

First Ladies: Leading Their Way

S. Irene Matz
California State University, Fullerton

Donald L. Stelluto
University of Notre Dame

Using Eleanor Roosevelt and Hillary Rodham Clinton as case studies, this paper explores the importance of historical context and personal communication styles in determining how well political messages and ideas have been transmitted by American first ladies and how well these activities have been received by the American public. Both Eleanor Roosevelt and Hillary Rodham Clinton were strong personalities and exercised various roles that were ancillary to their president husbands and served as extensions of their husbands' presidential administrations. These two women, however, faced significant challenges and demonstrated quite marked differences in their success as first ladies.

INTRODUCTION

This paper will examine briefly the role of two first ladies, Eleanor Roosevelt and Hillary Rodham Clinton, in light of several significant questions about the evolving nature of the role of the first lady and the impact of individual personalities on that role's cultural and political importance. These include: Did these women stand alone or were they appendages to their husbands? What was the importance of historical context and did crises, such as the Great Depression, relax more traditional and restrictive expectations in the public sphere? In the 1990s, did the changing roles of women lead to changes in the first ladies' political messages? Was the public more welcoming to Hillary than decades before with Eleanor? What personal skills and capabilities did both first ladies possess that affected their roles and endeavors? This study will also prove to be the basis for an expanded work on first ladies in the twentieth century as communicators of political and constitutional ideas and concepts.

The first lady, a companion to the president, wasn't a term used until the mid-nineteenth century; it only gained in popularity during the early twentieth century. Previous to this traditional title, president's spouses were named "lady," "lady presidentress," and "queen." Not until the second president, John Adams, first occupied the now landmark White House did the first lady play a prominent role in the presidency by entertaining guests for many leaders of the free world while standing by her husband and, during his tenure, acting as his confidant (Watson & Eksterowicz, 2003, p. 3).

Traditionally, the president's wife managed the White House, overseeing historical refurbishments and renovations, preserving the significance of the antiques, and protecting the White House as a museum to be revered and admired for future generations. Entertaining honored guests, whether domestic or international, was her predominant role. There was, and remains to this day, an expectation that the White

House is open to greet the electorate and dignitaries as well as welcome the common public; however, that is not the sole role of the first lady.

Martha Washington fashioned three roles—as public figure, social hostess and presidential confidant—but over two centuries these roles were expanded to include projects and influences beyond those of two centuries ago (Eksterowicz & Watson, 2000). For example, Caroline Harrison, Edith Roosevelt and Jacqueline Kennedy presided over historic renovations of the White House and preservations of its furnishings while Rosalynn Carter presided over mental health reform. Other more significant social projects for first ladies included Nancy Reagan’s “Just Say No” campaign against drug abuse, and Hillary Clinton’s fight for health care reform and charitable work for children. First ladies have championed social and charitable projects, and, in addition to these worthwhile projects, many first ladies became involved in executive decision-making and policy-setting processes (Anthony, 1990; Caroli 2003; Eksterowicz & Watson, 2000). Indeed, during the 20th century, American first ladies became more involved with the political questions of their day as women moved into public roles as policy makers and political participants, although five first ladies (Grace Coolidge, Bess Truman, Mamie Eisenhower, Jacqueline Kennedy, and Patricia Nixon) chose to remove themselves from the inner workings of their husbands’ administrations (Black, 2001, p. 15). First ladies, aware of their presence in society, have been reluctant to exceed the political gait of their husbands and to speak out independently for fear of offending voters, and, for this reason, many assumed traditional roles (Pear, 1993).

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

“No first lady before had ever become such a public figure as Eleanor Roosevelt. Her breadth of activities created new expectations against which her successors would be measured” (Goodwin, 1994 p. 617).

Formative Years

Although she enjoyed family affluence and privilege during her early years, she received little moral support and encouragement from her immediate family. Her childhood was one of loneliness, rejection and fear (Burke, 1984, p. 365). By societal standards, she was not an attractive child, and her own mother judged her to be deficient in looks and personality. She nicknamed her “Granny,” a name that underscored her hardened impression of her daughter (Caroli, 2003, p. 186; Watson & Eksterowicz, 2003, p. 151). Her mother passed away early in her childhood from diphtheria; and her alcoholic father, although he lovingly called her his “Little Nell,” was often absent due to his illness. Eleanor was left in the custody of her maternal grandmother following her mother’s passing and father’s illness that finally led to his demise from a drunken fall (Caroli, 2003; Watson & Eksterowicz, 2003). Later in Eleanor’s life, she noted that the times spent with her father were the best in her life (Caroli, 2003; Roosevelt, 1939). However, she grew up full of fears attributed to her parents’ deaths and her unloving grandmother’s influence (Burke, 1984, p. 365). Under the control of her Grandmother Hall, and following her father’s death at the age of 15, she was sent to London to attend Allenwood Academy from 1899 to 1902; and it was there that she was influenced by a feminist headmistress Marie Souvestre (Caroli, 2003, p. 186; Watson & Eksterowicz, 2003). Under Ms. Souvestre’s tutelage, she was taught that “right should be right for right’s sake” and not for the sake of reward or out of fear of punishment. Eleanor learned the lesson well and championed the underdog throughout her lifetime (Burke, 1984, p. 366). It was during these formative years that Eleanor’s traits were developed and one could argue that her nascent leadership abilities were already manifest in her intelligence and integrity (Northouse, 2013). Her relationship with Ms. Souvestre instilled a determination in Eleanor to serve others, and even though her family was not supportive in those formative years, her self-confidence grew during these years at the Academy. Later, she returned to the United States, taking her place in high society.

