more! Opinion Research's poll is the only one of the three recent polls to [show Clinton winning](#). The [third poll, from Insider Advantage](#), shows Edwards winning handily once the second choices of the "non-viable" candidates are counted. Insider Advantage polled Friday and Saturday--ending a day earlier than DMR. But I don't know why that would work against Edwards. ...

\*\*--It's possible that the Hillary camp is spinning reporters in the Iowa-decides-nothing direction--always a possibility when Adam Nagourney is involved! But at this point, given the uncertainty, all the Democratic candidates would probably happily contract for an inconclusive outcome that would let them all go on to New Hampshire. Maybe they're all spinning the anti-Iowa story--a happy confluence of short-term individual and [long-term national interest](#). ... 6:58 P.M. link

Quien es mas ... ? Edsall [says Edwards' new tough-guy posing](#) is stealing male caucusers away from Obama. ... P.S.: Hey, Edwards is looking [more macho](#) than we'd thought! ... 3:24 P.M. link

Press pros on the ground (excitable [Joe Klein](#), [Marc Cooper](#), the [First Read crew](#)) are convinced Huckabee's press conference today--in which he announced he was pulling a negative campaign spot and then showed it to the press anyway--was so disastrous as to be Dean-screamish. Like [Jonathan Martin](#), I'm not so sure. Huckabee's transparently trying to have it both ways--but it's not clear why he won't have it both ways. [Transparently](#) cynical [arrangements](#) seem to be working well this year! At least with Iowans.... P.S.: This seems like the MSM jumping in in order to discover for itself that Huckabee is imploding after he has already been taken down by Romney's attack spots. ...

Update-Now That's Contrarianism: Chris Beam thinks Huckabee [might actually have been sincere](#). ...

More: Rachel Sklar [suggests it was a "masterstroke,"](#) not a meltdown. ... 2:00 P.M. link

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Kf Hero of the Day: Gov. Strickland of Ohio, who commits a classic [Kinsley gaffe](#), foolishly [telling the truth about Iowa ... and about New Hampshire](#).

In an interview with The Dispatch last week, Strickland **said** the Iowa caucuses make "no sense." He called the GOP and Democratic caucuses "hugely undemocratic," because the process "excludes so many people." Anyone who happens to be working or is sick or too old to get out for a few hours Thursday night won't be able to participate, Strickland **said**.

"I'd like to see both parties **say**, 'We're going to bring this to an end,'" Strickland **said**, adding that he has no problem with the New Hampshire primary Jan. 8, because "at least it's an election." [E.A.]

Letting the presidential nominee be picked by the Iowa caucusers is like letting your antiwar tactics be picked by the last people left at the end of a 4-hour SDS meeting in 1970. The result: the leftist radicals win! [But you were all leftist radicals. It was an SDS meeting--ed Oh, right. I mean, the most committed partisans who have nothing better to do with their time win! In Iowa these people are [proven fools](#), remember.]

Update: John Fund [notes that Iowa's silly process](#) is not an accident.

The caucuses are run by the state parties, and unlike primary or general elections aren't regulated by the government. They were designed as an insiders' game to attract party activists, donors and political junkies and give them a disproportionate influence in the process. In other words, they are designed not to be overly democratic

Fund's piece also has gives good headline! ... [1:11 A.M. link](#)

Sunday, December 30, 2007

He Dieted for Our Sins--Or Did He? Republican Undernews! Did Huckabee go [bariatric](#)? Plutarch [makes the \(surprisingly non-weak\) case](#) with photos and graphs. ... P.**S.**: The Arkansas ex-governor's dramatic weight loss is to his campaign what Edwards' loyalty to his sick wife is to the latter's campaign. In each case, there are [undernews suspicions](#). In each case, these suspicions are likely to become overnews--i.e. news--if (as is very possible) the candidate in question emerges victorious from Iowa. In each case, apparently, the suspicions could be dissipated by the presentation of routine medical evidence. [How with Edwards? Just between us--ed Aternity-pay Est-tay] ...

Backfill: Jonah Goldbeg has one [argument against bariatricity](#). ... Powerline commenters debate [here](#). ... Another Huck defense [here](#). ... 8:26 P.M. link

From Shrill to Shill! It looks like that pro-Edwards "527" group [defended by Paul Krugman](#) as a "labor 527" and a "527 run by labor unions" [actually got about a third of its money](#) "in a single check from an entity linked to Rachel Mellon, the widow of Paul Mellon, who inherited his share of the great American fortunes." ...

P.**S.**: [Obama's point in attacking Edwards](#) on the 527 issue was, of course, not that it was wrong to accept union help but the transparent phoniness of Edwards boasting "I support public financing of federal elections"--and **saying** "these [527] groups should not be a part of the political process"--when this one is run by his former campaign manager and obviously set up to help his campaign. ...

P.P.**S.**: Edwards seems to be good at these elaborate charades! [What are you thinking of?--ed Oh, nothing.] ...

Update: Overlawyered [raises another question](#) about the Mellon contribution.

Related anti-Krugmania: Steve Smith reads FDR's Madison Square Garden speech and finds [some "Obamaesque" passages Krugman must have missed](#). ... See also [Jon Alter](#), on--among other things--Krugman's



## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

convenient ex cathedra [assertion](#) that a populist candidate would do better than a more moderate candidate in the general election (something Krugman supports with on surveys of [debate-watching](#) [Democrats](#)).  
... 1:20 A.M. link

Saturday, December 29, 2007

Mark Halperin's ["The Page" has suddenly become indispensable](#) if you're trying to follow the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries. ... I guess that was his plan all along! P.S.: NBC's excellent First Read is also one of the few sites that's [posting enough to cover the rapid developments](#). But they're trying to do it all themselves. Halperin's playing Drudge, which is much more efficient. ... 8:13 P.M.

Does MSM mean "Media Saves McCain"? Howie Kurtz [goes to bat](#) against Romney's anti-McCain ad with a defense that's much more misleading than any ad I've seen:

Romney's description of McCain's failed [immigration](#) bill -- which was backed by President Bush -- is so selective as to be misleading. The measure would have allowed illegal immigrants to seek legal status only if they first returned to their country of origin and paid a fine, and it was coupled with stricter border enforcement -- key elements omitted by the ad. Romney called a similar bipartisan effort "reasonable" in 2006. It is not true that McCain backed Social Security for illegals; a Senate amendment would have allowed payment of past benefits only after immigrants obtained legal status. [E.A.]

The provision requiring a return "to their country of origin"--the so-called "touchback" plan--was in fact not part of the reform that McCain has righteously championed for years. It was [added at the last minute](#), as the bill was sliding down the tubes, in a desperate attempt to attract conservative votes. (The bill failed anyway two days later.) The provision [was also a fraud](#), but that's almost beside the point. ...

Why don't reporters like WaPo's Kurtz\*\* and NYT's [Santora](#)--both of whom have now peddled correction-worthy pro-McCain misinformation--stop pretending they are enforcing truth or fairness and just face the perhaps-subconscious motive that's evident to nearly everyone: They liked McCain's failed [immigration](#) reform, or they like McCain, or they like their own acceptance into the comfortable bipartisan "comprehensive" consensus, and they instinctively for the ways to defend him against what they assume must be crude, yahooesque attacks from the right?

\*\*--Have I mentioned that Howard Kurtz has the [biggest conflict of interest in the business](#)? Not lately! ... 7:54 P.M.

Is Gen. Petraeus Killing Kos? Even though there's a big election on, Daily Kos traffic peaked in August, and has been trending down ever since, according to [this forthright Onemadson post](#) (noted by [Geraghty](#) and [Instapundit](#)). ... Hmm. I don't think the cause is "candidate wars." I was at a very nice left-wing party over the holidays and the youthful antiwar types were [saying](#) that traffic was down on all the left-wing sites because of ... Iraq. ... That's not what I [said](#). It's what they [said](#). ... Iraq just isn't as salient now that it doesn't seem to be spiraling into apocalypse. ... P.S.: Was the left-wing blogosphere always mainly about Iraq? ... P.P.S.: Of course, some [right-wing](#) [sites](#) seem to be experiencing a mild decline since August also. Maybe the whole blogosphere was about Iraq! ...

Update: Maguire [does some actual research](#), and discovers that "the big lefty sites ...peaked in April (Atrios, MY DD, C&L) or February (Firedoglake); the righty sites peaked in October (Instapundit, Ms. Malkin) or March (Powerline)." He speculates that the left sites are simply coming down off an anomalous spike in traffic caused by the Feb./March Libby trial. But the "surge" explanation also fits that timetable, as [a commenter notes](#). ... 1:01 A.M.



---

Friday, December 28, 2007

Truthchecking the MSM's Truthcheckers: The New York Times' Marc Santora [declares Romney's anti-McCain ad "selective or worse, misleading"](#) on immigration:

For instance, Mr. Romney claims Mr. McCain "even voted to allow illegals to collect Social Security."

The more complicated reality is that Mr. McCain supported legislation that would allow illegal immigrants who come forward, pay fines, then wait their turn to become citizens the chance to collect Social Security - but only after they are citizens.

Santora has to be wrong. ... [pause for Googling] ... He is. Under McCain's bill, legal immigrants wouldn't collect Social Security "only after they are citizens." They would collect Social Security after they had [become legal](#). In fact, illegal immigrants apparently [don't even have to become citizens](#) now, [under current law](#)--if they're legalized, they can collect Social Security, even for work they performed here when they were illegal.

The distinction between "citizen" and "legal" is important, because it's easier to become a legal worker than it is to "wait" and become a full-fledged citizen. And McCain's "comprehensive **immigration** reform" would have legalized millions of current illegals fairly quickly. Hence, it would ... how to put it? ... "allow illegals to collect Social Security." Romney's charge seems basically accurate.\*\* The New York Times seems "selective or worse, misleading." ... P.S.: Actually, **no**. It's not "selective." Or merely "misleading." Make that "misinformed or worse, spun by the McCain camp." ...

Update: Note that McCain's response to Romney's charge has largely avoided an actual defense of McCain's position, focusing instead on Romney's flaws. See [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

\*\*--It's reasonably clear from the context of the ad that Romney is **saying** that McCain would let illegals collect Social Security by giving them amnesty, not by allowing them to remain illegal and collect Social Security. But [you be the judge](#). ...[via [Ambinder](#)] 7:19 P.M. link

---

The [Feiler Faster Thesis](#) suggests that by next Thursday the Benazir Bhutto tragedy will loom shockingly small in Iowa. ... 4:45 P.M.

---

It's CW that Hillary Clinton "would rather ... come in fourth"\*\*\* in Iowa if John Edwards finishes first than come in a close second to Barack Obama. (Or maybe even than coming in a close first to Obama.) For Hillary, it's all about getting rid of Obama. But what about for Obama? Which of these two scenarios would he prefer?

Obama--35

Edwards--33

Clinton--25

or

Clinton-35

Obama--33

Edwards-25

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

It's close, no? Getting rid of Edwards--making it a Hillary vs. Obama race--seems very important to Obama. If he comes in a competitive second to Hillary, on the other hand, will the press really declare that Hillary's delivered a "knockout punch" and go home? I doubt it. They'll want to set up an epic two-person battle. ...

Update: [Edsall says](#) "the least attractive outcome for Obama would be to see Hillary win Iowa on January 3." Really? Even if Edwards finished third (something that admittedly looks unlikely as of this posting on 12/31)? ...

\*\*Chris Matthews, 12/26 ... 4:40 P.M.

Tariq Ali on Benazir Bhutto: [Written before her death](#). Quite nasty. I don't trust him.\*\* For all I know he may now regret writing it. But there is a lot here to chew on, especially the intrigues surrounding her brother Murtaza. Compare with John Burns' [NYT obituary](#). ...

Update: [Here's a post-assassination piece](#) by Ali.

\*\*--Reflexive anti-Americanism would be the charge against Ali. For example, would U.S. non-interference in neighboring Afghanistan really end "instability" in Kabul and "the tribal areas between the two countries" in a way that didn't simply empower Al Qaeda? ... 12:28 A.M.

Wednesday, December 26, 2007

One [Hed](#) Fits All: Are you impressed with a [drop in home values of 6.6%](#) over a year? It doesn't seem like such a big [here](#).) I thought a "housing crisis" was when people couldn't find housing, not when it got cheaper. (NBC's expert: "It's very, very difficult to find any silver lining." No it's not.) ...

P.S.: Instapundit [suggests](#) that the press may (in the words of a reader) "scupper Main Street confidence" in the economy when all it really wants to do is scupper the Republicans. You'd think the Fed or someone would address this structural issue by creating a reliable way for reporters to sabotage Republicans directly, without having to go through the intermediate stage in which they drag the entire economy down too. Sort of an earned "path to partisanship": For every sensible, non-hysterical story about the economy's perturbations under a GOP president, Dem-leaning reporters get to apply an anti-GOP double standard in a non-economic story. ...

\*\*--Update: "Affordable housing," and "housing crisis," as traditionally used by critics on the left, includes rental housing. If the credit crunch prevents people from buying houses, and those houses are sitting around unsold, they'll be rented, no? Which will tend to drive rents lower. Am I missing something? (This is a response to [Bill Quick](#) and others). ...

More [Quick responds](#) that rents in San Francisco are going up, as people who can't get a mortgage to buy a home crowd into the rental market. Hey, the same thing happens in my neighborhood!. But it's a short-term (and maybe localized) effect, no? Speculators who own houses have an interest in renting them rather than leaving them vacant--even at bargain rents. I would very much doubt it if rents are rising in overbuilt South Florida, for example. .. [pause to Google] ... [Yep](#).

Depressed housing market is good news for renters

Glut of property makes it cheaper than buying home

Harriet Johnson Brackey/Personal finance

December 9, 2007

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

What a good time it is in South Florida for renters. Rent is falling and renters have their pick of places to live: Apartments, condominiums, apartments that used to be condos that have gone back to apartments. Not to mention single-family homes for rent from accidental landlords. ...[snip]

Research from Axiometrics, a Dallas firm that studies major apartment markets around the country, shows that rents in Fort Lauderdale in the third quarter of this year are down by 2.2 percent compared with last year. In Palm Beach County, the decline is 7.8 percent and in Miami-Dade County rents are off by 0.7 percent. "In a lot of the overbuilt markets, it's better to be a renter than an owner," said Axiometrics President Ron Johnsey.

Again, I'm not saying the credit crunch isn't a problem. I'm not saying that a lot of middle class Americans haven't bet a lot on the continued rise in their homes' value, or that if they take a big hit the resulting slowdown in their spending might not tip the whole economy into a recession. (But it might not!) I'm saying that during the runup in housing prices the air was filled with complaints from the left that the rich were bidding up the value of housing, which was becoming unaffordable for ordinary Americans whose wages were rising only slowly, etc.. Now that this process is unwinding, some of this affordability problem is presumably being corrected. I'm amazed Quick resists this point. He must own. ...

Corner reactions here. ... 7:57 P.M. link

Is illegal immigration like crime in New York: They said it could never be reduced, until it was? More evidence that even the mild efforts at border control are having an impact.

a) The Gran Salida continues, reports Reuters, although the story offers no hard numbers (just a reported "spike" at a Mexican consulate). Instapundit notes that one non-enforcement explanation--a shift in exchange rates--doesn't appear to hold water.

b) And they don't keep on coming: Meanwhile, the LAT reports on a decline in incoming illegal immigration, and the paper has some numbers. ... Mexicans who say they plan to seek work abroad: down by a third. ... Border arrests: down by 20%. ... Most significantly:

The growth rate of the U.S. Mexican-born population has dropped by nearly half to 4.2% in 2007 from about 8% in 2005 and 2006, according to an analysis of census data by the Pew Hispanic Center. [E.A.]

That seems pretty dramatic. True, there's a debate about how much of the drop is due to stepped-up enforcement and how much to a decline in construction work. The official PC position appears to be that enforcement can't possibly have anything to do with it.\*\* Still, the drop suggests that border control efforts may have at least as much effect on shaping the future electorate in the long run as attempts by Republicans to win over Mexican-Americans by pursuing McCainesque semi-amnesty proposals. [But illegals don't vote-ed. Their U.S.-born children do. Plus, fewer illegals = less demand for semi-amnesty, no? Which makes it less likely that a whole new group of previously illegal Latino immigrants will ever become voters. Pandering to this now-smaller group of potential future voters in turn becomes less appealing.]

.\*\*--you see "the border buildup has encouraged more illegal immigrants to employ professional smugglers, whose success rate is higher than that of individuals, according to Wayne Cornelius, director of the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at UC San Diego." OK, but doesn't the cost of hiring a professional itself deter illegal immigration? And are the pros getting less successful--and more expensive? ... 7:21 P.M. link

How grudging and testy is Bob Wright's acceptance of the surge's relative success? (And he wasn't even against it.) ... 1:58 P.M.

