

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: FIRST LADIES AS POLITICAL WOMEN:
PRESS FRAMING OF PRESIDENTIAL WIVES,
1900 – 2001

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This project contends that press framing of the U.S. first lady institution throughout the twentieth century positioned presidential wives as important public women who were presented as models of American womanhood. An analysis of the print news coverage reveals that the first lady institution serves as a site of ideological contestation over women's public and political roles, reflecting the intersection of gender, publicity, and power at particular historical moments. The press practice of gendered framing draws on often competing ideologies of American womanhood, and in doing so shapes the content of news narratives. The subjects of the stories often become representatives of social gender norms. I call this practice *personification framing, which is the positioning of a well-known individual as the embodiment of a particular ideology*. A personification frame serves as an ideological short cut used by journalists to simplify, in the case of first ladies, the complexities of

gender role performance, making such discussions easier to insert into the limited space of a single news story.

An outgrowth of personification framing is the emergence of first ladies as *public women, gendered celebrities, political activists, and political interlopers*, positioning that reflects press representations of women's public and political roles at various points in U.S. history. The publicity and scrutiny surrounding gendered performances of the first lady position construct boundaries of empowerment and containment that help to normalize women's public activity and domestic empowerment while challenging women's public and private *political* influence. Press frames, thus, serve as important boundary markers that help to define "proper" performances of both gender and the first lady position. While first ladies' status as public women and gendered celebrities results in both access to and influence within U.S. political culture, they remain on the fringes, with their power largely limited to domestic matters and women's issues. When their influence is suspected of trespassing too far into the male political reserve, press coverage exhibits a rhetoric of containment that suggests the political activities of first ladies violate the gendered boundaries of institutional performance. Such framing accentuates the contestation that surrounds first ladies as political women.

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Introduction

First Ladies as Political Women:

Press Framing of Presidential Wives, 1900-2001

On May 16, 1789, a grandmotherly figure bid farewell to her beloved home and set out on a journey that would change her life and influence the lives of many women to come. As she boarded her coach, Martha Washington was not just leaving the serenity of her private life behind, she was traveling into uncharted territory for most females, a journey into the public sphere and spotlight so long reserved for men and a handful of powerful women. In each town, people lined the streets to wave to her, while reporters joined the procession and followed Washington all the way to New York. Although Washington seemed overwhelmed by all of the attention, the press and the people apparently recognized the significance of her trip and the role she might play in the burgeoning nation. A story in the May 26, 1789, *Pennsylvania and Daily Advertiser* described the reaction of the crowd, noting that “every countenance bespoke the feelings of affectionate respect.”¹

As the story of Washington’s trip indicates, the press and the American people have been fascinated with the first lady since the beginning of this nation’s history. Lewis L. Gould argues, “These women offer a significant perspective on how their fellow citizens regard marriage, child rearing, women in society, and gender relations within the United States. . . . Americans have sensed that the wife of the president of the United States says something meaningful about the way the nation has chosen to organize its private and public affairs.”² The institution of the first lady is a complex

combination of contradictions. The position is not outlined in the Constitution, yet it has been a part of the American presidency since its inception. The institution has no set rules or guidelines, yet the first lady assumes important duties and faces high expectations.³ As such, the first lady institution is unique in that it forces its holders to straddle the public and private spheres.⁴ Katherine Prindiville suggests that, despite a clear position description, the job of being first lady is a matter of tradition probably more than any other U.S. institution. She explains, “Over almost two hundred years, a handful of women have, by their personalities and performances, created that tradition. . . . And the very fact that they have included such a range of personalities has given the role a precious flexibility that allows each woman to adjust to her official situation in her own best way.”⁵ Part of that tradition includes a deep sense of ambivalence about the role. Gould asserts, “The public expects the first lady to fulfill a multitude of roles flawlessly, and there is criticism at any departure from perceived standards. At the same time the criteria for success as a first lady constantly change as the public’s view of women evolves and develops.”⁶

Over the years, first ladies have been asked to perform a variety of public and private roles, from that of hostess, escort, and *noblesse oblige* to advisor and policymaker.⁷ Because the first lady is a gendered role,⁸ there are social norms and expectations associated with the “performance” of the position.⁹ The public nature of the position gives first ladies some latitude of performance in the public sphere, yet they must also conform to gender standards that reflect models of American womanhood that often equate women’s roles with the private sphere of home and family.¹⁰ Therefore, while the position has been shaped by the discourse and actions

of each first lady and the multiple interpretations of the position throughout the years, those in the role have never had complete control over the construction of the position because of historical, social, and political constraints.

Standing between the first lady and the public is the ever-present press, the Fourth Estate. Since very few people ever have direct contact with the first lady, the majority of the public's information about the position comes from the press. The evolution of the position has undergone press scrutiny since the days of Martha Washington.¹¹ However, Gould asserts that "popular interest in the president and his family quickened after 1900," thanks in large part to the media. He argues that mass-circulation magazines and the emergence of human interest journalism fostered what some scholars have called "the culture of celebrity," in which first ladies are objects of curiosity and hence of press coverage.¹² Throughout the years, the press has reported on everything from the first lady's fashion sense to her political activities. It was also the press that popularized the title of "first lady."¹³ The press, thus, has played a significant role in constructing the first lady institution.

While several scholars have studied the relationship between individual first ladies and the press, few have examined the journalistic constructions of the institution over time. Thus, I conducted a longitudinal study of select newspaper and magazine coverage of the first lady institution in the twentieth century, tracing the ways that journalists framed stories about the first lady position during different eras and the consequences of such framing. As a rhetorical critic, I am interested in analyzing these texts within their historical context,¹⁴ which requires an understanding of the history of the first lady institution, gender ideologies, women's history, and

journalism practices. As a feminist media critic and former journalist, I am also sensitive to the news writing process, particularly the journalistic practice of gendered news framing. The resulting study seeks to contribute not only to the growing body of scholarship on first ladies, but also to our understandings of women's history, journalism history, and media theory.

The First Lady Institution and the Media: Research Trends

Serious scholarly interest in first ladies is a fairly recent phenomenon, dating back to the mid-1980s with the work of researchers like Lewis Gould, Betty Boyd Caroli, Carl Sferrazza Anthony, Myra G. Gutin, and Robert P. Watson.¹⁵ Within this research tradition, the works that have looked specifically at first ladies and the media fall into three general categories: the relationship between first ladies and the media, media coverage of first ladies, and the consequences of first lady media coverage.

The relationship between first ladies and the media has been shaped by a number of factors over the years, including the dispositions of the individual women holding the position, the social norms governing women's publicity, the marketability of women's news, and institutional structures regulating journalists' access to first ladies. As noted above, press coverage of first ladies dates back to Martha Washington. "The continuing question for all First Ladies," according to Gould, "has been how to come to terms with this unrelenting attention—'having every move watched and covered and considered news,' in the words of Lady Bird Johnson."¹⁶ The relationship between nineteenth-century first ladies and the press varied widely, in part because there were no guidelines for either first ladies or journalists to follow. Some first ladies attracted press coverage (both positive and negative) for their

hostessing or their fashions, others actively sought publicity, and some avoided the press altogether.¹⁷ The emergence of publications targeting female readership in the mid- and late-nineteenth century, including women's magazines and women's pages in newspapers, helped to expand press coverage of the first lady institution. By 1900, articles about first ladies were regularly featured in the American press,¹⁸ facilitating the need to institutionalize the relationship between first ladies and the media. Edith Roosevelt hired the first social secretary, Belle Hanger, in 1902. Hanger's responsibilities included preparing press releases about the Roosevelts and talking to the press on Roosevelt's behalf, a practice that would eventually lead to the advent of spokespersons and press secretaries.¹⁹

The next major innovation related to first lady press relations occurred during Eleanor Roosevelt's tenure when she instituted the practice of holding regular press conferences with women reporters. During her first White House press conference, Roosevelt told the women assembled, "'Your job is an important one and if you want to see me once a week I feel I should be willing to see you. . . . You are the interpreters to women of the country as to what goes on politically in the legislative national life and also what the social and personal life is at the White House.'"²⁰ By limiting the press conferences to women journalists, Roosevelt gave them a shot at "choice news stories that their male counterparts could not acquire;" in turn, these reporters often "protected the First Lady from tough questions and took potentially embarrassing answers off the record."²¹ Roosevelt's relationship with reporters was strengthened by her own journalistic endeavors that included writing a syndicated

newspaper column, penning numerous magazine articles, and working as a radio commentator.²²

Roosevelt's successors however were quick to abandon her approach to press relations. According to Gould, they moved instead "toward a more managed and bureaucratized relationship with the media."²³ Bess Truman, Mamie Eisenhower, and Jacqueline Kennedy returned to the practice of relying on their social secretaries to keep women journalists informed and largely limited their personal contacts with reporters.²⁴ While Kennedy was the first to have a staff member assigned specifically to dealing with the media, Lady Bird Johnson "formalized the First Lady's press operations with the naming of Elizabeth 'Liz' Carpenter as Press Secretary and Staff Director;" Johnson was also considered the most "open and accessible" first lady since Eleanor Roosevelt.²⁵ In the past forty years, press secretaries and their staffs have served as intermediaries between first ladies and journalists. As coverage of the first lady institution steadily increased throughout the twentieth century, so too have White House efforts to manage first ladies' relationships with the media.

Media coverage of the first lady institution has evolved over the years, playing a significant role in shaping public expectations regarding the performance of the first lady position. Betty Houchin Winfield claims that "the first lady has become a collective image, undefined when the country was founded, but framed by the media."²⁶ By focusing on the ritual, social, and ceremonial functions of the first lady, according to Winfield, "the nation's early press defined the first lady's duties, with implications for social norms about the role of women in public life."²⁷ Such framing persisted throughout the twentieth century as journalists continued to define the

“proper” roles for first ladies by scrutinizing performances of the first lady position. As Maurine H. Beasley notes, “Both influencing and reflecting public opinion, they watch the performance of presidential spouses, measuring their success or failure by the media’s own standards.”²⁸ Winfield identifies five categories journalists have historically used to frame first ladies’ coverage and measure their performances: presidential escort, leader of social protocol, *noblesse oblige*, policymaker, and political advisor. The first three frames, which concern “traditional” roles of “an ideal, upper-middle-class American woman in a supportive, nurturing female capacity,” dominated first lady coverage well into the twentieth century. The “nontraditional” frames of policymaker and political advisor appeared more frequently toward the end of the twentieth century, often in critical news reports.²⁹

Recent studies analyzing first lady media coverage have largely supported Winfield’s contentions. Shawn J. Parry-Giles notes that mediated images of Clinton have been “varied and at times antithetical,” ranging from “career woman turned feared feminist, a sometimes all-powerful First Lady who becomes a more traditional ‘good mother,’ and a ‘stand by your man’ wife who is victimized by a cheating husband.”³⁰ Parry-Giles claims that as images shifted from nontraditional (“strong, independent feminist”) to traditional (“good mother and sympathetic wife”), Clinton’s public approval ratings increased. Erica Scharrer and Kim Bissell discovered a similar correlation between framing and political activity of first ladies. Using Winfield’s categories, their content analysis of print media coverage of Clinton, Barbara Bush, and Nancy Reagan revealed that the more politically active the first lady was, the more negative the tone of the coverage. Their study also found, however, that when

the first lady acted in the more traditional roles of hostess and escort, media coverage was notably more positive.³¹ Liz Watts conducted a similar content analysis of magazine coverage of first ladies from Lou Hoover through Clinton. She discovered that magazine articles focused more on first ladies' social contributions than their political activities, which resulted in more positive coverage.³² By praising some performances of the first lady position and criticizing others, journalists construct boundaries that define "proper" behavior for first ladies.

