LEARNING MODULE

Level:	Grades 10 to 12
About the Author:	Matthew Johnson, MediaSmarts
Duration:	2 hours (without extension activities)

Suffragettes and Iron Ladies

Overview

This lesson considers how the media portrays women in politics. Students explore capsule biographies of female political leaders, from ancient times to current events – crafted from snippets of media coverage such as newspapers, magazines, TV news and encyclopedias – to understand bias in how female politicians are portrayed. Based on this, the class prepares a "portrait of a female politician" – a catalogue of the negative attributes frequently ascribed to women in politics by the media. Looking at this portrait, students are asked to consider which of these would be considered positive or neutral attributes if they were found in a male politician, and discuss how coverage of women in politics could be made less biased. Finally, students are asked to write a biography and position paper for themselves which casts them in a positive and politically active light.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Understand and identify bias
- Analyze gender stereotypes
- Use connotation in writing
- Think of themselves as political agents

Preparation and Materials

Photocopy the following handouts:

- Forms of Bias
- Profile: Hatshepsut
- Profile: Margaret Thatcher
- Profile: Hillary Clinton
- Profile: Kim Campbell
- Profile: Naomi Klein
- Profile: Nellie McClung
- Uncovering the Coverage: Gender Biases in Canadian Political Reporting *(note: this is only needed if you are conducting Extension Activity #2. If not, treat this as a backgrounder for teachers and read it before conducting the lesson.)*

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Procedure

Bias

Write the word *Bias* on the board and ask students if they know what it means. Develop a definition that is similar to this one: a view or way of presenting something that is consistently unfair.

Distribute the handout *Forms of Bias* and review it with the class.

Composite Biographies

Explain that one common form of bias is *gender bias*, based on whether the subject is a man or a woman. Distribute the handout *Profile: Hatshepsut* to the class. Explain that it is made up of quoted excerpts from actual print and online articles about the Egyptian pharaoh Hatshepsut. Read through the profile and ask students to watch for examples of gender bias, and then go through it again with the class:

Paragraph one: Hatshepsut's reign is described as "long and prosperous" only in comparison to other female pharaohs – she is not allowed to "compete" with male pharaohs. She is favourably compared only to the "notorious" Cleopatra – damning with faint praise.

Paragraph two: Hatshepsut is "allowed" to reign – as though she had no influence on it. Her success is attributed to being the daughter of someone important (not who she is, but who her father is – although most male pharaohs got the job the same way), and to stereotypical female qualities like beauty and charisma. She "misled her subjects and the uneducated public" by appealing to religion, although all pharaohs claimed to be gods in human form. Are other male pharaohs accused of misleading their subjects? Her co-regency is described as "invented" and "fabricated," although there are many examples of co-regencies throughout history.

Paragraph three: Hatshepsut's success is attributed to "propaganda," a term with negative connotations. It is suggested that she was only able to reign because she pretended to be a man. Her success is attributed on her advisors, all men – implying she needed the help of men to succeed. (How often are the advisors of male leaders mentioned in similar profiles?) She is said to have been a good pharaoh "although there were no wars during her reign" – implying that only the conduct of warfare, a traditionally male activity, can be the proof of a good leader; Hatshepsut had to settle for the lesser, feminine goal of "proving her sovereignty" (note the weak language) through trade. Finally, it's suggested that her reign was "inappropriate," presumably because she was a woman. (No other reason for her removal from the king lists – such as her successor's hatred of her for delaying his rise to the throne – is mentioned.)

Distribute the remaining *Profile*s so that one-fifth of the class gets each one. Have students go through their profiles and look for evidence of bias; remind students again that these are made up of actual quotes from print, TV and online sources. Once students have finished, have each profile read aloud and have students share and explain the examples of bias they found. Summarize the examples on the board.

Portrait of a Female Politician

Have students (either alone, in pairs or in small groups) develop a composite "portrait of a female politician," collecting all of the qualities ascribed to the women in the profiles. (For instance, Hatshepsut could be described as passive, charismatic, attractive, unprincipled, manipulative, illegitimate, dishonest, needing guidance and weak based on the examples above). Go through the composite portrait and ask which qualities might be considered positive in a male politician (a female politician described as "charismatic" is seen as trading on her looks; a male politician described the same way could be seen as succeeding by force of personality).

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Ask students if they think it is unavoidable for media coverage of female politicians to be biased in this way. Are different sources (TV news, newspapers, blogs, etc.) more or less likely to be biased? Are women more evenhanded when writing about female politicians than men are? Would coverage of female politicians be more fair if more journalists (and editors, producers and media owners) were women? Why or why not? Discuss ways in which media coverage could be made less biased.

Position Paper

Tell students to think about how they would present themselves if they were running for office or trying to organize a political cause. Ask them to consider what aspects of their own histories, personalities or opinions could be presented in a positive way to make them seem like a good leader or politician.

Have students write a brief (1-2 pages) biography and/or position paper (a summary of their political views) in which they present themselves as political agents.

Extension Activity #1: Who Makes the News?