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Undernews Underanalysis Still impressive, near-total lack of MSM pickup of the National Enquirer's [s Edwards scandal allegations](#).\*\* My guess regarding MSM thinking is 1) Nobody wants to hurt Elizabeth Edwards and 2) Everybody figures that if John Edwards loses in Iowa, there's no reason to mention the story. It will go away and nobody will have to cover it. ... If Edwards wins Iowa, however, that calculus would presumably change.

P.S.: Were the story to break out in the MSM before Iowa, the Edwards camp might react by allowing his popular wife make an impassioned plea for her husband, against sleaze, etc., which would generate considerable sympathy. His support in the caucuses could well go up in the short run. If you don't want Edwards to win--as [I don't](#)--it may be best at this point if the story stays undernews until January 4. Which puts me in the same page as the MSM, I think.

In other words, under this theory the worst outcome for Edwards is if the Enquirer account slowly seeps into voter consciousness, but doesn't become known enough for Edwards to be able to profit by making a big deal of it in public (which would have the downside of bringing it to more or less every voter's attention). ... That assumes Edwards remains [in contention](#). Should he fall significantly behind in the polls, then making a big deal out of it becomes a plausible Hail Mary gambit. ...

P.P.S--Mickey's Assignment Desk: Are the issues of the Enquirer making it to the supermarket stands in Iowa? If anyone's there and can check, I'd love to know. ...

\*\*-- Relevant denials are included in the [Enquirer story](#). See also Edwards' denial ("made up") in [this Rush & Molloy column](#). ... 3:01 A.M. link

AARGH! Cardinal "Mike" Richelieu [casts aspersions](#) on an ARG Iowa poll ("looks off because it near-certainly is"). ... Barack Obama better hope that [this](#) more recent ARG poll is off. It has him plunging into third place in the caucuses. ...

Update: [Mystery Pollster on ARG](#)--

[T]he problem in trying to assess the ARG poll is that we know so little about it. Does ARG make call-backs to unavailable respondents? What was the sample composition on any ARG Iowa survey this year in terms of age and education level, and was this one suddenly different? Did ARG weight the results by age or education this time, and if so, by how much? We are in the dark on all of these questions. ...

See also: Jay Cost, who offers more reasons for [caution but not dismissal](#). ... 1:38 A.M.

Monday, December 24, 2007

Mick Shand, [one of the few survivors of the "Great Escape"](#)--the last man to make it out of the tunnel--has died at age 92. ... P.S.: The [book](#) was better than the movie. ... 12:43 P.M.

Sunday, December 23, 2007

I'm staying out of the great [Politico vs. Fred Thompson debate](#). Many campaign events seem forced and awkward to me. Thompson's fire-station drop-by [looked maybe more awkward than most](#). So? Is gladhanding ability all that crucial a presidential talent? More important, as [Instapundit notes](#), Thompson's answer to local paper's farm policy question wasn't entirely "glittering generalities" (Politico's quote from an editor). Thompson [eventually got around to saying](#):

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

We're going to have to phase out the corporate welfare system we've got, however. There are extremely rich people living in skyscrapers in Manhattan that are receiving subsidy payments. I think that's wrong. I'd put a stop to that if it was within my power. That still continues in this latest Farm Bill and it's not right. There ought to be a cutoff at some level and it's not right to have millionaires receiving farm subsidies.

People who know more about farm issues can tell me how brave and non-pandering an answer that is. But "phase out the corporate welfare system we've got" would seem to have some bite. ... P.S.: Here's [McCain on the same topic](#). Arguably braver, since he talks of reducing all subsidies, not mainly about cutting off the rich. Still. ... 11:40 P.M.

Did you know that CITGO, effectively owned by the Venezuelan government headed by Hugo Chavez, runs ads in the U.S. [urging Latinos to buy its gas on the basis of ethnic solidarity--as "Energia Latina"?](#) .... One ad is [here](#). ... 10:31 P.M.

If Hillary numbers in Iowa show her losing badly early next week, wouldn't she be smart to have her much-rumored staff shakeup the day before the Iowa caucuses? That way a) the story the next day becomes "Hillary relaunches campaign" instead of "Hillary crushed" and b) she might even convince some people that she lost because of the staff shakeup. ... Even if she doesn't think she needs a shakeup, it might be a good idea to have one. ... P.S.: Blame Bill: Implicitly blaming her staff seems more promising than blaming her husband. She's stuck with her husband.\*\* And do we really think Hillary's main problem is [subconscious sabotage](#) from her husband? Isn't Hillary's problem Hillary? ...

\*\*--Unless ... you don't think ... Now that would be a staff shakeup. ... 10:51 A.M. link

Friday, December 21, 2007

The Matrix Room Eight's Jerry Skurnik has [suggested that the electorate is splitting into two diverging parts](#)--people who follow politics and people who don't--with the people who follow politics much better informed than they were before (thanks to cable, web, etc.) and the people who don't follow politics less well informed (they used to get at least some information from Walter Cronkite). That certainly rings true to me. And it may, as Skurnik claims, explain some of the new volatility in polling--e.g., when the uninformed majority suddenly discovers, [say](#), that Rudy Giuliani has been married three times.

But there's a second way to divide the electorate that asks how the [voters](#) inform themselves. Do they rely on the traditional Mainstream Media (MSM), or do they get their political information from the Web, from cable news, from the tabloids, etc. This division may have once seemed unimportant, but it doesn't anymore--its seriousness is suggested by the MSM's impressive resistance to stories bubbling up from the blogs and the tabs that don't meet MSM standards (putting aside whether you regard those standards as high or merely idiosyncratic). "Rielle Hunter"--the woman whom the [National Enquirer alleges](#) was John Edwards' mistress--was the top-searched name on the MSN site at one point Thursday, I'm told. Meanwhile, in the traditional mainstream press, "Rielle Hunter" was mentioned only ... well, zero times.

Of the two ways to divide the electorate, the second is arguably more important. After all, even those who don't follow politics, will eventually inform themselves before the election.\*\* But if the MSM/Web barrier remains as robust as it's been, those who inform themselves from the MSM will find out something different, when they finally tune in, than those who go to the Web and learn both the news and what might be called the ["undernews"](#).\*\*\* If you're thinking of voting as a Democrat in Iowa or New Hampshire, you might watch NBC and never know about this messy Rielle Hunter business. Or you might read DailyKos know the whole allegation plus the arguments against it

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

plus seven theories about how it came to light. That knowledge might cause voters to vote against Edwards or to vote for him--but either way first they have to find out.

Likewise, TNR's [Noam Scheiber suggests](#) that the egghead sector ("urban, college-educated liberals") of the Democratic party--which used to be less partisan and combative than the blue-collar/labor sector--is now more partisan and combative, because its egg heads are wrapped up in Kos and other anti-Bush sites, where they absorb the latest undernews about the machinations of Karl Rove and Tom DeLay. Scheiber argues this is a good development for Obama, who surprisingly doesn't have to become more partisan than he actually is in order to win over non-egghead (labor) Dems.

The 2008 campaign will be a test of the relative strength of these various differently-informed electorates. Of those who follow politics (Skurnik's s first group) how many follow the "undernews" and how many merely watch Brian Williams? Of those who don't follow politics (Skurnik's s second group) how many bone up in the end by madly googling the candidates, and how many just read the editorial endorsements in their local papers? The non-MSM Enquirer will be in the checkout aisles all over Iowa, but will it have an impact?

At the moment it looks as if Edwards has the most at stake in this great experiment, but others will have a stake soon enough. . Much of the anti-"amnesty" immigration movement has been consigned to the Undernews simply because the MSM consensus in favor of some kind of "comprehensive" legalization has been so strong. Why even cover those nativist kooks? That's no longer true, but there may be other issues the MSM doesn't cover, including various partisan conspiracy theories and maybe entire candidacies (e.g. Ron Paul).

My guess is that Skurnik's s largest group--those who don't normally follow politics--will by and large continue in 2008 to get their "free media" from the conventional press. That means they won't, by and large, learn the undernews. The MSM will still dominate this election. But not the next one.

---

\*\*--You might think there would only be three groups: Non-Followers, people who follow through the MSM, and people who follow through non-MSM. But the non-followers who actually vote will have to start following some time, at which point they will also fall into two groups: either relying on the MSM or going beyond it. It's a four-box matrix--very exciting--although the box of "those who don't follow politics but then learn from blogs" presumably doesn't contain many voters.

\*\*\*--Apologies to Sam Smith of [Undernews](#), and the various sites that use this term in what may be a different way. 3:39 A.M. link

---

Thursday, December 20, 2007

McCain's s Secret Friends? Pithy, knowledgeable Weekly Standard blogger Richelieu [busts Edwards aides](#) for forced spinning of their man's s comeback. But Richelieu himself keeps spinning McCain comeback scenarios--the latest [suggests that Giuliani could become a "Superman" by dropping out and endorsing McCain](#). If, as everyone including me suspects, Richelieu is in fact former McCain strategist Mike Murphy, someone should bust him. The Standard is depriving its readers of a key fact they need to judge his posts. ... P.S.: This is not to say that Edwards or McCain might not, in fact, come back. ...Update: And isn't Jake Tapper a famously huge McCain fan? Today ABC's s evening news led with Tapper's s report hyping McCain rival Giuliani's s apparently [brief illness](#) as if it were the equivalent of Paul Tsongas' cancer. ... 3:53 P.M. link

---

"Nice Hagel!" Malcolm Gladwell has elaborated [a Theory of Disqualifying Statements](#), in the context of courtship:



## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

For every romantic possibility, no matter how robust, there exists at least one equal and opposite sentence, phrase, or word ... capable of extinguishing it.

Gladwell gives two examples of such disqualifying phrases. ("Brown," and "nice Tits!").

There are similar Disqualifying Statements in politics, words that will extinguish your enthusiasm for a candidate at the very moment when you are ready to swoon for him (or her). Here's one of those words: "Hagel." [As in:](#)

Barack Obama has often **said** he'd consider putting [Repblicans in his cabinet](#) and even bandied about names like Sens. Dick Lugar and Chuck Hagel.

Forget that this is a cliché appeal to hack Washington bipartisanship, that Sen. Hagel's reputation seems to have been built on the substitution of good looks and agonizing passion for coherent, articulated thought, that the press mainly loves him because he's always ready to go on television and stab his party in the back. Why would you promote Hagel at the very moment when [his prediction that the Surge was "the most dangerous foreign policy blunder in this country since Vietnam"](#) appears to have been humiliatingly wrong? Disastrously wrong, potentially, if it had been heeded. Disqualifyingly wrong, you'd think. Obama is **saying**, in effect, that his need for respectable approval trumps reality. ...

P.S.: And just when many people (e.g. me) were trying to convince themselves that Obama's inexperience wouldn't be a problem because he'd surround himself with terrific advisors. ...

P.P.S.: "Hagel" isn't as much of a disqualifying statement as "I support the Davis-Bacon Act." But it's close! ... 12:01 P.M. [link](#)

The Wages of Lehanism: Steve Stark explains [why Hillary gets unfavorable press](#):

[T]he crew that publicly surrounds Hillary has consistently come across as the most arrogant group of know-it-alls ever to populate the modern campaign stage. (When one considers the group that surrounded Richard Nixon, that's really **saying** something.) Every question is seemingly answered with a snarl. Every challenge appears to be greeted with a personal insult. ("We don't comment on books that are utter and complete failures," was one such riposte.) [E.A.]

It's not a complicated dynamic! I remember feeling that way about Joe Biden's 1988 staffers when I worked at Newsweek. I internally resolved to screw them to the maximum reasonable extent if the opportunity ever arose. ... The "we don't comment on books" line is a bit of Lehan-style fightback the Hillary camp must have been particularly proud of. But it had long-term costs way in excess of its short term benefits. (Political journalists, remember, are people who tend to write books that are utter and complete failures.) .... 11:32 P.M. [link](#)

What am I, a potted plant? Like a blogger trying to seem sophisticated, Rush Limbaugh [embraces the fallacy](#) that just because the National Enquirer published a [scandal story](#) about John Edwards a couple of weeks away from an election, it must be a "hit":

But I've been trying to think: who leaked, who planted, who dropped this story right before a neck-and-neck primary?

Sometimes a story is just a story. They're not all plants... Sometimes they just, you know, bubble up! And they tend to bubble up right before elections for the same reason students tend to check out library books right before finals-- it's fish-or-cut-bait, use-it-or-lose-it time for sources and reporters alike. ...2:52 A.M. [link](#)

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

[Level-headed Kos diary](#) . ImpeccableLiberalCredentials argues Edwards

needs to avoid sabotaging himself with denials if they will not be borne out by facts, ignoring the rumors or issuing reckless challenges to the media - mistakes that have brought down frontrunners with even more substance and experience than Edwards has.

P.S.: [Less level-headed Kos diary](#). I'm sure the commenters will defend me! ... 12:04 P.M.

Rielle Hunter Update: Respected [stock researcher](#) and [astral](#) [analyst](#) Jerome Armstrong has the [claim of paternity from the lawyer for former Edwards' aide Andrew Young](#). ... P.S.: Sure seems like a lot of secrecy-- [features of the Enquirer story](#) that are undisputed in the statement-- if Young and Hunter are just "a couple that's expecting a child." ... P.P.S.: The solution of living with your wife and family and the pregnant mother of your forthcoming offspring in the same gated community seems a little, well, old-school Mormon!. .. Also: Note that Young's s lawyer writes

the relationship between these former co-workers, which began when they worked together in 2006.

But Hunter, in [her original MyDD-posted denial](#), declared:

When working for the Edwards camp, my conduct as well as the conduct of my entire team was completely professional.

I sense a contradiction! . ... 1:34 A.M. link

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

Pollster.com's Mark Blumenthal notes [a big reason why those gratuitous network Iowa caucus "entrance" polls](#) might be wrong. As he puts it in an email, "There is zero check against younger interviewer bias"--meaning that when the networks employ young interviewers older caucusers tend to avoid talking to them.

Keep in mind that the 2004 [exit poll] debacle was partly the result of younger, presumably Dem interviewers having greater trouble approaching or interviewing older Republican voters. This despite the age / gender "adjustment" that [CBS pollster] Frankovic talks about.

Why this matters: As Frankovic notes, Obama's s support is much higher among voters under 45. So never mind the deliberation, post threshold reallocation, etc. The entrance poll will likely show Obama doing better than he'll really do even among those entering.

The networks could leave the Iowa caucuses to their own perverse, undemocratic and historically misguided devices without making them more perverse and undemocratic. But then how would network polling divisions justify their existence? ...

See [earlier post](#). ...

Correction: It turns out the networks will attempt to correct for the tendency of older caucusers to avoid young entrance poll interviews. But the fix requires the already-harried entrance polltakers to keep an accurate tally of the voters who don't talk to them (are they old, male, female etc.). It's s not clear that this can be pulled off in the crush "as voters stream in for the 6:30 p.m. caucus start," Blumenthal notes. But he has [posted a correction](#). ....11:48 P.M. link

---

What to expect when you're expecting: Drudge [teases the National Enquirer](#) ... Update: The Enquirer [posts the gist](#) ... Update: The [full Enquirer story](#) is now up. ... One initial point: There's no reason to conclude this story was planted by one campaign or another. I'm familiar with how the initial Rielle Hunter/Edwards rumors, true or not, got to at least one news outlet--and no campaigns, Dem or GOP, were involved. It was a story going around--I'd been hearing it for months. Not all rumors are plants. And some are true. Even in the Enquirer. ... P.S.: Here's an earlier [analysis of the potential effect of this scandal](#) on Edwards--and Hillary. It doesn't seem all that complicated. Until recently, Edwards not very subtly [put his wife's illness. and his loyalty to her, near the center of his campaign](#). In the process, [he said:](#)

In so many ways, you're the guardians of what kind of human being, we're going to have as president. ... And you get to judge us.

and, on [60 Minutes](#):

[E]very single candidate for president, Republican and Democratic have lives, personal lives, that indicate something about what kind of human being they are. And I think it is a fair evaluation for America to engage in to look at what kind of human beings each of us are, and what kind of president we'd make.

Backfill: Here's Jerome Armstrong's [initial Rielle Hunter denial](#) from back in October ("completely unfounded and ridiculous") ...

Update: Many readers report the story has disappeared from the Enquirer's web site. I don't know why, but you can't be too paranoid when [Ron Burkle might be involved](#). (If it hurt Edwards, the story would potentially devastate Burkle's candidate Hillary, who needs Edwards to beat or dilute Obama in Iowa. That's why it's crazy to [suggest](#) that Hillary's camp planted it.)