Along with setting standards for first lady performance, media coverage over the years has had other consequences for the first lady institution. One outgrowth of the media's fascination with first ladies is what Troy refers to as the first lady's "cult of celebrity." According to Troy, "With the rise of the national media, the president has become the nation's celebrity-in-chief. . . . As the most famous man in America, his wife, his daughter, even his cat and dog, become role models for the nation."³³ However, their celebrity status is often more of a curse than a blessing. As Gould explains, "Being a First Lady . . . requires a woman to act, if she would succeed, as a mixture of queen, club woman, and starlet. Subject to unrelenting attention, expected to behave impeccably in every situation, and criticized from some quarter for substantive assertion, the wife of the president has all the prerequisites of stardom and the rewards of fame. What she is denied is genuine importance as an individual."³⁴ Gould views celebrity as a trivializing process. Because first ladies "live on display,"³⁵ their individual agency is severely curtailed. Their every move is critiqued, and they often find that they can never please everyone.³⁶

The celebrity status of first ladies has led journalists to position them as ideal cultural embodiments of American womanhood. Watson explains, “As the most influential and scrutinized woman in the United States, the first lady also functions as a sort of barometer for the status of women in society and its shifting views of ‘womanhood.’ Her roles, political activities, and treatment by the press and public reflect the status of women and the social expectations of women throughout U.S. history.”³⁷ Caroli claims that “individual First Ladies have reflected the status of American women of their time while helping shape the expectations of what women can properly do. They extend our understanding of how women participated in government in ways other than simply voting and holding office.”³⁸ Because they are positioned as “ideals” of American womanhood, journalists often expect first ladies to embody traditional gender roles while also reflecting the changing times. As Troy points out, the first lady is “a throwback of a position with one high-heeled shoe firmly planted in the Victorian gentility of the nineteenth century and one sensible pump planted in the anything-goes hurly-burly of late twentieth century American life.”³⁹ Several scholars have examined this tension and the pressure placed on first ladies to live up to the expectations generated by being treated as models of womanhood. Leesa Tobin claims that Betty Ford’s work in the White House “demonstrated the tension that existed between the emergence of feminism and the persistence of traditional women’s roles.”⁴⁰ Similarly, James G. Benze, Jr. argues that “the multiple roles of women in American society (homemaker and working woman) are reflected in the demands of First Ladies,”⁴¹ often resulting in double binds perpetuated by the press that result in “no-win” situations for first ladies.⁴²

One area of scholarly study that warrants more attention is the intersection of publicity, power, and gender that occurs in media framing of the first lady institution. The press is the primary way that the ideas, images, and words of first ladies have historically moved into the public arena. First ladies become public women largely through the press, which details their public as well as private activities and circulates their images throughout the public sphere. Media historian Michael Schudson says that the press has always been “a central institution of the public sphere” in the United States.⁴³ Political figures, in particular, have long used the press as a vehicle for communicating with the American people, which some scholars have called “going public.”⁴⁴ Mel Laracey, in his study of the partisan press of the 1800s, argues that newspapers are the “forgotten way of going public,” noting that many presidential scholars have overlooked the important role the press has traditionally played in providing access to the public sphere.⁴⁵

Press coverage has always been a main avenue of “going public” for first ladies, making them some of the first female public figures, and in some cases, political celebrities, exhibiting political agency in their own right. But “going public” for women has always been a risky venture; gender ideologies based on the notion of separate spheres traditionally defined the public sphere as the domain of men. According to Glenna Matthews, “‘public woman’ in a positive sense was literally inconceivable, because there was no language to describe so anomalous a creature, yet ‘public man’ represented a highly valued ideal.”⁴⁶ Positive press coverage of American first ladies helped to lessen the stigma of being a “public woman” and legitimized women’s presence in the public sphere. Yet, because press coverage often

focused on first ladies as wives, mothers, and homemakers, the same stories that constructed these women as public figures simultaneously reinforced the idea that women's primary domain continued to be the home. While scholars have looked at first ladies as celebrities, they have not fully examined the role played by the press in constructing, or gendering, first lady celebrity. Nor have they considered the ways in which gendered media framing has both empowered and limited performances of the first lady position.

This study views press coverage of the first lady institution as a significant site of contestation over women's private, public, and political roles throughout U.S. history. This analysis is unique in that it approaches the first lady institution from the perspective of the press, rather than using press accounts to supplement the construction of historical accounts of the first lady position. By examining press coverage between 1900 and 2001, the period in which a "truly national media and a national audience displaced . . . a local public,"⁴⁷ this study seeks to assess how the journalistic practice of gendered framing has shaped stories about the first lady institution over time, and the consequences of such framing for first ladies. Such an examination attends to matters including the women who make up the institution, the history and traditions of the position, the roles and duties performed by first ladies, the interpretations of the position, and the press and public's expectations of the first lady.⁴⁸

Framing Gender, Memory, and Image in News Narratives

My study explores the intersection of journalism and gender ideologies that occurs in coverage of the first lady institution. Thus, several areas of media research,

combined with a rhetorical understanding of narratives, collective memory, and image construction, provide a framework for this analysis. First, media framing theory serves as a basis for understanding how journalists construct news narratives. Second, feminist media theory helps illuminate the gendered aspects of journalistic framing. Finally, the interpretive nature of journalism, particularly the role that collective memory and image-making play in shaping news narratives, highlights the power of the press in constructing an institutional identity for the first lady position.

Despite long-held claims of objectivity on the part of journalists,⁴⁹ media scholars argue that journalists use a technique known as “framing” when writing stories. Frames are defined by Stephen D. Reese as “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world.”⁵⁰ Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman elaborate further that, “The metaphor of a frame—a fixed border that includes some things and excludes others—describes the way information is arranged and packaged in news stories.”⁵¹ Frames work, according to Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, by drawing upon the prior knowledge of individuals in order to explain and classify new information.⁵² Todd Gitlin asserts that, through framing, the news media “specialize in orchestrating everyday consciousness—by virtue of their pervasiveness, their accessibility, their centralized symbolic capacity.”⁵³ Framing scholars also believe that journalists do not simply mirror social standards, they also help create them. Gaye Tuchman argues that “as newswriters simultaneously invoke and apply norms, they define them. That is, notions of newsworthiness receive their definitions from moment to moment . . . news does not mirror society. It helps to constitute it as a

shared social phenomenon, for in the process of describing an event, news defines and shapes the event.”⁵⁴ Robert Entman explains it this way, “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text.”⁵⁵ Because of the pervasiveness of the news media, scholars are interested in the ways journalists frame people, issues, and events.

Studying media frames offers insight into how the media alternately reflect, constitute, and reify social reality. As a research perspective, the concept of framing, according to Entman, “consistently offers a way to describe the power of a communicating text.”⁵⁶ In a review of framing scholarship, Paul D’Angelo identifies three strains of framing research: critical, constructionist, and cognitive. Framing criticism, which is central to this study, identifies news frames and studies how framing shapes the resulting news product; the constructionist and cognitive approaches are primarily concerned with the effects of framing on audiences.⁵⁷ D’Angelo explains that framing critics begin by pinpointing particular words and images, called “discursive units,” in news stories. Scholars then focus their criticism on “news values, discursive structures, and content formats that integrate the words and images of a news story into a frame.” The term “framing device” is commonly used to denote the constitutive elements of news frames.⁵⁸ Critics are interested in explicating how framing devices shape news narratives and the implications of such framing on the subjects of the news stories.

Attending to the constrictive value of frames, feminist media critics contend that gender is a primary framing device used by journalists. By employing social standards to frame news narratives, either consciously or unconsciously, journalists

often reinforce so-called “traditional” gender roles.⁵⁹ Pamela J. Creedon argues, “There is precious little evidence to suggest that journalists have examined the cultural assumptions that lie beneath their own, their sources’, or the consensus interpretation of gender values.”⁶⁰ The result, according to Cynthia Carter et al., is that the news media “provide sexist judgments about women such that their subordinate status within patriarchal society is symbolically reinforced.”⁶¹ As Pippa Norris argues, “journalists commonly work with gendered frames to simplify, prioritize, and structure the narrative flow of events when covering men and women in public life.”⁶² She claims that “the heightened salience of gender politics on the American agenda means that news frames have become increasingly gendered on an explicit basis. That is, gender has come to be seen as a relevant peg for the story line whether covering candidates running for political office, voters at the ballot box, international leaders, or policy debates about welfare reform, abortion, and affirmative action.”⁶³ When women are the subject of news narratives, gender is often the primary, if not the only, frame. Linda Witt, Karen M. Paget, and Glenna Matthews note that such “framing can be an insidious, even when inadvertent, barrier to new ideas, as well as a potent drumbeater for both stereotypes and the status quo. Because we expect X, we see X.”⁶⁴ Thus, gendered framing shapes how journalists construct narratives about women.

The news media’s notions of gender are drawn from competing ideologies that seek to define womanhood during particular historical moments.⁶⁵ Gaye Tuchman notes, “Dominant American ideas and ideals serve as resources for program development, even when the planners are unaware of them, much as we all take for

granted the air we breathe. These ideas and ideals are incorporated as *symbolic representations of American society*.”⁶⁶ In turn, James Carey argues that when gender becomes part of a news story, it becomes “part of a culture described by a particular writer, class, power structure, or the like at a particular point in history.”⁶⁷ The result is a symbolic construction of gender in which various “ideals of American womanhood” emerge in the mass media.⁶⁸

The notion that there is such a thing as the “ideal American woman” has persisted since the birth of this nation. However, gender ideals have evolved and shifted over the years in response to historical, political, and social forces. Also, different conceptions of the “ideal American woman” have competed to define gender norms and roles. The common thread historically has been the construction of the “ideal American woman” as white and upwardly mobile, particularly by the mass media, which seeks to appeal to the broadest possible audience.⁶⁹ But because gender is a fundamentally unstable construct,⁷⁰ even the white, upwardly-mobile journalistic ideals include “layers of internal inconsistencies and the co-existence of multiple gender meanings.”⁷¹ In addition, although journalists may promote a particular gender ideology, challenge to its ideals is possible through oppositional readings of messages. As Liesbet van Zoonen explains, media texts “carry multiple meanings and are open to a range of interpretations, in other words news narratives are inherently polysemic.”⁷²

Such gendered framing, and framing in general, is directly tied to journalism’s reliance on narrative. Storytelling has always been an essential form of human communication, and journalism is a specialized form of storytelling.⁷³ Journalists

construct narratives that include characters, plots, and settings. Despite the obviousness of the narrative structure of news, journalists and journalism scholars have often overlooked or denied the importance of narrative.⁷⁴ Barbie Zelizer, in her work on the interpretive nature of news, argues, “While journalists have long discussed among themselves issues connected with narrative and storytelling—questions about ‘how to tell a news story,’ distinctions between fact and fiction, stylistic and generic determinants and specific conventions of news presentation—admitting to non-reporters a dependence on narrative practice seems to imply a lack of professionalism.”⁷⁵ Cultural theorists have adopted the narrative paradigm as a way of understanding the interpretive nature of journalism. Michael Schudson contends that “news is a form of literature” and that journalists work within “the cultural tradition of story-telling and picture-making and sentence construction they inherit, with a number of vital assumptions about the world built in.”⁷⁶ Media frames allow journalists to construct stories that not only ring true to their audiences, but are also compelling and engaging narratives about the world in which we live.⁷⁷ Thus, the narrative structure of news illuminates the journalistic practice of framing as well as the rhetorical nature of news accounts.