Project or have students access the *Global Media Monitoring Project* 2020 report on women in the news (https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/GMMP2020.ENG_.FINAL20210713.pdf) and answer the following questions:

1) What jobs are women and men most likely to be shown doing in news? Do you think that accurately reflects reality? (page 38)

2) What age groups of women are most often seen in news? What age groups of men are seen most often? What gender stereotypes might this support? (page 39)

3) How many reporters in newspapers, radio and television newscasts are women? (page 45)

4) In which topics of news stories is there the biggest difference between what male reporters cover and what female reporters do? Why do you think that is? Are the differences bigger or smaller for online news sources compared to print newspapers? Why might that be? (page 47)

5) What percentage of news media stories challenge gender issues? Why is it so small? (page 54)

6) How has the number of stories that challenge gender issues in North America changed between 2005 and 2020?

Have students select a news program to watch at home, or else assign programs for students to watch, to get a "snapshot" of gender in the news today. Each student should watch for and record:

- the number of male and female presenters
- the topics of the stories presented by the male presenters
- the topics of the stories presented by the female presenters
- the number of male and female subjects of news stories (mention that stories may have more than one subject, and some stories will not have a human subject)
- the topics of the stories with male subjects

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- the topics of the stories with female subjects
- the number of stories that show women or men in a stereotyped way according to their gender (you may wish to review the concept of gender stereotypes)
- the number of stories that show women or men in a way that challenges gender stereotypes
- the number of subjects portrayed as victims and whether they were male or female

Have students write their findings on a piece of chart paper and post it on the board. How similar is the class's "snapshot" to the *Global Media Monitoring Project* report?

Have students answer questions 1-7 above about their "snapshot."

Extension Activity #2: Uncovering the Coverage

Have students read the article "Uncovering the Coverage: Gender Biases in Canadian Political Reporting" by Joanna Everitt, PhD, and answer the following questions:

1) What is the difference between conscious and unconscious bias?

2) Why does Everitt see unconscious bias as more of a problem in press coverage of female politicians?

3) According to Everitt, how do news outlets (newspapers, TV news, etc.) appeal to their audiences? How does this affect their coverage of female politicians?

4) Politics is frequently described in the news using *metaphors*. What metaphors for politics does Everitt's article discuss, and how do they affect coverage of female politicians?

5) According to Everitt, how does the news media communicate the message that women "just do not belong in the political world"?

6) Scan the political news in several Canadian newspapers, paying particular attention to headlines and the first paragraph of each article. Do you find that Everitt's conclusions hold true?

7) Everitt concludes that female politicians are "damned if you do, damned if you don't" by the news media. Can you imagine any changes that might be made to news coverage of politics or to the Canadian political system that would improve conditions for women in politics?

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Extension Activity #3: Women Writing About Women

Note: This activity is only possible with Internet-connected computers. MediaSmarts does not have and cannot grant permission to reprint the articles linked to below.

Have students read the following articles (students may be assigned a single article to read, with half of the class reading one and the other half of the class reading the other, or students may be asked to read both articles):

- Robson, John (19 August 2020). When did the media join Kamala Harris's campaign team?. *National Post.* https://nationalpost.com/opinion/john-robson-when-did-the-media-join-kamala-harriss-campaign-team
- Burnett, Sarah & Seitz, Amanda (12 August 2020). Groups vow to fight sexist, racist coverage of Kamala Harris after VP Pick. *Global News.* https://globalnews.ca/news/7267990/kamala-harris-sexism-racism/

Have students identify any examples of bias they find in either article.

Have students compare their findings. Was either article more or less biased than the other? Were different forms of bias used in one article than in the other?

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Forms of Bias

At one time or another we all complain about "bias in the news." The fact is, despite the journalistic ideal of "objectivity," every news story is influenced by the attitudes, assumptions and background of its interviewers, writers, photographers and editors.

Not all bias is deliberate. But you can become a more aware news reader or viewer by watching for the following journalistic techniques that allow bias to "creep in" to the news:

1. **Bias through selection and omission**

   An editor can express a bias by choosing to use or not to use a specific news item. This has a significant impact on what audiences think is important: for many years large news outlets didn't cover police violence against Black people in Canada or the United States, but when they began to public opinion on the issue — and public perception of whether or not it *was* an issue—began to change significantly. Within a given story, some details can be ignored, and others included, to give readers or viewers a different opinion about the events reported.

   Remember that the biggest bias is always towards what journalists see as being "newsworthy" — but this question is always political, even if it isn't seen that way. Though crime is more likely than many other topics to be seen as newsworthy, research has found that in most cases there needs to be something else about a crime—something unusual about the perpetrator or victim, something that makes the crime seem like a violation of our sense of right or wrong, or some connection to a broader issue — to make the news. Stories about a single event are also more likely to be seen as newsworthy than about something that's ongoing, and stories about specific people are more newsworthy than stories about groups or systems.

   Bias through omission is difficult to detect. Only by comparing news reports from a wide variety of outlets can this form of bias be observed. You can use the News tab on Google or MediaSmarts' custom News search (bit.ly/news-search) to see how different outlets cover the same story.