Just in case, I've saved my cached copy. You can do it too!. ...

12/19 Update: The Enquirer has now posted a [more complete version](#). Editor in Chief David Perel [emails Wonkette](#): "Due to a website malfunction a summary of the story went live last night for a brief time. It was then taken down because it was scheduled to be released this morning ." ... 4:54 P.M. link

---

Congress' Fence: Get the old gang back together one more time? Provisions buried in the huge omnibus spending bill about to pass Congress gut the program to build a border fence, according to Republicans--and [they appear to have a point](#):

The 2006 Secure Fence Act specifically called for "two layers of reinforced fencing" and listed five specific sections of border where it should be installed. The new spending bill removes the two-tier requirement and the list of locations.

Defenders of the changes (i.e. Sen. Hutchison of Texas) argue that the Department of Homeland Security should have discretion to "utilize limited resources." But the whole problem is that nobody trusts President Bush's Department of Homeland Security. Or anybody's Department of Homeland Security, for that matter. Whoever is president, DHS will always have a bureaucratic bias toward expanding its budget by employing more DHS personnel--e.g. border patrol agents--and less [cheap, inanimate fencing](#). They can't be expected to stand up to the businesses and local interests and ACLU lawyers and diplomats who hate the fence and will always lobby against it.

Shouldn't the old "yahoo" coalition from earlier this year reform and bombard the Capitol with phone calls to get the House and Senate to drop the fence-gutting language? I **say** yes. a) The project seems doable--Dem Congressman are trying to appear tough on border security and are unlikely to cling to the fence-weakening provisions, Spitzer-

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

style and b) if they backed down, it would provide a valuable deterrent demonstration for future politicians who try to sneak border-weakening provisions past the vigilant yahoo community. ....

One problem is that a prominent border-control blogger, Michelle Malkin, is wedded to a silly idiosyncratic position *that the fence is "gesture politics,"* as opposed to something the soft-on-illegals lobby (including Republican business interests) oppose precisely because it will actually work. ....

Update--It's on: Border-control group Numbers USA has sent out an "action" alert to *its lists*, ("Senate Vote this afternoon. Stop Congress from gutting the Secure Fence Act!") Doesn't seem like a lot of time if the vote is this afternoon, however. ... 12:09 P.M. link

Monday, December 17, 2007

It's come to this: Counterproductive overspinner Chris Lehane and his firm *get \$100,000 a month* (according to S.F. Chronicle's Matier & Ross) to craft mindlessly combative sound bites for Hollywood studios in their dispute with the Writers Guild. Sample sound bit (after union president Andy Stern severed ties with Lehane):

"The real issue here is that Stern needs to do some explaining on how it is that he is fighting for people who make more than doctors and pilots against the interest of real working-class people (set workers and others who have been sidelined during the strike) - and less time punching at shadows."

I dunno. That one was worth maybe only \$99,000. ... But hey, you have to hit back! It's the Lehane way. Ask President Gore. [So now that people who buy you dinner are on strike, you're suddenly pro-union?--ed **No**. Just Anti-Lehane.] 5:50 P.M.

*New Clinton ad*: "Hillary's mom lives with her." But does her husband? Mickey's Assignment Desk: Has anybody updated *Patrick Healy's May, 2006 story* and calculated the *number* of days Bill Clinton has spent in Hillary's Washington, D.C. house in the past year (now that it's been officially designated as the place where you live when you live "with" Hillary)? If you're going to flaunt your home life then people are entitled to examine your home life. ... Assigned to: Healy. Hillaryland already hates him. He might as well take all the flak. ... 5:19 P.M.

The TV networks are screwing around with the already-absurd Iowa caucuses again, *using an "entrance poll" of only 40 precincts (out of more than 3,500) that threatens to manufacture a misleading result*. Ah, but it's all justified because of the valuable information the network poll will gather! Politico's Roger Simon reports

Though the actual questionnaire that will be handed to *voters* is a secret, Kathy Frankovic, the CBS News director of surveys, told me it would probably include 12 to 15 multiple choice questions asking such things as when the *voters* decided on whom to support, how they feel about the Iraq war, whether they are in a labor union, their political philosophy (i.e., liberal, conservative, etc.), and age, income and level of education.

Armed with this information, a network analyst can *say*: "Obama got 53 percent of the anti-war vote, while Clinton got 47 percent of the labor vote and Edwards got 36 percent of those who made up their minds in the last two weeks."

a) I deny this information is that useful. If Obama wins, I bet he got most of the anti-war vote! I don't need an entrance poll to tell me; b) Network polling place surveys have a history of humiliating error. Ask Presidents Gore and Kerry; c) The information, even if accurate, is likely to be deceptive. If Obama does get 53 percent of the antiwar vote, that might mean antiwar *voters* shopped around and found Obama the most anti-war of the candidates. Or they might have liked his smile. They might even have liked Obama first, before thinking about the issues, and then become antiwar *voters* because that's what Obama talked about; d) Mainly these unenlightening

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

little correlations let network news divisions fill time--because the real news (who won) comes at an inconveniently late hour and then only takes about 10 seconds to report; e) The conceit of the "caucuses" is that voters meet, argue with their neighbors, listen to speeches, and then vote. But the entrance poll records their preference before the arguing and speeches; f) Worse, the entrance poll results threaten to have a Heisenbergish outcome-distorting effect, since they may be known before the caucus votes are finished and will instantly flash on everyone's Blackberry, cell phone, etc.. If Obama is barely edging out Edwards in the (possibly inaccurate) entrance poll, with Hillary third, will Hillary order her supporters to switch over to Edwards in order to deny Obama a win? I don't think that's too far-fetched. ...

Backfill: The networks wouldn't have to resort to a questionable "entrance" poll if Iowans voted at normal hours using, say, easily-countable ballots. But that's not the Iowa way. For a preview of the state's near-identical vote problems from four years ago, see ["The Four Votes of Iowa."](#) Key point:

Iowa only gets its moment of cynosure, in other words, because its system is too f---ed up to be a primary.

If it were a straightforward "primary," after all, then it wouldn't be allowed to precede New Hampshire.

All this might be excusable if Iowa Dem caucusers had a long track record of sound judgment. [Alas](#), ...

See also [Saletan and Schiller](#), and [Saletan's seminal article](#) on the epic 1988 caucus debacle. ... 1:16 P.M.  
link

Sunday, December 16, 2007

"Report Says That the Rich Are Getting Richer Faster, Much Faster" When I read that NYT headline I thought the [accompanying piece](#) was going to document that the rich are not only getting richer, but they are getting richer faster than before. It wouldn't be surprising--sure seems that way to me. But there's nothing in David Cay Johnston's trademark semi-penetrable reporting that compares the increase in riches at the top in the most recent period against the increase in prior periods (except a GOP claim that the increase for 1992-1997 was the same as the increase from 2000-2005, which would seem to make the opposite point). ... In short, Johnston's actual story showed inequality increasing, but not accelerating. Clearly the rich had a very good 2005, though, and it's hard to believe 2006 will be worse. ... P.S.: Here are the CBO's [year-to-year data since 1979](#) (see esp. Table 1C). Incomes at the top took a big hit between 2000 and 2001, and they had big increases the past two years. I leave it to the more graph-oriented to extract the trend Johnston failed to extract. ... Update: See, e.g., [Jared Bernstein's effort](#). (he finds a greater increase in income inequality from 2003-2005 "than over any other two year period" since 1979.) ... But [Luskin notes](#) that the 90s saw a sustained increase in the income share of the top 1% ("to 20.8% of total income in 2000, from 14% in 1990"). It's not clear the 2000s will see the same sort of increase. So far, no. (After the "bad" years in the early part of the decade, the top 1% are now up to 21.2%, he says.) ...

\*\*--not just faster than the poor, which is, as they say, old news.

Note to David Cay Johnston: All emails on the record! ... 11:54 P.M.

Idle Minds Will Work for Free: First Kushell strike video, [OK](#). Second Kushell strike video, [excellent](#). ... P.S.: But what's Kevin Drum got to do with it? (I was paying close attention to the credits.) ... P.P.S.: The video is funnier than most TV comedies. It reportedly got 400,000 hits--more than many cable shows. It was put up on the Web by unpaid performers seemingly just for the hell of it (and maybe the exposure). Doesn't that sort of make [Marc Andreessen](#) and [Rob Long's](#) point about the tenuous position of both Hollywood and the Writers Guild? ... It's as if the Linotype operators went on strike and decided to publish their story in four color offset!... 10:36 P.M.

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

---

I'm discounting all reports of a McCain surge that look like they might well come from Mike Murphy, the shrewd political observer who ran McCain's 2000 campaign and obviously likes his former client. That includes [this report](#)--and maybe [this one too](#). On the other hand, Mark Steyn [also blogs of a "detectable" McCain surge](#) in N.H.. ... 11:10 A.M.

---

Saturday, December 15, 2007

Obama goes after Edwards: [Hillary's not even Obama's main rival](#) anymore? ... 2:23 A.M.

---

Friday, December 14, 2007

Huckabee and the Pence Scam: [RCP's Tom Bevan wants to know](#) how Huckabee can reconcile his righteous statments about compassion for the children of illegal immigrants ("[W]e are a better country than to punish children for what their parents did") with his [tough new Minuteman-endorsed anti-illegal "attrition" plan](#). Here's one possible answer: Huckabee thinks he can square the circle with [his support of the Pence Scam](#), which would require illegals to "touchback" in their home countries before letting them right back in again. It won't work because the Pence Scam is ... [well, a scam](#). But I suspect it will be Huckabee's answer, if he has one at all.... Update: As predicted, [Huckabee responds](#) by declaring that "immigrants and their families here illegally would have to return to their home countries." But he's also [said](#) that [in "days, maybe weeks" these people "could come back in the workforce"](#)--jumping the queue of those waiting to come legally. In effect, [amnesty with some travel requirements](#).. Bevan doesn't seem to recognize the Pence Scam when he sees it. Huckabee's obviously hoping GOP [voters](#) don't either.... 3:09 P.M.

---

I attempt to defend the [tri-modal model](#) of scandal coverage against withering assault on bloggingheads [here](#). Of course, I forgot the most important point--which is that when scuttlebutt is made public that serves an investigative function--sources are alerted and come forward, friends vouch, previously unknown emailers email, and [you find out the truth faster](#) than you would when professional journalists keep the good gossip to themselves. That includes finding out that a rumor is false. ...

P.S.: As the videos linked above eventually succeed in making clear, I think the easy-to-fabricate [Huma innuendo](#) is one of those false ones. I'd still argue (contra [Klein](#)) that if it's being used to smear Hillary in South Carolina it can be mentioned and assessed, but I'm not pushing it. ( I'm pushing the [Edwards rumor](#)!).. 2:21 P.M.

---

DC-centrism: [Dana Milbank](#) is ["more powerful"](#) than the editor of the Des Moines Register? I guess everyone in Des Moines should just give up. ... 11:07 A.M.

---

Bob Wright [boards the Anyone But Edwards bandwagon](#). ... and [explains why](#). ... 11:04 A.M.

---

More reasons why the Iowa caucuses are a fraud:

1) In the Democratic caucuses, [out-of-staters can sway the vote](#):



## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

In each precinct, local officials will have a list of registered Democrats in that precinct. Those who show up and aren't on the list can register to vote by asserting that they live in the precinct and sign a voter registration form.

Technically, a campaign staffer who moved to Iowa a few months ago to work for a campaign is not breaking the law by attending a precinct caucus, even if the staffer plans to move on the morning of Jan. 4.

Why even stay "a few months"?

2) But in any case it's the network executives, not the actual caucusers, who may decide who comes in first. It's important to let everyone get to bed early, after all. Here's [Howard Fineman on Edwards](#):

He could get pummeled by media dynamics. There will be exit polls on caucus night, but they will not be an accurate reflection of the final tallies of caucus delegates - the legally meaningful number - until later. Also, he is strongest in the small western towns, whose disproportionate influence in the delegate tallies (don't ask) won't show up in the exits. In other words, he could win but not get credit for it by the time the winners are declared.

9:55 A.M.

---

Thursday, December 13, 2007

Even [Mark Krikorian worries](#) that "idiot politicians will overdo" the potent immigration issue "with " [Listen. Jose, you're not coming in this time!](#)" hyperbole.

The potential problem is not really the Hispanic vote, which is too small and diverse to be of much consequence in any case, but rather other Americans, who want the laws enforced and immigration reduced, but don't want to feel bad about themselves for wanting that.

I agree-- though, again, when it comes to detoxifying border-control rhetoric, I think I still prefer "no illegals, but more legals" to Krikorian's "fewer immigrants but a warmer welcome" approach. ... 11:30 P.M.

---

I didn't realize [the "shield" law passed by the Dem-controlled House applies only to professional journalists](#) --i.e., those who disseminate news

for a substantial portion of the person's livelihood or for substantial financial gain

What's worse, inequality of income or inequality of rights? ... P.S.: "Substantial ... gain." At least they were precise!. .. [via [Instapundit](#)]. 10:50 P.M.

---

Why are we running a BIO ad 19 days out!?! That would be the complaint from the dissenters within the Hillary camp about [this ad featuring Hillary's mother](#). ... kf's line: Yes, it's a bio ad. And yes, Dorothy Rodham, seems a wee bit distanced, in a slightly elevated way, from the "other people's unfortunate circumstances" that Hillary is said to have "empathy" for. But at least she comes across as a real person, unlike her daughter. If she seems like someone who's led a comfortable, affluent, slightly snooty life--well, we know people like that! It helps us peg her and tether her, and indirectly her daughter, to a reality that's familiar even if it's not one we share. (As [Lucianne says](#), "She had a mother?").

If you need a bio ad 19 days out you need a bio ad 19 days out. ... 2:27 P.M.

---

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

[Bloggingheads.tv](#) launches alarmingly professional redesign. ... 1:51 P.M.

---

Don't Tell Zell! The estimable Mark Blumenthal [sorts through the myriad Iowa polls](#). Some have a "unique conception ... of the likely electorate." The L.A. Times' effort, in particular, [does not come off well](#). ... 12:32 A.M.

---

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

Hillary's Second Life Staff: Little did I know that the idea of a "backup" campaign staff is an idea that's been bubbling around in Hillaryland for at least a year. Obviously, [current campaign manager Patti Solis Doyle is the main target](#)--she holds that position mainly because Hillary knows she won't leak, I hear. She's now in charge in Iowa, which sets her up for the fall if Hillary should lose the state. .... I'm told there have been at least two unsuccessful coup attempts aimed at Solis Doyle--one by former Hillary chief of staff Maggie Williams, the second by strategists Carville and Begala. It wouldn't be surprising if the latter were available to step in as the white knights to save Hillary should what she calls the "best staff in the country" fail in the early going. ...Update: [Knives out](#) for chief strategist Mark Penn as well. "Campaign spokesman Howard Wolfson downplayed the dissent." But campaign spokesman Howard Wolfson "hates" Penn, I hear--and vice-versa. ... 8:03 P.M.

---

"[T]heir friendship will never be the same. There is now a real distance between Burkle and the Clintons." I would be less skeptical of the severed-friendship part of [HuffPo's story](#) if it wasn't exactly what the Clintons would want to come out right about now. Unless Bill Clinton is a bigger fool than I think he is, he knew the complicated enterprise he was getting into when he got into business with Burkle, and he knew that at some point before the primaries he'd probably be well advised to officially distance himself, if only to avoid being associated with the behavior of every firm Burkle invested in. ... Or you'd think he would have realized, [say](#), when [this 2006 NYT story came out](#) that Burkle's often-cacophonous life was something he got involved with at his own PR peril, no? Yet they were [reported zipping around](#) as recently as this August. ...

Update: Tom Edsall of HuffPo emails--

I guarantee that the story line was not the result of Clinton spin.

7:57 P.M.

---

"Clinton readies New Hampshire 'firewall' to slow Obama post-Iowa" [AP](#): [Some "firewall."](#) ... 5:32 P.M.

---

Polipundit [rounds up](#) yesterday's [immigration](#)-related news, including the LAT's [winning entry in the contest to produce the most biased immigration poll](#) in advance of last Sunday's GOP Univision debate. In the Times-Bloomberg poll, big majorities, from 54% to 76%, wanted to deny illegal immigrants drivers' licenses, food stamps and public schooling. A small 48-46 % plurality apparently even wanted to deny emergency medical services. Somehow the paper settled on [the headline](#)

1 in 3 would deny illegal immigrants social services

on the grounds that only 1 in 3 checked "no" to all the services. ... The [poll's joint corporate press release](#) was more accurately titled "Many would deny illegal immigrants basic social services." There must have been an Intervening

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Twit\*\* before the actual newspapered was written. ... P.S.: Also, Minuteman founder Jim Gilchrist [appears to have fallen](#) for the [Pence scam!](#) ...

