

CRITICAL CULTURAL CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NEWS
MAGAZINE COVERAGE OF HILLARY CLINTON

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A content analysis of print magazine coverage of former First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton during her husband's first year in office compared with the year that her husband faced a sex scandal and impeachment may provide valuable insight into how society perceives the First Lady's role, as well as how it perceives women in politics. In the first year of office, Hillary Rodham Clinton took a more politically active role, leading the charge for wide-scale health-care reform in America. President Clinton appointed his wife as chair of the President's Task Force on National Health Care Reform during his first week in office, setting new expectations for the role of First Lady.

Other presidents' wives—such as Rosalynn Carter who had rallied Congress in 1979 for more spending in mental health programs, and Eleanor Roosevelt who had testified in 1940s about the migration patterns of American workers—had pursued their own public policy projects. Hillary Rodham Clinton, however, was the first to be placed in charge of a major initiative for a presidential administration, immediately establishing her role as a public policy maker instead of the more traditional supportive role of past First Ladies.

The role was new for a First Lady, but it was not new to Hillary Rodham Clinton, who would later campaign for and win a New York seat

in the U.S. Senate after her husband left office. Before coming to the White House with her husband, she had been viewed as a political figure in her own right with a long political and policy-making career even though she had never run for public office (Burrell, 1997). It was not just her relationship with Bill Clinton that made her a political figure although it structured the development of her political life. She had developed a political personality on her own (p. 117).

Initially, the public showed support for the First Lady's new task, according to various national polls. No "previous First Lady has occupied center stage so aggressively or disarmed her critics more effectively," wrote Gwen Ifill of the *New York Times* in September 1993. "And with each success, her role has been expanded far beyond that of previous presidents' wives" (p. A24). However, critics suggested that Hillary Rodham Clinton's appointment was a mistake for the President because the overhaul of the American health-care system was such a complex issue. Whoever led the initiative had to win over the public as well as Congress. A health-care policy expert might be able to sort through the thorny policy problems surrounding the issue and a Washington political expert might be able to deal best with the process of mobilizing support within Washington ... It is unlikely, however, that policy and political expertise would be combined in the same person. (Burrell, p. 113).

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The First Lady's new job had become more complicated than she had imagined, as observed by *Newsweek's* Clift (1993):

She is barnstorming the country, building support for the idea of national health-care reform—while refereeing fights over policy among staffers back in Washington. She is girding the White House for a fierce lobbying battle over the biggest piece of social legislation the country has seen since the New Deal. And she is doing that while the whole world is watching to see if Bill Clinton blew it by giving her that much responsibility. (p. 20)

The President had erred in placing his wife at the helm of the task force, critics said, because there would be no accountability if the First Lady failed to produce a successful plan. In other words, Clinton could not fire his own wife.

In the end, Clinton failed to get one vote on the floor in either Congressional house for the health-care plan. Hillary Rodham Clinton, who had acquired the unflattering nickname "Shillary" on Capitol Hill, was criticized for its collapse, making it "very unlikely that a First Lady will be assigned a similar task in the near future. First Ladies will be hesitant to play such a prominent role and will more likely revert to private influence" (Burrell, 1997, pp. 113-114). Following the failed health-care reform plan, Hillary Rodham Clinton acquiesced to a less spotlighted role.

However, in 1998, as allegations of her husband's sexual misconduct with White House intern Monica Lewinsky surfaced, both intriguing and disgusting the nation, the First Lady emerged in the role of a wife standing by her husband despite the gory details of the 445-page report entitled

“Referral to the United States House of Representatives, pursuant to Title 28, United States Code, 595,” which was compiled by the Office of Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr. The media latched onto the scandal, bombarding the country with coverage on television and radio programs, on front pages of newspapers and on the Internet. Journalists in the 1950s like Walter Lippmann and James Reston had played to the Washington elite; modern reporters play[ed] to the masses and recycled all kinds of garbage, mourned Howard Kurtz, the *Washington Post* media critic (Troy, 1997, p. 362).

The scandal did wonders for Hillary Rodham Clinton’s popularity ratings, which soared as the First Lady carried the humiliation of her husband’s indiscretions while presenting a supportive front to the public. Olson (2001) said the release of the Starr report unleashed the Clinton spin machine, which portrayed Monica Lewinsky as a mentally unstable, stalking, Valley Girl sexual predator. Hillary Rodham Clinton went on national television and blamed it on a “vast right-wing conspiracy” (p. 11).

Strained but dignified in appearance, the First Lady was viewed by many as the most admirable woman in America for backing her husband publicly despite the disgrace he had caused their family. The scandal painted Hillary Rodham Clinton as a victim. The world poured out its heart to her, and admired her posture of stoic dignity while her husband and everyone else in Washington seemed to be throwing their self-respect out the

window. The year of Monica restored her popularity (Olson, 1999, p. 10). The First Lady, once called the most powerful woman in the world, will now go down in history as the most famously betrayed (Warner, 1999, p. 3).

However, others labeled her a hypocrite for standing by her philandering husband and not staying true to the “strong woman” persona she had portrayed earlier. Not long after the scandal broke, murmuring of the First Lady’s interest in running for Senate surfaced. She found receptive audiences—and presidential-level press coverage—wherever she went, and she basked in the radiating warmth of adoring crowds (Olson, 1999, p. 11). Many critics, including *Time* columnist Margaret Carlson, attacked the First Lady for using her new role to get into public office:

Those pushing her to run lost sight of the transient reason she had become the most admired woman in the country. It’s not the wonders of makeup or the right hairdo or giving up the institutional power of being health-care czar and posing for the cover of *Vogue*. The reason she finally got to that 60 percent in the polls—to that Sally Field “you like me, you really like me” moment—was that she had become what she swore she wasn’t in the “60 Minutes” interview: a long-suffering wife standing by her man. (1999, p. 59)

The *New Republic*’s Talbot (1998) echoed similar sentiment when writing, “For in the wake of Bill Clinton’s most recent sexual disgrace, it seems harder than ever to scrunch our eyes shut and construe Hillary Clinton as a feminist icon, a role model for young women of talent and ambition” (p. 19).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Determining how the media—particularly news and political magazines in this study—portrayed the First Lady during these two contrasting times could provide researchers insight into whether media coverage varies if presidents' wives are perceived in politically active roles versus supporting roles to their husbands.

Such information garnered from the study could be a small step in determining whether the media does set agendas in its coverage of women in politics and if set societal expectations of women determine the type of coverage—positive, negative or neutral—that First Ladies receive. The evolution of the role of First Lady has been observed by many researchers. Since the creation of the First Lady title, certain characteristics have been expected from the U.S. presidents' wives. Mayo and Meringolo (1994) explained:

The nation has always expected First Ladies to reflect ideals of home, family and womanhood. Even the term "lady" has connotations of middle- and upper-class respectability and suggests a certain kind of demeanor. These expectations illustrate the conflict all First Ladies face: As presidents' wives or hostesses, they are inevitably on the political and public stage, but as "ladies" they are expected to stay out of politics and in the background. (p. 8)

It was not until 1920 that a president publicly discussed how large a contribution his wife made to his political success. That year Warren G. Harding credited his wife as being a "good scout who knows all my faults yet has stuck with me" in his nomination speech (Anthony, 2000, p. 73). Anthony (1990) pointed out that the First Ladies are an integral part of a presidency, whether the public realizes it or not. "Only the First Lady and the president determine the extent of her power, though she has operated without his knowledge or permission. There is an error, though unavoidable, in viewing candidates' wives as mere handwavers and shakers" (p. 8).