2. **Bias through placement**

   Readers of papers judge first page stories to be more significant than those buried in the back. Television and radio newscasts run the most important stories first and leave the less significant for later. Online news puts the most important stories on the home page and promotes them on social media. What section a story appears in matters too: if a story about sexual harassment in the movie industry appears in the Entertainment section, example, we'll probably take it less seriously than if it appears in News.

   Bias through placement can also happen when a story is placed *near* something else. Putting a news story next to an opinion article on the same topic, or a political cartoon about the subject of the story, changes how we read it.

   How the story is organized is also significant. Most news stories are written in what is called "inverted pyramid" style, beginning with what is considered the most newsworthy facts, followed by the important details relating to those facts, and finally background information to provide context. The last part of the story contains information that readers are least likely to read and editors are most likely to cut. This can be a form of bias because context often helps you fully understand a topic: for example, if an article about the number

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of sufferers of mental illness in prison (the newsworthy facts) waits until the fourth paragraph to note that sufferers of mental illness are no more likely to be violent than anyone else (context), readers who only read part of the story may come away with a very inaccurate view of mental illness and violence.

3. Bias by headline

Many people read only the headlines of a news item. Most people scan nearly all the headlines in a newspaper. Headlines are the most-read part of a paper. They can summarize as well as present carefully hidden bias and prejudices. They can convey excitement where little exists. They can express approval or condemnation. Even when a story avoids significant bias, because headlines are shorter they often give a much simpler and more biased picture.

4. Bias by photos, captions and camera angles

Some pictures flatter a person, others make the person look unpleasant. A paper can choose photos to influence opinion about, for example, a candidate for election. On television, the choice of which visual images to display is extremely important. The captions newspapers run below photos are also potential sources of bias.

5. Bias by word choice

What words are used to in a story has a major effect on how we read it. For example:

- Using metaphors like describing a politician as “attacking” an issue can provoke an emotional reaction.
- Sentences in the passive voice make it seem like an event just happened, without anyone doing it: compare “Three protestors were injured by police” (passive voice) to “Police injured three protestors” (active voice).
- The choice of verb to describe an action affects what we think about it: Compare “Police *confiscate* gun collection,” “Police *seize* gun collection” and “Police *grab* gun collection.” Was something a “death,” a “killing” or a “murder”? Did a politician “state” something, “claim” it or “allege” it?
- Similarly, how a person or group is described affects how we see them. Is a candidate an *experienced* politician, a *long-serving* politician or an *old* politician? If something is described as a *gang*, that can imply that it is a large, well-organized group—even if it’s actually just a handful of young people.
- Using a particular word also suggests that the word describes something real. For example, in the 1990s the news media coined the word “superpredator” to suggest that there was a group of young offenders who committed crimes for fun and had no conscience. Although there was never any evidence this was true, its use in news stories promoted fear of youth crime and led to stricter sentencing laws in the United States.

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6. Bias by source and quote

Always consider where the news item "comes from." Is the information supplied by a reporter, an eyewitness, police or fire officials, executives, or elected or appointed government officials? Each may have a particular bias that is introduced into the story. Companies and public relations directors supply news outlets with press releases that hurried reporters can easily turn into news stories. Journalists will also often base their ideas of what is newsworthy on what they see on social media—which allows groups to engage in "source hacking" by manipulating trending topics or creating a fake controversy.

You should also always consider *who* is quoted. Are all of the quotes from authorities, like government and police? Are people from the community that is affected quoted? It's important to look past a single story: most news outlets quote men more often than women overall, and White people more than non-White people.

7. Bias through false balance

It's important for news articles to give both sides of a story, and journalists take that responsibility seriously. Unfortunately, some groups take advantage of that fact—and the fact that many news outlets no longer have reporters who have special training in covering things like health and science—to make it seem like stories have more sides than they really do. The tobacco industry started doing this in the 1970s by trying to get "equal time" for idea that cigarettes don't cause cancer, when basically all scientists agreed that it did. Today, other groups use the same strategy to make it seem like there isn't a clear consensus on topics like climate change and vaccination.

8. Bias through statistics

Many news stories include statistics: crowd counts, vote totals, temperature records, and so on. There can be bias in *which* statistics are included (showing temperatures dropping from August to December doesn't give you an accurate picture of the whole year, for example) and also in *how* those statistics are described or interpreted.

For example, the first of these stories focuses on the fact that "millions" of people in the US did not get their second dose of Covid-19 vaccine. The second story focuses on how many people *did* get it (the "majority") and describes the number who aren't as "only 5 million."

Both of these stories are from reliable news outlets, and both are biased! This shows that instead of looking for "unbiased" news (which doesn't exist) we need to learn to recognize bias so we can read through it.

Adapted from Newskit: A Consumers Guide to News Media, by *The Learning Seed Co. Reprinted with their permission*.