\*\*--as so often happens. ... 12:35 A.M.

Tuesday, December 11, 2007

Hillary pundit rebound? The [smart, useful Ambinder/Todd National Journal ranking](#) claims Hillary's still

ahead because there's a plausible scenario for her to win the nomination even if she loses Iowa and New Hampshire; that scenario does not exist for Obama.

I hope it doesn't involve winning South Carolina! ...

P.S.: Speaking of South CarolinawithitslargeAfricanAmericanpopulation, why couldn't Obama [make a stand there](#) if he comes close in Iowa and N.H.? ...

P.P.S.: The New York Observer'sSteve Kornacki [makes the more limited argument](#) that if Hillary loses in Iowa she could restore her "halo of inevitability" in New Hampshire, where she's been "massaging the egos of local political leaders." But Doug Schoen, defending Hillary, [claims she's actually already doing worse in New Hampshire than in Iowa](#). And anyone who remembers the Mondale/Hart race of 1984 won't put much stock on the egos of local political leaders. The mighty Mondale machine had massaged them into a state of near-arousal, but somehow actual New Hampshire voters swarmed to Hart. ... Anyway, given today's outlook, Hillary is well advised to drop the "halo of inevitability" and don the fur suit of the Energizer bunny candidate who will just keep going and going even if she, say, loses the first three primaries and the next three. Her strategists are presumably already thinking about such a long-haul comeback plan. ...

P.P.P.S.: One obvious comeback strategy would take to heart the lesson of the McCain campaign, which is that the press will give you a clean relaunch if you fire your existing, expensive campaign staff. But it's unlikely that this is the strategy Hillary's existing, expensive campaign staff will come up with. She needs a second staff! ... 4:44 P.M.  
link

Today's video: Huckabee [sucks up to the teachers' union](#). ... 11:54 P.M.

Monday, December 10, 2007

The GOP immigration tough guys: Mark Krikorian [cracks Giuliani's code on immigration](#). It seems Giuliani wants to stop illegal immigrants at the border but resists "internal" enforcement--e.g., employer sanctions. I'm [less gung ho about the need for "attrition" in the immigrant population than Krikorian is](#)--but you do have to have "internal" enforcement to diminish the "jobs magnet," no? Unless, as Krikorian speculates regarding Giuliani, you only want control at the border as a political stunt to appease the 'yahoos' and pave the way for legalization. ....

P.S.: Meanwhile, [Krikorian realizes](#) that Huckabee--who theoretically [based his seemingly tough, "prevent amnesty" proposal on a Krikorian article](#)--has no idea what his own plan is actually about. In debate, Huckabee endorsed a version of the [Pence "touchback" scam](#), which would allow existing illegals to jump the queue and become legal in "days, maybe weeks." ....

P.P.S.: Check out [Huckabee ten days ago on This Week](#). He doesn't seem to have a tough-on-illegals bone in his body, whatever [his ads](#) or his overworked "issues" staff say in his name. ...

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

P.P.P.S.: Romney has just launched an [ad attacking Huckabee as soft on illegal immigration](#). Huckabee is [being defended by ... John McCain](#). Which is a little like being defended against a charge of marital infidelity by Bill Clinton. ... Update: Read [Ryan Lizza's New Yorker piece](#) to learn that McCain hasn't changed at all in either his support for "comprehensive" reform or his narcissistic righteousness on the issue.\*\*

P.P.P.P.S.: Of course, we're [not too sure about Romney either](#), on the anti- "amnesty" front. ... Of the top 5 GOP candidates, only Thompson appears not to be faking it. [He's an actor--ed. But not a good one]. ...

\*\*--You won't learn much else from Lizza's article. It's ... not one of his best! A classic dumbed-down Remnick-era New Yorker piece--remedial reading for U.W.S. cocooners. Lizza skips over all the wonkish aspects of the [immigration](#) debate (like whether "comprehensive" reform will actually work) as if they have nothing to do with the politics, paints opponents as unfeeling racists, ignores well-publicized evidence (e.g., from [Carville and Greenberg](#)) that [Democrats might have political problems](#) from supporting legalization, falls for the [recent Pew hype](#) and generally fits the issue into a comfortable Civil Rights template (moral moderates vs. pathetic bigots). Did I mention that it's a bad piece? When [E.J. Dionne offers a more nuanced, less moralistic view](#) of the politics of [immigration](#), you are in big trouble. ... 10:15 P.M. link

Lehanian ethics: [The New Republic quotes](#) the Hollywood studio's new hired attack flack, who previously found work as spokesman against an obviously-doomed initiative designed to tinker with California's electoral votes:

"When they're refusing to [say](#) who's behind the initiative," [says](#) Chris Lehane, a consultant who handled communications for the countereffort, "the rules of the game are that you can make all sorts of allegations." [E.A.]

Who makes these "rules of the game"? Maybe if Lehane played by more appealing rules he'd win a few. ... 9:40 P.M.

The Dog Ate My Sermons: Mike Huckabee wants credit for his work as a preacher\*\* but [doesn't seem to want to make public his preachings](#)--his campaign [says](#) its "not able to accommodate" press requests" for his sermons, and a pastor's assistant at his Texarkana church tells Mother Jones

much of the archival material from Huckabee's tenure as pastor had been destroyed during a remodeling. The rest, she [said](#), was not available to the press.

Hmm. These aren't exactly private documents. They're addresses to large groups. He's running for President. Seems like he should make them public. Could be a rich treasure trove of embarrassment! [Like your archives-ed I've been thinking of, you know, remodeling.] ...

\*\*--See, e.g., his December 2 [Stephanopoulos interview](#) ("I also have a record of being in the private sector, not only in small business, but being involved in the human work of touching people's lives from the cradle to the grave ..."). 2:02 P.M.

School Me (a new feature in which I advertise areas in which I'm embarrassingly ignorant, in the hope that readers will fill me in faster than I could fill myself in by, [say](#), making phone calls): Back in June, Ron Brownstein wrote that in California "liberal interests and labor unions ... hate the idea" of an "individual mandate" requiring everyone to buy health insurance. Does that "hate" hold true nationally? Is it grounded solely in the sentiment Brownstein alludes to--that "they consider it unfair to working families"? Or does it also have a more cynical, institutional grounding, namely unions' fear that an individual mandate would [undermine employer-provided insurance](#) and the role of unions in negotiating for that insurance? ... American labor has been relatively selfless, it seems to me, in lobbying for government programs (e.g. OSHA) that partially remove the very need for unions by providing directly,

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

through government, what unions otherwise provide through collective bargaining. This would be an exception to that tradition. ...

Most important (for campaign purposes) does this mean that on the domestic policy issue where Obama is most conspicuously more "conservative" than Hillary Clinton, he's not telling **voters** "what they need to hear," good-government style, as [advertised in his J-J speech](#)--he's telling powerful liberal interests ["what they want to hear."](#) New Deal-hack style? ... 12:44 A.M.

Sunday, December 9, 2007

I was relieved to see that Juan Cole's ["Why Bush's Troop Surge Won't Save Iraq"](#) doesn't **say** Bush's troop surge won't save Iraq. It **says** what you've heard before--that "there have been some relative gains in security recently," yet on the political front "Iraq is still beset with problems." It asks, "How much longer can Iraq limp along as a failing state before it really begins to collapse?--but doesn't try to give answers. ... "Iraq ... beset with problems" sounds a whole lot better than what we were looking at a year ago. ... P.**S.**: The [June version of Cole's catastrophism](#) ("Surging toward disaster in Iraq")--which foillowed a brief U.**S.** offensive in Baquba--declared that

the operation clearly committed the United States to one side in a civil war. ...

Which side? The Shiite side. "In practical terms, the U.**S.** military was helping a Shiite government and a Shiite security force impose itself on a majority Sunni population." Given what we now know about the Sunni-empowering aspects of the surge--including the Sunni "tribal Awakening Councils on the U.**S.** payroll"--that does not seem like an eerily prescient characterization of the surge's actual effect. ... 11:47 P.M.

Saturday, December 8, 2007

Seasonal: kf 's perennial nominee for [best rock Christmas song](#). Only works loud. ... Update: That link now dead. Here's a [video](#). ...[Thanks to C.M.] 6:47 P.M.

Friday, December 7, 2007

Reminder: Back in January, the courageously incoherent [Sen. Chuck Hagel called the "surge"](#)

"the most dangerous foreign policy blunder in this country since Vietnam, if it's carried out."

He got lots of [glowing coverage](#). But [whatever the surge is](#), it isn't that. ... Why mention this? In case anyone feels an urge to draft MSM favorite Hagel for president on the Unity'08 ticket. ... 1:36 P.M.

I [talk Hollywood right-wingers](#) with the expressive and strangely compelling Rob Long. ... 1:24 P.M..

Thursday, December 6, 2007

Hillary's supposed to be the experienced one who can handle foreign policy crises. Yet [in the current campaign](#) it's Hillary who seems panicked and Obama who projects calm. Just **saying**. ... Maybe this is how " [running for president \[became\] a qualification for being President](#)." ... 11:52 P.M.

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Sell your studio stock: The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers has [hired Chris Lehane](#), according to Hollywood-writers-strike-must-read Nikki Finke. The producers' group apparently wants "to take a more aggressive approach in its public relations" [LAT's words](#). Lehane is the [counterproductive overspinner](#) whose "aggressive" approach made Al Gore, John Kerry and then Wes Clark president. He also helped California Gov. Gray Davis establish his political legacy in his recall contest against fading action star Arnold Schwarzenegger. ... Update: Radar has more on [Lehane's magic touch](#). ... 4:14 P.M.. link

The Pew **Hispanic** Center reports that between July 2006 and October 2007 [Hispanic voters went from 49/28 Dem-Republican to 57/23](#)--a net Democratic gain of 13 points. In an excellent bit of 'comes-at-a-time'-ism, Pew attributes the shift to Republican anti-comprehensivism:

This U-turn in **Hispanic** partisan allegiance trends comes at a time when the issue of illegal **immigration** has become an intense focus of national attention and debate

HuffPo's normally sophisticated Thomas Edsall makes the argument less 501-c-3-ishly: ["GOP Driving Hispanics Away with Anti-Immigrant Push."](#) The problem, of course, is that the Pew Center doesn't tell us how many points the Democrats gained among non-**Hispanic voters**, or all **voters** generally. These were not good months for the GOP, mainly because of Iraq.

I'm perfectly willing to believe that the **immigration** debate has hurt the GOP among Hispanics, but without any sort of control group it's impossible to tell how much. (Gallup, for example, has the [Republicans losing about 5 points among all voters over the same period](#)--suggesting that the real **Hispanic immigration** backlash amounted to 8 points net, not 13.) ...

Update: More to the point, [Mark Blumenthal notes that Pew's own data](#)

shows that leaned party identification (identifiers plus leaners) among all adults went from 47%-40% Democrat/Republican in July 2006 to 54%-36% in October 2007 -- a net Democratic gain of 11 points.

That would make the extra GOP downturn among Hispanics more like a mere 2%! But that would be hardly be worth writing a big report about. No wonder Pew didn't mention it. ...

P.**S.**: What are the chances that the Pew **Hispanic** Center is going to conclude that Hispanics are not important or distinctive--they're really just like everyone else and really not worth studying much? I'd **say** close to zero. The study would be more credible if it came from the Pew Hellenic Center. ... Update: Steve Sailer **says** [I'm being unfair to Pew](#). ("Robert Suro and the others at the Pew **Hispanic** Center are willing to publicly state, for example, that the **Hispanic** vote isn't as big or powerful as the media typically assume."\*\*) But this report, not written by Suro, seems pretty egregious--and it does hype **Hispanic** voting power.

More: The [NYT swallows it whole](#), without bothering to ask whether "[g]ains made by Republicans ... in the presidential elections of 2000 and 2004" haven't been "erased" for virtually all **voters**, not just Hispanics. ....

P.P.**S.**: If legalization is so important to Hispanics, why does John McCain--champion of "comprehensive" reform--only draw 10% support in Pew's **Hispanic** Republican sample? ...

\*\*--Sailer's conclusion:

yes, the GOP may have lost 3 or 4 points among Hispanics on 2006 due to resistance to amnesty, but the size of the **Hispanic** vote is so small, that it's insignificant -- 5.8% times 4% = 0.23% -- compared to picking up votes (or at least not losing them) among the other 94% of the population.

3:32 P.M. link



## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

America's s Petting Zoo of Faith! Does anyone else find the following paragraph in [Mitt Romney's big religion speech](#) just a wee bit condescending--a quick tour of America's s religions offering each a little pat on the head:

"I believe that every faith I have encountered draws its adherents closer to God. And in every faith I have come to know, there are features I wish were in my own: I love the profound ceremony of the Catholic Mass, the approachability of God in the prayers of the Evangelicals, the tenderness of spirit among the Pentecostals, the confident independence of the Lutherans, the ancient traditions of the Jews, unchanged through the ages, and the commitment to frequent prayer of the Muslims.

He's s like a high school coach trying to maintain the self-esteem of all the children in his charge. ... 11:07 A.M. link

Wednesday, December 5, 2007

Is Hillary Cool with Edwards winning Iowa? That's s Rich Lowry's [sintriguing suggestion](#).

As Major Garrett noted on Fox News a little while ago, Hillary is probably going after Obama so hard in Iowa because she can afford to have Edwards win there in a way she can't with Obama. ...

For one thing, she needs to keep Edwards alive to split the vote against her. ... P.s: But why might Hillary be so confident that Edwards is not a threat in the long-run? Some [scandal](#) she thinks might bubble up? ... 3:12 A.M.

Rethinking Early Primaries: If Peter Beinart is right and [Hillary's appeal, even within her antiwar party, has perversely fallen as Iraq has faded from the news](#) ("Iraq played to Clinton's s biggest asset: her reputation for experience and strength") what happens if Dems reject her next month--and then Iraq, Iran, or some other foreign policy crisis happens over the summer before the election? The Democrats would find that their early-primary schedule will have led them to nominate the wrong candidate for Election Day--i.e. a candidate like Obama who plays better in peacetime. ...

It may be time to rethink the stone-carved CW that it helps a party to settle on a candidate early. Historically, prolonged, exciting, bitter nomination battles have tended to weaken nominees--Humphrey in 1968, for example. But there are counterexamples (in 1976 Jimmy Carter hardly wrapped it up early) and complicating circumstances (Carter in 1980 and Mondale in 1984 would have lost even if they'd faced no primary challengers). More important, the [Feiler Faster Thesis](#) suggests there is effectively more time between June and November in which a party can patch things up and change the story line. ... Unless it has already nominated the wrong person way back in February. ...

P.s: The FFT also suggests that the public mood about what sort of candidate is "right" is more likely to shift between February and November than it did back in 1968. ...

P.P.s: As if on cue, the CW appears to be under assault on the related issue of whether the early primaries will, in fact, settle the nomination. [Charlie Cook](#) and [Dick Morris](#) both suggest Hillary could weather early setbacks and still win. And the FFT suggests she has enough time, even with a front-loaded schedule [Yepsen notwithstanding](#). But I'm not quite buying it. Hillary in fightback mode is, so far, not a pleasant sight. ...

P.P.P.s:--A Plan So Crazy It Just Might Work: Still, this is kind of brilliant, from Morris--

There is only one way for Hillary to shift the focus onto Obama or John Edwards: lose.

1:46 A.M. link

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Dobbs May Already Have Control: [That National Public Radio debate today](#)

focused exclusively on three issues: Iran (and the echoes of Iraq), China and immigration.

even though Tim Rutten quite clearly told them that Americans don't care about the immigration issue. NPR is now part of the corrupt conspiracy to boost the ratings of CNN's Lou Dobbs. ("Make immigration a bigger issue and you've made a bigger audience for Dobbs," as Rutten explained.) The ostensibly neutral "Pew Research Center" has already been identified as part of this Dobbsian axis. Indeed, our entire politics is being perverted by a media elite in order to benefit one man ... Lou Dobbs! If Steve Inskeep and Robert Siegel are in on it, the hour is very late indeed. ... [See also [Tom Maguire](#)] 12:03 A.M.