Eleanor’s interest in the “other half” of society resulted in her volunteering at various places and teaching dance and calisthenics to poor immigrant children. Her interest in and dedication to the less

fortunate, influenced by “doing right,” was her springboard to future efforts and dedication to others (Caroli, 2003, p. 186; Watson & Eksterowicz, 2003).

Expectations for Eleanor

Women during this decade were expected to marry and take up their traditional role in society. For Eleanor, it was no different and upon her return from London, she quietly accepted that challenge (Caroli, 2003, p. 186). Eleanor’s courtship with her fifth cousin, Franklin Roosevelt, was peppered with challenges as they dealt with his mother’s doting protectiveness and eagerness to keep their relationship and later their engagement secretive (Watson & Eksterowicz, 2003). Their relationship seemed awkward, Roosevelt dashing and gregarious and Eleanor plain and shy. Roosevelt’s biographer wrote that Franklin’s “dissembling contrasted with Eleanor’s scrupulousness, concluding that “perhaps she appealed to him because he needed someone to temper his fun-loving, easy-going, frivolous side” (Caroli, 2003; Lash, 1971, p. 122). According to Joseph P. Lash, author and historian, the marriage brought out both Eleanor’s competencies and her insecurities (1971, p. 145). In 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt walked his orphaned niece down the aisle, beginning the partnership between a young politician and his strong-willed wife who would become a historical model for future presidents’ spouses (Watson & Eksterowicz, 2003; Caroli, 2003).

Eleanor’s Political Partnership

Franklin began his early political career as a New York assemblyperson; was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson as assistant secretary of the Navy; ran as a vice presidential candidate with James M. Cox; became a presidential candidate in 1920 but was defeated; and, finally, became Governor of New York from 1929 to 1933, a position that launched his nomination as the Democratic nominee for president. Roosevelt had an enormous impact on the nation and his wife had an impact on the role of the first lady. Her humanitarian efforts would not only enhance Franklin’s historical contribution to the United States, but her own as well (Watson & Eksterowicz, 2003). The climate during the beginning of Roosevelt’s term in 1933 was dismal with bank closures and businesses immobilized (Caroli, 2003, p. 185). Roosevelt’s tenure was marked by the Depression and World War, a period of extraordinary events (Beasley, 2005, p. 61). Eleanor realized that it was important not to yield to the prestige of being first lady, and the commitment to teaching that she held before Roosevelt’s presidency initially continued after his election.

Eleanor’s Voice, Influence, and Causes

In 1932, following the election, Eleanor was asked by her husband to leave behind public causes for the demands of hostess and supporter of her husband (Black, 2001, p. 17). Yet Eleanor was determined to use her role as first lady to further causes that she believed in rather than allowing the office to use her (Caroli, 2003, p. 190). She submitted a leave of absence from teaching, yet continued other professional activities such as lecturing and writing. When charged with using these public appearances for profit, she quickly donated much of her income to organizations such as the Women’s Trade Union League and the Red Cross (Caroli, 2003, p. 190; Beasley, 2005, p. 59; Burke, 1984). As the New Deal began, what distinguished Eleanor was that she continued to work within the framework established by her husband’s political personality yet with a determined eye on political pursuits she felt strongly about.

The twentieth century saw an expansion of the first ladies’ activities and resulted in a staff being assigned to them during their husbands’ tenure (Eksterowicz & Watson, 2000). Eleanor’s popularity and the response to her efforts led to the hiring of several assistants just to deal with her mail. During her first year in the White House, over 300,000 pieces of requests for help and comfort flooded her mailbox (Burke, 1984, p. 368). Eleanor was tireless in her daily schedule. On a typical day, she breakfasted with guests, read several newspapers, attended a conference and returned to the White House to hold her own press conference, wrote a news column, and hosted a radio broadcast—all before the lunch hour (Caroli, 2003, p. 198). Eleanor held her own press conferences, but restricted them to women reporters only. At that time in history, women reporters were limited in their roles and Eleanor wanted to ensure they had

the opportunity to move into the political journalist arena (Beasley, 2005). Eleanor wrote a syndicated column titled “My Day” in 1936 that allowed her voice to spread across the country. Eleanor’s independence and unorthodox manner spearheaded her into projects that would later become legendary (Eksterowicz & Watson, 2000).

At this moment, two developments in Eleanor’s public political persona are distinctive: (1) Eleanor fostered a relationship directly with voters through the opinions and feedback she solicited in her syndicated column, “My Day,” and in her many lectures across the country; (2) she developed a close, almost friendly relationship with the media, especially reporters who covered the travels and public statements of the first lady; and (3) the perspective and voice Eleanor projected publicly were those of her husband. From 1933 to 1935, Eleanor traveled across the United States so frequently that she eclipsed the travel of the five previous presidents, meeting with voters and concerned citizens wherever they might be found. No barriers divided Eleanor from the voting public on these travels, not even a Secret Service detail to protect the first lady (Black, 2001, p. 17). She certainly affected public policy and could be quite determined in accomplishing public policy goals. However, she made clear that she was not advancing her own influence in policy circles. Rather, Eleanor maintained that, in raising new issues and ideas that could be considered beneficial to the American people, she was furthering the goals of the President and was only serving as an extension of his administration (Abramowitz, 1984, p. 569).

