

CMPA's Lichter Finds the Obvious: Media Overwhelmingly Positive on Obama

By Justin McCarthy
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It is no surprise that Barack Obama receives much better treatment in the media than John McCain, but the non-partisan Center for Media and Public Affairs actually conducted a [study](#) [1] that concluded just that. The Center's evaluation found that since both candidates were formally nominated "Senator Obama on the network evening news shows have been 65% positive, compared to only 36% positive about John McCain."



While the networks ignored the study, the October 20 edition of "Fox and Friends" interviewed CMPA's founder Robert Lichter. Lichter noted that Obama fits the media's template of a "fresh face," "some sort of special dimensions," and "charismatic quality." He did note that the media eventually sours on such candidates, but curiously have not done so for Senator Obama.

The interviewed proceeded to the recent "New York Times" [hit piece](#) [2] on Cindy McCain. Lichter offered the "Times'" perspective claiming they did just as many negative stories on Obama as McCain. However, co-host Steve Doocy asked if they're going to be fair "where's the tough piece on Michelle Obama?" Lichter observed he has not "seen other coverage of Michelle Obama."

The transcript follows.

BRIAN KILMEADE: Hey, a recent study found that the comments made about Barack Obama on television news are positive about 65 percent of the time. John McCain, not so much. He receives positive commentary only about 36 percentage of the time. What's causing the media bias and how does it impact the race for the White House?

STEVE DOOCY: Let's talk to Robert Lichter. He is the founder of the Center for Media and Public Research, a non-partisan research organization which conducted the study. He joins us live today from DC. Good morning to you Bob.

ROBERT LICHTER: Good morning.

DOOCY: Okay, according to your study, Barack Obama is getting twice as- about twice as many good stories, positive stories, as John McCain. Why?

LICHTER: Well, it's on the network evening news since, since the party conventions started. Media candidates going all the way back to Jimmy Carter tend to be people who are fresh faces, who have some sort of special dimensions in their background, the historic dimensions of Obama's candidacy is obvious, and who kind of have a charismatic quality, their soaring rhetoric. Obama fits all of these things. The really surprising thing is not that he got a wave of good press, but that he's done it twice. This is the sort of thing you usually see in the primaries when such a candidate appears. By the time the general election comes along as with Jimmy Carter, usually the media are disillusioned. But Obama seems to have gotten a second wind this time.

KILMEADE: What would you say about Governor Palin? I find this really perplexing. First everyone loved her, now people are going out of their way to take hits on her. But yet, she hops on SNL, ratings through the roof, she goes out to an audience, she gets record crowds.

LICHTER: Well, once again, when she first stepped on the stage, she fit the fresh face, big rhetoric, interesting character, and got a quick hit of, of really positive coverage. But pretty soon, once the media starting digging around in Alaska, finding negative things, and particularly after the Katie Couric interviews, the coverage really turned on her sharply and it's been that way ever since.

DOOCY: And Bob, let's talk a little bit about coverage of Cindy McCain. Cindy McCain not running for president and yet "The New York Times" had a huge, in my estimation, hit job where they, you know, they had one of "The New York Times" reporters fishing around trolling on Facebook, asking some of the teenage friends of one of the McCain's children for dirt on McCains- questioning her stroke, stuff like that. "New York Times" though, I understand the public editor made it pretty clear, what?

LICHTER: The public editor, their ombudsman, looked at all of, what he called, the enterprise stories of all the kind of original stories in the "Times" and concluded that overall they were pretty fair, they were balanced of critical of Obama, critical of McCain. I think what's happened now is the piece on McCain's wife can seem to Republicans like a low blow. It's not the candidate for heaven's sake. It's the candidate's wife. Why drag her in? I think Clark Hoyt, the public editor, was arguing that it all balances out. It happens that there has been a couple of tough pieces on McCain lately and that's what Republicans were remembering. That's his position.

DOOCY: Yeah, but, but Bob where's the tough piece on Michelle Obama? If they're going to do a tough piece on Cindy McCain, you know, turn about is fair play isn't it?

LICHTER: Well, you don't have to tell me that. I haven't seen other coverage of Michelle Obama. But this, you know, this is about the time you get this, this sort of the final story, now let's look at the candidates' wives. It's the one thing we haven't done. Maybe there's something in the hopper on, on Mrs. Obama. I don't know.

KILMEADE: Okay.

DOOCY: Neither do we.

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