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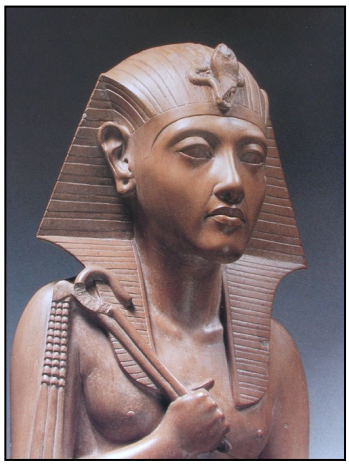
Profile: Hatshepsut



Hatshepsut (Hat-shep-soot), the first important female ruler known to history, lived a thousand years after the pyramids were built and seventeen centuries after the Egyptians had begun writing their language in hieroglyphs. **[1]** In comparison with other female pharaohs, Hatshepsut's reign was long and prosperous. **[2]** Although less familiar to modern audiences than her much later successor, the notorious Cleopatra (51–30 B.C.), Hatshepsut's achievements were far more significant. **[3]**

Tuthmose III was in line for the throne, but due to his age Hatshepsut was allowed to reign as queen dowager. **[4]** Hatshepsut was not one to sit back and wait for her nephew to age enough to take her place. As a favorite daughter of a popular pharaoh, and as a charismatic and beautiful lady in her own right, she was able to command enough of a following to actually take control as pharaoh. **[5]** Hatshepsut misled her subjects and the uneducated public by indicating that Amon-Ra had visited her pregnant mother at the temple in Deir el-Bahri in the Valley of the Kings. **[6]** In order to make Hatshepsut's proclamation to king more official and more accepting to the Egyptian citizens, she invented a co-regency with her father Tuthmosis I. She even went as far as incorporating this fabricated co-regency into texts and representations. **[7]**

Using propaganda and keen political skills, she deftly jumped each hurdle she faced. **[8]** Monuments of Hatshepsut frequently portray her in kingly costume and the famous royal "false beard", often referring to her as though she were male. **[9]** It may be that if she had ruled strictly with a more feminine-looking disposition she may not have been so readily accepted by the masses. **[10]** Hatshepsut surrounded herself with strong and loyal advisors, many of whom are still known today: Hapuseneb, the High Priest of Amun, and her closest advisor, the royal steward Senemut. **[11]** Although there were no wars during her reign, she proved her sovereignty by ordering expeditions to the land of Punt, in present-day Somalia, in search of the ivory, animals, spices, gold and aromatic trees that Egyptians coveted. **[12]** Hatshepsut's name was also omitted from subsequent king lists, indicating that her reign was perhaps considered by some to have been inappropriate and contrary to tradition. **[13]**

1 "Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh." *Special Exhibitions*, Metropolitan Museum of Art. <http://www.metmuseum.org/special/hatshepsut/pharaoh_more.asp> (Accessed on February 10, 2009.)

2 "Hatshepsut." *Wikipedia*, *The Free Encyclopedia*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatshepsut> (Accessed on February 10, 2009.)

3 "Hathshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh."

4 Bediz, David. "The Story of Hatshepsut." *The Queen Who Would Be King: Hatshepsut*, 2000. <http://www.bediz.com/hatshep/story.html>

5 Ibid.

6 "Hatshepsut." *King TutOne.com* <http://www.kingtutone.com/queens/hatshepsut/> (Accessed on February 10, 2009.)

7 Ibid.

8 "The Story of Hatshepsut."

9 "Hatshepsut – The Female Pharaoh." *Egyptology Online*. <http://www.egyptologyonline.com/hatshepsut.htm> (Accessed on February 10, 2009.)

10 "Hatshepsut." *King TutOne.com.*

11 "Hatshepsut – The Female Pharaoh."

12 "The Story of Hatshepsut."

13 "Hatshepsut: The Female Pharaoh".

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Profile: Margaret Thatcher

The Iron Lady of British politics, Margaret Thatcher was the longest continuously serving prime British prime minister since 1827. **[1]**

On 13th December, 1951 she married Denis Thatcher, a successful businessman. **[2]** Her marriage enabled her to finish her studies for the bar [to become a lawyer] and devote herself to politics. **[3]** In October 1970 she created great controversy by bringing an end to free school milk for children over seven and increasing school meal charges. **[4]**

> Newspaper headline:
> TORY LEADERSHIP IS WON DECISIVELY BY MRS. THATCHER; 4 Male Opponents Beaten **[5]**

On February 4, 1975 Thatcher defeated Edward Heath by 130 votes to 119 and became the first woman leader of a major political party. Heath took the defeat badly and refused to serve in Thatcher's shadow cabinet. **[6]**

Some of Mrs. Thatcher's support undoubtedly came from disgruntled backbench M.P.s who felt that their talent had gone unrecognized and untapped by Heath. As the notoriously hardheaded Mrs. Thatcher put it, "I'll always be fond of dear Ted, but there's no sympathy in politics." **[7]**

She was sarcastically called the "Iron Lady" by the Soviet press, but she chose to adopt the title, believing it illustrated her resolve and strength in the face of adversaries, as well as adversity. **[8]**

[Her] twin children, Carol and Mark, were born in 1953. Denis was an oil company executive; he died in 2003... Mark Thatcher was arrested at his South African home in 2004 on a charge of financing an attempted coup in oil-rich Equatorial Guinea. **[9]**

1 Lewis, Jone Johnson. "Margaret Thatcher." *About.com: Women's History*, 2008. <http://womenshistory.about.com/library/bio/blbio_margaret_thatcher.htm> (Accessed on February 10, 2009.)

