



Women for President: Media Bias in Eight Campaigns

Erika Falk

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When Hillary Clinton announced her 2008 bid for president she was the Democratic front-runner. Despite this, she received less coverage than Barack Obama, who trailed her in the polls. Such a disparity is indicative of the gender bias the media has demonstrated in covering women candidates since the first woman ran for America's highest office in 1872. Tracing the campaigns of eight women who ran for president through 2004--Victoria Woodhull, Belva Lockwood, Margaret Chase Smith, Shirley Chisholm, Patricia Schroeder, Lenora Fulani, Elizabeth Dole, and Carol Moseley Braun--Erika Falk finds little progress in the fair treatment of women candidates. A thorough comparison of the women's campaigns to those of their male opponents reveals a worrisome trend of sexism in press coverage--a trend that still persists today.

While women have been elected to the highest offices in countries such as England, Germany, and India, the idea that a woman could be president of the United States provokes scoffs and ridicule. The press portrays female candidates as unviable, unnatural, and incompetent, and often ignores or belittles women instead of reporting their ideas and intent. Since voters learn most details about presidential candidates through media outlets, Falk asserts that this prevailing bias calls into question the modern democratic assumption that men and women have comparable access to positions of power.

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