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Networks Praise Kerry, Fox News Buries Him

Study Finds Election News Tilts Both Ways

WASHINGTON, DC- The broadcast TV networks and weekly news magazines favor John Kerry over George W. Bush, according to a new study released by the **Center for Media and Public Affairs** (CMPA). But the study also finds that Fox News Channel was far more negative towards Kerry than Bush.

These results come from the **2004 Election NewsWatch** project, conducted by CMPA, an affiliate of George Mason University, and in cooperation with Media Tenor.

This is the sixth *ElectionWatch* report of Campaign 2004. This report covers the period of June 1 through September 2 on the ABC, CBS and NBC nightly newscasts, as well as Time and Newsweek. We also examine "Special Report with Brit Hume" on Fox News Channel from August 1 through September 2.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

- Evaluations of John Kerry were positive by a two-to-one margin, while evaluations of George W. Bush were over 60 percent negative
- Among non-partisan sources, Kerry's evaluations were almost three-to-one positive; Bush's were over two-to-one negative.
- Among the networks, the gap between the candidates was largest on NBC; the coverage was most balanced on ABC.
- Kerry's proportion of good press declined in August, but he still fared far better than Bush until the GOP convention.
- Bush got better than Kerry only during the GOP convention, which also was the only time he received a majority of positive evaluations.

(additional findings on next page)

(page two)

- Based on CMPA's previous studies of primary and general election coverage, Kerry has gotten the best press on network news of any presidential nominee since we began tracking election news in 1988.
- The coverage has focused more on the candidates' policies and personal characteristics than on the campaign horse race.

The Fox News Difference

- Fox News Channel was about as negative towards Bush as the broadcast networks, but Kerry's evaluations were negative by a five-to-one margin.
- There was little difference in the evaluations of party- and campaign-based partisan sources, but Bush fared over four times as well as Kerry among non-partisan sources.

Examples

Ms. Ann Knuth (voter):

NBC (7/30/04)

"I like what John Kerry's saying. I like the positive note that he is giving."

NBC reporter David Gregory:

NBC (7/30/04)

Today, Mr. Bush begins an unusually aggressive month of campaigning. With his approval rating below 50 percent and polls showing widespread concern about the direction of the country, aides admit the president cannot wait any longer to outline why he deserves another term.

Roy Hoffmann (RET.), Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy:

Fox News (8/20/04)

[Kerry's war biography "Tour of Duty"...was politically a diatribe, had many inaccuracies, gross exaggerations and some outright slanderous lies.