2 Simkin, John. "Margaret Thatcher." *Spartacus Educational* <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/COLDthatcher.htm> (Accessed on February 10, 2009.)

3 "Margaret Thatcher: British Prime Minister." *Cold War Knowledge Bank: Profiles*, CNN.com. <http://web.archive.org/web/20080214200239/http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/kbank/profiles/thatcher/> (Accessed on February 10, 2009.)

4 Simkin, “Margaret Thatcher.”

5 Eder, Richard. "Tory Leadership is Won Decisively by Mrs. Thatcher." *The New York Times*, February 12, 1975. <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F30F13F83C5A157B93C0A81789D85F418785F9>

6 "No Time for Post-Mortems." *Time*, February 17, 1975. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,912866,00.html>

7 Ibid.

8 “Margaret Thatcher: British Prime Minister.”

9 "Margaret Thatcher." *Answers.com.* <http://www.answers.com/topic/margaret-thatcher> (Accessed on February 10, 2009.)

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Profile: Hillary Clinton

Why does Hillary like Pantsuits so much, you may ask? The answer is probably for the same reason men wear suits. First, it looks professional and is non-offensive. It is preferable to Hillary wearing a tank top that shows the "I love Bill" tattoo that she sports on her back. The second reason for Hillary's insatiable appetite for Pantsuits is, again, the same as for men. They hide body fat. Every man or woman who dons a suit or pantsuit will be able to hide the bulges that result from all of those business and campaign lunches. I don't think I am the only one who has noticed that Hillary has gained weight during the campaign. Hillary's pantsuits help to disguise it. **[1]**

"She has a bad figure. She's bottom heavy and her legs are short," reported CNN's style editor, Elsa Klensch. Performance coach Anthony Robbins added, "When she gets angry, she comes across as hard and bitchy and intense." **[2]**

[Hillary has] the calm, cool presence of a Grace Kelly... She has been charming but cold and absolutely flawless. **[3]**

Her feisty talk seems to play well with people in her audiences, many of them women who are quick to hail her fighting bona fides. **[4]** Fifty five percent of married men in the country say they'll never vote for her under any circumstances. **[5]** Clinton's “nagging voice” is the reason she lost the male vote. **[6]**

Will Americans want to watch a woman get older before their eyes on a daily basis? And that woman, by the way, is not going to want to look like she's getting older because it'll impact poll numbers, it'll impact perceptions. The reason she's a U.S. senator, the reason she's a candidate for president, the reason she may be a frontrunner is her husband messed around. **[7]**

1 Waltz, Zane. "Pantsuits and Hillary Clinton." *Associated Content*, May 19, 2008. <http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/775049/pantsuits_and_hillary_clinton.html?cat=7> (Accessed February 10, 2009.)

2 *Larry King Live*, CNN, June 1, 2008. Quoted in "From the Women's Desk -- Why Does Larry King Think Hillary Clinton's Hair, Legs, Smile and Figure Are "News"?." *FAIR: Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting*, June 14, 1999. <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=1781>

3 *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, MSNBC, October 30, 2007. Transcript. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21562091>

4 Leibovitch, Mark, and Kate Zernicke. "Seeing Grit and Ruthlessness in Clinton’s Love of the Fight." *The New York Times*, May 5, 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/05/us/politics/05clinton.html>

5 *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, MSNBC, November 8, 2007. Transcript. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21707994/>

6 *Your World With Neil Cavuto*, Fox News, January 4, 2008. Transcript. *Media Matters for America* <http://mediamatters.org/research/200801050004>

7 Name it change (2010). The top 50 most sexist quotes from the campaign trail. Retrieved from http://www.nameitchangeit.org/blog/entry/top-50-most-sexist-quotes-on-the-campaign-trail/

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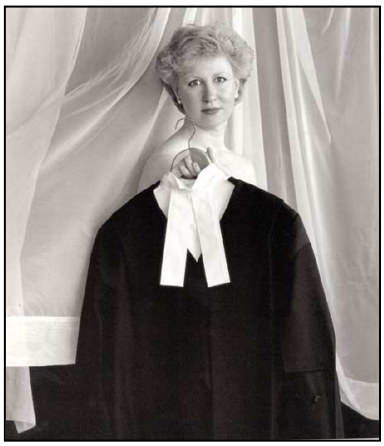
Profile: Kim Campbell



There's something quite regal about Kim Campbell. Perhaps it's the tilt of her head, the beatific smile she bestows upon both nobles and commoners as she campaigns. Impetuous as she is intelligent, Campbell has never been content to patiently wait her turn. She has long relied on her instincts - which by all accounts run counter to those of most politicians. **[1]**

Kim Campbell was born Avril Phaedra Douglas Campbell. As a teenager, Avril permanently nicknamed herself Kim, perhaps for actress Kim Novak. She spent several years studying the Russian language, and was close to being fluent. **[2]**

Kim Campbell was Prime Minister of Canada for only four months, but she can take credit for a number of Canadian political firsts. Kim Campbell was the first woman Prime Minister of Canada, the first woman Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, the first woman Minister of National Defence, and she was the first woman elected leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. **[3]**