One example of Eleanor’s terrific influence was her determined effort in 1935 to create the National Youth Administration (NYA) to address unemployment and the need for educational programs for the nation’s youth. Here was a cause deeply supported by the first lady, one for which she spoke frequently and in many venues across the nation. Her message focused on the need to invest in the formal education of the younger generation and on the inherent good of the project. In the NYA Director’s report to the President in September of 1937, he recounted how the first lady’s communication message and style (echoing the President’s warm, almost fatherly style from his Fireside Chats) had led the youth involved to consider Eleanor as “their friend.” The first lady not only made speeches on the subject, she pursued policymakers, including cabinet members, and the NYA’s success was largely attributed to the first lady (Abramowitz, 1984, pp. 569-571).

When President Roosevelt’s health declined, it was Eleanor, tireless and healthy—given the code name “Rover” because of her frequent absences from the White House (Watson & Eksterowicz, 2003, p. 163)—who took on his responsibilities. A syndicated journalist, Raymond Clapper, selected Eleanor as one of the ten most powerful people in Washington (Caroli, 2003, p. 195). There was even speculation that she would succeed her husband in 1940 (Caroli, 2003, p. 195). Eleanor insisted that “Nothing under heaven could ever persuade me to run” (Caroli, 2003, p. 62). A 1936 or 1940 lapel campaign button proclaimed, “We don’t want Eleanor, either” (Weisberger, 1993). However, Eleanor did not seek the public limelight and she was sensitive to the criticism leveled at her. When her unconventional spirit became the brunt of jokes and the subject of caricatures (Caroli, 2003, p. 194), she had to come to the realization that controversy and personal criticism were unavoidable (Caroli, 2003, p. 195). As a public figure, Eleanor appeared to be “her own person,” a role that first ladies before her had not necessarily enjoyed. She was more than a dutiful helpmate (Weisberger, 1993). This made her unique, for while she did exercise a public role, it was one held as an extension of her president husband.

On the eve of World War II, the segregation of women’s and men’s roles was still powerful and would be powerfully revealed during the war when women took on industrial labor and filled “men’s jobs” in factories producing war material (Milkman, 1991, p. 201). In May of 1941, the Office of Civilian Defense was created by the President for the purpose of recruiting civilian defense volunteers. Fiorello LaGuardia, the iconic mayor of New York, was named its part-time director and, when he and Eleanor differed about the tasks on which the agency should focus, Eleanor criticized the mayor. In response, LaGuardia offered Eleanor his position. Quite telling is Eleanor’s explanation of the appointment in a press conference. She explained that LaGuardia had asked the President for permission to seek another assistant director. Quite amazed, the press probed deeper, asking why LaGuardia had not simply asked the President to appoint Eleanor outright. Eleanor explained the appointment process as one that should be seen in the same context as any other appointment, rather than as one in which she was accorded especial

preference and influence as first lady. She pointed out that “the President has to approve anyone who is going to be in a position” and that LaGuardia had asked President Roosevelt “just as he would ask about anyone he was bringing in as an assistant director.” (Beasley, 1983, p. 224) In other words, she did not want the decision to be characterized as favoritism of a husband for his wife, but simply as a personnel decision. While it is true that Eleanor was not subject to the same types of legislative constraints that would later affect Hillary, this example does bear out the reluctance of Eleanor to fashion a privileged status for herself and her desire to be seen as a public servant. Interestingly, Eleanor would later resign her position in 1942 when criticism of her priorities and the increasing need for wartime mobilization prompted the first lady to conclude that, by continuing as assistant director, she was harming the program (Borelli, 2002, pp. 34-35).

An example of Eleanor’s independence and fearless stance for equality was evidenced when she took on the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR)—an organization that offers lifetime membership to first ladies—involving an incident that underscored the organization’s bias against black performers and exemplified when the DAR prohibited contralto Marian Anderson from performing on the stage of Constitution Hall in 1939. The incident became a national controversy, and, although Eleanor never mentioned the DAR by name or the incident during her “My Day” newspaper column, she wrote about “a question which I have had to debate with myself only once or twice before in my life. If you belong to an organization and disapprove of an action which is typical of a policy, should you resign or is it better to work for a changed point of view within the organization? [. . .] I belong to an organization in which I can do no active work and to remain a member implies approval of that action.” (Watson & Eksterowicz, 2003, p. 162). She publicly announced her resignation from the DAR (Watson & Eksterowicz, 2003, p. 162; Burke, 1984, p. 370). Eleanor used her influence on behalf of civil rights for African Americans, and it was exemplified by her stand against Ms. Anderson being barred from Constitution Hall.

Her influence and efforts spread across the United States and across entire continents. Eleanor visited soldiers in the Caribbean and press coverage had been successful during these visits (Goodwin, 1994, p. 495). Conditions of Black Americans were closest to Eleanor’s heart. She attended the opening of the first non-Jim Crow servicemen’s canteen in Washington. One woman’s criticism was that Eleanor only supported Black Americans so that her husband could get reelected, adding that Eleanor was the “most dangerous woman in America today” (Goodwin, 1994, p. 503). Eleanor felt that constant reminders of equality were absolutely necessary. She argued vigorously for women; the press corps was one example of her insisting that women journalists be invited and allowed to attend international conferences. Even after her reign as first lady, Eleanor continued to argue for human rights as evidenced in her speech at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1948 (Roosevelt, 1949). She spoke about the preservation of human freedom and chose Europe to deliver her speech because of the historic battles that had been fought on those lands (Roosevelt, 1949).