Because framing relies on organizing principles that are socially shared, journalists often draw on history to provide context for their narratives, linking journalism and collective memory. Zelizer argues, “The shared past through which journalists discursively set up and negotiate preferred standards of action hinges on the recycling of stories about certain key events. Journalists become involved in an ongoing process by which they create a repertoire of past events that is used as a

standard for judging contemporary action.”⁷⁸ Journalists simultaneously draw from, reinforce and contribute to U.S. collective memory. Collective memory is described by John Bodnar as a “body of beliefs about the past that help a public or society understand both its past and its present, and, by implication, its future.”⁷⁹ According to Bruce Gronbeck, the rhetoric of collective memory operates by constructing symbolic bridges between the present and the past. He claims, “A society’s collective memory is regularly reshaped by today’s interpreters so as to make it more useful in the present.”⁸⁰ Thus, collective memory, like news framing, both reflects and constitutes a society’s values, beliefs, and attitudes. Zelizer connects framing and collective memory, noting that memory can be understood as “a type of constructive activity, the enunciation of claims about the past through shared frames for understanding.”⁸¹ Through their power as an interpretive community,⁸² journalists help create social memory.⁸³ By variously reflecting, creating, and framing collective memory, journalists have considerable influence over the social construction of ideologies such as those shaping institutions like the first lady.

Since journalists must draw on historical and contemporary sources in constructing their narratives, framing often becomes a process of negotiation, especially when the subjects of news stories are aware of the importance of image-making. Richard W. Waterman, Robert Wright, and Gilbert St. Clair claim that presidents have always been concerned with constructing a favorable public image, but this concern has mutated over the years into what they term the “image-is-everything presidency” in which teams of consultants work to create a marketable image for the president. However, Waterman and his colleagues note that, while

presidents and their partisan rivals try to define the president's image, "[A]n important intervening factor is the media—newspapers, magazines, and television," which play "an integral role in establishing the president's image."⁸⁴ The same can be said of first ladies, who have increasingly sought, with the aid of staffers and consultants, to construct their public image. According to Gutin, "the press plays a critical role in transmitting both the image and substance of a First Lady."⁸⁵ Winfield believes that first ladies have the most influence over their images when they develop a coherent strategy for dealing with the media, which includes controlling their photographic and video images, as well as their public statements.⁸⁶ First ladies have faced the added challenge of representing for the press their gender as well as their office, and thus their images are tied to both the first lady institution and American womanhood. Karrin Vasby Anderson argues that "first ladies become 'sites' for the symbolic negotiation of female identity. Discourses by and about first ladies function culturally to shape our notions of femininity and so both foster and constrain women's agency."⁸⁷ Despite the growing complexities of image negotiations, journalists play a significant part in image construction because the practice of framing allows them to explain, interpret, and even deconstruct the images presented by first ladies and presidents.

Print Media Coverage of the First Lady Institution in the Twentieth Century

Although television, radio, newsreels, and other media have all contributed to the journalistic construction of the first lady institution, this project examines articles about the first lady institution published in newspapers and women's magazines between 1900 and 2001, centering exclusively on campaign years when press

attention to first ladies grows more intensive.⁸⁸ Newspapers and magazines are important sites of information because broadcast journalists tend to get their news from their print colleagues. As Schudson points out, “Television news, even the national network news programs, are parasites of print. Rarely does a broadcast journalist pick up a story that newspapers and newsmagazines are not already on top of.”⁸⁹ Print journalism, thus, has considerable power when it comes to constructing institutions such as that of the first lady and dictating the principle frames used by broadcast journalists.

Analyzing print sources also provides a sense of continuity throughout the project. In terms of professional journalistic practice, the press, as we know it today, is very similar to its turn-of-the-century counterparts. According to Schudson, the “new model journalism,” which developed following the Civil War, popularized the interview, “a colloquy between a reporter and a public person, designed explicitly and exclusively for a newspaper readership.”⁹⁰ Significantly, the interview gave journalists the power to question public figures, as well as the power to decide what information would be included in the resulting story. Such interviews were then packaged into narrative form to attract readers, including “leads” and the inverted pyramid style. Prior to this period, stories were often organized chronologically, resulting in laundry lists of information.⁹¹ Finally, women’s pages and successful mass market magazines targeted women and became staples of the print media in the late 1800s, increasing routine news media coverage of the first lady institution by the twentieth century.⁹²

Of particular interest will be the articles that appeared during presidential campaign years. Presidential campaigns are an ideal time to examine journalistic narratives about the first lady institution because they are moments in which the past, present, and future come together as Americans reconstitute themselves as a nation.⁹³ This study will examine articles written about the first lady institution during the period ranging from June of an election year, when the focus shifts away from the primaries to the national conventions and general election, through June of the following year.⁹⁴ Specifically, the study will center on those articles that construct the first lady institution; this will include articles about former, current, and potential first ladies.⁹⁵

This study will center on two major newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and three mass market women's magazines, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *McCall's*. Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* are considered national newspapers. Their stories are often reprinted in papers nationally, thus influencing audiences across the country.⁹⁶ Because of their national status, both newspapers also employ reporters assigned to the White House press corps to cover campaigns full-time during election periods.⁹⁷ *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *McCall's* were selected because all three have consistently been among the most popular women's magazines published throughout the twentieth century.⁹⁸ Women's magazines, because of their openly gendered content, serve as a counterpoint to mainstream newspapers, which have traditionally appealed to a broader audience despite the frequent relegation of first lady news to the women's pages.

This study examines how gendered framing shaped print news coverage of the first lady institution in the twentieth century. Gendered framing draws on the various and often competing ideologies of American womanhood during particular historical moments, and in doing so guides the content of news narratives. The subjects of the stories often become representatives of social gender norms. I call this press practice *personification framing, which is the positioning of a well-known individual as the embodiment of a particular ideological performance*. A personification frame, thus, serves as an ideological short cut used by journalists to simplify, in the case of first ladies, the complexities of gender role performance, making such discussions easier to insert into news narratives. Personification framing allows journalists to reduce a gender ideology to a few key characteristics, circumventing the difficulty of dealing with complex ideologies in the limited space of a single news story. As Richard Schickel argues, “reporters want to personify events and ideas, to find the individual who can conveniently symbolize an issue and thereby render it quickly and easily comprehensible;”⁹⁹ first ladies have long served this purpose, simplifying the complexities of gender performance.¹⁰⁰

Gendered framing also influences journalists’ discussions of the institutional duties of first ladies in that the expectations regarding the roles these women perform are derived from the gender prescriptions that they personify. Such framing, which conflates the performance of institutional duties with gender performance, can be both empowering and constraining. Through press coverage, first ladies have been positioned as some of the first, and most visible, public women. By recognizing first ladies as public women, gendered celebrities, and in certain instances political

activists or political interlopers, news framing moves them beyond the confines of the private sphere, even when they are portrayed primarily as wives, mothers, and homemakers, helping to simultaneously legitimize women's presence in the public sphere while also limiting their influence therein. Meanwhile, in viewing women's traditional domestic roles as newsworthy, the press acknowledges the important social role women play, even when their primary contributions may be confined to the home. Thus, media frames at times empower women, particularly within the domestic sphere. At the same time, the focus on domestic roles reinforces the idea of separate spheres, which constrains women's public and political participation and creates double binds for women who seek to move beyond the boundaries set by gender prescriptions and media frames. Journalists' reliance on gendered framing in articles about the first lady institution highlights the complexities of gender and institutional performance.

My analysis of press coverage of the first lady institution is divided into the following chapters. Chapter One provides the study's historical context by examining the gendered press framing of the first lady institution prior to 1900. The gender ideologies of the nineteenth century, based on the concept of separate spheres, shaped journalists' framing of first ladies, which in turn aided the development of the first lady institution, with its series of duties, traditions, and expectations. In addition, press coverage made many of these first ladies nationally visible public figures during periods when women's publicity was largely condemned. In some cases, such publicity was used to criticize a first lady, but in general, these women were positioned by the press as models of American womanhood. Combined, the gender

ideologies of the nineteenth century, the duties of the first lady position, and the growing publicity surrounding first ladies provided the foundation for twentieth-century press framing of the first lady institution.

Chapter Two examines the news coverage of first ladies from 1900 to 1929. Beginning the analysis with the campaign of 1900 parallels the beginning of the modern era of American politics.¹⁰¹ This era saw the emergence of the first lady as *public woman*. The cultural debate of this era regarding women's place in American society, coupled with the growing popularity of women's magazines and women's pages, heightened the publicity surrounding the first lady institution. In the press, the nineteenth century concept of true womanhood, which defined the home as woman's proper sphere, competed with the new woman's call for the expansion of women's roles into the public sphere. While turn-of-the-century first ladies personified the ideals of true womanhood, their successors represented a balance between the true woman and the new woman, embodying the modern era's version of the "superwoman." Such gendered framing was used by journalists to explain the growing duties of the first lady institution and to legitimate the emergence of first ladies as *public women*, which played a significant role in normalizing women's growing public presence and political activity.

The impact of the Depression, World War II, and the Cold War, especially in relation to women's roles, helped shape the news narratives about the first lady institution from 1932 to 1961 and are the focus of Chapter Three. The era was dominated by an ideology of domesticity that moved beyond the pages of women's publications, pervading every aspect of private and public life. Women's roles as

wives, mothers, and household consumers were imbued with political significance, offering women a sense of *domestic empowerment* that helped recognize that the “personal is political” long before second-wave feminism. However, by limiting women to traditional roles, their political power was simultaneously contained to private sphere concerns, which would be pointed to as the root of the “feminine mystique” by second-wave feminists. For the journalists covering the first lady, many of whom were women, the first ladies of this era embodied the domestic ideal, whether by personifying social feminism or Cold War domesticity. Thus, even Eleanor Roosevelt’s precedent-breaking performance of the first lady position was framed primarily as an extension of her role as a wife and homemaker. Yet such gendered framing and the rise of the first lady as public woman in the previous period led to the emergence of specific first ladies as *gendered celebrities*. As gendered celebrities, these first ladies served as models of women’s civic engagement, which ranged from Roosevelt’s volunteer and political activities to the Cold War consumerism of Mamie Eisenhower and Jacqueline Kennedy.

Chapter Four looks at coverage from 1964 to 1977, in which the first lady institution became a site of contestation over women’s roles, reflecting the influence of the women’s liberation movement on press framing. Just as domesticity dominated the previous era, feminist ideals permeated discussions of women’s issues. In women’s magazines, the first ladies of this era, with the exception of Pat Nixon, embodied the contemporary (super)woman who successfully balanced home and family with a career and outside interests, thus supporting women’s liberation without rejecting domesticity. In contrast, Nixon represented the feminine mystique, which

often resulted in critical coverage of her more “traditional” performance of the first lady position. The increased public and political activities of these first ladies were also viewed through a feminist lens, particularly by women journalists, many of whom were sympathetic with the women’s movement, leading to the emergence of first ladies as *political activists* in press framing. Because their status as public women and gendered celebrities was now linked with their political activism, press scrutiny of first ladies increased during this period. In some articles, journalists used *iconic first ladies*, who personified historical gendered performances of the position, to gauge the activities of contemporary first ladies. Other stories reflected the ideological contestation over women’s roles that characterized this era, pitting activist women against their more traditional counterparts, which often resulted in a no-win situation for everyone involved. While the activist first ladies were judged to be *too* influential, Nixon was criticized for *not* being influential *enough*. Such critiques of the performance of the first lady position began to evidence the double binds faced by these women and pointed to a growing backlash against the second-wave of feminist activity.