If Campbell had miraculously defied the odds and led the Tories to victory, or even to a respectable defeat, Canadians might still be applauding her gee-whiz enthusiasm as a welcome breath of fresh air, as they did in those fleeting summer weeks of 1993 when her approval rating was the highest of any prime minister in decades. [But] she was exhausted after her leadership race, due to her being forced into an endless round of barbecues and speech-making. She had no time to exercise, relax, get a chipped tooth fixed, have her nails done or pay household bills. **[4]**

1 Williams, Marla. "Outspoken Kim Campbell May Be Canada's Next Leader – The Candid Candidate." *The Seattle Times*, June 6, 1993. <http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=19930606&slug=1704997>

2 "Kim Campbell." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 2002. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kim_Campbell> (Accessed on February 10, 2009.)

3 Munroe, Susan. "Prime Minister Kim Campbell." *About.com: Canada Online*. <http://canadaonline.about.com/cs/primeminister/p/pmkimcampbell.htm> (Accessed on February 10, 2009.)

4 Phillips, Andrew. "Campbell, Kim (Profile)." *Maclean's*, April 29, 1996. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=M1ARTM0010657>

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Profile: Naomi Klein

The author and activist Naomi Klein has just endured a gentle mauling on the *Today* programme. **[1]**

She was wearing dark jeans tucked into tall brown boots, a crisp white shirt, and a long black blazer. She was dressed for a fox hunt. She looked terrific.

She had spent the day curled up on the blue sofa in her living room, watching CNN while she waited restlessly to hear what would happen in Washington. She fortified herself with cups of coffee and a smoothie. **[2]**

Naomi Klein is the pre-eminent figure (she would deplore the term "leader") in a worldwide protest movement against companies, free trade and global integration. **[3]**

Ironically, for a woman who has been hailed as the author of a "*Das Kapital* of the growing anti-corporate movement", there's nothing grungy about Klein. With her sleek hair-cut, immaculate teeth and friendly but down-to-business attitude, she could easily be mistaken for a telecoms exec winding up a power breakfast in the lobby of a boutique hotel. **[4]**

Naomi spent her adolescence in her room writing poetry or experimenting in the bathroom with makeup. [Her mother] Bonnie was appalled. She worried that Naomi was turning into a brat, thinking about clothes, spending time in front of the mirror. "I think we were overly concerned about the kind of typical teen-age stuff she was into," Bonnie says. "She read *Judy Blume*! I was beside myself. I was a feminist—I wanted my daughter to be good at math." **[5]**

Naomi Klein, like most campus leftists of the 1980s, directed her ideological energies toward the denouncing of various *-isms* within academia. (She later recalled, with admirable remorse, that she was known as "Miss P.C.") By the 1990s, Klein had come to realize, like some other campus activists, that off-campus there could be found worse depredations than the canonization of Shakespeare and other dead white males. **[6]**

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2 MacFarquhar, Larissa. "Outside Agitator: Naomi Klein and the new new left." *The New Yorker*, December 8, 2008. <http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/12/08/081208fa_fact_macfarquhar>

3 "Naomi Klein and her flawed brand of anti-brandism." *The Economist*, November 7, 2002. http://www.economist.com/printedition/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=1429429

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Profile: Nellie McClung

On a January day in 1914, a prairie housewife walked through the doors of the Manitoba Legislature in Winnipeg to convince the government that women should be allowed to vote. Her name was Nellie McClung. By early 1916, with the help of McClung, the women of Manitoba would become the first in Canada to win the right to vote. **[1]**

Nellie, a lively, talkative little girl, began teaching school in rural Manitoba when she was just 16 years old. **[2]**

At an early age, she received a series of Dickens novels from her brother; inspired by his social critiques, she was determined to become a writer. **[3]**

In 1890, at a Young Ladies Bible Class she met Annie McClung, a woman she would later say was "the only woman I have ever seen whom I would like to have as a mother-in-law" [from her autobiography *Clearing in the West*]. McClung set out to meet Annie's pharmacist son Robert Wesley McClung; they married in 1896. Nellie and Wesley McClung had five children and had, from all accounts, a strong and happy marriage. **[4]**

On January 27, 1914, a delegation of women headed by McClung petitioned Manitoba's parliament asking for the right to vote and, not unexpectedly, their request was declined by an arrogant speech by [Premier Sir Rodmand] Roblin. McClung had been a brilliant mimic since childhood when she amused her father with imitations of her mother's family and McClung paid careful attention to Roblin's speech and mannerisms and used her mimic skills to her advantage. **[5]**

McClung's understanding of human nature affected her views on temperance issues and feminism. Thus, when the First World War ended and the Great Depression deepened, McClung's concern for people and her inability to keep quiet propelled her into political activism. **[6]**

McClung and her fellow temperance advocates knew they could never win their battle against the liquor trade without being able to vote. So, McClung and a delegation of peaceful, polite, Canadian feminists set out to win this fundamental right for women. **[7]**

In 1921, when the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) comprised the majority government, McClung was elected as a Liberal. She served five years and joined hands with United Farmers' cabinet minister Irene Parlby on many pieces of social legislation. **[8]**