Most research regarding First Ladies shows that America continues to struggle with the role it wants its First Lady to play. The office is one of inherent contradictions, a reflection of the changing role of women in society and shifting public attitudes about that change (Mayo & Meringolo, 1994, p. 8). Reflecting the times of the late 18th century and through the 19th century, the country had demanded its First Ladies be supporters of their husbands' careers, nurturers of their families and communities, keepers of the cultural heritage, and moral leaders (p. 9). The First Lady role continued to evolve in the 20th century. Gutin (1989) studied the changing roles of First Ladies from 1920 to 1989 and determined that First Ladies fell into the following categories: social hostesses, spokeswomen or political surrogates and independent advocates (p. 4). Now, the First Lady's role

reflects the complicated role of women who are in the workplace and in politics but who also maintain the traditional role of nurturer. It seems the country wants a First Lady who can be politically active, but who also maintains a nurturing character.

More openly political First Ladies are still criticized for meddling in the nation's business, Mayo and Meringolo (1994) pointed out, "but with the domestic problems confronting the United States—the budget crisis, threats to the environment, illiteracy, inadequate health care, poor housing, crime, drug abuse and violence—have led voters to demand a First Lady who is an informed and active advocate for solutions, even as they criticize her activism" (pp. 8-9). Also, the First Lady must be informed on issues, articulate and persuasive, and must present her own substantive agenda without appearing to seek power for its own sake, Mayo and Meringolo added (p. 43).

Power in the hands of First Ladies has seemed to threaten many Americans. History has shown that First Ladies who have wielded power have been attacked for doing so. Mayo and Meringolo explained:

Even as the public came to accept a larger and more visible role for first ladies, many Americans have continued to be deeply ambivalent and at times hostile towards power in the hands of women. Abigail Adams, Edith Wilson, Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Reagan, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and other First Ladies have endured stinging criticism for having too much influence or wielding too much power. (p. 75)

In fact, the less power she claims, the more power she yields, Greer (1995) said of the First Lady's role. Gutin (1989) made a similar observation, writing that First Ladies could advocate feminine concerns or issues without receiving much public criticism. However, Gutin continued, if the First Lady chooses to become involved in more substantive issues of her husband's administration, or if she presents views on public policy that differ from those of her husband, she risks criticism that might ultimately hurt her husband's career. In addition, the First Lady may also harm her own credibility and popularity by taking publicly unpopular stands, Gutin added (p. 176). Mayo and Meringolo pointed out that First Ladies represent "the ways in which the personal and political converge in women's lives and reveals in stark relief the continuing conflict inherent in society's expectations of women. The First Lady remains the most visible symbol of that conflict and ambivalence in American life" (p. 75).

As an independently successful lawyer, wife and mother, Hillary Rodham Clinton represented the complex condition of women's roles in modern society. She came into the White House as the president's partner—an equal role, instead of a supporting one.

“What I hope is that each woman and someday men in that position, will be free to be who they are. If that means being a full-time career person not involved in the issues of the day ... that should be a choice that we respect. If it's a more traditional role in which the primary focus is in supporting the family that is there and the person who holds office, *that* is the position we should respect. If it is a more active public role, then I think we ought to be very happy about that.” (Boller, 1998, p. 483)

Hillary Rodham Clinton initially chose the latter. Just five days after her husband was sworn in as president in 1993, he named her to head the health-care task force.

Like Rosalynn Carter, Hillary Rodham Clinton had been more a respected partner in her husband's work than a supportive spouse. In Bill Clinton's 12 years as governor of Arkansas, she chaired the education committee that created public school accreditation standards in that state. The former governor's advisors said they frequently were asked to "run it by Hillary" when he was considering their recommendations (Mayo & Meringolo, 1994, p. 36). However, this publicly political partnership did not win over some media members who "portrayed Mrs. Clinton as unstylish, overly ambitious, and insufficiently involved as a parent" (pp. 73-74) in the 1992 presidential campaign. As a result, the candidate's advisors toned down her initial candor about her opinions and her partnership with her husband, and she began accepting fashion advice and appearing with her daughter as a silent, supportive mother (p. 74).

According to Mayo and Meringolo, Hillary Rodham Clinton arrived at the White House "with the ability and the opportunity to push the boundaries of the First Lady's role further than ever before" (p. 36). However, some American's balked at the idea of a First Lady being so involved in the political process. Early in her husband's presidency, Hillary Rodham Clinton downplayed the amount of influence she had over the

president during an interview with NBC television news anchor Katie Couric. "I don't know that I have any more influence than anybody else.... But I think that everybody who's in any kind of marriage, and particularly the marriages that have lived inside this house, knows that husbands and wives influence each other. That's just our common everyday experience" (quoted in Osborne, 1997, p.50). Public response to her position as unpaid chair to the health-care reform task force was mixed. Members of Congress and others commented on her command of the material and her ability to communicate complex ideas, but some people continued to question the appropriateness of a First Lady exercising so much political power (p. 75).

Other First Ladies have faced similar scrutiny over their involvement with the president's business or for being publicly independent or strong-willed. For example, Rosalynn Carter suffered negative media coverage during her husband's term. Invited by her husband, the former First Lady often attended cabinet meetings and frequently sat there silently taking notes. Critics pointed to that as well as her inclusion in certain national security briefings as evidence of Rosalynn Carter's "copresidency" role (Smith, 1996). Ironically it was women reporters who protested the loudest when the First Lady expanded her traditional role. She was once again breaking the First Lady's unwritten code of conduct. Jimmy [President Carter] told her to do what he did: ignore the tongue wagging (Marton, 2001, p. 233).

Other First Ladies—such as Betty Ford, Rosalynn Carter, Nancy Reagan and Hillary Rodham Clinton—who were perceived as strong-willed independent women thrived at the cost of their husbands' reputations (Troy, 1997). Their husbands were derided as being weak, wimpish, not in control. The ancient fear of Delilah endures in our age of space travel and the Internet (p. 374).

However, more so than any other First Lady, and more than almost any other figure in recent history, Hillary Rodham Clinton has elicited strongly polarized reactions from Americans across the social spectrum—impassioned paeans from her supporters and vitriolic attacks from her foes, Brock (1996) pointed out. Why has the First Lady garnered such conflicting reviews? On its cover, *Newsweek* printed a photo of Hillary Rodham Clinton in February 1996 with the headline: Saint or Sinner? In her book about the First Lady, author and journalist Judith Warner wrote that “even Americans of Hillary’s age and Hillary’s background raged at the seemingly seamlessness of her life. There was something about her that just *stank*” (p. 12). In her memoirs, longtime Washington journalist Helen Thomas observed that “no presidential wife in modern history, except perhaps Eleanor Roosevelt, has weathered such a steady barrage of opposition, criticism and just plain ‘Hillary hating’” from the media (1999, p. 286).