Final Days with the President

In the final hours Eleanor spent with her husband, she noted that a clear sign of his ill health was that he was upset and he “was no longer the calm and imperturbable person” who always goaded her into vehement arguments (Goodwin, 1994, p. 596). As a leader, Eleanor was compassionate, other-centered and inclusive. She possessed the magnetic quality and charisma that Weber (1947) defined as drawing others to her. Weber noted that there is usually a social crisis from which a leader emerges and attracts followers. In Eleanor’s case, the crisis was the economic depression (Yukl, 1998) and World War II. Eleanor’s role was not limited to the traditional role of the first lady; she carved out her own niche through her dedication to the disenfranchised. Eleanor had the advantage of being more than a confidant to her husband; because of his disability, both before and during his presidency, she became his limbs, figuratively and literally. After President Roosevelt’s passing, when meeting reporters who wanted to know her thoughts, she simply said, “The story is over” (Caroli, 2003, p. 73).

Post White House Leadership Continues

President Harry Truman, who assumed the office after Roosevelt's demise, appointed Eleanor to the United States delegation to the United Nations in December 1945 and she became chairman of the Human Rights Commission (Black, 2001). Eleanor accumulated more citations, badges, medals, adulation and heartfelt tributes than any other American woman in history (Burke, 1984, p. 365). She was responsible for the appointment of over 4,000 women in fourth-class post offices (Kearney, 1968, p. 113).

Eleanor was successful in building strategic coalitions and her leadership style—charming, persistent and uncluttered—along with her mature political values, all gave her assurance as her voice was heard by both national and international audiences (Burke, 1984, p. 367). Leadership establishes a direction that produces change (Kotter, 1990), and Eleanor exemplified change in her service to humanity and through her efforts on behalf of the underprivileged—African Americans, women, children and war veterans—all of whom were victims of abuse and inattentiveness by society and government.

When Bess Truman took over the reins of first lady, she was appalled by the condition of the White House—dust streaks on walls, threadbare carpets, furniture in need of upholstery, rotting drapes, the president's mansion in need of desperate repairs. Eleanor's attitude was that she was simply more concerned about people being "swept under the national rug due to injustice than she was about someone finding dirt under the White House rug" (Goodwin, 1994, p. 617). Truly, her attitude is testament to her commitment to humans rather than to lifeless trimmings in the building that housed the president. Eleanor's philosophical objective was a better life for all (Burke, 1984, p. 371). She was a champion and advocate for social justice who had a strong sense of humanity and human worth.

Eleanor didn't allow the White House and her husband's presidency to frame her; rather she kept true to herself through her values, her integrity, and her belief in "right for right's sake" (Burke, 1984, p. 366). Decades after Eleanor's presence on the public scene another first lady, Hillary Clinton, would have a profound effect on her husband's presidency. Her own role was influenced by the first lady who preceded her. Eleanor Roosevelt had paved an unparalleled path for the future first lady.

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

National Journal's composite of Hillary Clinton, doing her justice, concluded that she was a "presidential super spouse" who combined "the policy presence of an Eleanor Roosevelt [with] the sounding board of a Milton Eisenhower and the sort of generalship on hard decisions that Robert F. Kennedy offered during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962" (Solomon, 1993, p. 358).

Formative Years

As the first born, followed by two brothers, she tried hard to please her parents (Caroli, 2003). Unlike Eleanor's family, Hillary's parents were positive, and both her father and her mother encouraged her to excel. Along with her Methodist upbringing, strong parental support directed her future choices. In high school, she was voted the most likely to succeed because of her perseverance. Hillary graduated from Wellesley College with a major in political science in 1965, followed by Yale Law School (Caroli, 2003). Although raised a Republican, she later campaigned for Eugene McCarthy and further supported the antiwar movement, strong civil rights, and educational, environmental and prison reforms (Caroli, 2003). Her shift from Republican to Democrat came from her experience and not dogma ("Wife, Mother, Lawyer, Scholar," 1992). As a product of the women's movement, and as someone with strong family values, Hillary fully expected to have both a career and a family.

Hillary's Expectations

Hillary and Bill met in the Yale Law Library, dated, and then married in November of 1975 (Caroli, 2003, p. 296; "Wife, Mother," 1992). Later, they moved to Arkansas where she taught at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville law school. Although Hillary could have had a future in Washington, she chose to follow Bill to Arkansas ("Wife, Mother," 1992). Bill was elected attorney general and they moved to the state capitol, Little Rock, where Hillary gave up teaching and joined the Rose Law Firm as the first

woman hired into the firm (Caroli, 2003, p. 296). Nurturing close relationships with influential people gained them support that would be used later in Bill's bid for the presidency in 1993 (Caroli, 2003, p. 296). Hillary's career continued to flourish, and she was named one of the 100 Most Influential Lawyers in America not once, but twice (O'Brien, 1992, p. 44). Even though balancing career and family, Hillary never complained; she appeared tireless.

