



Framing Sarah Palin: Pit Bulls, Puritans, and Politics

Linda Beail, Rhonda Kinney Longworth

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Sarah Palin's 2008 vice presidential candidacy garnered tremendous levels of interest, polarizing the American public—both Democrats and Republicans alike. While many have wondered who she "really" is, trying to cut through the persona she projects and the one projected by the media, Beail and Longworth analyze why she touches such a nerve with the American electorate. Why does she ignite such passionate loyalty – and such loathing? How did her candidacy mobilize new parts of the electorate?

Using the notion of "framing" as a way of understanding political perception, the authors analyze the narratives told by and about Sarah Palin in the 2008 election – from beauty queen, maverick, faithful fundamentalist and post-feminist role model to pit bull hockey mom, frontier woman, and political outsider. They discuss where those frames are rooted historically in popular and political culture, why they were selected, and the ways that the frames resonated with the electorate.

Framing Sarah Palin addresses the question of what the choice and perception of these frames tells us about the state of American politics, and about the status of American women in politics in particular. What do the debates engendered by these images of Palin say about the current roles and power available to women in American society? What are the implications of her experience for future candidates, particularly women candidates, in American politics?

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