Some critics even resented the idea that the First Lady elicited such discussion. Peggy Noonan, former speech writer for President Reagan wrote:

She does not seem big enough to be the focus of such passion. She does not seem as big as the emotions she engenders. She lacks historical heft, is not a person of real size and authenticity. ...But Mrs. Roosevelt, a hero to my parents and theirs, a woman admired by generations, Mrs. Roosevelt had *size*. She had earned the admiration and derision she inspired; she was big enough to be the focus of all that love and disapproval. (p. 10)

The woman the country alternately loves and hates is not Hillary Rodham Clinton at all, Warner (1999) suggested. That woman is a creation of the media—and of the Clintons' own spin doctors. She is a projection of the country's hopes, fears, and desires (p. 9). "But is the 'new,' 'real,' 'human' and beloved Hillary Clinton of 1999 any less of a projection? I think not. ...I have come to think that the wounded woman now celebrated by American men and women is no more real than the Hillary-as-harpy of 1992" (p. 13).

What annoyed many people about the First Lady could be her confidence in the political philosophy that Americans need the government to make the right choices for them, Milton (1999) suggested. She observed that the First Lady does have a mission to do good but worries that if bureaucrats are not monitoring people, those people will make the wrong decisions. "Of course, she's right. I make bad decisions every day. What she doesn't understand is that some of us would like to make our own decisions" (Milton, 1999, p. 18).

Brock (1996), who also delved into the personal and professional motivations of Hillary Rodham Clinton, wrote that although other power couples have teamed up at the Capitol—such as Bob and Elizabeth Dole—the Clintons approach was unique, including Hillary’s “independent activist commitments; the unapologetic exertion of leadership in her own right; and most of all in the extraordinary extent to which Bill relies on her to balance his shortcomings and to guide his political career” (p. viii). The unusual role she has played as First Lady could explain the polarized views people have of her. However, Brock (1996) argued that looking at Hillary Rodham Clinton in terms of good or evil is wrong:

As Hillary herself remarked in response to the Newsweek cover story “Saint or Sinner?”: “[I’m] not as good as some people say...[or] as bad as others claim... .” Hillary should be approached as neither an icon or a demon but as a real person who has had a remarkable life and, it could be argued, has been more important to America than her husband. (p. Xi)

Hillary Rodham Clinton’s greatest defeat, as described by Brock (1996), was the inability to pass the health-care reform initiative in 1994 because her “own misjudgments and aversion to compromise, the inherent grandiosity of her plan, and her apparent belief that noble ends could trump the procedural niceties of the post-Watergate ethical regime had doomed it to defeat... .” Also the President was unable to focus his legislative effort on the plan and develop his own political strategy to push it forward, and too many other issues made their way to the front of his agenda (Burrell, 1997, p. 113).

The failure of the health-care plan led to the media's giving the First Lady more negative coverage, Brock (1996) said. He added:

Others saw her failure for what it was, and her political standing suffered greatly for it. Not to be underestimated in the subsequent turn against Hillary on part of the liberal press was her failure to deliver on her promise to pass health-care legislation. It was particularly embarrassing to many women who had embraced Hillary as an inspiring role model and were now reading—and writing—disparaging accounts of her performance. (p. 366)

Burrell (1997) also suggested that Hillary Rodham Clinton contributed to the coverage she received as well as the public's perception of her, explaining that her "suspicion of the press and inability to engage the media became a problem" (p. 113). In a 1998 interview with Thomas (1999), the First Lady acknowledged that she had mishandled the media while working on the health-care initiative. She told Thomas that if she could do it all over, she would have handled herself differently:

I would try to learn more about what the press expected of me, because I really didn't understand that at all. And I would try to just be more sensitive to how anything I did might be interpreted or perceived. ...And so my lack of experience in that arena of public opinion and press coverage is something that I had to learn the hard way. So if I could have [had] either more experience or asked for help or gotten better advice from people around, I think that would have eased my transition. (p. 290)

Another point of contention for critics of Hillary Rodham Clinton was her constant support of Bill Clinton despite his personal shortcomings, Brock pointed out. In fact, upper-class women, who initially related to the First Lady, became the group most infuriated by her contradicting roles as

independent career woman versus understanding wife of a philandering husband (Brock, 1996, p. 416). But Brock argued that Hillary Rodham Clinton's co-candidacy with her husband "may best be understood not as a cold political bargain but as a kind of co-dependency." The First Lady needs to be needed, which draws her to Bill Clinton's side and keeps her there, Brock said (p. 417).

The coverage of Hillary Rodham Clinton reflects the unrealistic expectations placed on this First Lady, Brock (1996) explained:

But the treatment of Hillary by the press and her opponents must be seen, as well, for what it says about American society itself. For one thing, it is clear that the societal expectations laid on Hillary—as wife, mother, professional woman, official hostess, and political partner—were exorbitant, and would have been enough to overwhelm and demoralize any woman—even Hillary. No other First Lady in history has had an entire generation identify so personally with her, and it is a particular irony in Hillary's story that the women of her own generation, particularly in the media, have been not only her strongest supporters but also her worst enemies. (p. 419)

Their expectations of what Hillary Rodham Clinton could accomplish as First Lady were not only unrealistic, Brock (1996) added, but inconsistent with the nature of the office itself, and ultimately seemed to rest on what those women may or may not have accomplished in their own lives (p. 419).

While Hillary Rodham Clinton drew the ire of many college-educated women by playing a more supportive role to her husband, especially during the sex scandal in 1998-99, other American women rushed to her support. As noted in a poll cited in a *U.S. News and World Report*

article in 1998, the shift reflected “the First Lady’s odyssey from a sometimes prickly political wife who didn’t want to be branded as merely a baker of cookies to a First Lady who has responded to a personal crisis in a traditional rather than radical way” (Pope et al., 1998, p. 25). *Time* magazine columnist Carlson (1998) took the First Lady to task for the way she handled herself during the sex scandal: “Many people, myself included, would have liked her to hurl her husband’s boxer shorts out the Truman balcony for getting us into all this. But just as many of us admire couples who slog through the bad times. Her favorability ratings, at about 60 percent, are her highest ever. Still, I wouldn’t want my daughter to grow up to be Hillary Rodham Clinton unless she were married to the likes of Al Gore” (p. 44).

Hillary Rodham Clinton was not the first president’s wife to stand by her man despite his roguish behavior. Other First Ladies faced similar humiliations; however, they suffered privately instead of on the pages of the newspapers or on the 10 o’clock news. The media had not covered the escapades of earlier presidents. But the post-Watergate media was not as restrained in covering personal details about the president (Woodward, 1999).

Jackie Kennedy had floated above her husband’s philandering, which, in any case, never became public until after his death. Lady Bird [Johnson] had rationalized it for her own peace of mind and lived in a different social and media climate. Whatever humiliation she suffered was private until years later. But the revelations and accusations about the Clintons occurred in real time, while they were in the White House—a situation unique in American history. (Marton, 2001, p. 328)

The First Lady's support of her husband saved his presidency. Not long after the Monica Lewinsky sex scandal broke, Hillary Rodham Clinton's press secretary issued a public statement that the First Lady was committed to her marriage and loved her husband (Woodward, 1999, p. 446). Although reserved and frequently visibly strained, Hillary Rodham Clinton continued to appear in public support of her husband. The American public seemed to take her lead on how to react to the situation. As Marton (2001) pointed out, the First Lady led the country from denial through rage to grudging acceptance of her husband's evasions and lies. If she could stand it and maintain her dignity, the American public decided, so could they (p. 344).

