

Bozell Column: Obama's Media Landslide

By Brent Bozell

October 28, 2008 - 22:42 ET

The election results aren't in yet, but there is one set of surveys with an unmistakable conclusion. Everyone should be forced to admit that the publicists formerly known as the "news" media have worked themselves to the bone this year to elect Barack Obama.

Polls have found it. The Pew Center for the People and the Press documented a landslide: "By a margin of 70 percent to 9 percent, Americans say most journalists want to see Obama, not John McCain, win on November 4."



The **Center for Media and Public Affairs** found it. Measuring for comments that are either measurably positive or negative – and dropping out the neutral remarks – comments about Obama on the three network evening newscasts have been two-thirds positive (65 percent) since the party conventions. Comments about John McCain have been about one-third positive (36 percent) in the same time frame.

The cultural landscape is no different. **CMPA** also found that the late-night comics launched seven times as many jokes on the Republican ticket than they did the Democrats, perhaps in the knowledge that comedians are going to face an awful backlash from their liberal peers should they utter a single mocking word about the ticket of Hope and Change. Leftist "Daily Show" host Jon Stewart can't be any tougher on Obama than to call him a "hope-ronaut."

Even the Project for Excellence in Journalism, run by liberal former reporter Tom Rosenstiel, found it. In the last two election cycles, Team Rosenstiel labored mightily to find a shred of evidence to support the theory of a pro-George Bush bias in the press. They weren't going to risk mockery for a flat-earth survey suggesting an anti-Obama tide this year.

They found coverage of McCain has been heavily unfavorable, and has become more so over time. In the six weeks following the conventions through the final debate, unfavorable stories about McCain outweighed favorable ones by a factor of more than three to one. Nearly six in ten of the stories studied were decidedly negative in nature (57 percent), while fewer than two in ten (14 percent) were positive.

Obama's coverage was more balanced, with 36 percent positive in tone, 35 percent neutral, and 29 percent negative.

But how can that be? How do you find that 29 percent of Obama mentions are negative? That's why people should put an asterisk on Mr. Rosenstiel's results. Unlike other surveys, PEJ isn't just studying the "news" media, the ones mandated to demonstrate balance and objectivity. PEJ included cable TV talk show hosts from O'Reilly to Olbermann and talk-radio hosts from Rush Limbaugh to Randi Rhodes – all commentators, mandated to express an opinion.

PEJ's surveys also only included partial samples, looking at two out of four listed newspapers every day, sampling just the first half-hour of network morning shows, rotating NPR and PBS programming, and studying the first half-hour of Limbaugh every other day. That's like painting half a picture instead of a whole one. And still, after all that conservative commentary, it was still a net positive for Obama.

We at the Media Research Center found something else: the media hated McCain's commercials. Between the end of the primaries and Tuesday, network news broadcast 84 stories criticizing McCain ads while only 32 had a negative tone toward Obama ads. Moreover, McCain was on the receiving end of nearly three times as many stories scolding his supposed negativity (66) as Obama (26).

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