Chapter Five examines the framing of the first lady institution from 1980 through 2001. By the end of the century, Americans were still debating women’s “proper” place as “family values” became a major campaign issue. The backlash against second-wave feminism saw the return of the Cold War domestic ideal and its baby boomer counterpart, new traditionalism, which were juxtaposed with the careerism of second-wave feminism, setting up a political catfight between candidates’ wives. Media framing, which throughout the century had facilitated the

emergence of first ladies as public women, gendered celebrities, and political activists, worked primarily in this era to establish boundaries that limited the gendered performance of the first lady position. Concerned with the “hidden power” of first ladies, journalists framed political wives who overstepped the boundaries of first lady and gender performance as *political interlopers* whose influence allegedly trespassed too far into the male political sphere. Drawing on iconic first ladies as boundary markers and the double binds that developed in the previous era, gendered media framing worked to contain wives who were perceived to be political interlopers. In particular, Hillary Rodham Clinton, before she even moved into the White House, aroused age-old fears of the sexualized public woman who refused to be contained and thus was a danger to her husband and her community.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, gendered framing continues to influence the coverage of the first lady institution. In the 2004 presidential campaign, gendered framing has juxtaposed the candidates’ wives. Displaying the reluctance of Edith Roosevelt and drawing favorable comparisons to Mamie Eisenhower, journalists praise current first lady Laura Bush for her “more traditional” performance of the position. In contrast, journalists compare the “outspoken” Teresa Heinz Kerry to Hillary Rodham Clinton, framing her as a potential political interloper who refuses to “stay on script” and be contained within the gendered and mediated boundaries of proper first lady performance. Using the current coverage of Bush and Kerry as a framework, the Afterword will reflect on the implications generated by this study of gendered framing, for the first lady institution, for journalists, and for political women. In the end, this study demonstrates first ladies’ unquestionable presence in

the *public*sphere through press framing; such framing likewise reveals the visible boundaries that still persist for first ladies' involvement in the *political* sphere.

Throughout the twentieth century, the press provided first ladies with a forum for becoming public women, gendered celebrities, political activists, and political interlopers. Their entrance into the public sphere via the media made first ladies among the first, and most visible, political women. Through their publicity, and as role models for American women, first ladies helped to legitimate women's participation in the public and political spheres long reserved for men. Their status as media figures empowered them with varying levels of influence. These women were granted the latitude to perform in the political sphere, provided that they confined their interests to issues affecting women and children. When first ladies were suspected of violating these boundaries, press criticism that framed them as political interlopers helped to contain them. The roots of such gendered media framing reach back to the earliest coverage of the first lady institution, back to Martha Washington's 1789 journey.

Chapter One

Representations of Womanhood in the American Press, Pre-1900

By the time Martha Washington reached the final leg of her journey from Mount Vernon to New York City, it appears she had become accustomed to seeing her name in the newspapers. On May 27, 1789, she boarded a forty-seven-foot presidential barge in Elizabethtown, New Jersey that carried her to Manhattan. In a letter to her niece, she noted that “the paper will tell you how I was complemented on my landing.”¹ But within weeks, anti-Federalist papers were criticizing rather than complimenting the president’s wife. Soon after Washington arrived, she settled into a schedule of weekly social engagements, including Friday evening receptions that she hosted. As Carl Anthony notes, Republican papers were quick to refer to the gatherings as “court-like levees” and “queenly drawing rooms.”² In a time when an accusation of royalist leanings was the ultimate insult, these comments were designed to incite the ire of Federalists.

Newspaper criticism of Washington would eventually become a campaign issue. Catherine Allgor explains that in 1792, Thomas Jefferson, through the Republican newspaper the *National Gazette*, “launched a six-month campaign against the Washington administration by attacking these events, especially Martha’s levees.” Jefferson directly charged the president’s wife with acting “too queenly,” in private and in print. Allgor asserts, “Though ostensibly a private lady, Martha bore the brunt of the criticism. Republicans lambasted her levees as ‘tending to her a supereminancy and as introducing the paraphernalia of the courts.’”³ Martha Washington was no

stranger to press coverage, and the stories about her would help establish a continuing relationship between presidents' wives and the press.

As one of the most visible women in America, the first lady has always been a popular topic of press accounts.⁴ For many journalists, the first lady position has become a barometer for measuring the shifting ideals of American womanhood. The first lady position is unique in that it calls upon women to perform the private sphere roles of wife and mother in the public spotlight, making these women public figures.⁵ The position also affords its holders an avenue for public and political participation.⁶ Thus, it is not surprising that journalists have consistently employed gender ideals in their framing of the first lady institution.

The news media are one social institution that helps shape gender norms and roles. Media critic Gaye Tuchman argues, "Americans learn basic lessons about social life from the mass media. . . . For our society, like any other society, must pass on its social heritage from one generation to the next."⁷ The mass media, according to Tuchman, are particularly influential in teaching American ideals of gender through their representation of sex-role stereotypes. These are "portrayals of sex-appropriate appearance, interests, skills, behaviors, and self-perceptions. They are more stringent than guidelines in suggesting persons *not* conforming to the specified way of appearing, feeling, and behaving are *inadequate* as males or females." Through their representations of gender in practices such as framing, journalists play an important role in shaping how Americans understand womanhood.⁸

At the same time, the ideals of American womanhood have never been static. The status and social expectations of women have fluctuated between traditions

rooted in the past and the progress of the present; these contradictions are reflected in press coverage of women, particularly first ladies. Joanne Meyerowitz argues that “mass culture is rife with contradictions, ambivalence, and competing voices. We no longer assume that any text has a single, fixed meaning for all readers, and we sometimes find within the mass media subversive, as well as repressive, potential.”⁹ Because the first lady position straddles the public and private spheres, its mediated construction serves as a site of contestation over the ideals of American womanhood. As Karrin Vasby Anderson puts it, “Historically, first ladies have functioned as ‘symbols’ of traditional white middle- to upper-class femininity in America, a condition that has both constrained and empowered them.”¹⁰

The gender ideologies that developed during the nineteenth century impacted the representations of American womanhood that appeared in newspapers and magazines, which in turn influenced the performance of the first lady institution. First ladies, because of their role, were nationally visible public figures during periods when women’s publicity was condemned.¹¹ Sometimes their publicity was turned against them, making first ladies targets of harsh criticism; in other times, their public role was justified as a requirement of their position. Regardless of the discourse’s tone, first ladies were granted access to rhetorical spaces, in this case the pages of newspapers and magazines, closed to most women.¹² The gender ideologies of the era were routinely employed by journalists to frame their stories about first ladies. What resulted is one of the many paradoxes of the first lady institution. Journalists used the first lady’s status as a public figure to construct her as a model of American

womanhood; such a focus, though, often promoted the home as woman's proper place, far away from the public spotlight.

This chapter has three goals. The first is to outline the gender ideologies that influenced definitions of womanhood throughout the 1800s and well into the twentieth century. Second, this chapter traces the development of the first lady institution, which foreshadows the roles and expectations of twentieth-century first ladies. Finally, press coverage of first ladies prior to 1900 is also discussed, with an emphasis on the gendered frames that continue to characterize coverage of the first lady institution. These three elements provide a foundation for the analysis in the following chapters of news framing of the first lady institution in the twentieth century. The following historical periods roughly coincide with shifts in gender ideologies, which impacted the performance and coverage of presidential wives.

The Era of Republican Motherhood and Parlor Politics, 1789 – 1833

Women played a significant role in the American Revolution, and continued to shape the new nation, albeit from a position that has long been devalued. As Linda Kerber notes, "Like most women in preindustrial societies, eighteenth-century American women lived in what might be called a woman's domain. Their daily activities took place within a feminine, domestic circle."¹³ The notion of a woman's domain, a separate sphere that is private, physically located in the home, and constructed in opposition to the public domain of man, can be traced back to Aristotle and has been used over the years to define, describe, and critique women's place in society.¹⁴ The concept of separate spheres has informed the gender ideologies defining American womanhood since the revolutionary era, simultaneously

constraining and empowering women. This paradox can be seen in the ideology of republican motherhood and the role of parlor politics in the fledgling Republic.

Republican Motherhood and Parlor Politics

Women's participation in the revolution disrupted the barrier between the male political world and female domestic realm;¹⁵ the ideology of republican motherhood "was an effort to bring the older version of the separation of spheres into rough conformity with the new politics that valued autonomy and individualism."¹⁶ Kerber argues that republican motherhood, which emphasized women's moral influence on men and ascribed importance to their maternal role, "recognized that women's choices and women's work did serve larger social and political purposes, and that recognition was enough to draw the traditional women's 'sphere' somewhat closer to men's 'world.'" But, she points out, the ideology rejected the feminist stance that "claimed for women a direct connection with republican political life" and instead upheld the conventional separation of spheres.¹⁷ For example, republican motherhood promoted at least a basic education for females; however, girls were taught to read and write in order to "prepare them for their role as mothers of the next generation of citizens."¹⁸ While access to education empowered women, the ideology imposed limits on that power by linking education to motherhood and containing women's knowledge within the private sphere, hence the paradox of republican motherhood.

Because republican motherhood and the notion of separate spheres recognized the home as a woman's domain, American women, particularly political wives, would play a key role in building the new nation. According to Allgor, America's founders

“had not yet developed a clear delineation between a private sphere of home, emotion, and family and a public sphere of office, bureaucracy, and business.” Because of this, “‘work’ happened in all arenas of life, especially in a town such as Washington. In a government with little mandated structure, the unofficial sphere proved as crucial as the official one.”¹⁹ Social events served as “both private events and political arenas, often at the same time,” and since women assumed the role of hostess within the home, they were key players in the “parlor politics” of the new Republic.²⁰ Allgor argues that, “in a republican culture that frowned upon official men engaging in such old-fashioned aristocratic politicking, women assumed more responsibility for creating the political machine and keeping its operations smooth.”²¹ Thus, hostessing was both a political and social role. Because hostessing was the province of women, they also bore the responsibility of balancing republican simplicity with the status symbols associated with aristocracy. This powerful position of post-revolutionary women has often been overlooked by scholars because of its association with the feminine domestic realm.²²

Early first ladies found themselves in positions that were infused with political significance, but the roles they played were often devalued or criticized. The ideology of republican motherhood and the importance of parlor politics in the new Republic were influential in the development of the first lady institution, and its resulting press coverage.

The Birth of the First Lady Institution

When Martha Washington joined her husband in New York, she knew that she would be helping her husband in his latest venture, but there was no blueprint to

follow in determining the extent of her responsibilities.²³ While the duties of the president were detailed in the Constitution, there was no mention of the role of the president's wife. Robert P. Watson claims that the tenure of Washington and other early first ladies "shaped the institution as a public ceremonial office that was responsible for social functions and hosting formal affairs of state."²⁴ The six presidential wives of this era, Martha Dandridge Custis Washington (1789-1797), Abigail Smith Adams (1797-1801), Dolley Payne Todd Madison (1809-1817), Elizabeth Kortright Monroe (1817-1825), Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams (1825-1829), and Rachel Donelson Robards Jackson (1828),²⁵ learned quickly that their private lives were now public record, and that they were expected to perform a variety of roles, including hostess, presidential helpmate, and public figure.²⁶

As noted earlier, the parlor politics of hostessing played an important role in the formative years of the United States. Allgor argues that the female relatives of political leaders, like those of farmers and shopkeepers, "participated in the family business—in this case, however, the family business was politics."²⁷ Social events served both private and political functions. According to Allgor, "Men could maintain public virtue in the official sphere while working cooperatively and politically behind the scenes," while women "used a veil of respectability to work aggressively toward their political goals."²⁸ Of the early first ladies, Dolley Madison and Louisa Catherine Adams were particularly adept at social politicking. Madison, whose social events received universally high praise, was successful because of "her ability to combine republican simplicity with federalist high style." Allgor says, "[S]he created a public space for the executive that reassured both Federalists and Republicans, while

impressing European visitors and officials with the sophistication of the new nation.”²⁹ But even Madison at times faced criticism, what Patricia Brady calls the “damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don’t factor, the hypercritical attention lavished on every aspect of presidential entertainment—too lavish, too formal, too free.”³⁰ Washington social events were heavily covered by the partisan editors, who recognized their political importance.