Tuesday, December 4, 2007

Hillaryland Hates Obama: Is It Just Arrogance? Hillary's people "despise Obama," reports David Corn in a [fine piece of schmoozalism](#). They "don't need any prompting in private conversations to decry Obama as a dishonest poser." Hillary has (not uncleverly) asked, "'How did running for president become a qualification for being president?' ... Is this just because Obama's presumptuous enough to deny her rightful nomination? Or is there another root-cause complaint that the citizens of Hillaryland can't voice because even though it's true it wouldn't help them: that Obama's an 'affirmative action baby' who's been promoted faster than his merits would ordinarily permit? If he weren't black he'd be Dick Durbin! (Or a more appealing but less experienced version of Dick Durbin) ... That Hillary's cadres can't voice or even permit themselves to think about thinking this thought, of course, might tend to make them even madder. ... P.S.: Of course, Hillary is not an affirmative action baby. She got her position the old fashioned way--by marrying it. ... 1:32 P.M.

Juno is a sweet, witty, well-acted little movie that (not to give anything away) seems effectively "pro-life." It reminded me of those hipster jocks on the good New Jersey indie station (WFMU) who are so hip and indie that they're totally into firearms and derisive about gun control. The best (stark, funny, moving, silly) scene in the film occurs outside an abortion clinic. ... 2:09 A.M. link

Now Steven Stark applies the [Feiler Faster Thesis](#) to the [problem of maintaining "outsider" appeal](#):

The problem for all these candidates, however, is that once you become a front-runner, you become, by definition, somewhat conventional.

And, voters begin to turn against you. That, in fact, is what happened in 1976 where Jimmy Carter swept almost all the initial primaries, only to find in a few months that he was now considered an "old face" with the consequence that Jerry Brown and Frank Church began to beat him almost everywhere (though not in time to wrest the nomination away from him).

This year, in the internet age, that process will be greatly accelerated, so that in a matter of weeks or even days, Huckabee will appear as if he's been around for decades. How do you continue to appear unconventional and new in an age when everything is sped up beyond recognition? [E.A.]

Possible answer: Unless you have actual ideas and plans that a) upset the insiders and b) appeal to voters, you don't. Half-fake outsiders like Carter probably won't pull it off. ... 12:54 A.M.

Monday, December 3, 2007

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Live by Pew, Die by Pew: LAT Chief Twit Tim Rutten [calls the CNN-YouTube debate "corrupt"](#) because it "chose to devote the first 35 minutes of this critical debate to a single issue -- immigration"--and did it allegedly to somehow expand the audience for CNN's Lou Dobbs.

How do we know immigration didn't deserve this play? Rutten cites a fresh poll from "the nonpartisan and highly reliable Pew Center" showing that "just 6% of the survey's national sample said that immigration was the most important electoral issue."

But of course this was a Republican primary debate, and presumably focused on issues of concern to Republican primary voters. Why didn't Rutten give his readers some Pew findings for Republicans, as opposed to all Americans? Could it be because they would show that immigration is indeed a big issue for these voters?

[Here's what the "nonpartisan and highly reliable Pew Center" itself said](#) after the CNN debate:

The first four questions of the night all focused on illegal immigration. In this regard, Pew polling shows that the debate was reflective of the importance of immigration as an issue in the Republican presidential primary.

In an October Pew survey, 65% of Republican voters said that immigration was very important to their presidential vote, ranking it sixth out of 16 possible issues. In contrast, while half of Democrats (50%) and a majority of independents (57%) cited immigration as an issue that was very important to their vote, both ranked it near the bottom of their agendas; only three issues were ranked lower: abortion, stem cell research, and gay marriage.

When asked what is the single most important issue facing the nation, 11% of Republicans cited immigration, according to the October survey. As an issue for Republican voters, immigration trails only Iraq (27%) and terrorism (14%) in importance and is viewed as more important than the economy (9%). Only 4% of both Democrats and independents say immigration is the most important problem facing the nation. [E.A.]

Does this mean Pew has been corrupted too? Scary! ...

P.S.--What you mean 'we'? Rutten also declares--discussing a CNN-YouTuber's bible question--that it's

anathema in our system -- to probe people's individual religious consciences. American journalists quite legitimately ask candidates about policy issues -- say, abortion -- that might be influenced by their religious or philosophical convictions. We do not and should not ask them about those convictions themselves. It's nobody's business whether a candidate believes in the virgin birth, whether God gave an oral Torah to Moses at Sinai, whether the Buddha escaped the round of birth and rebirth or whether an angel appeared to Joseph Smith.

I dunno. I tend to think when columnists throw around assertions that some things are "legitimately" done while others "we do not" do, they should maybe offer some actual arguments for why "we do not" do them other than Tim Rutten's vast authority on all matters. I'm quite interested in candidates' "individual religious consciences." They all say religion informs their behavior, so let's find out about it. See, generally, [Jacob Weisberg's essay on the relevance of Romney's faith](#). ...

Backfill.: [Rasmussen reports](#) that immigration is the #1 issue in the Iowa race:

Twenty-five percent (25%) of likely caucus participants identified immigration as the most important voting issue. Twenty-one percent (21%) named national security as their top issue while 18% said the economy was most important and 14% ranked the War in Iraq as the top issue- ...

Immigration is also [#1 in the New Hampshire primary](#). ... 3:14 A.M. link

---

Amateur Questions:

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

1) Does the DNC [stripping Michigan and Florida of their delegates](#) (to punish them for too-early primaries) make a brokered, or at least contested, convention more possible by creating a large overhanging pool of uncommitted delegates that might conceivably be counted later? ... Between them, Michigan and Florida [would seem to have almost 15% of the delegates a candidate would need](#) to win the nomination. ... [Thanks to alert non-reader D.J.P.]

2) Obama and Huckabee [lead their respective races in Iowa](#). Suppose those two actually win their parties' nominations. Wouldn't an Obama vs. Huckabee race be so quirky it would have a good chance of attracting potential third-party or independent candidates? Candidates more experienced and less of a semi-revolutionary "[stretch](#)" than Obama, less "socially" conservative than Huckabee, more fiscally conservative than either of them, and maybe less filled with [Broderesque compassion](#) for illegal immigrants? Candidates who are more boring? ... P.S.: Suddenly, [Unity '08](#) doesn't look irrelevant. ...

12:39 A.M. link

---

Sunday, December 2, 2007

[Brendan Nyhan](#) on the Carteresque silliness of Obama's idea of providing (in the NYT's description) "live Internet feeds of all executive branch department and agency meetings." ... For a good example of how idealistic "open meeting" laws can gum up government by forcing officials to endure hours of for-show public meetings with grandstanding interest groups before actually getting down to business, read Lynn and Whitman's [terrific account of Carter's welfare-reform failure](#). ... P.S.: How about live internet feeds of all Obama staff meetings? The voters of Iowa deserve no less! ... 11:42 A.M.

---

Friday, November 30, 2007

I hesitate to bring this up, but isn't the unremarked-on wild card in the [debate over Social Security's solvency](#) ... immigration? I've always been told by defenders of the system that one of the main safety valves, should it begin to look insolvent, was the ability to let in more immigrants-- increasing the crucial worker-to-retiree ratio. But to the extent the current immigration debate unexpectedly chases FICA-paying illegal immigrants away, and discourages admitting more legal immigrants, mightn't it by the same token make Social Security less solvent than currently projected? ... kf's solutions:a) If the number of illegals actually falls dramatically, that's what will make it possible to eventually get public support for a reasonable increase in quotas for legals; b) Find other ways to make the system solvent--like reducing the benefits of the affluent. If we have to raise taxes or cut benefits a bit more to make up for controlling the borders, it's worth it. ...

Why we love Matt Welch: You raise an issue that maybe cuts against your side, and all of a sudden you're a [goalpost-shifting ... restrictionist weathervane](#). And I've pledged \$100 for this guy's going away party? Worth every penny! ... 8: 28 P.M.

---

The [Feiler Faster Thesis](#) in action, as applied [by Steven Stark of RCP](#) :

Obama's mini-surge has come awfully early, giving his opponents ample time to answer back. John Kerry and John Edwards surged later in Iowa last time - and that was ages ago technology-wise, in a year when the race was not nearly as intensely covered as now and few had Blackberries.

It's not that Obama won't win Iowa. It's that to do so, he's going to need a second and a third act. In the early days of television, Bob Hope complained "in the old days you could do one sketch for five years. But if you use that

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

sketch on TV, in one night it's used up." The same principle applies to this year's process, which is the first real campaign of the internet age. [E.A.]

Right, Because people--I'd say voters as well as reporters--are comfortable processing information at a faster pace, there is plenty of time for Obama and Huckabee to wear out their welcome and fade. There is time for them to fade and come back. And fade again. ...

P.S.: There's also effectively more time between the Jan. 3 Iowa caucus and the Jan. 8 New Hampshire primary than there was during the equivalent 5 day period in, say, 1984. ...

P.P.S.: Stark's point seems different than the argument\*\* that by surging so soon a candidate like Huckabee has ironically raised the expectation that he will win Iowa, making a fading second place a bit of a defeat. But if Huckabee fades in the polls, why shouldn't "expectations" about him ebb and flow as quickly as his numbers? Maybe there is a ratchet for expectations--once you are in the top tier that might win you're expected to win. But how then to explain McCain, who was top tier but fell out and now has low expectations--so he'll be a big winner if he finishes third in Iowa? ... Clearly there are things you can do to "reset" expectations, like firing your campaign staff. ...

\*\*--I think this argument was made by Weekly Standard's Richelieu. Or maybe it was consultant Mike Murphy. I get them confused sometimes! ... 7:09 P.M.

---

Tuesday, November 27, 2007

Hillary's Petards: Prediction--If they settle the writer's strike, it could be bad for Hillary because Jay Leno will make Huma jokes! (Remember: Huma = comedy gold.) It certainly seems much more likely that the Huma innuendo would make it into the mainstream via late-night monologues than via investigative reporting. [Won't it make it into the mainstream by bloggers discussing how it might make it into the mainstream?--ed Don't think that trick will work. The blog/bloodstream barrier seems too robust. The late-night-joke/bloodstream barrier isn't. And remember, that ate night rabbit-hole into voter consciousness is not a byproduct of blogging. As far as I can see, it's a byproduct of the Gennifer Flowers and Monica Lewinsky scandals, which appear to have convinced Leno, Letterman, et. al. that if they didn't joke about Clinton's rumored sex life they'd look like fools and would miss out on some good material. (And if they did, it's not like they'd be sued for libel.) This is one way Hillary is hoist on her husband's petard, Huma-wise.

But there's another petard. Let's assume what is likely to be the case--that the Huma rumor is a) unprovable if true and b) un-disprovable if untrue. Under the old rules that means it would never be proved and would probably never surface. If it did surface --say because it was the subject of vicious campaign push-polling--a simple denial by both parties and it would be semi-officially "false." In the new Webby post-Lewinsky world it's more likely to surface, which makes the subsequent denial all the more important. Contrary to popular belief, it's not impossible to issue a denial so convincing that even gossip-addicted bloggers drop a juicy rumor. Here's an example. The trouble for Hillary is that when it comes to sex rumors she and her husband (unlike, say, John Edwards and his wife) have no credibility. They threw that away when the philandering charges they righteously denounced in 1992 and 1998 turned out to be basically true. 11:58 P.M.

---

Jim Pinkerton mocks Giuliani's "virtual fence." including a particularly vicious--but not unfair--line:

Bricks, concrete, barbed wire, all that: overrated! We don't need physical boundaries between us, only virtual boundaries. That's why we'd never put up a real fence, for instance, if we wanted to keep our children or pets from wandering away. ...[snip]

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Some see weaknesses in this virtual approach. A headline in The Washington Post from Sept. 21, 2006, declared: "Plenty of Holes Seen in a 'Virtual Fence'/Border Sensors Not Enough, Experts **Say**." ... But President Giuliani can fix any technical challenge. After all, as mayor, he solved the problem of radio interoperability between the police and fire departments long before disaster struck on 9/11. [E.A.]

6:17 P.M.

---

Obvious point: Dick Morris **says** that Hillary's attacks on Obama in Iowa [give Obama "added credibility."](#) But doesn't the Hillary vs. Obama mutual-sniping dynamic that's developed actually create an opening for Edwards to slip ahead as the acceptable, "electable" third candidate in the warped minds of Iowans--the same way ... well, John Edwards slipped ahead of Dean and Gephardt in 2004? Wouldn't it be smart for Obama to stop responding tit-for-tat to Hillary to prevent this from happening? ... P.**S.**: Obama was supposed to get Edwards to do his dirty work for him. That's not happening.... 5:12 P.M.

---

Who **Says** the Press Isn't Covering the Issues? We're Covering Who's "Electable"! One reason the "electability" issue has become so prominent--why ["presidential primaries have become an electability bonanza," as Jason Zengerle puts it](#)--is that the mainstream press likes it when electability is the issue. For one thing, "who's electable" is a [Neutral Story Line](#)--it seemingly doesn't require reporters and publications to take stands or sides. You can write dozens of "Is Hillary Electable?" stories without letting on what you think about, **say**, government-guaranteed health care. It's harder to write "Will Hillary be a Good President?" without doing that. Second, "electability" questions--like the traditional "horse race" questions--are in political reporter's analytic wheelhouses. Indeed, "electability" questions are "horse race" questions. They're the horse-race on stilts! Or, rather, they're the horse race "process" turned through some serendipitous alchemy into candidate "substance." ... P.**S.**: I don't think 'electability' is a bogus concern in the primaries. But I think Iowa's discredited caucusers are lousy at spotting it. Howard Dean was a more "electable" candidate than John Kerry (and, in retrospect, than John Edwards). ...

Update: Mark Blumenthal argues that [ordinary voters and caucusers don't think "electability" means what political reporters think it means](#). ... 2:06 A.M.

---

Shouldn't Hillary now get Jonathan Franzen to campaign for her? ... 1:52 A.M.

---

Driving North on I-5 today I noticed a lot of seemingly gratuitous references to McDonald's restaurants on schlocky FM music stations--mainly by the DJs. Has McDonald's had a resurgence as a pop-culture reference point? Do they have an especially energetic PR agent? Or is some other kind of incentive being spread around? Just suspicious. ... 1:46 A.M.

---

Monday, November 26, 2007

I'm late to Heller, the big Second Amendment case the Supreme Court has [agreed to hear](#). Instapundit argues the [Court couldn't duck the case in large part because it doesn't involve one of the 50 states](#), or a city in those states:

Cases involving state gun laws raise the question of whether the Second Amendment applies to the states. But, where every other US city is legally part of a state government, the district is a direct creature of the federal government.



## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

If that's true, then how stupid were the gun-controllers in the D.C government to persist in their cause? The result may be a ruling that after 200 years actually gives meaning to the distressingly clear language of the Amendment. Couldn't gun-controllers from the rest of the country have talked them out of it? ... 12:19 A.M.

Sunday, November 25, 2007

Obama's "": [Michael Kinsley on Obama](#):

My candidate, at least at the moment, Is Obama. When I hear him discussing issues, I hear intelligence and reflection and almost a joy in thinking it through.

Hmm. I'm listening for the "joy in thinking it through" part. I'm even expecting it. But I'm not hearing it. I wish I was, because I'd like to find a reason to be for Obama, and a pol who enjoys "thinking it through" might enjoy rethinking through the positions with which I disagree, like "card check" unionism and drivers' licenses for illegals (not to mention "comprehensive" semi-amnesty for illegals). An ironic Obamanic joy at, **say**, wrestling with the problem of how to keep [sneering](#) at the Petraeus [surge](#) when the surge looks like it's doing good would help leaven the impression that Hillary's policy positions are actually more sensible-- for example, she's less committed to withdrawing troops and could therefore be more effective at making the best of a bad situation in Iraq. ...

P.S.: Maybe Obama is [better answering questions on the stump than in debates](#) . But--to pick Amy Sullivan's example--asking "if the minimum wage in Canada was \$100 an hour?" in an argument over **immigration** doesn't sound like joy in thinking it through. It sounds like joy in coming up with a good line that lets you avoid thinking it through--i.e. avoid wrestling with the essential policy dilemma. Is Obama actually **saying** that we could all sneak into Canada to get rich and then legitimately expect Canada to legalize us and let us all become Canadian citizens? (Cool! There aren't that many Canadians. Taking over Canada was a common student radical fantasy in the '60s, if I remember. Alberta is our Aztlan!) ... 1:14 P.M. link

Saturday, November 24, 2007

Page B-1 Shocker: L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and former Telemundo anchor Mirthala Salinas have apparently [ended their romantic relationship](#)." And here we all thought it was a great love! The L.A. Times runs the story on page B-1. [S.S.](#) emails: "It's a B-3 story, for crying out loud." ... 12:26 P.M.