According to Brock (1996), the sexism and misogyny in American society also were factors in the way the media treated Hillary Rodham Clinton. To illustrate his point, Brock (1996) used a humor column published in the *Washington Times* by Wesley Prudence, who wrote "we've been too tough on President Clinton. He did Gennifer Flowers and Paula Jones, all right, but the devil in Miss Hillary made him do that too... . Maybe Hillary's long-suffering husband deserves not censure but a night out" (p. 420).

Even Quinn (1993) noted the difficulties that the media faced covering the First Lady: "Newsrooms all over the country are struggling to define how to cover Hillary Clinton and where to play the stories. National

or style, health care or food, politics or fashion? Where does she belong? Her staff seems to be struggling, too, to define and control the message" (p. 24).

In Perry's (1993) descriptive study on women's suffrage in the United States, she also pointed out an example of sexism and misogyny among the media. After being appointed to the health-care task force in 1993, members of the media asked the First Lady how reporters should refer to her, and she requested they use all three of her names: Hillary Rodham Clinton. Perry (1993) continued: "The charges flew. Ambitious female. Power mad. Who is in charge here? In March 1993, on a flight over Washington, D.C., an airline pilot joked over the loudspeaker, 'Down below you can see the White House where the president and her husband live' " (p. 41). While most reporters depicted President Clinton as a lumbering, bear-like empath with gargantuan appetites, Hillary Rodham Clinton was treated as an outlaw. Her assault on traditional sex roles saddled her with the worst of the career-woman stereotypes, somehow combined with the worst of the "Stepford wife" caricature (Troy, 1997, p. 363).

The idea that sexism and misogyny exist in media coverage of women in powerful positions, such as those in public office, is not new. In Allougi's (1998) study, she suggested that the media portrayed the spouses in the 1996 election in ways that continue to exclude women from political power and that serve to preserve the control of public policy in America by

men. Along the same lines, Braden (1996) determined in her descriptive research that news coverage of women politicians is not always blatantly sexist, but subtle discrimination persists. More women than ever hold high-level government positions, yet they are still portrayed by the media as novelties (p. 2).

Hillary Rodham Clinton, while not an elected office holder, was a symbol of the media's confusion about how to cover politically influential women (p. 146). The stance she initially took at the White House immediately classified her as a politically active First Lady instead of the more traditional role of being non-politically active and taking a minor position in her husband's presidency.

Hillary Rodham Clinton's aggressive approach to changing the role of First Lady met with resistance. Braden explained:

Washington political consultant Ann Lewis says Clinton is a "national Rorschach test of how people feel about the changing roles of women and men." Quoted in *Vanity Fair*, Lewis, a former political director of the Democratic National Committee, says the First Lady gets strong personal support, especially from working women but also provokes opposition from male "political insiders," who are angry at the way women are changing politics. "I've been taken by surprise by the depth and bitterness of the resentment. This flood of bile has come out. In the guise of insider political commentary, what you get is a kind of '50s sitcom: the lovable bumbling husband, Dagwood Clinton, who takes naps and rummages for snacks, and his competent wife, Blondie Rodham, who's making all the important decisions and the poor schnook doesn't even notice," Lewis said. "That's the oldest stereotype, that if a woman has power, it has to be at the expense of the man." (p. 146)

In conclusion, Braden (1996) observed that journalists ask women in politics questions that they would not ask men in politics and describe women politicians in ways and words that emphasize women's traditional roles and focus on their appearance and behavior. The myriad of stories that noted Hillary Rodham Clinton's different hair styles or tastes in fashion illustrates that point. Moreover, Braden said the media "hold women politicians accountable for the actions of their children and husbands, though they rarely hold men to the same standards" (p. 1).

Such biased coverage does lead to agenda-setting among the media, Braden (1996) found. Relating to agenda-setting, journalists do not determine what people think about certain issues, but they do contribute to what issues are discussed. The media set the agenda when "they are successful in riveting attention on a problem," Graber(1984) said, adding that they "build the public agenda when they supply the context that determines how people will think about the issue and evaluate its merits" (p. 268).

American society relies heavily on the media. Contemporary political reporting concentrates on personalities and media celebrities, and a major target of such personalized news coverage is the president, who is never offstage, observed Kelley (2001) in her study of the rhetoric of Hillary Rodham Clinton during the crisis of her husband's administration, including the failed health-care initiative, the Whitewater investigation

and the sex scandal and impeachment. By association, that focus also falls on the First Ladies. Both journalists and politicians realize that political events that get media attention frequently land on the political agenda (p. 217). Research has shown that “it is through continuing , day-by-day presentation of the topics on the agenda that newspapers come to influence the course of subsequent public thinking and action” (Brewer & McCombs, 1996, p. 8). In fact, agenda-setting is considerably more than the classical assertion that the news tell us *what to think about*. The news also tells us *how to think about it*. Both the selection of objects for attention and the selection of frames for thinking about these objects are powerful agenda-setting roles (McCombs & Shaw, 1993, p. 62).

Looking at the media’s role in agenda-setting, Fico and Freedman (2000) conducted a content analysis of hard news stories that were published in nine daily newspapers in the state regarding the 1998 governor’s race in Michigan. The researchers found that reporters’ subjective leads, to a significant degree, competed with the candidates in defining the story agendas of the election.

Many researchers have examined the existence and social influence of agenda-setting in the media. For instance, Shaw and Martin (1992) found that a major role of the mass media is to enhance group consensus—providing just enough agreement on public issues to promote dialogue between groups such as men and women, blacks and white—within

larger social systems by presenting issue-agenda options that override those historically learned by individuals, depending on gender, race, age, education and economic status. The media-public-issue agendas often overcome the historical agendas of readers and viewers, the researchers found.

Along the same lines, Wanta and Hu (1994) discovered that if individuals perceive the media as highly credible, they will depend more on the media, increase their media exposure and become more susceptible to agenda-setting. Furthermore, Miller and Wanta (1996) concluded that there are no potential differences between races in the agenda-setting process. They determined that whites and minorities do not have different issue agendas and did not differ on the effects of agenda-setting.

Targeting international trade issues, Chang (1999) studied agenda setting in regards to the automobile industry. The researcher concluded that the "auto elite" set the agenda for auto-related news in the *New York Times* and *Detroit News*, but that the *Detroit News* was more likely to be more biased in its coverage of automotive issues, particularly if conflict was involved. Huckins (1999) also looked at the influence of interest groups on media agenda-setting. He found a correlation between targeted issues of the Christian Coalition that were presented in the group's official newspaper and articles written in major secular newspapers in the United States.