The behind-the-scenes activities of presidential wives were also of interest to the press. According to Watson, early spouses “forged a role as confidant and informal advisor to the president on political matters.”³¹ All of the women of this era accepted the notion that their role as helpmates involved duties that impacted their husbands’ job performance, supporting scholars’ claims that the presidency is a two-person career.³² Because the presidential workplace and residence were one in the same, notes Betty Boyd Caroli, wives had to be familiar with politics, “With a husband who ‘worked at home,’ she could not, as John Quincy Adams’ wife, Louisa, liked to point out, escape knowing something about his job—who supported him and who opposed.”³³ This knowledge was essential in social politicking, and positioned wives as partners in their husbands’ political careers.³⁴ Their political influence was often tempered by the republican motherhood notion that these women were serving as helpmates to their husbands rather than political actors in their own right, keeping their actions safely contained within the private realm. Such ideological limitations on their influence, however, did not prevent the occasional critique that wives wielded too much power. Regardless of how their performance was viewed, the helpmate and

hostess roles made first ladies more visible publicly, especially when their activities were reported in the press.

Washington realized during her journey to New York, as she attracted crowds of well-wishers and newspapermen, that she had become a public figure. According to Watson, “From that moment Lady Washington responded to her public celebrity and thus fulfilled an important role within the first presidency, one that gave further credibility to her position, the presidency, and the new nation.”³⁵ The press and public promoted the status of these early presidential wives as public figures by treating these women as newsworthy. Early first ladies were among the most visible women in the country, attracting press attention in a period when stories about women rarely appeared in partisan newspapers. However, because the press was not yet a mass media, first ladies’ publicity was often limited to the elite readers of partisan publications.

These women recognized that, paradoxically, the publicity and political considerations of their public role placed severe constraints on their private lives and personal expression. Presidents’ wives were scrutinized by both political rivals and supporters, as well as by the partisan press. In a letter to her niece, Washington complained, “I think I am more like a state prisoner than anything else, there is certain bounds set for me which I must not depart from—and as I can not doe [sic] as I like I am obstinate and stay at home a great deal.”³⁶ Abigail Adams, who called the position a “splendid misery,” noted, “I have been so used to freedom of sentiment that I know not how to place so many guards about me, as will be indispensable, to look at every word before I utter it, and to impose a silence upon myself, when I talk.”³⁷

Thus, despite being among the most recognizable women of their era, early first ladies' voices were often stifled by their status. The silence of these women gave considerable power to the partisan press to construct their images and interpret the "proper" role of the president's wife.

Partisan Press Framing of the First Lady Institution

The press of this era was characterized by its partisan nature. Editors believed their purpose was to win supporters for a particular political viewpoint; they published news from a political standpoint, defending the party's view and attacking opponents,³⁸ while politicians sought out sympathetic editors to publicize their arguments.³⁹ Stories featuring women rarely appeared in partisan publications, which according to Karen List is not surprising given women's absence from politics and partisan papers' emphasis on political information.⁴⁰ In her study of several major partisan era publications, List found that when women appeared in stories, they were usually portrayed as victims, "most likely of men from the opposing political party, but also of criminals and even the weather. Women were killed, raped, pillaged, made to work as prostitutes, beaten and terrified."⁴¹ The rare stories that discussed women asserting themselves in public were critical of their actions, often labeling them as "public women" or "Jezebels." According to Glenna Matthews, "public woman" was an "epithet for one who was seen as the dregs of society, vile, unclean" and to be a public woman "in any of the several senses of the term—was to risk the accusation of sexual impropriety."⁴² List argues that the partisan press employed a notion of separate spheres that constrained women's roles, "Women's sphere as conceptualized by the periodicals was a physical space—the home—where women were to play a

limited role not created by them but assigned to them by men.”⁴³ In the process, List notes that partisan editors often employed the rhetoric of republican motherhood as a way to promote the concept of separate spheres, “The periodicals became voices of authority in terms of disseminating a new conception of woman’s role—one that kept her in the home but elevated the significance of what she did there.” Republican motherhood recognized that women contributed to civic life by instilling democratic values in their children.⁴⁴

Gender ideology converged with journalism ideology in the framing of first ladies, whose positions made their private lives of interest to the press. As noted earlier, partisan editors were primarily interested in promoting a particular political ideology by supporting their allies and attacking the opposition. List argues that “[w]omen in the newspapers were simply used for the editors’ own political purposes, considered secondary and subservient”⁴⁵ rather than as political actors in their own right. The press framing of first ladies between 1789 and 1833 exemplifies the debate over woman’s place in the new Republic. Early presidents’ wives were generally represented in one of three ways: as queens, as republican mothers, or as “Jezebels.” Each of these press constructions reflects the politics and gender ideologies of the period. Even stories about first ladies’ fashions were imbued with political significance during the partisan era. The coverage of these early presidential wives began to shape the institutional memory of the first lady position.⁴⁶

Depending on the political perspective of the editor, treating the first lady as queen was a frame through which presidents’ wives could be praised or attacked. Because partisan era editors did not have a template to follow for covering the first

lady position, many treated the president's wife as a queen. According to Anthony, Federalist editor John Fenno institutionalized the practice of referring to Washington as "Lady Washington," a title he bestowed on all society females.⁴⁷ But Republican editors were quick to criticize the use of royal titles, pointing to "Lady Washington" as an exemplar of the monarchical leanings of the Federalists.⁴⁸ Watson notes that Abigail Adams was criticized to an even greater degree than Washington for being a royalist, and was often referred to as "Her Majesty" by Republican editors.⁴⁹ Dolley Madison was lovingly called the "Queen of Hearts," but her successor, Elizabeth Monroe, was accused of suffering from "queen fever."⁵⁰ Monroe's preference for all things French, including her clothing and the furniture in the newly redecorated White House, was criticized in the press as a sign of aristocratic airs.⁵¹ Anthony asserts that, during her time in the White House, Louisa Catherine Adams was criticized by the Jacksonian press for living in "regal magnificence." Adams fought back, writing a detailed account of her life, which appeared in the June 1827 issue of *Mrs. A.S. Colvin's Weekly Messenger*, making her the first president's wife to openly write for a publication.⁵²

Partisan editors often employed the royalty frame when discussing social events. Early first ladies sought to establish a "Republican Court" that balanced royal dignity and republican simplicity.⁵³ As noted earlier, Washington's levees became a target of partisan press criticism for awkwardly imitating European court receptions.⁵⁴ Allgor claims that Madison was the first to develop a style that appeased both Federalists and Republicans. Many of her early drawing rooms were advertised and reported on in newspapers.⁵⁵ According to Anthony, Madison's "republican court"

was national news, “*Intelligencer* stories about her wit, fashions, and parties were read across the young nation, by men and women alike.” Even anti-Madison publications at times carried flattering accounts of her popular receptions.⁵⁶ As Allgor states, the press’ royal treatment of Madison’s events helped to make republicanism, “with its particularly ideological and abstract ideals of manners, into a working reality” for Americans.⁵⁷

Even the fashion choices of first ladies had political significance during the partisan era. Like European royalty, first ladies were held up as trendsetters by the partisan press, and editors often connected their popularity to their husbands’ political fortunes. Watson declares that the first lady “is a social and cultural trendsetter, and what she wears, how she styles her hair, and what she chooses to do often ignite a popular following.”⁵⁸ Madison’s turbans became a national fashion craze, thanks in part to their descriptions in press accounts.⁵⁹ She was also the first president’s wife to grace a magazine cover, offering Americans a visual representation of the popular first lady.⁶⁰ Monroe’s French gowns were often described in detail by partisan editors, many of whom criticized her regal tastes.⁶¹ In contrast, Federalist papers praised Washington’s decision to wear American-made garments, touting her as a model of republican values for supporting her country rather than coveting the latest European fashions.⁶² Coverage of first ladies as trendsetters helped to establish them as recognizable public figures.

The first ladies of this era not only circulated in the public sphere via press coverage, but they also engaged in volunteerism, one of the few public activities deemed appropriate for women.⁶³ Partisan editors often used the values associated

with republican motherhood to frame first ladies' volunteerism, a topic that received limited coverage during this period. Stories about Washington frequently mentioned how she helped care for her husband's troops during the Revolutionary War, and noted her continuing support of veterans' causes as a symbol of her patriotism.⁶⁴ Madison was the first to have her volunteerism covered extensively by the press.⁶⁵ She served as the "First Directress" of the newly founded Washington Female Orphan Asylum, donating a cow and twenty dollars to the cause as well as making clothes for the orphans. Allgor notes, "Extensive publicity, not usually associated with female activities, surrounded the effort from the start." The *National Intelligencer* regularly advertised the organization's meetings and fundraisers. The press covered the opening of the asylum, and then continued to report on its progress in raising money.⁶⁶ Volunteerism was sanctioned by the press as an acceptable public sphere activity for women because it reflected the domesticity and patriotism of the republican motherhood ideal. In other words, volunteering was a way for women to extend their maternal caretaking skills beyond the home. This type of press coverage would continue as first ladies adopted various volunteer and social advocacy projects, and the publicity surrounding such activities would help to expand women's presence in the public spotlight.

However, because women's publicity was generally frowned upon, first ladies' status as public women was sometimes used against them. Campaign coverage during the partisan era was often extremely negative, and several presidential wives found themselves at the center of political scandals in which they were cast as "Jezebels."⁶⁷ Anthony states that during her husband's presidential campaigns, the

anti-Madison press circulated “lewd rumors of a scandalously graphic nature,” claiming that Dolley Madison was Thomas Jefferson’s mistress. Editors charged that the Madisons were childless because James was impotent and Dolley was oversexed. Other stories implied that Madison “had relations” with Democrats who could deliver electoral votes.⁶⁸ During the campaign of 1828, the Adamses were accused of having pre-marital relations by Jacksonian editors.⁶⁹ These charges were minor, though, compared to the attacks leveled by the pro-Adams press against Rachel Jackson. During the campaign of 1824, word began to spread that Jackson was still married to her abusive first husband when she married Andrew in 1791.⁷⁰ While many were aware of the situation, it did not become a major campaign issue until 1828. By then, Anthony reveals that Jackson was called a “bigamist,” “an American Jezebel,” “a convicted adulteress,” and “a profligate woman” in pamphlets and the press.⁷¹ Jackson went on to win the election, but Rachel suffered a heart attack just before Christmas. Allgor notes, “Rumor held that the slanders of the campaign had brought on Rachel’s death, shocking and shaming the Washington community, who had been joking for months about the country woman smoking her pipe in the White House drawing room.”⁷²

The partisan press established a template for covering the first lady that continues to frame coverage of the institution. As List asserts, “The groundwork for the media’s depiction of women was laid in the 1790s, almost sixty years before the women’s movement began, and the media since that time have often conveyed the same thinking on women’s place that appeared in these publications 200 years ago.”⁷³ However, the social upheaval of the following era would also impact the ways in

which journalists framed the first lady position. The Jacksonian era is credited with ushering in a new democratic ideology that championed the common man⁷⁴ while at the same time further diminishing the political activity of American women.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, conflicting notions of American womanhood competed to define women's roles. While the true womanhood ideology intensified the concept of separate spheres, the fledgling woman's rights movement advocated expansion of women's participation in the political sphere. These very different ideals of womanhood impacted the performance of the first lady position and the framing of the first lady institution.