Hillary's Political Partnership

When Bill decided to run for the presidency, he openly advertised, "Buy one and get one free" (Burden & Mughan, 1999, p. 237). The public did not welcome the idea of a co-presidency and, realizing that Hillary's unpopularity would affect the election, campaign operatives set out to alter her image (Pear, 1993). Wisely, Hillary attempted to take on a softer image so as not to hinder his campaign, but stirred controversy when, in response to the suggestion that she had profited from Bill's governorship, she replied that she could have stayed home and baked cookies, but chose to pursue a career instead. Many felt her statement disparaged women who had no career outside of their homes (Caroli, 2003, p. 297; Burden & Mughan, 1999, p. 238). This comment would haunt her during this and subsequent campaigns. She was deemed the enemy of traditional values and accused of being full of her own importance. It was during this time that journalists began to grapple with the question of how to report on female politicians. How do you discuss their ideas rather than their wardrobes (Caroli, 2003, p. 299)? Reporting on Hillary had its challenges.

Hillary attempted to soften her image even more by wearing more feminine clothing, and, although it went against her background, she played down her role as a full partner to Bill Clinton (Caroli, 2003). Nevertheless, *The American Spectator* headlined an article describing her as "The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock" (Wattenberg, 1992) and Hillary from Hell became a common byword among conservative commentators (Caroli, 2003, p. 301). At the 1992 Democratic Convention, Hillary even competed in a "cookie bake off" against Barbara Bush, once again attempting to encourage the voting public to see the cookie-baking mom side of her personality (Caroli, 2003, p. 302; Pear, 1993).

On the campaign trail, Hillary spoke out less and even removed her maiden name only to return to Hillary Rodham Clinton after the successful election (Caroli, 2003; Pear, 1993). It was during the Inauguration Day ceremonies and at the inaugural balls that she had herself announced as "Hillary Rodham Clinton" (Pear, 1993). After the election, George Stephanopoulos, White House communications director, reported that Hillary would be closely involved in developing health-care policy with the president and others (Pear, 1993).

Hillary's Image, Voice, and Influence

Hillary was the 1st first lady to take an office in the White House West Wing—a symbolic move (Caroli, 1992, p. 98; Maraniss, 1995; Burden & Mughan, 1999, p. 238; Pear, 1993). She appointed a staff that brought strengths, political savvy and media insights to the job (Caroli, 2003, p. 303). Health care was Hillary's charge shortly after Clinton took office; the President claimed that she was the best person for the job (Caroli, 2003, p. 303). Criticism followed on the grounds that she had not been confirmed or taken an oath of office; doctors protested, challenging her qualifications, and a judge ruled that meetings on health care should be open to the public.

However, unlike Eleanor, Hillary refused to subordinate, at least publicly, her own ambitions, her own voice, and the influence she exercised in policy-making circles (Black, 2001, p. 18). As chair of the President's Task Force on Health Care Reform, Hillary exercised the preeminent role, a role that her husband had proclaimed she was qualified to fill because she had previous experience chairing reform committees on health and education matters. Though she scored high marks for her testimony before Congress on health care reform, her communication and leadership style was not open and, unlike Eleanor, did not include broad public discourse. The task force was comprised largely of cabinet members and senior staff from the White House. Its working group, made up of more than 300 members from a variety of executive departments, further insulated the task force and the first lady from the broader discourse on a major political matter. Exacerbating a poor public perception of the task force was its

chairperson's preference for closed sessions and disclosing little to the press (Borrelli, 2008, p. 28). Not only did Hillary reject public discourse (quite unlike Eleanor on the NYA), Hillary created a perception that she, an unelected appointee, was conducting policy-making on an inherently political matter of great concern to the nation without any participation by elected officials. In asserting an independent influence apart from her elected president husband, Hillary was communicating something constitutionally unorthodox and ultimately unforgivable. After the Task Force had been disbanded (Caroli, 2003, p. 304), Hillary said that she had been "naïve and dumb" about national politics and was to blame for the health care failure (Burros, 1995).

Images of Hillary were filled with paradoxes. She was seen as old-fashioned and postmodern; prone to remodeling and redefinition; pushing equality in marriage; arrogant and domineering (Maraniss, 1995, p. A01). Hillary was aware that many in the White House did not like her, but their contempt was driven by fear. Her staff saw her quite differently, insisting they and Hillary were like a family (Maraniss, 1995). They found media images portraying the first lady as cold and self-righteous foreign to their own experiences with her. Friends saw her as intelligent, committed to her family and to her beliefs, and as someone who was adventurous and fun to be with ("Wife, Mother," 1992). Hillary's language was interesting; for example, it was not unusual for a conversation to end with her saying, "okeydokey, artichokey" and to one staff member, "you're as cute as a bug in a rug today" (Maraniss, 1995, p. A01). Interestingly, a survey conducted for the new Republican leadership in Congress found most men said that Hillary reminded them of their first wife or, worse yet, their mother-in-law (Maraniss, 1995, p. A01). When Hillary attempted to balance her personal and professional image by agreeing to pose for a photo essay featuring her in glamorous and seductive poses—one staring dreamily off into the distance and another with a clinging black dress—controversy ensued. Some women thought Hillary's photo poses represented an inappropriate role model for daughters while others applauded the notion that an intelligent woman could care about how she looked (Caroli, 2003, p. 305).