Other researchers have examined the effects of agenda-setting and the coverage of societal issues. The effects of the agenda-setting theory also were examined in regards to environmental issues and the mass media. Ader (1995) studied pollution issues between 1970 and 1990 and found that despite an overall reduction in pollution, the media has increased coverage. She also determined a positive correlation between real-world waste pollution conditions and the media's agenda. In 1999, Wright scrutinized how two major news television programs, *Nightline* and *MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour*, which set the pace for other television programs, handled the issues of AIDS and HIV. The researcher found that the two programs mostly excluded guests who most closely represented those affected by acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and human immunodeficiency virus. Instead, Wright found that guests were primarily white, male, affluent and not suffering from AIDS or HIV.

Examining agenda-setting in the women's movement from 1966 to 1986, Ashley and Olson (1998) concluded that media did not seriously cover the groups of women who organized to promote the movement nor the groups who organized against it. The results of the study, which focused on *Newsweek*, *Time* and the *New York Times*, showed that articles described the women supporting the movement by their appearances and used quotations marks around such words as "liberation." The women against the movement were often described as well-organized and attractive.

Overall, the study showed that the goals of the women's movement were not often mentioned in the articles.

Studying how the media can set its own agenda by determining what makes a story newsworthy and by repetitious coverage of a specific event, Breen (1997) reviewed deviance as a trigger in the agenda-setting process. In the study, researchers examined media reports of Catholic clergy who committed child sexual abuse. The fact that the acts were deviant spurred the media's interest and agenda, as well as the number of negative stories that followed the incident.

In 1999, Kiouisis examined the media's coverage of the Monica Lewinsky scandal and how it affected public opinion of President Clinton's presidency. The research showed that the media's influence on perceived favorability was robust when controlling for external factors, such as time and economic indicators, but not robust in respect to job approval. The data also showed that newspapers and television news wielded similar influence on perceived favorability; it also provided evidence for second-level agenda-setting, priming and attitude change.

Because journalists are the gatekeepers of information, deciding what will pass through to the public, their perceptions of events are packaged according to traditional news values and become the news (Braden, 1996, p. 3). The traditional views held by journalists could then be transferred into news. Braden further concluded that voters attitudes are shaped both by the

kind of information they receive from the news media and by the way it is delivered by the news media. He explained:

... for example, reporters who tagged Kentucky Governor Martha Layne Collins as a former beauty queen and referred to her male primary opponent as a physician were not inaccurate—Collins had won a minor pageant 25 years earlier. But in labeling her as a beauty queen, they chose to devalue her more substantive experience as a teacher and elected official. (p. 3)

Being the first or being unusual also rates media attention, Braden added, and less obvious but equally important attributes are often bumped because of that. In the traditional “man bites dog” mode, it makes good copy to portray women as outsiders, to represent them as doing something new and unusual—something that deviates from a traditional role (p. 4).

In her observations, Braden does not accuse the media of intentionally setting agendas in the coverage of powerful women. Instead, she attributes the coverage to entrenched societal beliefs about women being the weaker sex. Those kinds of cultural beliefs affect how people perceive the world and consequently how they act—though people aren’t always aware of the underlying assumptions that guide their actions. Similarly, journalists may not be aware of the way their perspectives can unconsciously work to shape their conceptions of news (p. 10).

In 1996, Scharrer and Arnold examined how the media covered First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Hillary Rodham Clinton in a content analysis of stories from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. The research showed that the more a First Lady is involved in hard issues, considered a

non-traditional role, the more likely she will receive negative coverage and the more likely that it will be prominent.

Scharrer (2000) further examined how the media reacted to Hillary Rodham Clinton when she made the unprecedented switch from First Lady to a U.S. Senate candidate. After analyzing 342 newspaper stories in domestic newspapers, the study showed support that as Hillary Rodham Clinton delved further into active politics, the newspaper coverage tended to show "a more scrutinizing and negative tone."

The news stories in which the First Lady was politically active and in which the focus was on the Senate race "contained both a greater number of negative statements and, overall, a more negative tone," the Scharrer's study results indicated. The negative stories also were found in more prominent places in the newspapers and featured Hillary Rodham Clinton as the main character, Scharrer found, suggesting support for the theory that some news frames, particularly those meeting standards for news values such as importance and deviance, are given more prominent play in newspapers.

In her discussion of the study results, Scharrer (2000) cited several factors that contributed to the overall trend toward negativity in the print coverage dealing with Hillary Rodham Clinton's switch from First Lady to a candidate for the U.S. Senate. The press may have been flexing their "watchdog" muscles or it may have been playing to the American public,

which may feel ambivalence or harshly negative about the First Lady. Or “the members of the press could themselves be—or could perceive their readers to be—unready for a strong woman such as Clinton to succeed in making this non-traditional transition in roles that leads to an increase in power and self-sufficient prestige” (p. 312).

Based on the research conducted on how the media has covered First Ladies and women in politics, the following hypotheses were developed and tested for this study:

H_1 : There will be a significant difference in the number of positive and negative stories about Hillary Rodham Clinton published in national news and political magazines between the years Jan. 1, 1993-Jan. 1, 1994 and Jan. 21, 1998-Jan. 21, 1999.

H_2 : There will be a significant difference in the number of positive and negative stories about Hillary Rodham Clinton published during the time frames depending on whether the First Lady was depicted in the role of policy maker, supportive or other.

Also the following research question was developed and tested study:

R_1 : Does a relationship exist between the time frames and the average length of the articles?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

As past research suggests, the more politically active a First Lady is, the more negative the news coverage of her tends to be. In their study of the news coverage of first ladies, Scharrer and Arnold (1996) wrote, "We expected the first ladies to draw the most negative coverage when they overstepped their wifely bounds and focused on hard issues, rather than soft ones" (p. 78). Such was the expectation of this researcher regarding Hillary Rodham Clinton's first year in the White House. The First Lady immediately dove into a politically active role, being placed in charge of the controversial health care reform initiative just days after her husband took office.

Given the findings of Braden (1996) and Scharrer and Arnold (1996), it would seem that news coverage when Hillary Rodham Clinton was politically active compared with when she acted in a more traditional wifely role would be different. These differences may show up in the number of stories printed and the average length during the two time periods. Furthermore, the amount of negative and positive coverage may differ from the year she was politically active in 1993 and the year of the Monica Lewinsky sex scandal in 1998.

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there was a significant statistical difference in the number of negative and positive

articles during the two time periods mentioned. The study also looked at whether there was a significant statistical difference between the number of negative and positive articles depending on how Hillary Rodham Clinton was portrayed: a policy maker versus in a supportive or other type of role.

The research design of this study used content analysis of a sample of articles about Hillary Rodham Clinton that were published in nationally circulated news and political print magazines. Content analysis has been used in previous research for related topics. For example, Decamp (1994) conducted a content analysis of news stories about Hillary Rodham Clinton that ran on three television stations, in three newspapers and in three magazines during 1993. The Decamp research included reviewing the number of stories that were presented that year as well as the placement of the stories, the portrayal of the First Lady's role and whether balanced sources were used.

Watts (1997) also conducted a content analysis in research regarding First Ladies. In this case, she reviewed nationally circulated magazine coverage of First Ladies from Hoover to Clinton and compared how the First Lady was portrayed and whether the coverage was positive, negative or neutral. In addition, Watts reviewed the tone of the story headlines and the tone of the lead, the first paragraph of the story. Another example of focusing on content, Detman (1996) took a critical cultural content analysis look at press coverage—primarily the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*

and *New York Post*—of Hillary Rodham Clinton during the 1992 presidential campaign leading up to the inauguration, and how the public discourse on women's places in society played itself out around Hillary Rodham Clinton, who was used as a case study.