The Emergence of True Womanhood and Woman's Rights, 1833 – 1865

The notion of separate spheres continued to inform gender ideology. Republican motherhood remained salient, particularly during the Civil War, but the emerging "cult of true womanhood" dominated discussions of woman's roles during this era, particularly in publications targeting female readers. However, the sweeping social and political changes of this period drew many women into the public sphere and eventually led to the development of the woman's rights movement, whose early leaders promoted a gender ideology that directly challenged the separation of spheres.

Defining Women's Proper Place

The ideology identified by Barbara Welter as the "cult of true womanhood" first appeared in the 1820s. With its cardinal virtues of piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness, true womanhood was based on a strict separation of the public and private spheres.⁷⁶ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell offers this description: "Man's place was the world outside the home, the public realm of politics and finance. . . . Woman's

place was home, a haven from amoral capitalism and dirty politics, where ‘the heart was,’ where the spiritual and emotional needs of husband and children were met by a ‘ministering angel.’”⁷⁷ Carl M. Degler notes that women were often referred to as “angels of the house” because of their role as moral guardians of the family.⁷⁸ Collins believes that true womanhood “was attractive to many Americans in the pre-Civil War era because it emphasized safety and control.”⁷⁹ However, many feminist scholars have viewed true womanhood as an ideology that “controlled women and narrowed their options.”⁸⁰ Mary P. Ryan argues that, because of true womanhood’s strict separation of spheres, republican motherhood lost its political importance during the antebellum era, “By popularizing the notion of a separate female sphere of discourse and social practice, the antebellum cult of domesticity distanced vital civic concerns, as well as issues of specific interest to women, from the world of open public debate.”⁸¹ True womanhood also constrained women’s rhetorical activities and agency. According to Campbell, “femininity and rhetorical action were seen as mutually exclusive. No ‘true woman’ could be a public persuader.”⁸² Women who did speak or act in public risked their reputations, unless they could prove how their actions were sanctioned by true womanhood.

While true womanhood worked to confine women to the home, it also afforded women a certain level of authority within their sphere of influence. Women were viewed as the moral superiors of men, and they were entrusted with the spiritual health of their families, an idea that would eventually justify women’s public involvement in moral reform and benevolent organizations.⁸³ When Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States in the 1830s, he observed that “although the

women . . . are confined within the narrow circle of domestic life, and their situation is in some respects one of extreme dependence, I have nowhere seen women occupying a loftier position.”⁸⁴ Matthews claims that, in the mid-1800s, true womanhood had a “favorable impact on women” because “for the first time in American history, both home and woman’s special nature were seen as uniquely valuable.”⁸⁵ Domesticity was viewed as an alternative to patriarchy, and was legitimized as a social force, both inside and outside the home.⁸⁶

Volunteerism also expanded during this era, engaging more women from various social classes in public sphere activity. In the antebellum era, “women were organized into thousands of societies for charitable purposes and a certain number for more controversial reforms like abolition.”⁸⁷ These benevolent organizations gave women experience in leadership, organizing, fundraising, and financial management, as well as offering a network of female acquaintances.⁸⁸ They also helped to neutralize the negative connotations associated with women acting outside of the private sphere.⁸⁹ The moral reform movement was one of the first to be “successfully initiated and controlled by women.” A. Cheree Carlson argues that these women “used skillful casuistic stretching of the feminine ideal to justify taking non-traditional action in the name of traditional values.”⁹⁰ Likewise, Carol Smith Rosenberg asserts that moral reformers were “the first American women to challenge their completely passive, home-oriented image.”⁹¹ Many female abolitionists also drew on the religious elements of true womanhood to justify their public sphere activities. During the Civil War, the United States Sanitary Commission, staffed primarily by women, “performed a critical role in providing food and medical

services for the soldiers.” Meanwhile, Southern women created similar organizations dedicated to the war effort.⁹² The number of voluntary associations exploded following the Civil War, as women increasingly sought activities that took them out of the home.

Women’s experiences in the abolitionist movement, particularly the obstacles they faced as public women, led to the formation of the woman’s rights movement. At the first Woman’s Rights Convention, held July 19th, 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton read the “Declaration of Sentiments,” which called for a number of reforms, including marriage law reform, property rights, and suffrage for women.⁹³ Early leaders, including Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, and Angelina Grimke, promoted a natural rights philosophy which viewed women and men as equals,⁹⁴ a viewpoint that contradicted true womanhood. After the Civil War, when the Fourteenth Amendment added the word “male” to the Constitution in relation to citizenship and voting rights, movement leaders focused their energies on the suffrage issue. The presence of an active woman’s movement challenged not only laws, but the gender ideologies that dictated women’s roles in society.⁹⁵ These competing ideals of public versus private womanhood can be seen in the performances of the first lady position during this era.

The Antebellum First Lady Institution

Most of the presidential wives of this era were less active and less influential than either their predecessors or successors. As a result, Watson notes, “The roles and responsibilities during this time were not expanded, and the institution was much less visible than it was during the earlier period.”⁹⁶ Ten different presidents served

between 1833 and 1865. Two of them, Andrew Jackson (1829-1837) and his successor Martin Van Buren (1837-1841), were widowers. Another, James Buchanan (1857-1861), was a bachelor. Five presidential wives claimed poor health and delegated their first lady duties to stand-ins, including Anna Tuthill Symmes Harrison (1841), Letitia Christian Tyler (1841-1842), Margaret Mackall Smith Taylor (1849-1850), Abigail Powers Fillmore (1850-1853), and Jane Means Appleton Pierce (1853-1857).⁹⁷ The remaining first ladies of this era, Julia Gardiner Tyler (1844-1845), Sarah Childress Polk (1845-1849), and Mary Todd Lincoln (1861-1865), accepted their role and the inevitable publicity that went along with being first lady. This period was influential in the development of the institution, despite the limited expansion of the first lady's roles. Elizabeth Lorelei Thacker-Estrada argues that antebellum first ladies "helped to establish a 'traditional' approach to the office, that of a publicly passive and seemingly nonpolitical first lady,"⁹⁸ a performance which reflected the true womanhood ideology.

The more publicly active antebellum first ladies, Tyler, Polk, and Lincoln, continued to play the roles of hostess and helpmate established by early first ladies. All three women were recognized for their hostessing, and sought to use social events to garner support for their husbands, as their predecessors had done. The youthful Tyler was well aware of the importance of both image-making and parlor politics; in her brief time in the White House, she used hostessing to bolster her husband's, and her own, popularity.⁹⁹ The Polks entertained regularly, often holding two public receptions a week.¹⁰⁰ Lincoln believed that keeping a regular schedule of entertaining, even as the Civil War loomed, was important in maintaining a sense of stability and

presidential authority. However, the plan backfired, and her hostessing became a frequent subject of press attacks.¹⁰¹ Along with social politicking, these women also served as advisors behind the scenes. They all showed an interest in politics, with Polk acknowledged as being the most knowledgeable and influential. Thacker-Estrada argues that, “As performed by Sarah Polk, the role of political partner and advisor took the socially accepted form of being a helpmate to her husband.”¹⁰²

While most of the wives of the antebellum era were rarely mentioned in the press, Tyler, Polk, and Lincoln were again the exceptions. Tyler actively sought publicity, and had her own unofficial press agent.¹⁰³ Polk received “universally good press from both sides of the fence,”¹⁰⁴ praised for both her intelligence and for exemplifying “the elegance, charm, and dignity that marked the pinnacle of true womanhood.”¹⁰⁵ In contrast, Lincoln was the target of some of the most virulent negative press coverage of any first lady in history. She seemed to attract attention for all of the wrong things. Caroli claims, “If Mary Lincoln had diverted her attention from parties and clothes (subjects that appeared frivolous to many war-sufferers) and concentrated on appearing supportive and protective of her husband, she might have disarmed her critics.”¹⁰⁶ Even the ideologies of republican motherhood and true womanhood were not enough to frame Lincoln’s activities in a positive light.

True womanhood may have limited press coverage of most antebellum first ladies, but it prized two roles that would become increasingly important in the press framing of future first ladies: wife and homemaker. Thacker-Estrada argues, “In the age of the ‘cult of domesticity,’ the fundamental but often overlooked role of wife could be quite influential and powerful.”¹⁰⁷ She claims that Margaret Taylor, Abigail

Fillmore, and Jane Pierce, along with Sarah Polk, “contributed to their husbands’ administrations in varying degrees as loyal wives, homemakers, hostesses, cultural arbiters, intercessors, helpmates, and advisors.”¹⁰⁸ Because true womanhood demanded that women avoid publicity, the roles most of these first ladies played received little attention from the press. In later years, the roles of wife and homemaker would receive considerably more press coverage.

Framing the Antebellum First Lady

Unlike partisan papers, which rarely mentioned women unless it was in connection with politics, this period saw the rise of the penny press with its stories of average men *and women*, who increasingly became both writers and subjects of newspaper content. Several women broke into the field of journalism during this era, including the first woman to work full-time for a newspaper,¹⁰⁹ the first female foreign correspondents,¹¹⁰ the first women to cover Washington, D.C.,¹¹¹ and the first women columnists.¹¹² However, the majority of women who became journalists during this era worked for the newly developed society and women’s pages, as well as for the growing numbers of women’s magazines. These publications were developed specifically to satisfy the growing numbers of advertisers who wished to court female consumers. According to Maurine H. Beasley and Sheila J. Gibbons, some 60 magazines aimed at women were founded between 1830 and 1850. Many of these publications featured female editors and writers.¹¹³ As a result, articles about fashion, beauty, and society news became press staples in an effort to attract women readers. However, despite the general increase of women’s news, first lady coverage during this era diminished, with a few exceptions, due to the women who held the

position. The press continued to treat first ladies like royalty, covering their social and political activities. Whether focusing on their fashion or the scandals surrounding them, journalists drew upon gender ideologies to frame coverage of the first lady institution while simultaneously using first ladies to gauge the often competing ideals of American womanhood.

Despite the democratic spirit of the Jacksonian era and the penny press, many journalists continued to frame first ladies as American royalty; first ladies like Julia Tyler and Mary Lincoln even courted this coverage. This frame was especially prevalent in stories about first ladies' appearance and fashion. Tyler made history by hiring a press agent, *New York Herald* writer F.W. Thomas, to promote her activities,¹¹⁴ a move which evidences her understanding of the importance of image-management and self-promotion. According to Anthony, Thomas wrote glowing stories about her youth and beauty, calling her the ““Lovely Lady Presidentress”” and ““the most accomplished woman of her age.”” These stories, which Anthony claims represented Tyler as American royalty, reached a national audience because of the *Herald's* huge circulation.¹¹⁵ Lincoln was also interested in promoting a regal image, which she believed would help to legitimize the White House in the eyes of visiting dignitaries.¹¹⁶ Shortly after Lincoln entered the White House, *Leslie's Weekly* praised her regal tastes: “No European court or capital can compare with the President's circle and the society of Washington this winter in the freshness and beauty of its women.” The magazine also complemented the new first lady fashions for “displaying the exquisitely moulded shoulders and arms of our fair ‘Republican Queen,’ . . . absolutely dazzling.”¹¹⁷ Both Tyler and Lincoln were praised by the press

for their beauty and style, positioning the first lady as a trendsetter for American women and reinforcing the notion that physical attractiveness is a defining quality of womanhood.¹¹⁸

While royal comparisons persisted, particularly in the society columns of the penny press, there was a shift from the frame of queen to that of lady, a Victorian ideal tied to true womanhood. According to Katherine Fishburn, the lady represented all that “was chaste, unworldly, and moral in American culture,” and true womanhood, which praised piety, purity, domesticity, and subservience, “promulgated the lady as the ideal type of American woman.”¹¹⁹ Press coverage of Sarah Polk reflected the discourse of true womanhood, which is interesting given scholars’ claims that she was her husband’s most trusted advisor and one of the most politically astute women to become first lady.¹²⁰ Polk was a strict Calvinist who was praised by the religious press for banning drinking and dancing during her time in the White House.¹²¹ Caroli argues that Polk received universally positive press coverage, “Capital social arbiters who sized up her ‘feminine charms’ could hardly fault her, and the more intellectually inclined, who wanted a thinking woman in the White House, apparently approved of her too.”¹²² Anthony cites an editorial in a New York paper that noted the “legitimate influence of a pious wife . . . his guardian angel.”¹²³ Thus, despite her political activities, Polk’s piety made her a model of the true woman.

