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Brown Catches Clinton in Battle of TV Images

For the first time, Jerry Brown is matching Bill Clinton in both the volume and the negative tone of his TV news coverage, according to an ongoing study of election news conducted by the Center for Media and Public Affairs.

CMPA researchers have analyzed 505 news stories on all presidential candidates on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening newscasts from January 1 through March 30. Their study will continue through Election Day November 3.

Major Findings:

***Brown Gets More Press...** Brown's coverage has doubled every two weeks since mid-February, finally gaining parity with Clinton's during the New York primary. Before the New Hampshire primary, the networks ran 52 stories on Clinton and only 4 on Brown. During the week after the March 24 Connecticut primary, they aired 23 on Brown and 26 on Clinton. Since January 1, CBS has aired only 9 stories on Brown, compared to 22 on NBC and 31 on ABC.

***...But Enjoys It Less** Before the March 17 Illinois and Michigan primaries, when he emerged as Clinton's chief rival, on-air evaluations of Brown were 2-to-1 (66%) positive. Since March 17, they have been almost 2-to-1 negative (37% positive), even worse than for Clinton.

Examples: Brown is my man. He's the only person I see that's going to pull us out of this mess.

-voter, ABC, 3/16

For Brown to say that a flat tax plan would be a good deal for the middle class is either crazy or a lie.

-Robert McIntyre, Citizens for Tax Justice, NBC, 3/25

***For Clinton, More Bad News** Evaluations of Clinton on the network newscasts have been more than 3-to-2 negative ever since the Gennifer Flowers story broke in mid-January. His level of good press rose slightly after the Midwestern primaries, from 37% to 39% positive.

Examples: Hey! Where's Gennifer, you draft-dodging idiot?

-voter, NBC, 3/16

(more)

I do not trust Clinton. He's a typical smiling politician.
-voter, NBC, 3/25

[Clinton is] a right-to-work, union busting, scab-inviting, wage-depressing,
environmental disaster governor.
-Jerry Brown, ABC, 3/25

***For Bush, the Most Bad News** George Bush continues to get the worst press of any presidential candidate -- only 23% positive evaluations (i.e. 3-to-1 negative) since the Midwestern primaries, virtually unchanged from his 24% positive ratings earlier in the year.

Examples: In trying to appeal to each side of the political spectrum, George Bush has disappointed both.

-Karen Burnes, ABC, 3/21

Bush has come in and allowed taxes to go up, and the economy's gone down.
-voter, CBS, 3/3

***Anybody But Clinton?** On ABC Clinton's coverage has been 3-to-1 negative (74% negative to 26% positive) while coverage of Brown was evenly balanced (51% positive). On the other two networks both Democratic candidates have gotten roughly balanced coverage, ranging between 40% and 50% positive evaluations.

The Center for Media and Public Affairs is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that conducts scientific analysis of news and entertainment media. This study appears in the March *Media Monitor*, the Centers's monthly newsletter. Copies are available upon request.

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