Friday, November 23, 2007

[Page 6 Shocker](#): "[S]ingle singer/songwriter" tries "picking up women" when he's drunk! 5:30 P.M.

When you got Nixon, make Nixonade: [John Ellis argues](#) Hillary can't base her campaign on being likeable (she's not) and basing her campaign on being 'inevitable,' which she's done, is highly risky-e.g., if she loses the first two primaries. Instead, Ellis advises her to emulate Nixon in 1968 and portray herself as the 'woman in the arena':

Like Nixon, Senator Clinton is widely disliked. Like Nixon, she cannot be made warm ....

But also like Nixon, she is intelligent and diligent and determined and tough and she has been through hell and back. She is experienced in a way that only her husband and President George W. Bush are experienced. She knows what it's like to get her head kicked in every day, day after day after day, for months and years on end. She endures.

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

That was the whole point of the 1968 Nixon campaign narrative. He wasn't perfect by any means, but he was formidable and he endured. It's s a narrative that fits Senator Clinton's s campaign like a glove.

Hmm. Is Ellis saying Hillary should actually stage 'man in the arena' events as Nixon famously did? And aren't her attempts to prove how "formidable" she is by cutting up Obama--belittling his "" living in a foreign country at the age of 10"--unappealing? I asked Ellis via email and got this response:

I think every campaign is, basically, a narrative. How that narrative is distributed changes as the means of distribution change (the Internet has obviously become v important, etc). But I think her narrative is not "she's inevitable because she's experienced and the others are too light." I think her narrative is "formidable, battle-scarred, flawed, but important." I think Penn thinks he can micro-target to victory. I think they need a large macro theme that enables people to vote for Hillary, even though they don't want to.

It's obviously late now. This is work they should have done in 2006 and 2007: setting the context for "understanding" her candidacy ...

"Enduring" seems only a nuance away from "experienced," but I see Ellis' point. Campaigning as tough, battle-scarred fixture, etc. would certainly serve Hillary better, should she lose Iowa and New Hampshire, than campaigning as "inevitable." It seems entirely possible--given the way the Feiler Faster phenomenon enables quick comebacks in short periods of time--that primary voters might feel like resurrecting Ms. Durability after she's suffered a bit by way of a New Hampshire loss. (Making her suffer a bit might even be the point.\*\*\*) But there's no point in resurrecting a failed Ms. Inevitability. ...

\*\*\*--Voters might especially want her to suffer a bit because she's portrayed herself as inevitable. ... 3:58 P.M.link

Wednesday, November 21, 2007

Pinch Works Fast: The New York Times' value has been cut in half in less than three years. It's now worth a little more than \$17 a share. In 2002, it traded above \$50 a share. I wouldn't worry about Rupert Murdoch buying the Times at this point. I'd worry about Rupert Murdoch's s nanny buying the Times. ... [Thanks to S.B.] 6:30 P.M.

Thanksgiving Tune-Out? Why is Obama suddenly sinking in Rasmussen's national robo-poll? His number for Monday was obviously awful. Maybe all his supporters stopped answering the phone for Thanksgiving. But you have to wonder whether the cause was this widely-reported Saturday story (which I thought would help him)... 3:15 A.M.

Tuesday, November 20, 2007

How Does the Surge Hurt? I'm willing to be convinced that the instinct to keep up Petraeus' "surge" (as long as it's showing promising results) is wrong. But the recent Podesta/Korb/Katulis op-ed--"Strategic Drift: Where's the Pushback Against the Surge?"--didn't come close to doing the trick. When you write a sentence like:

the progress being made at the local level often undermines the stated goal of creating a unified, stable, democratic Iraq

you have to come up with, you know, an example. Maybe in the next sentence! Podesta et al. argue that Iraqi national reconciliation--and "constructive" intervention by regional powers--will only come when America withdraws. That may be true (though it seems tendentiously optimistic). But we can always withdraw. In the meantime, how does "progress at the local level," including "declines in the overall level of violence," actually hurt? Without that argument, the piece looks like positioning. ...

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Update: Kevin Drum tries to supply the missing paragraphs [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Maybe you will find them convincing. The basic issue is whether empowering Sunni tribes outside the new Iraqi state eventually promotes a stable reconciliation or a future civil war. ... But attempting "integration" of Sunnis directly into the Maliki government wasn't working very well, was it? Likewise, withdrawing and hoping for Shiite benevolence--and benign intervention by "regional powers"--seems pie-eyed. Attempting to achieve some sort of stable balance of local power, on the other hand, has worked before in this sort of situation, no? It seems worth a shot, especially if the ongoing cost in American lives gets reduced to a tolerable level. ...

P.S.: Via Drum, here is Petraeus adviser David Kilcullen's [explanation of the current strategy](#). ...

Update: Robert Farley of Lawyers Guns & Money does his part to fill the void [here](#). The trouble with his argument, something he more or less admits, is that the current central government wasn't making much progress obtaining a "monopoly" on the use of force before the Bush strategy shift and it's unlikely to obtain such a monopoly if we withdraw. Even if you measure progress by the "stated goal" of "a unified, stable, democratic Iraq"--instead of, more realistically, by the goal of leaving the most favorable situation behind that we can--it's not clear that the best chance of ultimately constituting that unified government (with a monopoly on violence) isn't first to rebalance sectarian military strength on the ground, enabling Iraq's warring groups to then cut a stable deal down the road. ... 6:49 P.M. link

The other obvious hack speculation: Hillary tanks in Iowa and N.H.. Obama, Edwards too liberal and inexperienced. Electability. Late entry. Exciting convention. Gore. [Take it away](#). ... 6:20 P.M.

Ayes of Newt: The normally sound Tom Edsall [contrasts Speakers Gingrich and Pelosi](#) and finds that Pelosi, "strangely enough, has won enactment of more legislation than her flamboyant predecessor." He notes that Pelosi's achievements include:

an increase in the minimum wage, lobbying and ethics reform, Gulf Coast reconstruction assistance, and substantial expansion of college financial aid.

I concede that the minimum wage increase is an achievement. The others are yawners. Meanwhile, by the end of Gingrich's first two years as Speaker, 1) the budget was heading toward a surplus after years of deficits; and 2) a once-in-a generation welfare reform had been signed into law--a big attempt to tackle the "underclass" problem, the first time a federal entitlement had been repealed, in a bill that also included substantial changes in child support enforcement, immigrant benefits, and social security disability for children. ... Oh, and the minimum wage got increased under Gingrich too, also before his first two years were up. ...

The situations aren't comparable, of course. President Clinton was inclined to find common ground with Gingrich. Gingrich had a united party. Pelosi is trying to block a president's foreign policy, and events on the ground haven't been going her way lately. Gingrich was (is?) an infantile megalomaniac who was easily manipulated and overplayed his hand. Still. The achievements aren't comparable either. At least not yet. ... 5:42 P.M. link

Sometimes an NPR show can upend your expectations and convince you that ordinary Americans can be brilliant observers and even entertainers. [StoryCorps](#) is not that show, I think. Every story I've heard on it has been lame. When do the grants run out? ... 2:51 A.M.

Giuliani, the Ideas Candidate? Sara Mosle recently reminded everyone of a [key, overlooked moment in Giuliani's career](#): after his prostate cancer diagnosis, he decided to employ New York City's trademark Comp Stat policing

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

technique to "aggressively recruit greater numbers of uninsured children for coverage under two existing government-run programs: Medicaid and Child Health Plus." Mosle--and later [Sara Kershaw of the NYT](#)--used this incident to paint Giuliani as a hypocritical candidate. It seems to me it shows why he's a formidable candidate.

1) It's a great idea, and great politics--combining a liberal desire to insure children with the conservative insight that the reason many kids aren't signed up isn't lack of funding but parental screwup. The benefits are there for the taking, they're just not being taken. So Giuliani will track down the parents using the same computerized maps he uses to hunt down criminals! It's compassionate. It's conservative. And it's innovative.

2) Giuliani's now in the GOP primaries. He doesn't talk about his children's insurance initiative. When it comes to health care, as Mosle notes, he's "tried to change the subject." He attacks "socialized medicine." But does that preclude him returning to the "Health Stat" idea in the general election--and winning over swing **voters** with it? I don't think so.. Medicaid and Child Health Plus are programs for those who can't afford regular health insurance. That's not "socialized medicine." Giuliani can **say** he supports signing up those who are poor enough for existing programs but he doesn't want to expand eligibility further up the income ladder.

3) Giuliani's Health Stat initiative, originating in his May 2000 news conference, gives the lie to the widely held notion that he was a politically dead before 9/11 revived him. It humanized him, and it seems like the sort of fresh initiative that can win you a third term (if you're not term-limited).

2:19 A.M. link

---

Monday, November 19, 2007

About that AT&T ad (sometimes at the top of this page): If home is in Kansas, and fun takes you to California, but work leads to Kentucky, then don't you live in Kanifucky? [AT&T says "Kanifky."](#) Weak! ... 12:48 P.M.

---

Will Hill Ditch Iowa? I often rely on NBC's excellent First Read for my fill on the day's campaign . But today [First Read](#) and kf are pretty much completely out of synch:

FR: For the next 45 days, until the caucuses take place there, the Democratic presidential race will be all about Iowa. ...[snip] ... One of two things will happen in Iowa on January 3: Either Clinton wins, and she steamrolls through the primaries on the way to the nomination. Or she doesn't, and the candidate with a majority of the advantages -- in polls, in endorsements, and with the most famous last name in the Democratic Party -- looks vulnerable and it becomes a two-person fight to the finish with the candidate who wins

kf: There is an obvious third thing that could easily happen before the 45 days are up. In, **say**, 25 days, with Hillary behind by 10 points and not gaining ground, she starts deemphasizing the state--pulling out staff, campaigning elsewhere, effectively conceding Iowa and choosing to make her stand in other states. Humiliating, but not as humiliating as trying and losing--and Hillary is a cautious type. She also doesn't seem like a late surger. Her aides will convince her she doesn't need Iowa to win--focusing on Iowa in the first place was just an attempt to land a knockout punch. The punch having missed, she'll settle in for the full 15 rounds. ... She could even make some mischief by having some of her Iowa troops vote for the anti-Hillary candidate she wants to keep alive (who looks like Edwards at the moment but may look like Obama by January)..

FR: [A]fter Obama's less-than-stellar debate performance late last week, one can sense another one of those momentum switches. His campaign screamed to the top of its lungs after Bob Novak reported that the Clinton campaign was sitting on allegedly scandalous material on Obama. ... [snip] ... About the only good news for Obama this weekend is that the spat over the Novak story did appear to change the subject from the debate.

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

kf: Huh? Did the Novak story, and Obama's s instant reaction, really make Obama look bad? I thought it made Hillary's s campaign look bad. And it means that if any dirt on Obama does come out, it will look like Hillary was the source--hurting her as well as him in goody-goody Iowa. (Remember when Dukakis had to fire his campaign manager after the latter was outed as the source of a perfectly legitimate hit on Joe Biden?) The promise of blowback makes it much less likely that the dirt, if any, will be dropped.\*\* Obama was daring and shrewd to draw attention to Novak, no?

\*\*--Though if Edwards has dirt on Obama, he might be able to drop it and have Hillary take the blame--a twofer. My guess, though, is that Edwards is in no position to start a scandal war.

12:12 A.M. link

---

Sunday, November 18, 2007

Scandal MADHere's s one way to look at Saturday's surprising campaign back-and-forth over undisclosed scandalous dark matter--all started by Robert Novak's column claiming that Hillary "agents"\*\*\* were "spreading the word" that she had "scandalous information" about Obama.

Until the Novak column, all the leading Dem candidates had semi-public potential scandal hanging over them--except Obama. Edwards had the Enquirer cheating story. Hillary had all the stories about her marriage and "Bill Clinton's postpresidential sex life" referred to by an Obama aide in Marc Ambinder's s recent Atlantic piece. Richardson ... well, rumors about Richardson were so rampant he felt compelled to defend against them before they actually surfaced. (He said, "I believe in the physical side of campaigning.")

Now Obama is on notice that if he plays the Clinton marriage card, a scandal bomb might drop on him too--assuming there is a bomb to drop. It doesn't matter so much if Hillary actually has some goods on Obama as long as Obama thinks Hillary has some goods on him.

But here's s a thought experiment: Suppose there are some goods to be had. And suppose that all the candidates know all the other candidate's s scandals and have the capability to launch them in the press. Has Hillary achieved Mutually Assured Destruction, scandal-wise? I doubt it.

Remember that it's s a three-way race. According to the current polls, Hillary's s precarious position in Iowa requires that both Obama and Edwards remain strong opponents, splitting the anti-Clinton vote. Like an inexperienced karate initiate, she can take on all comers only if they attack in a precisely symmetrical formation.

But if Scandal Doomsday happens, and all the evil that lurks in the mud hatches out, the results will not be symmetrical. Suppose that what Jezebel.com speculated about Obama is true. Would it sink him? I doubt it. The Bill and Hillary rumors you hear are also wildly unshocking, given their history--though they would have the multiplier effect of reminding people of that history.

But the Edwards allegation, if confirmed, would be devastating. Edwards has made his good character in the face of his wife's s illness a central part of his campaign pitch.

If the Enquirer story pans out, you'd think he'd sink fast. Which would be terrible news for Hillary.

But if Obama and Hillary are hit with scandals and the Edwards story doesn't come out, that makes Edwards the big winner in the exchange. Which is also terrible for Hillary.

I think Sid may have his work cut out for him!

\*\*--not "operatives"! A little Plame joke. 9:33 A.M.link

---

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Saturday, November 17, 2007

Viva Triangulation, II: Alert reader D.J. emails to note a major virtue of "triangulation" I omitted:

[T]riangulation has involved somewhat more than what you say. It seems to involve extracting, from each side, the most ridiculous and indefensible part of the position and saying that you are against that and a resolution ought to be achieved without it. If done well, this does not really hurt the politician doing it because the issue so rejected is so ridiculous that, exposed and standing alone, that position is not defensible in the MSM or elsewhere.

In the Democrats' stance on welfare, that was the position that welfare recipients should not have to work -- a position that, if forced to confront it, anyone with any sense rejected as nothing but a way of buying votes. The Republicans' view that no money ought to be spent was equally ridiculous, given the long history of the nation's willingness to spend for it, and purely ideological. And the unions have exactly the same kind of position within their stance on education reform, which is that incompetent teachers should not be fired ...

Even if you publicly support the unions, again if you are forced to confront this particular issue it is hard to defend it in a public forum. If a Clinton-like person were to triangulate on education he could easily say that, of course, teachers that can't hack it have to leave. Can you imagine the press protesting that oh, no, incompetent teachers can't be fired? [E.A.]

What he said. When solving a problem requires that a powerful interest group give up its most cherished demand, you won't solve the problem by finding "common ground," "bridge-building," or "compromise." If the "common ground" doesn't include the cherished demand, the interest group won't go along with the project. In order to break the impasse, it helps if a politician can subject the cherished demand to public scrutiny (i.e. ridicule). Turn it into a liability. That's not finding "common ground." That's triangulating! Make the uncommon ground uninhabitable, and all of sudden a new "common" ground starts looking like home. ... When the interest group complains angrily that you are creating a "distraction," "smoke screen," or "scapegoat," you know you are making progress. ...

N.B.: In the 1984 Democratic primary, the issue that Gary Hart (triangulating) extracted and ridiculed Walter Mondale over was, in fact, the issue of firing incompetent teachers. Mondale finally got bludgeoned into admitting in so many words that yes, maybe they should be fired. ... Twenty-four years later, the Democratic candidates don't even dare bring up this core issue--sorry, I mean 'smokescreen.' Instead they half-squabble over the less central, less touchy issue of "merit pay". This is not progress. ... 8:19 P.M.

---

Putting the Sid Back in Inside Baseball--A Timeline:

Nov. 15--Sidney Blumenthal joins Clinton campaign.

Nov. 17--Columnist Robert Novak writes that

Agents of Sen. Hillary Clinton are spreading the word in Democratic circles that she has scandalous information about her principal opponent for the party's presidential nomination, Sen. Barack Obama, but has decided not to use.

It can't be that simple. Right? ...

Update: Excitable Joe Klein is outraged! I mean, more than usual! And he's outraged at Novak. ....

Is Klein's point that if agents of Sen. Hillary Clinton are spreading the word that she has scandalous information about Obama, that this is not worth Novak reporting? Wouldn't it tell you something about Hillary? ... [But you can't report that without reporting the alleged scandalous information--ed Novak didn't report the alleged scandalous information. You can't report it without suggesting that there is a scandalous allegation of some sort--ed That's true. There are two models, I guess.



## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Model One is Klein's:

Journalists are continually bombarded with rumors, often scurrilous. They are not news. Rumors only become news when they are confirmed, cross-checked and responded to by the target of the attack.

In this bi-modal model, there is "news." And there is "not news"--a black sump of information that the public does not get to learn (though journalists eagerly talk about it amongst themselves). One problem that when Klein's gatekeepers vigilantly protect the borders of "news", they consign a lot of relevant and verified information (e.g. who is spreading what about what) to the black hole of non-news. Some journalists are so frustrated by their inability to convey the real story under Model One that they resort write thinly veiled campaign novels!

Why not a tri-modal model? In this Model Two there are a) Klein's confirmed and cross-checked news; b) unconfirmed, mainly Web-borne unverified scuttlebutt that everyone also gets to learn about; and c) things the public never knows about, perhaps because they are unchecked, highly damaging, and once loosed can never be completely recalled (i.e. unverified rumors of wife-beating or child porn, etc.) or because reporters only learn of them on an "I won't report this" basis.

The main objection to Model Two is the fear the public won't be able to handle category (b)--the unverified scuttlebutt. But over the past few cycles, haven't the voters put these fears to rest? They rallied around Bill Clinton despite all sorts of public rumors. They elected Arnold Schwarzenegger despite scandalous groping stories. Most recently, they've continued to support John Edwards despite the National Enquirer's report of a cheating scandal (and his on-the-record denial). The electorate seems reasonably capable of i) considering the source ii) supporting a candidate while holding in their minds the possibility that a scandalous rumor might be confirmed; and iii) putting the confirmed scandalous rumors into perspective.

I'm for Model Two. Let the public know most of the things journalists like Klein talk about amongst themselves--like that (hypothetical) Hillary agents are running around saying they have the goods on Obama.

I also think Model Two is where free public debate is going, whether Klein likes it or not.

Backfill: Michael Kinsley [made basically this same argument](#) at the time of the original Web-driven political scandal (Drudge and Lewinsky, in 1998). ... 6:06 P.M. link

Friday, November 16, 2007

I have seen the new nose ("front clip") for the Pontiac Solstice. It's ugly! They've styled it along the [tongue-thrusting lines of the G6 GXP](#). If I had a cell phone camera I'd be rich. ... The Solstice, which is not an expensive car, is currently [gorgeous-but-unreliable](#). Maybe GM will fix its "drive system" problems (according to Consumer Reports) when they are changing the nose. ... That's a common pattern: A car looks pretty much perfect when it's introduced--but by the time they have the bugs out they've tragically "refreshed" the styling. ...[True of people too!--ed A get-up-and-get-a-beer line.]

Update: See [this comment](#) for why I think it was a factory nose. ... 5:31 P.M. link

Thursday, November 15, 2007

Triangulation vs Bridge Building: On bloggingheads, [Bob Wright argues there is no contradiction between 1\) Obama's claim to be truer, bluer Democrat and 2\) his claim to be a bipartisan bridge-builder](#). I grant that if you see policies on a spectrum, a politician can say he believes in a 'pure' liberal position but promise that he'll compromise as much as necessary to pass legislation. I'm forced to distinguish between this kind of bridge-building and "triangulation"--a distinction self-proclaimed bridge-builder Obama makes too, since he attacks "triangulating."

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

What's the difference? A Triangulator defines himself or herself against the positions of left and right. Most obvious example: welfare reform. Clinton argued traditional Congressional Democrats were wrong not to demand that welfare recipients work. But he distanced himself from Republicans who weren't willing to spend the money to provide the work and to "make work pay." He wasn't building bridges so much as telling each side off.

Why is this useful? The Triangulator knows that bipartisan solutions don't always require each side to give up its least important demands and meet in the middle, half-a-loaf style. Bipartisan solutions sometimes require one side or the other to give up its most important demand. There was nothing the left cared more about in the welfare debate, for example, than preventing states from being able to abolish welfare or rigorously require single mothers to work. In the bipartisan reform that ultimately passed in 1996, the left lost those demands.

Similarly, in the education debate, traditional due process protection against dismissal isn't a marginal demand for the Dem-supporting teacher's unions. It's their core demand--not the last 10%, but the first 10%. But arguably you aren't going to fix the schools unless you take away that 10% and make it easier to fire mediocre teachers (or close down whole schools if they fail to meet standards). Similarly, in the health care debate there is nothing small-government conservatives want to avoid more than a big government-controlled system. Arguably we aren't going to get universal health care unless the conservatives lose that fight. Not compromise. Lose.

On issues that have this structure, you're not necessarily going to achieve a bipartisan solution by starting out on one side or the other--as a "pure" Dem or a "pure" Republican--and then compromising, because you're not going to be well-positioned to make your side give up the core demand that it has to give up. You're not going to start out as a flat-out supporter of teacher tenure (and opponent of NCLB-style accountability) and then "compromise" by abandoning teacher tenure. You won't have laid the basis for it, and it's not a "meet in the middle" solution. But if you start out by criticizing the teachers' union for dogmatically supporting tenure and criticizing the Republicans for stinting on funding, you have a shot.

There are issues that don't have this structure--where getting to a solution doesn't require denying a core demand of left or right. Some problems are loaf-splitting problems--funding for the arts, maybe, or roads. They're easy to solve. But I'd argue that precisely because they're easy to solve most of them have been solved already. The problems we're left with are problems where one side or the other is willing to fight to the death to protect a core demand that must be denied to achieve a solution.

Often that core demand will only be on the right--health care may well be one such problem. In that case, taking a "pure" liberal position won't hurt. But on most problems there's a core demand on the left as well as the right standing in the way: not just teacher tenure on education, but also race preferences on civil rights, opposition to means-testing on Social Security and Medicare. On those issues, Triangulators are more likely to succeed than either purists or bridge-building compromisers--or [people like Obama who claim to be both](#). ...

Update: Brownstein [touts Obama's bridge-building](#), and lets him get away with arguing [in Brownstein's words] that "the Clintonian version of consensus focuses too much on finding a poll-driven midpoint between the parties." That's not a fair characterization of either Clinton's welfare plan or his health care ("[managed competition](#)") plan. Both were distinct third-way approaches. ...4:30 P.M. link

---

Out of 177 recipients of Bill Clinton's last-minute pardons, Jake Tapper could find only 3 [who've contributed to Hillary's campaign](#)? Ingrates! Or else people smart enough to know that a \$2,3000 maximum contribution isn't worth the bad publicity stories like this bring. ... P.S.: Hillary campaign manager Howard Wolfson still manages to come off as a prick. ...[via [Lucianne](#)] 11:34 A.M.

---

Wednesday, November 14, 2007

Fred Thompson: [Not that lazy](#). ... 11:03 P.M.

---

Tuesday, November 13, 2007

John Edwards:

"When I'm president, I'm going to **say** to members of Congress, and members of my administration, including my Cabinet, I'm glad that you have health care coverage and your family has health care coverage. But if you don't pass universal health care by July of 2009, in six months, I'm going to use my power as president to take your health care away from you."

What power exactly does a president have to take away the health care coverage of Congressmen and executive branch officials? \*\* Isn't the health coverage provided by statute? And doesn't Congress have to go along with changing a statute? ... More important, isn't this exactly the sort of showy bluff that won't work, bringing the Edwards presidency crashing down in its first year? ... Even more important, what kind of candidate thinks the **voters** are going to be taken in by a disingenuous display of substanceless bravado like this? ...

\*\* Update: ---Edwards' [own bloggers don't seem to know](#) the answer. (Sample: "He'll speak to it effectively, I'm sure.") ...

Backfill: Howie Kurtz [beat me to this point](#), and got this explanation from the Edwards camp:

"He would introduce legislation, that's all it is," spokesman Eric Schultz **said**. "He would introduce legislation and ask them to set a deadline for themselves."

Pathetic. And if Congress doesn't want to pass this legislation?

It's a phony threat from a ...

See also [this DailyKos post](#). ...And the [links here](#), including a [suitably vicious Hillary counter](#). ...

Paranoid thought: Edwards must have known his fake-strongman ad would draw fire. Is it all a ploy to make himself the center of attention? ...

P.P.S.: A [NYT piece](#) portrays Edwards as desperately running against the clock, and he was eclipsed at the recent Jefferson-Jackson dinner by Obama. He's disrupting the MSM's preferred Obama vs. Hillary storyline. But he's by no means in a bad position. Data points: a) a close second in Iowa [in the latest CBS/NYT poll](#); b) steadily rising [in Rasmussen's national poll](#); c) This troubling quote from an Iowa county chairman in [Joe Klein's Hillary piece](#):

They love Obama. He's very inspiring. But in the end, Iowans vote on electability. I hate to **say** it, but my guess is they'll vote for the white guy - Edwards - this time, just like they voted for the war hero last time."

Right, last time. Dems rely on the good sense of Iowa caucusers at their peril. ...

Paging [Rielle Hunter](#)! ... 6:42 P.M link

---

I bristled at Chris Matthews' breathless pumping up of Obama's Jefferson-Jackson speech on MSNBC yesterday. Then I read it. It's a [very skillful speech](#) in that Obama simultaneously does three seemingly contradictory things:

**1)** Portrays himself as a "real" Democrat. ("Triangulating and poll-driven positions because we're worried about what Mitt or Rudy might **say** about us just won't do.")

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

2) Portrays himself as a bipartisan bridge-builder! ("I expanded health care in Illinois by bringing Democrats and Republicans together." ... "I don't want to pit Red America against Blue America. I want to be the President of the United States of America.")

3) Portrays himself as a brave truth-teller willing to tell voters "what they need to hear" as opposed to "what they want to hear"--to deliver the "bitter medicine" (as columnist Roger Simon put it on Hardball) ...

Of course, Obama gives no examples of #3--in fact, he's telling Iowa caucus Democrats more or less exactly what they want to hear, namely that they don't have to compromise (#1). He's certainly not telling them that the way to be a bipartisan bridge-builder (#2) is often precisely to violate #1 and "triangulate," as Bill Clinton did on welfare reform. ...

Obama's new wrinkle is the argument is that Bush is so unpopular he's freed up a bunch of voters at the center for Dems to capture without triangulating. That may be true on universal health care coverage (where Obama's plan arguably triangulates a bit more than Clinton's plan). But I'm not sure where else it applies. At bottom, it still seems a variation of Shrumian populism, the idea that there are obvious answers to benefit the common man and the only thing standing in the way is some elite group or "corporate lobbyists in Washington"--as opposed to the non-populist position, which is that there are answers that benefit the common man but what's standing in the way is usually a) the common man and b) powerful interest groups on the Democratic as well as Republican side. If our most difficult domestic problems (Social Security, health care cost control, poverty, civil rights, immigration) really did conform to the Populist model, they'd have been solved by now, by Democrats. ...

Update: See discussion of this argument--including further refinement under withering assault!--[here](#) and [here](#). ... 6:01 P.M. link

Monday, November 12, 2007

Instapundit [effortlessly spans present, past, and future](#) to cover the Lapham's Quarterly launch party, Laphamistiically.\*\* ... When I worked at Harper's, after Michael Kinsley took it over from Lapham,\*\*\* one of the editors had a shorthand name for Lapham's pretentious, opaque, you-can't-quite-understand-this-so-I-must-be-smart prose style: "The Caravans of the Mind." [Wagons. ho!](#) ...

\*\*--This is not the "worst media party ever" referred to in the headline. That would be [this party](#).

\*\*\*--When Lapham took over the magazine again after Kinsley's departure, he fired the Kinsley people, including me. A perfectly reasonable thing to do. I wouldn't have wanted to work for him anyway! The transition was accomplished seamlessly, with a minimum of fuss and a maximum of civility. He's still on my s-list for life. You should know that. ... 10:46 P.M.

Strike-bound Rob Long is [blogs semi-apocalyptically](#) about the future of Hollywood. Sample:

The truth is, the web--that thing that brings us email and MySpace and cats playing the piano on YouTube--has a kind of Wal\*Mart effect on the entertainment choices offered to the audience: there's a lot more to choose from, most of it's pretty awful, and all of it is going to be a lot cheaper. When you combine the digitization of content with unlimited bandwidth, what you get is a cheaper, more efficient system. And Brentwood was not built on cheap, or efficient. This town--and all of us who work here--all of us, writers, agents, actors, lawyers, studio executives, all of us here in the second grade classroom called Hollywood--have a stake in preserving this great big slushy inefficient mess of a system, that makes pilots that never get aired, buys scripts that never get produced, makes movies that no one sees, produces series that get cancelled.

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Long is such a good writer/[talker](#) he can even be forgiven for **saying** that Marc Andreessen "gets it"--though if you read [the strike analysis on Andreessen's blog](#) it will save you hours and hours of unenlightening MSM coverage over the next few weeks. ... 10:25 P.M.

Sunday, November 11, 2007

TheAtlantic Discovers the [American Idea](#): Kudos to gravy-trainish Atlantic chairman David Bradley for giving an anniversary party so elementally, gracelessly snooty that it transcended its disastrousness to become a powerful parable of social equality! From [Gawker](#) (which has video):

In a striking display of awful judgment, the VIPs (Arianna Huffington, Moby, the Mayor) were allowed (forced) to mingle on stage. The poors sat in chairs in the auditorium and watched.

You can imagine the party planners' thought process: We want to have this exclusive witty cocktail party--but we also want to do something for everyone else. Hey, we'll let them come and watch! That's better than nothing, right? Wrong! Stark, in-your-face snobbish social inequality makes everyone unhappy--the favored few no less than the masses. At least in this country. At least Atlantic types. ...

P.**S.**: Celebrity-based inequality is arguably much worse than money-based inequality. If the VIPs had paid to be on stage, skybox or [Vegas-club](#) style, that would have been less offensive. ...

Most obvious public policy application of the Atlantic Party Parable: Guest-workers! Many U.**S.** employers, generally allied with Republicans, want to import unskilled workers and then ship them away after a few years. Atlantic moral: Everyone at the party gets to party. For legal guest workers, there should be a path to citizenship. ...

P.P.**S.**: Getting the wittiest, most talented people, feeding them and then letting everyone else watch them talk--isn't that also [Bradley's business plan for the Atlantic, including it's blog presence?](#) I'm not sure it works. For one thing, people want to interact, not just sit in their seats. They also have blogs of their own, and don't seem attracted to the idea that the blogs invited onto Bradley's stage are all that much more entitled to attention than the blogs not invited onstage. ...

Update: At the libertarian Reason blog, Kerry Howley [demands to hear from "the people involved,"](#) imagining that those stuck in the audience enjoyed themselves despite the "social inequality." Well, here's an [excellent blog account](#) from one of the voyeurs. He seems ungrateful! Sample--

At this point it was clearly time to ratchet up the theater of cruelty. An Atlantic employee came up the aisle with a video camera, interviewing the pathetic audience members. "What do you think is going on here?" he asked me. "I think the celebrity guests are up there, and the groundlings are down here," I told him. No argument from Errol Morris. "And how does that make you feel?" he **said**. I thought about it. "It makes me feel special," I replied. "Well, you can still **say** you were at a party with the mayor and Robert De Niro," he told me, moving on up the aisle. [E.A.]

9:07 P.M. [link](#)

Anti 'Anti-Incumbent Wave' Wave Building: "Anti-incumbent wave" is a classic [Neutral Story Line](#)-- a bit of bold political analysis the "objective" mainstream press can deploy without seeming to pick sides between Democrats and Republicans. (It's just incumbents of both parties the **voters** hate!) The "anti-incumbent" idea fits the NSL bill so neatly that it's bound to be overhyped in the press. Stuart Rothenberg notes that [the last predicted "anti-incumbent" wave was really an anti-Republican wave](#). The next one could be as well, if any wave materializes at all. ... 8:23 P.M.

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Nora Ephron: [\*"\[T\]he Democrats tend to break your heart and the Republicans are just the boys you'd never go out with anyway."\*](#) When people ask me why I spend so much time attacking fellow Democrats, I think this is what I'm going to start telling them. It's even true--at least as far as the Republicans are concerned. My expectations of modern Democrats are so low that 'break your heart' doesn't really apply. ... 2:49 P.M.

---

Are Hollywood's Iraq dramas bombing because a) people don't want to hear about Iraq or b) people don't want to hear about Iraq from Hollywood liberals? ... Several hundred [commenters at Breitbart.com](#) (most, presumably, [sent by Drudge](#)) seems to think they know the answer. It's not [Steven Bochco's](#) answer. ... If there were an Iraq film not made by Hollywood liberals, we might be able to settle the argument. ... 1:22 A.M.