Other events tarnished the Clinton's image. For example, in the Whitewater case the Clintons were criticized for acting improperly, if not illegally, in an investment that went bad in Arkansas earlier in their careers. At least for Hillary, this was a welcome detraction from the photo gallery (Caroli, 2003, p. 305). The focus quickly moved from dress to money and investments. Although she was shocked by the harsh way that she came across to others (Burros, 1995), she exhibited little self-disclosure in her interactions, noting that people should attempt to be somewhat mysterious (Maraniss, 1995, p. A01). Nevertheless, one day she decided to invite reporters to the State Dining Room to tell her story. Her attire was staged to relax her image, and she shared that she and Bill needed a "zone of privacy" as their reason for not telling more of the truth regarding Whitewater (Caroli, 2003, p. 306). She now had the need to tell more, but this particular interview was dwarfed by former President Richard Nixon's demise (Caroli, 2003, p. 306). A series of interviews and stories from individual reporters ensued. Headlines proffered various images of Hillary: "Hillary Talks Back," "Hillary Hangs Tough," "Hillary the Pol," and "Pinning Down Hillary." The first lady began to bring aides with her to interviews and attitudes toward reporters were sometimes condescending (Caroli, 2003, p. 307). The first lady held a prominent place in the President's business affairs and, to underscore their parity, when questioned by the investigator for Whitewater, Hillary's interview was only 30 minutes less than the President's interview (Caroli, 2003, p. 307).

In the 1994 election, the Republicans took control of both houses of Congress, and Hillary was ascribed partial blame because of the health care reform that failed the year after being introduced (Burden & Mughan, 1999, p. 238). The president of the National Organization of Women (NOW) expressed concern about "the shift of political power to enemies of women's and civil rights" (Minor, 1995). Although Hillary took the brunt of angry male backlash that surfaced, she noted that the attitude went beyond one individual, namely, herself, to the changes that she represented (Caroli, 2003, p. 307; Burros, 1995). Rather than continuing on this destructive path, however, she chose to model herself after the first ladies who came before her—Eleanor Roosevelt, Lady Bird Johnson and Rosalynn Carter—by speaking out, while not straying too far away from the mainstream topics and causes the public expected of a president's spouse (Caroli, 2003, p. 308). She began to travel widely across oceans and continents. Among prior first ladies, Hillary Clinton was only beat out by Eleanor Roosevelt as the first to testify

before Congress and to write a book about policy development and by Lady Bird Johnson as the first to write legislation (Black, 2001, p. 18).

In 1995, she attended the United Nation's Fourth World conference on Women. In her speech she reaffirmed women's lives and respect, and she took on China's treatment of human rights, noting that Chinese culture placed more value on boys than on girls. Women attendees were ecstatic while the Chinese leadership slighted her presence and voice (Caroli, 2003, p. 308). Here, the first lady displayed her great strength and her great weakness as first lady. Her emphasis on "voice" and "empowerment" spoke powerfully to the women in the audience but failed to speak across genders about a fundamental matter of right and wrong. She often sounded more like an attorney than a conciliator or first lady representing an entire nation. Like Eleanor, Hillary traveled extensively, visiting fifty-one countries and committed to a demanding public appearance schedule of two or more speeches on most days. Also, like Eleanor, Hillary authored a column, "Talking it [sic] Over" (Mattina, 2005, p. 266), in which she addressed "the human dimension of our lives" (Burden & Mughan, 1999, p. 238). However, she never fostered an image as a person engaged in listening to voters nor did she portray herself as an extension of her president husband, perhaps making it more difficult for her to develop the kind of relationship with the general public that her predecessor Eleanor had enjoyed.

Bill's second election, although easily won, was anything but tranquil. Rumors began to circulate about Bill's extramarital affairs, including one regarding a White House intern. In January of 1998, Hillary defended her husband by going on the *Today* show claiming this was a "right-wing conspiracy" bent on destroying him. Both the President and Hillary refused the request for testimony and asserted executive privilege to "thwart the investigation of the Office of Independent Counsel" (Rozell, 1999, p. 550). In fact, the President would use executive privilege thirteen times during his presidency (Rozell, 1999, p. 551). The Lewinsky scandal pushed all other news off the front pages and, with physical evidence proving that the President was guilty of an affair with the intern, on December 18th the U.S. House of Representatives voted for only the second time in the history of the government to impeach President Clinton. In 1999, the Senate returned a verdict of "not guilty" on both counts of obstructing justice and committing perjury (Caroli, 2003, p. 309; Rozell, 1999; Thomas & Rosenberg, 1999).

Hillary became the "wronged woman" and many wondered why she endured such humiliation. Mixed assessments of her motives circulated: she was a loyal wife, standing by her man, staying for her own personal ambition, and so on (Caroli, 2003, p. 310). It appeared that many Americans preferred the loyal wife to the overachiever (Caroli, 2003, p. 310). Hillary emerged more determined to follow her own ambitions, and rumors once again surfaced that she would possibly seek a political position herself (Caroli, 2003, p.310). Typically, first ladies retired with their spouses; only two widows, Eleanor Roosevelt and Jackie Kennedy pursued their own careers (Caroli, 2003, p. 310). Hillary would now join the elite group of self-identified women; she would no longer be identified merely as the first lady.