1 "Nellie McClung: The Sculpting of Angels." *Life and Times*, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Accessed June 15, 2009. <http://www.cbc.ca/lifeandtimes/mcclung.html>

2 "Nellie McClung." *About Canada Multimedia Study Guide Resources*, Mount Allison University Centre for Canadian Studies and Canadian Heritage, 2001. <http://www.mta.ca/about_canada/study_guide/famous_women/nellie_mcclung.html>

3 "Nellie McClung, Woman Suffrage and the Persons Case." *The Canadian Studies Webcentre*. Accessed June 15, 2009. <http://www.canadianstudies.ca/NewJapan/mcclungunit.html>

4 Ibid.

5 "Nellie McClung, Woman Suffrage and the Persons Case."

6 "The Famous 5: Heroes for Today." *Alberta Online Encyclopedia*, 2004. <http://www.abheritage.ca/famous5/achievements/nellie_mcclung.html>

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8 "The Famous 5: Heroes for Today."

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Uncovering the Coverage: Gender Biases in Canadian Political Reporting

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This presentation is based on work that I have conducted with Dr. Elisabeth Gidengil of McGill University.

Let me begin by saying that when I speak of gender bias in the media, I am not accusing reporters, editors or even political cartoonists of being consciously sexist in the coverage that they give to women in the political world. I don't think that anyone begins their story thinking "how can I treat Belinda Stronach, Sheila Copps, Alexa McDonough or Kim Campbell as unfairly as possible". No, I do not think that journalists are any more consciously biased than anyone else. But it is not the conscious bias that I am concerned about. It is the more insidious unconscious bias that is the problem.

We all have unconscious stereotypes that we use to frame our understanding of how women and men should behave – and of how politicians should behave. Unfortunately, those stereotypes that we so often hold of "women" do not map well over the stereotypes that we hold of "politicians". As a result, women who seek elected office frequently face expectations that are very different from the expectations facing male politicians. These differences are built into our evaluations of male and female politicians and they are reflected in the media coverage that they receive. And, there is lots of evidence that the coverage that women receive is very different from the coverage that men receive.

Now before I get into some of the results of our studies, let me first say that there are several factors that affect how political stories are covered. The first is that the news media are trying to capture and maintain audience attention in an increasingly competitive media market. If you are not a political scientist, a politician, a member of the media, or someone closely connected to the workings of government, what makes you want to watch the news? Well part of it is that there is something about the stories that get covered that grips you, some sort of conflict, something unexpected or some sort of novelty that captures your interest and pulls you into the story. It is for this reason that these news values, conflict, novelty or unexpectedness are often played up in the actual news reports.

The second thing to keep in mind is that politics has traditionally been a male dominated field … and political journalism has also been pretty male dominated. The result, we argue is that political reporting typically employs a masculine narrative that reinforces conceptions of politics as a male preserve and treats the male as normative. This basically means that the language that is used to report on politicians and their activities tends to reinforce the image that politics is something that men do. It does this through the images that it evokes, most explicitly through the use of metaphors. These metaphors describe elections as campaigns or battles and parties as armies prepared to go to war with one another. These images fit well with the news value of "conflict". However, they do little to change the image of politics as being a male activity. Despite efforts to attract women, the military is still a male dominated profession, so metaphors that evoke images of war, evoke images of men, not women. Political events such as debates are often described in the same terms as boxing matches with leaders going into the ring and trying to land the knock out punch, or as back street brawls, free-for-alls, with punches landing everywhere - again not images that immediately bring women to mind.

A beautiful example is the case of Alexa McDonough in Craig Oliver's post debate coverage for CTV in the 2000 election. Oliver's commentary on the debate referred to it as a game of verbal hockey – a game that despite the Canadian women's team's success in the past Olympics is not one we immediately think of women as playing.

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Oliver described the leaders as if they were NHL hockey players taking shots on net, skating off the ice bent and battered and unable to make break-aways on an open net. Not once in his post-debate report did he make mention of McDonough's performance in the debate. It was as if she wasn't there, or if she was, she was on the sidelines, on the sidelines of a game that women haven't traditionally played. Just like politics. So one of the real problems with the use of such a masculine narrative in describing election campaigns is that women are often left out or ignored, especially when they do not conform to traditional expectations of "political behaviour" - tough, assertive and combative behaviour.

On the other hand, if women do assert themselves, get in there and play rough, they are also punished by the media. Women, who adopt traditional masculine behaviours and behave combatively, often find that those behaviours are over -emphasized in the coverage that they receive. Combative behaviour is newsworthy, but combative behaviour on the part of a woman is doubly newsworthy because it runs counter to deeply held expectations about how women should behave. It is "unexpected behaviour" and therefore it gets played up in the news stories.

Take for example, our studies that compare male and female party leaders' debate behaviours with post-debate news commentary. We coded the debates to determine as objectively as possible who displayed aggressive behaviour: interrupting, shaking fists or pointing fingers. What we found was that the female leaders were no more aggressive than the male party leaders. In fact, both [Audrey] McLaughlin and McDonough were less aggressive than their male counterparts in the debates that they participated in, Campbell was equally aggressive.