---

[Prof. Volokh claims](#) that \$10.9 million verdict against an eccentric fundamentalist group that pickets military funerals (["with placards bearing shock-value messages such as "Thank God for dead soldiers"](#)) is an unconstitutional speech restriction. It's hard to believe he's not right. ... 1:10 A.M.

---

Saturday, November 10, 2007

What if the Clintons (through Bill's buddy Ron Burkle) were about to gain effective control over the nation's major tabloids? Seems like a big story. Well, [it's happening](#)--or sure looks like it.

Ron Burkle and American Media Inc.'s David Pecker are **said** to be meeting with banks to finalize the financing for Source Interlink Co., controlled by Burkle-owned Yucaipa Cos., to acquire AMI [of which the tabs are part]

After all, why would "the allegedly press-shy" Burkle, who has [denounced tabloids, "tabloidism," and "tabloid-style journalism,"](#) suddenly want to own them?

His interest appears mainly to be in AMI's magazine distribution company DSI, the purchase of which would make Source Interlink one of the largest magazine distributors in the country.

Hey, that could be the explanation! I don't buy it. Look at it from Burkle's point of view: Soon he'll presumably have the power to kill any scandalous story in the Enquirer or Star that might hurt his friends (the Clintons). And he'll have the power to run the stories that will hurt his enemies. And for those who might help the Clintons now (by, [say](#), splitting the anti-Hillary vote) but hurt them later--well, he'll be able to choose the timing of any further [exposes](#). ... Look at it from the point of view of the aptly-named David Pecker, head of AMI: If you assume Burkle wants AMI's publications in order to gain political influence, when is the time at which Burkle would pay the maximum price? Right before the campaign starts in earnest. In fact, you might pinpoint Pecker's maximum leverage as coming a couple of months before the Iowa caucuses. Just a thought. ... Oh, by the way. When the two companies are merged:

Sources close to the deal expect Pecker to become head of the new company, despite a very rough patch over the last few years that included falling rate bases and restated financials at AMI.

[via [HuffPo](#)] 10:02 P.M. link

---

Eli Lake on John Edwards: "I remember him at Christopher Hitchens' house giving me the best arguments I'd heard from any Democrat on why we should invade Iraq. ... very neoconservative arguments ... humanitarian arguments." ... [\[First segment in podcast\]](#) 3:19 A.M. link

---



## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Friday, November 9, 2007

Did Bill Clinton really compare the opponents of "comprehensive" immigration reform to Al Qaeda? [You make the call](#):

In Onawa, for instance, he mused on the world view that "says all that matters in life is our differences" - seeing it at work in everything from the dark philosophy of Al Qaeda to the U.S. immigration debate. "The Al Qaeda people think that all that matter are our differences, and 'You do it my way or you deserve to die,'" he said. "You see it in more benign but also troubling ways in America when something happens like that recent incident in Jena, La.," he said, referring to the prosecution of six young black men that has been criticized as racially motivated. "You see it in very complicated ways in the context of what do to about immigration, what's the best way to get a handle on illegal immigration," he said.

I think he did! It's a banal thought, too. ... 2:53 P.M. link

From her [Amazon author bio](#):

Susan Estrich has been called one of the most influential public intellectuals of the century

Short century. ... [But she helped elect a President--ed [True!](#)] 2:23 A.M.

Did the 2005 bankruptcy reform exacerbate the subprime mortgage crisis? Blogger (and bankruptcy lawyer) Steve Smith [predicted it would](#) a year ago.

Those people who are now threatened with the foreclosure of their homes will be visiting my office soon, as well as the offices of other bankruptcy attorneys (oops, my bad: other "debt relief agencies"), but without the protections Chapter 7 and 13 debtors had under the old law. And as a consequence, more people will lose their homes in the end to foreclosure, which will further depreciate the value of real estate, which will suck even more money out of the economy.

Bloomberg [reports](#) that this is just what is happening. ... 2:14 A.M.

Thursday, November 8, 2007

Voters 'Grow Wary' of Politicians: The poli-sci cliché has been that voters hate politicians but love their own Congressman. Comes now the [NBC/WSJ poll](#) finding that "just 39% of respondents believe their OWN member of Congress deserves re-election; 51% say it's time to give someone new a chance." [First Read calls the number "staggering"](#)--which is what I thought until I looked at the poll's own historical data, which show that it was worse (51-37) in November of 2005, even worse two months before the 1994 anti-incumbent election (53-20) and still worse months before the 1992 election (62-27). It's only been in positive territory about a fifth of the time. ... 12:24 P.M.

Breaking It To Them Slowly:

["Congressional Democrats Grow Wary of Spitzer License Plan"](#)

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

"French Crowd Grows Wary of Bastille,," "Romans Wary of Carthage," "Montagues, Capulets, Locked in Cycle of Wariness," etc. ... The news will unfold at the New York Times' orderly pace! ... [Thomas Maguire mocks](#). ... 12:06 P.M.

---

A [Latino Intifada?](#) The Miami Herald's [Andres Oppenheimer says](#) that if the country's anti-"comprehensive" attitude on illegal **immigration** persists, "a **Hispanic** intifada that may rock this nation in the not-so-distant future."

Remember the Palestinian intifada of the early 1990s, when thousands of frustrated young Palestinians took to the streets and threw stones at Israeli troops? Remember the French intifada of the summer of 2005, in which disenfranchised Muslim youths burned cars and stores in the suburbs of Paris?

If we are not careful, we may see something similar coming from the estimated 13 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, most of them **Hispanic**, who are increasingly vilified in the media, forced further into the underground by spineless politicians and not given any chance to legalize their status by a pusillanimous U.**S.** Congress.

We are creating an underclass of people who won't leave this country and, realistically, can't be deported. They and their children are living with no prospect of earning a legal status, no matter how hard they work for it. Many of them will become increasingly frustrated, angry, and some of them eventually may turn violent.

[Krikorian doubts](#) that "Oppenheimer's feared outcome is all that likely, in part because automatic citizenship at birth makes the illegal population a one-generation problem." ... I tend to think violence is a possibility, but not because Congress fails to pass a legalization bill. It's more likely to be sporadic violence of a tiny minority in support some sort of restoration of Aztlan, either as a part of Mexico or a separate entity, on the order of the Basque ETA in Spain. The chance of that sort of violence is probably increased by a comprehensive reform that ratifies an immigrant flow heavily weighted with citizens of Mexico (with its historic claims to much of the U.**S.** Southwest). ...

Neologism Bake-Off: Latintifada [suggested by reader D.M.], Hispanifada, Latinofada, Mexifada [used by Rod Dreher] ....3:45 A.M. link

---

Wednesday, November 7, 2007

["New York Democrats Say License Issue Had Little Effect," says](#) the headline over the NYT account of yesterday's state elections. But why?

In most of those areas where Mr. Spitzer's licensing proposal moved to the forefront of the campaign, Democrats were able to cauterize the issue by publicly breaking with the governor, harshly criticizing the plan and in some cases threatening to join lawsuits challenging it. [E.A.]

So it's another victory for the Spitzer Plan then! (Is it too late for Hillary to join those lawsuits?) .... Similarly, **immigration** semi-amnesty didn't stop Dems from taking control of the U.**S.** House in 2006 partly because many Democrats distanced themselves from the proposal. ... P.**S.**: In Virginia, as well, a tough-on-**immigration** stand didn't save the Republicans. [Mark Krikorian argues](#) the issue did work (for the pro-enforcement side) where it was "highly salient," even in liberal areas. But Virginia Dems "steered clear of any clarifying stance on **immigration**, like, oh, supporting driver's licenses for illegals." ... P.P.**S.**--The Sleeping Giant Dozes Off Again: Meanwhile, a rising "tide of apathy" engulfed Boston's non-white wards! ... [via [First Read](#) and [Taranto](#)] 1:36. P.M.

---

Hillary Clinton's [lead in New Hampshire is now only 10 points](#) in Rasmussen's robo-poll--down from [23 points](#) in mid-September. Ten points isn't nothing two months before a New Hampshire primary, but it's pretty close

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

to nothing. Especially if it's ten-points-and-falling. ... P.S.: Hillary has now used two of what she must have considered the most powerful weapons in her arsenal--1) the gender victim/Rick Lazio card, and 2) [her husband](#)--and they both backfired. Doesn't that make them hard to use again? ... Hillary shouldn't panic. But judging from her performance so far, she will. ... 11:44 A.M.

---

Tuesday, November 6, 2007

Hitting A Vain: A full week after the Democratic debate, Hillary Clinton is still flailing on the licenses-for-illegals issue--[justifying her position on unconvincing federalist grounds](#), letting her husband mount an equally [specious it's-all-too-complicated defense](#). Maybe she can keep it going until Iowa Caucus Day! ... Yuval Levin is [astounded by this performance](#). Wouldn't it be better for her just to take the hit for supporting Spitzer's plan and move on? The most troubling aspect of this incident, for Democrats, isn't that Hillary can't finesse an issue as well as her husband--we knew that. It's the possibility that a) she panics in adversity--a point Levin emphasizes or b) she's too vain to let herself be perceived as having given a wrong answer, so she goes back to correct it even when that only compounds the damage. ... 7:20 P.M. link

---

Bill Clinton wants a more extended discussion of licenses for illegals. [From the A.P.](#):

But Bill Clinton said the issue is too complicated for sound bites.

"It's fine for Hillary and all the other Democrats to discuss Governor Spitzer's plan. But not in 30 seconds - yes, no, raise your hand," he said.

Would 30 minutes do? Have Hillary explain her extremely complicated position for 30 minutes. A conversation with the American people! That would just about do it for her. ...

Update: [HuffPo's Sam Stein](#) on John Edwards' shift to the right on immigration, which still seems pretty tentative. The genius of the driver's license issue for Edwards is that it gives him a way to be tougher on illegals than Hillary is without requiring him to do anything as heretical as opposing "comprehensive" legalization. Hillary was very foolish to give him this opening. [She should have dissed Spitzer?--ed Yes.] ... The Edwards campaign [is actually highlighting](#) his near-mumbled rejection (on This Week) of the Spitzer plan ...

More: Jim [Pinkerton says](#) the issue won't stop her in the primary, but he senses a Willie Hortonesque vulnerability in November. He should know (he was George H.W. Bush's opposition research director during the 1988 campaign).

... Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton reminds me a lot of Dukakis. As he was two decades ago, she's from a big state, has a lot of money, is ahead in the polls - and she's been grievously injured.

Alert reader L.S. notes one significant Dukakis/Clinton difference: Dukakis, Pinkerton notes, had "a tin ear" on Willie Horton and the prison furlough issue that "should have been a warning sign to Democrats." In contrast, Hillary clearly knew that Spitzer's licenses-for-illegals plan was unpopular--that's why she hemmed and hawed rather than endorsing it. Her problem wasn't a tin ear so much as an unwillingness to stiff an important liberal constituency--and a failure to anticipate that it might be necessary. It's not clear that this is a huge improvement. 11:28 A.M.

---

... on the other hand, Hillary Clinton's never tried a defense as specious and weaselly as [LAT columnist Tim Rutten's](#) (in an attempt to avoid an embarrassing correction). ... If she did, even [Huma](#) would laugh at her! [Cheapest Huma reference I've seen yet--ed Huma=comedy gold] ... 2:47 A.M.

---

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

The yahoos' border fence is working: An [update from the Houston Chronicle](#), which notes the impact on a once-booming smuggling haven in Palomas, Mexico:

"The fence has destroyed the economy here," **said** Fabiola Cuellar, a hardware-store clerk on the main street of Palomas who used to sell supplies to the throngs heading north from here. "Things are going back to the way they were before."

Where the fence has been completed, "it tends to elicit satisfied nods from Americans and resigned shrugs from Mexicans," says reporter Dudley Althaus. Then there's this anecdote, from the principal of a Mexican elementary school that abuts the fence:

Then [the principal, Armando] Villasana told of a daydreaming young student who gazed out the window at the new wall during class last month.

Villasana asked the boy, What are you thinking about?

"They have built us a wall of shame, professor," the student answered.

"How is that?" Villasana asked.

"It's shame because people have to leave our country to find work," the boy responded.

No wonder Mexican politicians hate the fence. If it ever gets finished, they might be called on to deliver a reformed economy. ... [via [The Corner](#)] 2:08 A.M link

John Edwards does not want you to think about his courageous wife ("If you're looking for heroes, don't look to me. Don't look to Elizabeth."): Reason's Dave Weigel on the increasingly smarmy John Edwards' [latest exploitation of his wife's illness](#):

"And Elizabeth and I decided in the quiet of a hospital room." Subtle. "After 12 hours of tests and after getting very bad news." Even subtler. His wife has cancer. "We're not going to quietly go away. Instead we're going to go out there and fight for what it is we believe." You know, Mitt Romney's wife has multiple sclerosis. Obviously that's not going to shorten her life the way Elizabeth Edwards' cancer will shorten hers. But it's the kind of thing that could stir up sympathy and handkerchief-clutching out there in Iowa and New Hampshire, and the Romneys only [ever talk about it](#) when asked. There's no TV ad pimping her illness. If Romney has no emotions, than Edwards has only the basest ones. There's not enough Lysol on the eastern seaboard to scrub his slime away.

[via [Influence Peddler](#)] 1:46 A.M. link

[Bloggingheads](#) --Bob Wright's videoblog project. [Gearbox](#) --Searching for the Semi-Orgasmic Lock-in.  
[Drudge Report](#) --80 % true. Close enough! [Instapundit](#) --All-powerful hit king. [Joshua Marshall](#) -  
 -He reports! And decides! [Wonkette](#) --Makes Jack Shafer feel guilty. [Salon](#) -- Survives! kf  
 gloating on hold. [Andrew Sullivan](#) --He asks, he tells. He sells! [David Corn](#) --Trustworthy reporting  
 from the left. [Washington Monthly](#) --Includes Charlie Peters' proto-blog. [Lucianne.com](#) --Stirs the  
 drink. [Virginia Postrel](#) -- Friend of the future! [Peggy Noonan](#) -- Gold in every column. [Matt  
 Miller](#) --Savvy rad-centrism. [WaPo](#) --Waking from post-Bradlee snooze. [Keller's Calmer Times](#) --  
 Registration required. [NY Observer](#) --Read it before the good writers are all hired away. [New  
 Republic](#) --Left on welfare, right on warfare! [Jim Pinkerton](#) -- Quality ideas come from quantity ideas.  
[Tom Tomorrow](#) --Everyone's favorite leftish cartoonists' blog. [Ann "Too Far" Coulter](#) --Sometimes it's just  
 far enough. [Bull Moose](#) -- National Greatness Central. [John Ellis](#) --Forget that  
 Florida business! The cuz knows politics, and he has, ah, sources. ["The Note"](#) --How the pros start their  
 day. [Romenesko](#) -- O.K. they actually start it here. [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) --Money

## Hillary Stuns--Four Theories

Liberal Central. [Steve Chapman](#) --Ornery-but-lovable libertarian. [Rich Galen](#) --Sophisticated GOP insider. [Man Without Qualities](#) --Seems to know a lot about white collar crime. Hmm. [Overlawyered.com](#) --Daily horror stories. [Eugene Volokh](#) --Smart, packin' prof, and not Instapundit! [Eve Tushnet](#) --Queer, Catholic, conservative and not Andrew Sullivan! [WSJ's Best of the Web](#) --James Taranto's excellent obsessions. [Walter Shapiro](#) --Politics and (don't laugh) neoliberal humor! [Eric Alterman](#) --Born to blog. [Joe Conason](#) --Bush-bashing, free most days. [Lloyd Grove](#) --Don't let him write about you. [Arianna's Huffosphere](#) --Now a whole fleet of hybrid vehicles. [TomPaine.com](#) --Web-lib populists. [Take on the News](#) --TomPaine's blog. [B-Log](#) --Blog of spirituality! [Hit & Run](#) --Reason gone wild! [Daniel Weintraub](#) --Beeblogger and Davis Recall Central. [Eduwonk](#) --You'll never have to read another mind-**numbing** education story again. [Nonzero](#) -- Bob Wright explains it all. [John Leo](#) --If you've got political correctness, he's got a column. [Gawker](#) --It's come to this. [Eat the Press](#)--Sklarianna & Co. are like Gawker if Gawker actually believed in something. ... [Luke Ford](#)--Go for the sex, stay for the self-loathing. ... [More tk]

## Classification

---

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Web Publication

**Subject:** PRIMARY ELECTIONS (90%); CAUCUSES (90%); **VOTERS** & VOTING (89%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (89%); POLITICS (89%); BALLOTS (78%); POLLS & SURVEYS (72%)

**Person:** JOHN EDWARDS (78%)

**Geographic:** NEW HAMPSHIRE, USA (92%)

**Load-Date:** April 11, 2008