As a leader, Hillary differed from her predecessor Eleanor. Unable to draw the media and the general public to her, she was forced to ask for help in finding a softer image (Burros, 1995). Her role with President Clinton throughout the years had been one of offering support, influence, and counsel; in the White House, her high-profile position carried a different weight. She regretted the way the health care legislation and her publicity had been handled (Burros, 1995). Weber (1947) defined charisma as a magnetic quality of drawing people to you, usually precipitated by a crisis. Quite possibly, the change of heart for Hillary was the impeachment hearings and narrowly averting President Clinton being replaced. Hillary's leadership was stronger after this period, and the public became aware of her strong character and political goals. She didn't allow the White House to frame her; she framed her own future and began to look out for other opportunities.

More than a First Lady, a Senator

Hillary was perceived as more of a policy than a people person, so it was natural that she would pursue an independent position in politics. Hillary was now seen as the "hottest commodity in American public life (Thomas & Rosenberg, 1999, p. 24). Asked whether she would run for office, she insisted that she couldn't think about it until the impeachment trial was over" (Thomas & Rosenberg, 1999, p. 24).

The rumor is that ten minutes after the gavel fell on the acquittal for President Clinton she was considering a run for Patrick Moynihan's New York senate seat. A *Newsweek Poll* found that 78 percent thought Hillary would make an effective senator (Thomas & Rosenberg, 1999, p. 24), and she launched her election campaign (Caroli, 2003, p. 311). Comingling trips while first lady with campaign swings for her New York seat, it was difficult to separate the two both politically and monetarily. She established residency in New York and began spending more time away from the White House. Interestingly, daughter Chelsea, much like Roosevelt's daughter Anna, hosted state dinners and other events (Lacey, 2000). Hillary easily won the election and was now both a first lady and Senator-elect.

Post White-House Leadership Continues

Hillary worked on health issues and as director of the Children's Defense Fund (Pear, 1993). After less than two years in the Senate, people were already speculating that Hillary would become a candidate for the presidency in 2008 (Caroli, 2003, p. 313; Thomas & Rosenberg, 1999, p. 24). As with Eleanor, Hillary's story continued long after the White House.

CONCLUSION

Many first ladies had enormous private sway over their husbands. Even the quiet Bess Truman vetted her husband's speeches and his schedules (Maraniss, 1995). To deny the effect of the spouses on their husbands in the highest office in our country would be naïve. As shown by the two first ladies—Eleanor Roosevelt and Hillary Rodham Clinton—their influence weighed profoundly on both offices.

Journalists reported not only on their clothes, their appearance, and White House social and cultural events, but on their political actions, positions, and influence (Winfield, 2001, p. 241). Eleanor's and Hillary's campaigns for human rights and the disenfranchised were widely covered by journalists who didn't have to search for stories about their activities or for a public interested in hearing about them. These women were reaching into the public arena, and having popular husbands helped them garner general public interest and extensive news coverage.

Eleanor entered the political scene in the early 1930's; women's voting rights had only been granted in 1920 by the 19th Amendment (Bern, 1993). Women's opinions were marginalized and an opinionated first lady drew both applause and criticism. A talented Eleanor Roosevelt was able to break with the antiquated ideology about women's traditional roles and move into leadership positions (Gardner, 1995; Matz, 2007). As a leader, Eleanor was compassionate, other-centered, and inclusive. She possessed that magnetic quality and charisma that Weber (1947) had defined as drawing others to her (Matz, 2007). Weber noted that there is usually a social crisis from which a leader emerges and attracts followers. In Eleanor's case, the crisis was the economic depression (Yukl, 1998; Matz, 2007) and World War II. Perhaps because Eleanor was plain and less than glamorous, people felt they could easily relate to and trust her. She paved the way for first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, but the road was not necessarily a smooth one. As noted earlier, Hillary was met with suspicion, criticism and dislike. The health care project failed, tarnishing her image, and the photo essay showing her feminine side evoked criticism as inappropriate for young women. It wasn't until the Monika Lewinsky scandal that people softened their view of her. Perhaps that was the crisis that created the magnetic attraction Weber noted. For it was after the scandal, when stories appeared about Hillary standing by her man, that Americans came to respect her. People seemed to prefer the image of the loyal wife to the ambitious overachiever.

One can only speculate about the extent to which the image of "the woman scorned" swayed public opinion in favor of both first ladies. After their husbands left office, both Eleanor and Hillary continued their work and their husbands' infidelity seemed to have given them more power and respect from the general public. President Roosevelt's polio left him physically disadvantaged, and it was Eleanor who rescued his presidency by being his limbs. President Clinton's insatiable need for sexual/romantic relationships, whether fleeting or not, made him politically vulnerable, and it was Hillary who remained faithful and stood by his side.

Eleanor was not an appendage to her husband; she enhanced his presidential responsibilities and obligations. Hillary did not want to be seen as a mere appendage to her husband and placed President Clinton at a disadvantage in his first term with the health care debacle. During his second term, events transpired to change her image, and she not only helped his political career, but advanced her own.

Historically, women were relegated to supporting roles as men took on leadership positions (Book, 2000, 5; Matz, 2007). Both Eleanor and Hillary were able to escape these expectations and inequities by advancing into high-ranking positions. Eleanor was appointed to the United States delegation to the United Nations in 1945 (Black, 2001), and Hillary served as United States Senator for New York in 2000 and was later appointed Secretary of State in 2009. On April 12, 2015, she announced her candidacy for the president of the United States.

