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Networks say “Elián, Sí. Election, No.”

Study Finds His Coverage Exceeds Bush and Gore Combined

WASHINGTON, DC—Since the Elian Gonzalez story first broke on November 25th, the network evening news shows have devoted more stories to the plight of the Cuban boy than to George W. Bush and Al Gore combined, according to research conducted by the Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA). During that period, Elian Gonzalez was the subject of 117 stories, while Bush and Gore were featured in 116. Though the parties’ frontrunners have totaled similar numbers, Steve Forbes and Alan Keyes have been featured in 7 and 0 stories, respectively. Overall, there has been over one Elian story for every two election stories so far this year.

According to CMPA President Dr. Robert Lichter, “The decision on Elian Gonzalez’s future has beaten ‘Decision 2000.’ His story has provided what the election, so far, has not: a sympathetic figure at the center of the kind of ongoing soap opera that the networks think their audiences prefer.”

This is CMPA’s second ElectionWatch report of Campaign 2000. ElectionWatch will provide regular updates of how the broadcast networks are covering the candidates, the issues and the campaign. This report examines stories broadcast on the ABC, CBS or NBC evening news from January 1 through January 28.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS:

- **Elián Knows ABC**—Among the “big three” networks, ABC was responsible for over 40 percent of the boy’s coverage, with NBC and CBS tied at 29 percent.
- **Measuring Up With The Candidates**—Since the Elian story broke on November 25th, coverage of the 6-year old (117 stories) has kept pace with each party’s campaign story count—falling two short of the six Republican candidates (119 stories) and one shy of the two Democratic contenders (118).
- **The Long and Short of It**—Though NBC accounted for the least amount (28%) of the total stories on the presidential campaign, it was responsible for the most airtime (39%), showing a tendency towards longer stories. Conversely, ABC had the highest amount of campaign stories yet tied CBS for the least time.

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SUBJECTS OF STORIES SINCE GONZALEZ' DISCOVERY (NOV. 25)

Focus	ABC Stories	CBS Stories	NBC Stories	Total
Elian Gonzalez	47	30	40	117
Al Gore + George W. Bush	34	43	39	116
GOP				
George W. Bush	23	21	18	62
John McCain	14	20	16	50
Steve Forbes	0	4	3	7
Alan Keyes	0	0	0	0
Dems				
Bill Bradley	16	26	22	64
Al Gore	11	22	21	54

NETWORK COVERAGE (JAN. 1-JAN. 27)

Focus	ABC Stories	CBS Stories	NBC Stories	Total
Elian Gonzalez	33	23	22	80
GOP				
George W. Bush	19	18	13	50
John McCain	11	18	11	40
Steve Forbes	0	3	2	5
Alan Keyes	0	0	0	0
Dems (lowc)				
Al Gore	10	22	17	49
Bill Bradley	13	21	14	48

NETWORK COMPARISON OF CAMPAIGN STORIES (JAN. 1-JAN. 27)

Network	Stories	% of Total
ABC	55	37%
CBS	54	36%
NBC	41	27%
Total	150	100%

NETWORK COMPARISON OF CAMPAIGN AIR-TIME (JAN. 1-JAN. 27)

Network	Air-Time (Minutes)	% of Total
ABC	80	31%
CBS	82	32%
NBC	98	37%
Total	260 minutes	100%

ElectionWatch is published regularly during the primary and general election season by the **Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA)**, a nonpartisan and nonprofit research and educational organization. Future ElectionWatch reports will contain statistical updates on the amount, topics and tone of the media's coverage of Campaign 2000. Results of **CMPA** research will be posted weekly on its daily online magazine, **NewsWatch**. Located at <http://www.NewsWatch.org>, the publication critically examines the content of print and broadcast news.