The focus on society news in the penny press intensified interest in White House social activities as well. John Tyler caused quite a stir in the press when he became the first president to wed while in office, marrying 24-year-old New York

socialite Julia Gardiner in June of 1844.¹²⁴ Like her predecessors from the partisan era, Tyler used social events, which were covered by all of the major papers, to garner support for her husband's policies. She hosted several social events that helped her husband successfully lobby for the annexation of Texas, as well as a grand final ball that reclaimed her husband's social status after being turned out of his own party.¹²⁵ Abigail Fillmore also garnered press coverage when she invited public figures to the White House during her tenure, including singer Jenny Lind and authors William Thackeray, Charles Dickens, and Washington Irving.¹²⁶ Coverage of such events established the White House as the center of Washington society and cast the first lady as a society doyenne.

Along with the increased attention to the first lady's role as hostess and social arbiter, the press included more coverage of their volunteerism. The values of republican motherhood continued to legitimate first ladies' philanthropic activities during this era. Lincoln was praised by some newspapers as a patriot for her volunteerism during the war. Gould explains that the *Washington Star* characterized her as a motherly figure in a story about her visits to Union hospitals, where she delivered flowers, food, and sympathy to wounded and dying soldiers. Some papers also noted her personal donations to the Sanitary Commission, which raised money for soldiers, and her fundraising efforts on behalf of the Contraband Relief Association that provided aid to the freed slaves who flooded the nation's capitol.¹²⁷

Ironically, the values of republican motherhood were also used to criticize Lincoln's performance of the first lady position.¹²⁸ Although Lincoln was initially praised for her hostessing skills, she faced harsh criticism from female journalists

who denounced her expensive clothing and extravagant entertaining as unpatriotic and selfish. Columnist Mary Clemmer Ames claimed that while American women made bandages for wounded soldiers, the president's wife spent her time traveling between Washington and New York, making extravagant purchases. Eleanor Donnelly published a poem, "The Lady-President's Ball," which told of a fictitious soldier dying in the street as a party raged on in the White House. However, when Lincoln cancelled weekly band concerts, she was also criticized, placing her in a no-win situation. One of the most crushing rumors printed was that she abused her children.¹²⁹ The stories that accused her of being a frivolous woman and a bad mother were just as critical of her performance of the first lady role as those that claimed she was a traitor and southern sympathizer because some of her male relatives were fighting for the Confederacy.¹³⁰

As the lineage of the first lady institution extended, journalists started to construct the collective memory of the institution through stories that focused on the history of the institution and the links between past and present. Julia Tyler was often compared to Dolley Madison by reporters, in part because of her close relationship with the former first lady. According to Anthony, Tyler herself sought to publicize the relationship, insisting to her press agent at one point, "Can't you get into the New York papers that Mrs. President Tyler is coming to town accompanied by Mrs. Ex-President Madison?"¹³¹ Tyler recognized that linking herself publicly with her popular predecessor would only help to increase her own popularity. Like Madison, Tyler continued to garner press coverage that tied her to the first lady institution until her death, and often commented on her successors when interviewed.¹³² Sarah Polk

remained popular with the press following her White House tenure. Reporters often visited her Tennessee home to seek her opinions on political matters and her successors. To this day, journalists continue to refer to Mary Lincoln as an exemplar of everything that a first lady should *not* be.¹³³ Such media coverage impacts the collective memory of the institution and influences future reporting on the first lady institution. By contrasting “proper” and “improper” performances of the position and positioning certain first ladies as historical role models to be either emulated or rejected, journalists help to shape expectations regarding first lady performance.

The Civil War brought about great social change in the United States, particularly for women. As women expanded their social roles and challenged the boundaries of the private and public spheres, journalists would take an even more active role in defining the first lady institution within a context of contestation over women’s roles in American culture.

True Womanhood, New Womanhood, and Social Reform, 1865 – 1900

Although the ideology of true womanhood dominated the pages of newspapers and the growing numbers of women’s magazines at mid-century, the daily experiences of American women were increasingly taking them out of their homes and into the public spaces. The Civil War “encouraged many women to give their first speech, organize their first club, or take their initial trip out of home territory.”¹³⁴ Whether shopping at a department store, going to the theater, or working at a settlement house, women were becoming more visible in public life.¹³⁵

The True Woman, the New Woman, and the Female Reformer

True womanhood continued to shape discussions of women's roles in the late nineteenth century; however, the true woman of the Gilded Age was very different from her antebellum sister, particularly as portrayed in the press.¹³⁶ True womanhood was championed by the mass market women's magazines and women's pages that proliferated following the Civil War, in part because the ideology helped to promote the rapidly expanding consumer culture.¹³⁷ Katherine Fishburn argues, "Rather than functioning as producers of goods, women, in the nineteenth century, became consumers."¹³⁸ Women's domestic role made them responsible for the household shopping, drawing them into the marketplace, which was part of the public sphere previously closed to white middle- and upper-class women. Jennifer Scanlon says that women's publications, aimed primarily at white women, "promoted for women readers traditional 'women's values' and full participation in the consumer society. Contradictions naturally followed." For example, Scanlon notes that while advocating domesticity and women's place in the private sphere, women's magazines in the 1880s and 1890s simultaneously encouraged women's participation in the public sphere of commerce, thus expanding women's social roles.¹³⁹ By tying true womanhood to consumer culture, the boundaries of the domestic sphere became much more elastic than they had been previously. Such ideological repositioning allowed true womanhood to remain a viable ideology in the debate over women's roles.¹⁴⁰

The redefined true womanhood was still viewed as restrictive by woman's rights leaders like Anthony and Stanton, who continued to work on behalf of suffrage and other women's issues. The energies of suffragists were focused on two fronts:

lobbying for a constitutional amendment and stumping for state propositions granting women the vote.¹⁴¹ Egalitarianism, which promoted gender equality, continued to be the dominant ideology of the movement.¹⁴² Suffrage leaders routinely experienced discrimination and ridicule, especially when they spoke in public. Women's rhetorical action was still viewed as improper, a violation of the separate spheres. As Campbell describes it, "a woman who spoke displayed her 'masculinity'; that is, she demonstrated that she possessed qualities traditionally ascribed only to males. When a woman spoke, she enacted her equality, that is, she herself was proof that she was as able as her male counterparts to function in the public sphere."¹⁴³ Hence, suffrage activity continued to be viewed as suspect by both men and women because it was such a far departure from true womanhood.¹⁴⁴

Neither the ideology of true womanhood nor the woman's movement could fully account for the roles women found themselves playing in a rapidly changing society, thus a new ideology was needed. Industrialization, urbanization, and immigration from 1865 through the turn of the century dramatically altered the social, cultural, and political landscape of the United States, and American women were greatly impacted by these developments.¹⁴⁵ The "new woman" ideology, which emerged during these years, claimed the middle ground between true womanhood and suffrage. Combining true womanhood's moral authority and concern for family with the public activism of suffrage leaders, the new woman was interested in social reform and personal improvement. Caroli asserts that the "'new woman' meant a serious woman concerned with substantive matters such as reform rather than empty party-giving. It meant having opinions and an identity of one's own."¹⁴⁶ Many of the

college educated women of the era believed that the ideology of the new woman reflected their experiences.¹⁴⁷

New womanhood was promoted by the growing numbers of women who were attracted to reform activities like the temperance and settlement house movements. The Women's Christian Temperance Union, under Frances Willard's leadership, became the largest women's organization in the nation, lobbying for a broad welfare program.¹⁴⁸ By appealing to women's moral authority and domestic concerns, the W.C.T.U. was able to attract women from various walks of life and convince them to support various reform efforts, including suffrage.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, the settlement house movement literally channeled women's domestic talents into social reform efforts. By the end of the century, progressive movements drew countless women into the public sphere. Meanwhile, the growing number of women's clubs and literary societies, many of which were more politically active than their title suggests, meant that, by the end of the century, an overwhelming majority of women from all walks of life were involved in women's club activities.¹⁵⁰ Women's participation in women's clubs and reform movements in the late nineteenth century was often justified as a logical extension of true womanhood's moral influence. Estelle Freedman argues that, in order to bridge the separate spheres, female reformers created a "public female sphere" in which they established their own networks, managed their own organizations, and commanded an actual physical space as well as a figurative spot in the male-dominated public sphere. This space allowed women to reconcile conflicting gender prescriptions and be publicly active true women.¹⁵¹

Transitional Spouses and the Evolution of the First Lady Institution

The first ladies of this period were a mix of true and new women. In general, they were well-educated, intellectually gifted and sociable.¹⁵² Yet many scholars express disappointment with these women's performance of the first lady position, referring to the "unfulfilled possibilities"¹⁵³ of this era and the "limited promise of the 'new woman.'"¹⁵⁴ Watson says, although these first ladies were generally more active and influential than their immediate predecessors, they "fell short of their potential; they did not make lasting impressions on the first ladyship or on the status of women in U.S. society."¹⁵⁵ Caroli puts it this way: "The nation's Head Housekeeper might present a more serious, mature image but she was not really a 'new woman.'"¹⁵⁶

However, news coverage of the first lady tells a different story. The women of this era, with the exception of Eliza Johnson who proclaimed herself "an invalid,"¹⁵⁷ expanded the duties of the first lady, providing the foundation for the development of the modern institution. By the end of the nineteenth century, first ladies were more than just hostesses, helpmates, and volunteers; they were White House managers and preservationists, campaigners, and social advocates. Meanwhile, more attention was paid to their roles as supportive wives and mothers. They also routinely dealt directly with the press and appeared more often in public than their predecessors. The seven women who occupied the White House at the end of the nineteenth century, Eliza McCardle Johnson (1865-1869), Julia Dent Grant (1869-1877), Lucy Ware Webb Hayes (1877-1881), Lucretia Rudolph Garfield (1881), Frances Clara Folsom Cleveland (1886-1889, 1893-1897), Caroline Lavinia Scott Harrison (1889-1892), and Ida Saxton McKinley (1897-1901), often found themselves at the center of the social debate over women's roles.