In the current study, the sample included complete articles published within the following time periods: Jan. 1, 1993-Jan. 2, 1994 and Jan. 21, 1998-Jan. 21, 1999. The time periods are determined by the First Lady's first year in the White House when she led the health-care reform task force but include the weeks preceding the Clintons moving into the White House, a time period when publications traditionally focus on the new President and his family. The first year illustrates the First Lady's role as a policy maker. The second year to be examined includes the time that Hillary Rodham Clinton's husband underwent scrutiny of a sex scandal and impeachment, respectively.

During this time, the First Lady took a less active role in politics and, instead, played a more supportive role at the White House.

The magazines examined included the general news publications *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report*, all published weekly, and the politically focused *New Republic* and the *Washingtonian*, which are published monthly. The latter two magazines were selected based on their narrow focus on politics, and in particular, their focus on Washington, D.C. politics, which provided researchers a different perspective than

magazines that took a more general approach to coverage. Each coded article was the unit of analysis. The limitation of this study is that not all nationally circulated magazine articles published during these time periods were included in the sample. However, according to Watts (1997), nationally circulated news and women's magazines comprised more than two-thirds (the majority) of all magazine coverage of First Ladies from Hoover to Clinton.

To execute this study and test the hypotheses, the researcher read and coded each sample, which totaled 126 articles. To be included in the sample, the article had to have at least one paragraph focusing on Hillary Rodham Clinton that conveyed a tone, whether positive, negative or neutral, and that portrayed the First Lady in a specific role, whether as a policy maker, supportive or other. The number of paragraphs in the sample articles ranged from one to 83.

The coding sheet included the publication name, date and article page number; author; the number of paragraphs in the article; the headline and lead of each article as well as the tone of each; and the tone of the article. It also indicated if the coverage of Hillary Rodham Clinton dealt with her in a policy maker role or in a supportive role. The coverage was marked based on the tone used when Hillary Rodham Clinton was mentioned in the

headline, lead and throughout the article; the tone was defined by statements used in Watts' (1997) study:

- Positive—complimentary, flattering, upbeat
- Negative—critical, finds fault
- Neutral—neither complimentary nor critical.

Using similar definitions that Scharrer (2000) used to determine the role of the First Lady, coders identified Hillary Rodham Clinton as a "policy maker" in stories in which she takes a stance in a political issue, discussed political policy, heads a political initiative or campaigns for political candidates. The "supportive" role was determined if she was not politically active and played a more traditional role as the president's spouse, speaking and appearing on behalf of her husband. The "other" roles were determined on other traditional First Lady roles such as entertainer, home decorator, fashion plate charitable works advocate, etc.

Two coders reviewed magazine articles for the study. The second coder was used for 10 percent of the study. The additional coder was given a training session on how to code the articles, and the researcher explained how to code the articles and how to look for certain words that would determine how to categorize the articles. The results of the intercoder reliability test based on Holsti's formula was .80.

Once the data was collected, the researcher used the chi-square statistical method to determine any relationships between coverage of

Hillary Rodham Clinton and the designated time periods, and whether they were statistically significant. Also the t-test statistical method was used to test the research question. The level of measurement was nominal for the content variables used in this study. As in other mass communications research, the significance level of 0.05 was used.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

One hundred twenty-six articles were coded. Shown in Table 4.1, a breakdown of the number of articles used from each of the five magazines includes: *New Republic*, six (5 percent); *Newsweek*, 53 (42 percent); *Time*, 24 (19 percent); *Washingtonian*, 11 (9 percent), and *U.S. News and World Report*, 32 (25 percent). *Newsweek*, a weekly general news magazine, published the most articles during the time frames of this study; *New Republic*, a monthly political magazine, had the least. Overall, general news magazines provided about 87 percent of the articles for the study, and the political magazines provided about 13 percent of the articles.

The H_1 was not supported. As shown in Table 4.2, no significant difference emerged between the time frames and the number of positive and negative stories ($X^2 = 1.73$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.42$).

Overall, articles coded with a positive and negative tone were almost equal, about 44 percent each; 12 percent were coded as neutral. In 1993-94, 44 percent were positive; 41 percent were negative; and 15 percent were neutral. Forty-five percent were positive in 1998-99 with 47 percent coded as negative and about 8 percent coded as neutral.

The H_2 also was not supported. As shown in Table 4.3, no significant difference emerged between the number of positive and negative articles

and the role in which the First Lady was depicted ($X^2 = 1.14$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.56$). Of the articles in which she is depicted as a policy maker, 65 percent are positive and 35 percent are negative. The numbers are more equally distributed in the articles in which she is depicted in a supportive role. Of those, 49 percent are positive and 51 percent are negative. Of the articles that depict her in other roles, 50 percent are positive and 50 percent are negative.

The overall average length of the stories during both time frames, shown in Table 4.4, was 12 paragraphs. In 1993-94, the magazines overall averaged 13 paragraphs; in 1998-99, the average was 10.4 paragraphs. The magazine with the longest stories was the *Washingtonian*, which had an overall average of 17.8 paragraphs for both years, while stories in the *New Republic* were, on average, the shortest with 8.7 paragraphs.

The R_1 was not supported. As shown in Table 4.5, no significant statistical difference emerged between the time frames and the average length of articles ($t = 1.21$, $df = 124$, $p = 0.23$).

As observed in Table 4.6, a statistical difference did not emerge between the time frames and the tone of headlines ($X^2 = 2.69$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.26$). Among the coded articles, the headline tone was almost equally distributed between positive, negative and neutral. Thirty-five percent had headlines with a negative tone; the remaining articles were equally divided between positive and neutral headlines with 32.5 percent each.

However, when looking at the 1993-94 time frame, 38 percent of the headlines were positive and about 32 percent were negative in tone. In comparison, 24 percent were positive and about 40 percent were negative in tone in 1998-99. About 30 percent of the articles in 1993-94 had neutral headlines compared with about 36 percent in 1998-99.

As indicated in Table 4.7, there was no significant statistical difference between the time frames and the tone of leads in the articles ($X^2 = 0.75$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.69$). The tone of the leads, however, was not as equally distributed as the articles' headlines. Forty-four percent of the total had a story lead with a positive tone, while 36 percent had a negative tone. About 20 percent of the articles had leads with a neutral tone. About 43 percent of the leads in 1993-94 had a positive tone, 34 percent had a negative lead and 23 percent had neutral leads. In 1998-99, 45 percent of the leads had a positive tone, while 38 percent had a negative tone and 17 percent were coded as neutral.

As shown in Table 4.8, no statistical difference emerged when comparing the tone of headlines and the tone of leads in the 1998-99 time frame ($X^2 = 6.87$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.05$). However, the headlines and leads did not always reflect the same tone. The number of positive headlines was 54 percent less than the number of positive leads. Also, in the neutral category, there were 47 percent more headlines compared with leads with a neutral tone. The number of negative headlines and leads was about even in the time frame.