Both Eleanor and Hillary shattered existing expectations for first ladies and incrementally moved attitudes about women's qualifications, skills, and intelligence to serve not only as first ladies, but to hold higher public offices. Will 2016 find a woman in the White House sitting behind her desk in the Oval Office?

REFERENCES

- Abramowitz, M. (1984). Eleanor Roosevelt and the National Youth Administration, 1935-1943: An extension of the presidency. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 14 (4), 569-580.
- Anthony, C. S. (1990-1991). *First ladies: The saga of the president's wives and their power, 1789-1961*. New York: Quill/William Morrow.
- Beasley, M. (2005). *First ladies and the press. The unfinished partnership of the media age*. Illinois: Northwestern.
- Black, A. (2001). The modern first lady and public policy: From Edith Wilson through Hillary Rodham Clinton. *OAH Magazine of History*, 15 (3), 15-20.
- Bern, S. L. (1993). *The lenses of gender: Transforming the debate on sexual inequality*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Book, E. W. (2000). *Why the best man for the job is a woman*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.
- Borrelli, M. (2002). The first lady as formal advisor to the president. *Women & Politics*, 24 (1), 25-45.
- Burden, B. C. & Mughan, A. (1999). Public opinion and Hillary Rodham Clinton. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 63 (2), 237-250.
- Burros, M. (1995, January 9). Hillary Clinton asks help in finding a softer image. *The New York Times*, pp. A1-15.
- Burke, F. (1984, September - October). Eleanor Roosevelt, October 11, 1884-November 7, 1962: She made a difference. *Public Administration Review*, 44 (5), 365-372.
- Caroli, B. (2003). *First ladies from Martha Washington to Laura Bush*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eksterowicz, A. J. & Watson, R. P. (2000). Treatment of first ladies in American government and presidency textbooks: Overlooked, yet influential, voices. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 33 (3), 589-595.
- Gardner, H. (1995). *Leading minds: An Anatomy of leadership*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goodwin, D. K. (1994). *No ordinary time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The home front in World War II*. New York: A Touchstone Book.
- Kearney, J. R. (1968). *Anna Eleanor Roosevelt: The evolution of a reformer*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Kotter, J. P. (1990). *A force for change: How leadership differs from management*. New York: The Free Press.
- Lacey, M. (2000, May 23). At day job, Mrs. Clinton is the hostess of a dinner. *The New York Times*, B5.
- Lash, J. P. (1971). *Eleanor and Franklin. The story of their relationship based on Eleanor Roosevelt's personal papers*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Lauer, M. (Host). (1998, January 27). *Today* [Television broadcast]. New York: NY: National Broadcasting Company.

- Maraniss, D. (1995, January 15). First lady of paradox: After two years, Hillary Clinton is defined by contradictory perceptions. *The Washington Post*, p. A1.
- Mattina, A. (2005). Hillary Rodham Clinton: Using her vital voice. In M. M. Wertheimer (Ed.), *Leading ladies of the White House: Communication strategies of notable twentieth-century first ladies*. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Matz, S. I. (2007). 21st century women leaders: Uncharted journey. *Iowa Journal of Communication*, 39 (1), 101-118.
- Milkman, R. (1991). Redefining 'women's work': The sexual division of labor in the auto industry during World War Two. In K. K. Sklar & T. Dublin (Eds.), *Women and American Power* (2nd ed.), Edgewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Minor, D. (1995, January). Revenge of the white male: 94 Election Results: Nightmare on Helms Street. *National NOW Times* 27, No. 2.
- Northouse, P. G. (2013). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (6th ed.), Los Angeles: Sage.
- O'Brien, P. (1992, August 1). The first lady with a career? *Working Woman*, 44-48.
- Pear, R. (1993, January 22). Settling in: First lady Hillary Clinton gets policy job and new office. *The New York Times*, Late Edition, p. A1.
- Roosevelt, E. (1939, February 27). *My day in Eleanor Roosevelt's day: Her acclaimed columns 1936 – 1945*. R. Chadakoff (Ed.), New York Pharos Books.
- Roosevelt, E. (1949, February). The struggle for human rights. *The Eleanor Roosevelt papers project*. George Washington University.
- Rozell, J. J. (1999). Something to hide: Clinton's misuse of executive privilege. *Political Science and Politics*, 32 (3), 550-553.
- Solomon, B. (1993, February 6). Say, aren't those the fingerprints of Clinton's right hand woman? *National Journal*, 25, 35B.
- Thomas, E. & Rosenberg, D. (1999, March 1). Hillary's day in the sun. *Newsweek*. 133. 9, 24-31.
- Watson, R. P. & Eksterowicz, A.J. (Eds.). (2003). *The presidential companion: Readings on the first ladies*. South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press.
- Wattenberg, D. (1992). Lady Macbeth of Little Rock: Hillary Clinton's hard-left past and present. *The American Spectator*, 25-32.
- Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organizations*. New York: Free Press.
- Weisberger, B. A. (1993). Petticoat government. *American Heritage*, 44 (6), 18.
- Wife, mother, lawyer, scholar: Hillary Clinton's juggling act. (1992, November 5). *Telegram and Gazette*, p.A4.
- Winfield, B.H. (2001). The making of an image: Hillary Rodham Clinton and American political journalists. *Political Communication*, 14, 241-253.
- Yukl, G. (1998). *Leadership in organizations* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.