However, when we analysed the post-debate coverage in these three elections we found that the media regularly used a disproportionate number of attack metaphors to describe the women's conduct during the debates – even McLaughlin's and McDonough's behaviour. This was not true for the male leaders. Their "aggressiveness" tended to be under emphasized. We also found that the sound bites and news clips that were used in the post debate coverage showed the female party leaders interrupting and using other assertive behaviours such as shaking their fist or pointing their finger far more often than their behaviour in the debates warranted. The men, who for the most part were more aggressive than the women, were not shown behaving in this manner. The result is that someone who had not watched the debates would have come away from watching the post-debate coverage thinking that these women were perhaps a little bit too much on the attack.

In another study of all of the CBC election news in 1993 and 1997 we found that the media represented women's statements with more combative, expressive and unconventional verbs than they did men's. For example, while journalist reported the male leaders as "saying" or "talking" about something, the female leaders were reported as accusing, warning, insisting, boasting, challenging, daring and denying. Thus, while in these instances the women were reported on in language that fit with the combative, masculine image of politics, they were presented as behaving more aggressively than they actually had and described in a way that was dramatically at odds with traditional social expectations of appropriate female behaviour.

Journalists were also more likely to account for why the female leaders were doing what they were doing, in other words they interpreted the women's behaviour more than they did the men's. The statements and the actions of male party leaders tended to just be described - "Jean Chretien was in Halifax today to give a speech to …" "Giles Duceppe announced his party's policy on …". This wasn't so much the case for women. Rather than just stating that "Kim Campbell did such and such today" they felt obliged to provide some explanation for why she was doing what she was doing. For example, they would say "Kim Campbell did such and such today because … she needed to shore up support in the west, she wanted to appeal to this group or that …". They were also more likely to judge the statements or behaviours of female leaders, evaluating whether they had been successful or not. Often they judged not. This simply presents another avenue for mediation.

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So why is all of this important? Why does it matter that we found these subtle differences in the coverage that male and female politicians receive, differences that most journalists would probably deny until they see the results of our content analyses?

First, by framing politics in a masculine manner the media highlight the "unnatural" position of women, the "unusualness" of women in these election campaigns. The masculine language used in political reporting implicitly presents women as abnormal participants in politics. Drawing attention to this uniqueness may raise questions in voters' minds about the appropriateness of a woman in that position or her abilities to perform effectively in a male-dominated environment.

However, I would not argue that acting tough, acting like a "traditional politician", acting like we might expect a man to act, is the answer for women. It is not the answer because of these news values that I have just outlined, news values of conflict, unexpectedness and novelty that govern political news coverage. As we have shown in our research these news values lead the media to focus disproportionate attention on those behaviours that we do not traditionally associate with women. In other words, women's aggressive behaviours get far more attention than their actions in the actual debates or election campaigns warranted.

While some might say this coverage could help women, show that they are as tough as the guys, we are a little more cautious. It is possible that this coverage may reduce the likelihood that voters will stereotype female politicians in traditional manners; however it does not necessarily imply that women will benefit from this coverage. Actions which run counter to stereotypes are often viewed as more pronounced or more extreme, making a women's assertive behaviour appear downright aggressive. This is a real problem as individuals who break these traditional expectations are often viewed more critically than others.

The under-reporting or negative coverage given to political women and their presentation in stereotypical or powerless roles that I talked about at the beginning of my presentation provide clear messages to voters that women just do not belong in this political world. Unfortunately, even when journalists cover female politicians using the same masculine narrative that they use to cover male politicians, the news values of conflict, novelty and unexpectedness that governing political reporting can still undermine women's opportunities. Female party leaders, female cabinet ministers or even your average female politician who try to fit in by adopting combative debating styles or taking strong stances will find that their aggressive behaviours are over-emphasized. As a result they are likely to appear "too aggressive" and evoke criticisms of their non-stereotypical behaviour.

Paradoxically, those women who do not conform to the traditional masculine approach to politics will continue to be sidelined, receiving far less coverage than a similar low-keyed performance by a male leader. In my mind this is a clear case of being "Damned if you do, damned if you don't". Given that these prevailing news values and the masculine narrative guiding political news are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, I can only believe that the media will continue to present a serious stumbling block to women seeking elite elected office.

Questions

1) What is the difference between conscious and unconscious bias?

2) Why does Everitt see unconscious bias as more of a problem in press coverage of female politicians?

3) According to Everitt, how do news outlets (newspapers, TV news, etc.) appeal to their audiences? How does this affect their coverage of female politicians?

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4) Politics is frequently described in the news using *metaphors*. What metaphors for politics does Everitt's article discuss, and how do they affect coverage of female politicians?

5) According to Everitt, how does the news media communicate the message that women "just do not belong in the political world"?

6) Scan the political news in several Canadian newspapers, paying particular attention to headlines and the first paragraph of each article. Do you find that Everitt's conclusions hold true?

7) Everitt concludes that female politicians are "damned if you do, damned if you don't" by the news media. Can you imagine any changes that might be made to news coverage of politics or to the Canadian political system that would improve conditions for women in politics?

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