As seen in Table 4.9, no significant statistical difference emerged when comparing the tone of coverage and the gender of the lead writer ($X^2=5.33$, $df=2$, $p=0.07$). Of all the articles coded, 48 percent had a man as the lead writer on the byline, while 38 percent listed a woman as the lead writer. Seventeen of the articles did not have bylines.

Shown in Table 4.10, a statistical difference did emerge between the time frames and types of roles in which Hillary Rodham Clinton was depicted in the articles ($X^2=56.68$; $df=2$; $p=.0001$). The articles were coded to determine if the First Lady was portrayed in a policy maker role, a supportive role or roles other than those. In almost half of the articles coded for this study, 48 percent, Hillary Rodham Clinton was portrayed in a policy making role. About 33 percent of the articles portray her in a supportive role and 19 percent of the articles portray her in other roles.

However, in the 1993-94 time frame, 75 percent of the articles portray her as a policy maker and 11 percent portray her in a supportive role. In 14 percent of the 1993-94 articles, she is portrayed in other roles. The numbers differ in the 1998-99 articles: 9 percent portray her in a policy maker role; 64 percent in a supportive role; and about 27 percent in other roles.

Table 4.1
Number of Articles
Providing Coverage of Hillary Rodham Clinton during Study Time Frames

Magazines	1993-94 %	1998-99 %	Total %
<i>New Republic</i>	4 (.05)	2 (.04)	6 (.05)
<i>Newsweek</i>	35 (.48)	18 (.34)	53 (.42)
<i>Time</i>	11 (.15)	13 (.24)	24 (.19)
<i>Washingtonian</i>	8 (.11)	3 (.06)	11 (.09)
<i>U.S. News and World Report</i>	15 (.21)	17 (.32)	32 (.25)
Total	73 (1.00)	53 (1.00)	126 (1.00)

Table 4.2
Number of Positive, Negative and Neutral Stories during Study Time Frames

Tone	1993-94 %	1998-99 %	Total %
Positive	32 (.44)	24 (.45)	56 (.44)
Negative	30 (.41)	25 (.47)	55 (.44)
Neutral	11 (.15)	4 (.08)	15 (.12)
Total	73 (1.00)	53 (1.00)	126 (1.00)

X²=1.73

df=2

p=0.42

Table 4.3
The Number of Positive and Negative Articles
Compared with the Role in which the First Lady is Depicted

Tone	Policy Maker %	Supportive %	Other %	Total %
Positive	22 (.65)	24 (.49)	13 (.50)	59 (.54)
Negative	12 (.35)	25 (.51)	13 (.50)	50 (.46)
Total	34 (1.00)	49 (1.00)	26 (1.00)	109 (1.00)

X²= 1.14

df= 2

p= 0.56

Table 4.4
Based on Paragraphs, Average Length of Magazine Articles
Providing Coverage of Hillary Rodham Clinton during Study Time Frame

Magazines	1993-94	1998-99	Average
<i>New Republic</i>	9.0	8.5	8.7
<i>Newsweek</i>	10.3	9.7	10.0
<i>Time</i>	10.5	17.8	14.1
<i>Washingtonian</i>	26.9	8.7	17.8
<i>U.S. News and World Report</i>	8.9	11.5	10.2
Average	13.0	10.4	12.0

Table 4.5
Comparison of Means in Article Length

Group	1993-94	1998-99
Mean	12.9	10.4
Standard Deviation	13.3	8.1
Standard Error of Mean	1.6	1.1
Sample Size	73.0	53.0

t-test statistic = 1.21

df = 124

p = 0.23

Table 4.6
The Tone of Headlines in Articles Coded for Study

Tone	1993-94	%	1998-99	%	Total	%
Positive	28	(.38)	13	(.24)	41	(.325)
Negative	23	(.32)	21	(.40)	44	(.35)
Neutral	22	(.30)	19	(.36)	41	(.325)
Total	73	(1.00)	53	(1.00)	126	(1.00)

$\chi^2 = 2.69$

df = 2

p = 0.26

Table 4.7
The Tone of Leads in Articles Coded for Study

Tone	1993-94 %	1998-99 %	Total %
Positive	31 (.42)	24 (.45)	55 (.43)
Negative	25 (.34)	20 (.38)	45 (.36)
Neutral	17 (.23)	9 (.17)	26 (.21)
Total	73 (1.00)	53 (1.00)	126 (1.00)

$X^2 = 0.75$
 $df = 2$
 $p = 0.69$

Table 4.8
The Relationship Between Headline Tone and Lead Tone in 1998-99 Articles

Tone	Headlines %	Leads %	Total %
Positive	13 (.24)	24 (.45)	37 (.35)
Negative	21 (.40)	20 (.38)	41 (.39)
Neutral	19 (.36)	9 (.17)	28 (.26)
Total	53 (1.00)	53 (1.00)	106 (1.00)

$X^2 = 6.87$
 $df = 2$
 $p = 0.05$

Table 4.9
The Tone of Coverage Versus Male or Female Lead Writer

Tone	Male %	Female %	Total %
Positive	22 (.36)	25 (.52)	47 (.43)
Negative	29 (.48)	21 (.44)	50 (.46)
Neutral	10 (.16)	2 (.04)	12 (.11)
Total	61 (1.00)	48 (1.00)	109 (1.00)

$X^2 = 5.33$
 $df = 2$
 $p = 0.07$

Table 4.10
The Roles Hillary Rodham Clinton Portrayed in Articles

Role	1993-94	%	1998-99	%	Total	%
Policy maker	55	(.75)	5	(.09)	60	(.48)
Supportive	8	(.11)	34	(.64)	42	(.33)
Other	10	(.14)	14	(.27)	24	(.19)
Total	73	(1.00)	53	(1.00)	126	(1.00)

$X^2 = 56.68$
 $df = 2$
 $p = 0.001$

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Before discussing the findings of this research and their implications, the shortcomings in the study's methodology should be pointed out. The magazines that were selected did not yield as many articles as expected, especially in the political category, resulting in the sample size being much smaller than anticipated. Because of this, the majority of articles reviewed in this study came from general news magazines, and few came from political magazines. Comparing the two categories was difficult because the political magazine sample size was significantly less than the general news magazines. Increasing the sample size of political magazine articles may have garnered different results in this study. The chi-square test, which tests for a significant difference between observed frequencies and expected frequencies, fares better when the sample size is large. Although the overall sample was 126 articles in this study, the sample of size of political articles in some cells falls under five, which is considered by many researchers as the minimum to have in a chi-square test. Future studies on this topic could include additional political magazines as well as other types of publications, such as women's magazines and daily newspapers, to broaden the scope of the research and increase the sample size.

The results did not support H_1 and H_2 of this study. A significant statistical difference did not exist between the number of articles about Hillary Rodham Clinton between the two time periods studied; however, a slight increase in the number of negative articles did occur between the two time frames. Also a significant statistical difference did not exist between the number of positive and negative stories when comparing articles that portrayed the First Lady in the role of policy maker, supportive or other. The lack of a significant statistical difference is somewhat favorable to journalists and reinforces their argument that most do not have a bias when covering women in political roles. However, a larger sample may have yielded different results.

When comparing articles from the two time periods selected in the study, a significant statistical difference was found between the types of roles in which the First Lady was portrayed. In 1993-94, 75 percent of the articles reviewed depicted her as a policy maker, while 11 percent portrayed her in a supportive role and 14 percent in other roles. Meanwhile, the opposite was true in the 1998-99 set of articles in which Hillary Rodham Clinton was mostly portrayed in a supportive role. During that time period, 64 percent of the articles showed the First Lady in a supportive role; 9 percent as a policy maker and 11 percent as other.

The implications of the research is that the initial role of the First Lady changed drastically between her first year in the White House and the

year of the sex scandal. The media's role and the possibility of agenda-setting does come into question, as indicated in the literature review. It is also possible that the First Lady set her own agenda by shedding the policy maker role after failing to pass the health care reform. As Kelley (2001) put it: "A political actor's agenda-setting skill aids in deflecting criticism and directing the flow of electorate discourse. The progression of Hillary Rodham Clinton from political spouse to First Lady to presidential surrogate and savior is grounded in that theory and is practice of that knowledge"(p. 217).

However, the media's coverage of the First Lady was sometimes questionable. In this study, more than a third of the time the headlines and leads of the articles were negative in both time frames; the same was true for the overall tone of the articles. When Hillary Rodham Clinton became First Lady, she enjoyed popular reviews in the American public polls.

"She's box office: she now outpulls Princess Di as a newsstand draw for *People* magazine," wrote *Newsweek* reporters Howard Fineman and Mark Miller in 1993 (p. 21). However, in the same article, the reporters also raised questions about the First Lady's role in the White House:

On many important decisions ... Mrs. Clinton is far more than a First Lady. She has her own network, which stretches across the country and deep into the new administration. She has more senior-grade aides assigned to her than Vice President Al Gore. In politics, as in private life, the Clintons employ team survival strategies that serve both and give Hillary unprecedented clout. As one White House aide put it last week, she isn't just in the loop, she *is* the loop. The only question is when—if ever—Hillary's unique role will raise the issue of who's really in charge in the Oval Office. (p. 18)

Was such scrutiny of the First Lady's role necessary in the article? The use of the words "unprecedented clout" and the reference to her being "the loop" – words that convey political power and control—could be construed as the reporters' perceptions of the First Lady. The final question of "who's really in charge in the Oval Office" also seems to be the reporters' take on Hillary Rodham Clinton. The media's day-to-day questioning of the First Lady's role could reinforce an idea to readers that Hillary Rodham Clinton had too much power for her position.

In 1998-99, however, magazine articles rarely reported that side of the First Lady. Instead, Hillary Rodham Clinton took on the supporting role of her husband. Talk regarding the First Lady turned from policy making in her first year to supporting her husband politically despite the personal wounds she suffered from the sex scandal. The focus of many articles changed from referring to her political power to reviewing her personal relationship with her husband. In the Aug. 24, 1998, issue of *Time*, an article with the headline "The Cost of it All" describes a different Hillary Rodham Clinton than depicted in 1993-94.

It is taken as gospel in some circles that Hillary Clinton has known everything about her husband all along, that she made her deal with the devil years ago. Neither her admirers nor her enemies can imagine this proud, private woman as a victim, trusting and gullible. But her friends say otherwise. They will tell you that she loves him, has since law school, the brainy girl who beat out the beauty queens. She always dismissed them; they meant nothing to her. (Gibbs & Duffy, p. 40)

The words "victim," "trusting" and "gullible" paint an entirely different picture of the First Lady than in the preceding example. In this passage, Hillary Rodham Clinton is portrayed as "the brainy girl," the not-so-attractive spouse who loved her husband despite his possible infidelities. It would be interesting to study how the media was portraying the President at this time. Would it show the media turning these two people into the stereotypical characters of a daytime drama? Many of the articles seemed to depict the President as a cad who "does not hide his dark underbelly; he rubs it lovingly; it is part of who he is" (Gibbs & Duffy, p. 37). The First Lady, meanwhile, took on the role of the devoted spouse who turned a blind eye to her husband's roving eye because she loved him and because she wanted to support him during the remaining days of his term. Although the media presented the story this way in many of the articles, the truth, most likely, is not as one-dimensional as the characters presented by the media. For example, the President may not have been as much of a philanderer as was implied; and chances are that the First Lady was not the long-suffering saint.

Further research could be beneficial in determining whether agenda-setting was at play in regards to the media and its coverage of Hillary Rodham Clinton. A study that focuses on the media's depiction of the First Lady's role each year her husband was in office could shine light on when Hillary Rodham Clinton's role changed from policy maker to supportive and the reason the change occurred. Another interesting study that could

examine how the media covers women involved in policy making and politics would be reviewing how the media depicted Hillary Rodham Clinton the year she ran for U.S. Senate.

When comparing the two time frames, the tone of headlines also could be the focus of more research, although no significant statistical difference was found in this study. As shown in Table 4.4, the number of positive headlines in 1993-94 outweighed the number of negative headlines; but in 1998-99, negative headlines outweighed positive headlines by a similar margin.

Also the relationship between the tone of headlines and tone of leads in the 1998-99 articles could be interesting to examine. The tone in the headlines should reflect the tone of the leads in the positive and neutral categories as they did in the 1993-94 time frame. However, in the 1998-99 time frame, the number of positive headlines was 54 percent less than the number of positive leads. Also, in the neutral category, there were 47 percent more headlines compared with leads with a neutral tone. The number of negative headlines and leads was about even in the time frame.

In the October 1998 issue of the *Washingtonian*, one negative headline read: "Hillary stopped smiling as Morgan sang too many 'Cheatin' Heart' songs." The lead, however, is neutral and focuses on a breakfast hosted for the First Lady. It is not until later in the story that the "cheatin' heart" connection is made. Another example is in the Dec. 21, 1998, issue of

Newsweek, which had a headline that read: “A Crisis at Home: The Clintons are in the fight of their lives—to save his troubled presidency, their shared legacy and their own self-respect.” The headline definitely radiates drama of the sex scandal fallout and grabs the attention of readers. However, a large portion of the article deals with the First Lady’s decision to stay out of the scandal involving her husband and walk a separate path “as the ultimate good soldier” in the Democratic campaign.

Other results from this study were interesting and could be the focus of further research. One area would be studying the difference in the tone of coverage between male and female writers. The difference in the number of negative stories and the number of neutral stories in this study shows that a difference could exist when comparing men and women writers. Although this study found no significant statistical difference in the tone of coverage, the p-value was just slightly higher than the 0.05 level of significance. A study with a larger sample could garner different results.

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APPENDIX

CODING SHEET

Coding sheet: Print magazine coverage of Hillary Rodham Clinton from Jan. 1, 1993-Jan. 1, 1994 and Jan. 21, 1998-Jan. 21, 1999.

Magazine: _____ Date: _____ Page # _____

Author: _____

Number of paragraphs in story (length): _____

Article headline:

Headline tone: Positive Negative Neutral

Lead: _____

Lead tone: Positive Negative Neutral

Tone of article: Positive Negative Neutral

In what role is Hillary Rodham Clinton presented in the article:

 policy maker supportive other

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