The first ladies of this era took different approaches to their roles, but each contributed to the increasing public visibility of the position. Anthony asserts that Grant “steadfastly upheld her belief that the role of First Lady was public and must be acknowledged as such.” Grant took an active role in creating and promoting herself and the first lady position. She was the first to always recognize reporters, and she also issued the first press release. She attended several ceremonial functions, including the opening of the Philadelphia Exposition in 1876, marking the U.S. centennial, because she recognized the publicity opportunities of such events.¹⁵⁸ Hayes traveled across the country with her husband, giving the thousands that turned out a chance to see the president’s wife firsthand. For others, Hayes’ image was readily available in the press. Caroli argues that hers “became the most familiar woman’s face in America. Advertisers used her picture, without her approval, to promote household products, and popular magazines carried photographs of her.”¹⁵⁹ Her popularity would be mirrored in the tenure of Cleveland, whose image was appropriated to sell numerous products.¹⁶⁰ She was frequently chased by photographers who, like today’s paparazzi, went to extreme lengths to capture a picture of the popular young first lady. She also issued a press release in response to reports that she was an abused wife.¹⁶¹ The volunteer activities of both Hayes and Cleveland also received press attention, helping to create the public expectation that the first lady support a charitable cause.¹⁶² Garfield was also “quite frequently in the public eye,” often accompanying her husband on tours of government facilities, including a naval shipyard.¹⁶³

First ladies also became more visible through participation in their husband's campaigns. Garfield was the first candidate's wife to appear on a campaign poster,¹⁶⁴ while McKinley was the first to have her image appear on campaign buttons, and was also the subject of the first campaign biography of a candidate's wife.¹⁶⁵ Harrison and McKinley were active in the front porch campaigns of their husbands, "entertaining guests" and "posing for the media."¹⁶⁶ Harrison reviewed almost daily campaign parades, which featured marchers numbering upwards of 75,000.¹⁶⁷ Despite her poor health, McKinley often "emerged from the house to pose for photographs with various delegations who came to pay their respects to her husband."¹⁶⁸ Stories about candidates' wives became common features of newspapers and magazines. These articles usually focused on their roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers, outlining their qualifications for the position of the first lady. Such stories would become staples of campaign coverage in the twentieth century.

Ironically, the increased publicity of the first lady institution was accompanied by an intensified focus on the first lady's domesticity and femininity. Gender ideologies were used by the press to justify the first lady's public activities, and several first ladies of this era were constructed as personifications of a particular ideal of American womanhood. The language of true womanhood, the spirit of the new woman, and the patriotism of the republican mother were all used to frame the public and private activities of first ladies at the end of the nineteenth century.

New Journalism and the New Woman: Framing First Ladies

The conflicting ideologies of womanhood shaped the representations of women in the press during this era. Both true womanhood and the emerging new

woman found voice in newspapers and women's magazines. Coverage of the first lady institution intensified substantially during the era of new journalism because of factors including the expansion of women's pages, the proliferation of women's magazines, and the marketability of women's news,¹⁶⁹ as well as heightened visibility of first ladies.

The expansion of women's publications following the Civil War increased both the number of female journalists and the coverage of women. By the end of the nineteenth century, more women worked for the press than ever before, and some of the most prominent journalists of this era were women.¹⁷⁰ Several of the society reporters and female columnists who got their start before the Civil War were now among the highest paid journalists at their respective publications,¹⁷¹ and women journalists formed their own professional organizations.¹⁷² By the 1890s, women's magazines were proven commodities, reaching millions of readers.¹⁷³ The increasing importance of women's consumerism led newspapers to focus more attention on their female readers, creating evening and Sunday editions that targeted women in order to accommodate the increasing number of advertisements aimed at female consumers.¹⁷⁴ These issues were filled mainly with department store advertisements, all hoping to attract women as customers. They also expanded the society and women's pages in order to carry more articles about fashion, beauty, and health, subjects all linked with advertising.¹⁷⁵ These articles promoted domesticity and the true woman ideology in an effort to cultivate women as consumers.¹⁷⁶

In their stories about the first lady institution, the press continued to use frames prevalent in earlier coverage. The focus on women as consumers encouraged

stories about first ladies' appearance and fashion, sometimes using first ladies to promote various products. The private lives of presidential couples were increasingly of interest to reporters, recalling in some cases the partisan era's focus on scandal. The political activities of first ladies, like volunteerism, also received more attention during this era as journalists began making more connections between the public performance of the first lady position and gender ideals.

First ladies had long been viewed as style setters, and the increased use of illustrations and photographs in newspapers and magazines, coupled with advertisers' desires to promote women's consumerism, heightened the attention paid to first lady fashion and appearance. When Julia Grant issued the first press release as a first lady, she declared that she was not interested in being a "fashion dictator,"¹⁷⁷ but that did not keep her fashions from being discussed in the press. Lucy Hayes also did not wish to be a trendsetter, yet her prim and proper style was the focus of much of the early coverage of her. According to Emily Apt Greer, the *New York Herald* described her as "singularly youthful" and a "most attractive and lovable woman."¹⁷⁸ Mary Clemmer Ames covered the Hayes inauguration in her column, praising her prim appearance. She compared her eyes to those of "the Madonna" and wondered how fashion magazines like *Vanity Fair* would represent the new first lady, asking would they "friz that hair? powder that face? . . . bare those shoulders? shorten those sleeves? hide John Wesley's discipline out of sight, as it poses and minces before the 'first lady of the land?'"¹⁷⁹ Ames' description positioned Hayes as a model of true womanhood, while simultaneously constructing her as a public figure. Popular magazines frequently featured photographs of Hayes, often posing with her children;

advertisers also used her image without her permission to promote their products.¹⁸⁰ Frances Cleveland faced a similar problem. Weeklies like *Leslie's Illustrated* and *Harper's* could not get enough of the young first lady; advertisers unscrupulously reproduced her likeness to sell just about every product imaginable, including soaps, perfumes, liver pills, ashtrays and even women's underwear.¹⁸¹ Women imitated her hairstyle and her fashions, and people lined up by the thousands at White House receptions and public appearances just to catch a glimpse of her.¹⁸² Both Hayes and Cleveland were treated by the press as models of consumption, foreshadowing celebrity coverage that emerged during the Cold War era.

Several first ladies were held up as models of true womanhood in articles that praised their piety and purity. The *Philadelphia Times*, cited in Caroli, lauded Hayes as a "true woman" for her pious dress and the lack of pretension at her White House events.¹⁸³ Ames continually held Hayes up as a model of true womanhood in her columns, noting her religious devotion.¹⁸⁴ Ida McKinley was also positioned by the press as a true woman. Following her husband's election, popular magazines published numerous posed photographs of the new first lady and articles praising her womanliness and virtue.¹⁸⁵ An article in *Harper's Bazaar* noted, "Mrs. McKinley's faithful presence beside her husband at state functions, her frail form clad in the rich, ceremonious dress proper to the occasion, describes a gentle martyrdom, the indescribable pathos of which is written in the expression of her sweet pale face." The article further described McKinley as "a revelation of the glory of the woman at home" and a "First Lady who exalts mere womanliness."¹⁸⁶ At the end of the nineteenth century, McKinley's press construction reflected the true woman ideal.

The publicity given to these so perceived true women by the press helped to carve a space for women in the public sphere that would be explored further by the first ladies of the early twentieth century.

Domesticity, another key theme of true womanhood, would also frame the coverage of first ladies. In the campaign of 1880, newspapers promoted the Garfields as the ideal nineteenth-century couple. Caroli states that the Republican Party literature bragged that Lucretia Garfield had “the domestic tastes and talents which fitted her equally to preside over the home of a poor college president and that of a famous statesman.”¹⁸⁷ When Garfield decided to redecorate the White House to reflect the history of the mansion, she promoted her plans in the press.¹⁸⁸ Similarly, Caroli maintains that Caroline Harrison was referred to by her contemporaries as the “best housekeeper the White House has ever known.” The press touted her domesticity, which included her plans for a major White House renovation.¹⁸⁹ When Harrison decided to renovate the White House, she, like Garfield a decade before her, used the press to lobby Congressional support for the renovation.¹⁹⁰ Such stories presenting first ladies as White House homemaker would start a trend that would stretch well into the twentieth century.

True womanhood’s emphasis on domesticity and the private sphere, coupled with the fact that the White House serves as both a private residence and a public place, in some ways legitimated stories about the private lives of presidents and their families. Coverage of life inside the White House intensified the spotlight on presidents *and* first ladies. Articles about the Clevelands were representative of this type of news framing. When bachelor president Grover married twenty-two year old

Frances in June 1886, the newspapers followed the couple's every move.¹⁹¹ The press was barred from the White House wedding, but the story made the front page around the nation. Eager reporters followed the couple on their honeymoon, hiding in trees trying to get pictures of the newlyweds.¹⁹² A few years later, Cleveland staunchly defended her husband during a campaign scandal. In 1888, rumor spread that Grover beat his young wife. In response, Watson reports that Cleveland issued the second press release in first lady history, calling the reports “wicked and heartless lies” and said she wished women “no greater blessing than their homes and lives be as happy and their husbands may be as kind, attentive, considerate, and affectionate as mine.”¹⁹³ By highlighting the relationships of presidential couples, newspapers promoted first ladies as traditional wives while simultaneously recognizing them as public figures in their own right.

Despite the dominance of the true woman ideal, the increasing involvement of middle-class women in social movements heightened journalists' interest in the private and public activities of first ladies.¹⁹⁴ The image-making activities of the women of this era also prompted the press to pay more attention to first ladies' roles as advisor and presidential surrogate. Hayes, the first college graduate to become first lady, was recognized for her political intelligence and reported to be one of her husband's respected advisors. Greer reports on an article in the *National Union*, “Mrs. Hayes is said to be a student of politics and to talk intelligently upon their [sic] changing phases.”¹⁹⁵ Hayes was one of the earliest first ladies to travel regularly, sometimes serving as a surrogate for her husband, expanding the press coverage of the position. Anthony reports that when the Hayeses traveled through the South in an

effort to reunify the country, the *Richmond Dispatch* reported, “Mrs. Hayes has won the admiration of people wherever she has been in the recent tours of the President.”¹⁹⁶ Garfield was also her husband’s trusted advisor. According to Anthony, one journalist noted Garfield was “in all senses the ‘helpmeet’ of her husband, his companion in all sorts of studies and reading, his confidante and advisor in all things.” Ames, also quoted in Anthony, observed that Garfield had “a strength of unswerving absolute rectitude her husband has not and never will have.”¹⁹⁷

The frame of the new woman was most often employed to describe the volunteerism of first ladies during this era. Hayes was linked to the temperance movement. Although she refused to publicly support the W.C.T.U., the organization used Hayes’ likeness to promote their cause by commissioning a portrait of the first lady, which included a symbol of the temperance movement in the background. According to Margaret Truman, Ames helped avert criticism of the portrait by arguing in her column that the portrait be considered a “a tribute to Mrs. Hayes—to the grace and graciousness of her womanhood.”¹⁹⁸ Cleveland represented the new woman ideal. A Wells College graduate, she balanced her home life with a concern for social reform efforts. The press of the era noted that rather than championing a specific cause, Cleveland supported several, including the W.C.T.U.’s “Hope and Help” campaign, the Washington Home for Friendless Colored Girls, the Colored Christmas Club, and the Cincinnati Orchestra Association.¹⁹⁹ Despite her domestic public persona, Caroline Harrison was deeply interested in politics and was an ardent advocate of many women’s issues. She was the first president’s wife to publicly

associate herself with struggling women's organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution, and her support garnered needed publicity for such groups.²⁰⁰

As the lineage of the first lady institution extended, journalists had more history to draw from to construct their narratives about the position. Simultaneously, the image-making activities of some first ladies encouraged coverage that highlighted the history of the institution. Grant often avoided journalists' criticism by orchestrating press events that helped ensure a positive portrayal of the first lady. When Julia Tyler visited the White House in 1871, reporters followed the former first lady as she gave a portrait of herself to Grant to be hung in the White House, marking the start of the first ladies portrait collection. A reception was later held in Tyler's honor, and reporters remarked on the two Julias standing side by side in the receiving line.²⁰¹ Events like this encouraged the press to construct the institutional memory of the first lady institution. The number of articles comparing candidates' wives during campaigns also increased in this era. In the campaign of 1876, for example, the serious Hayes was contrasted with the fun-loving Grant; reporters speculated on how the difference in their personalities would impact the role of the first lady.²⁰²

By 1900, journalists had a century of experience in covering the first lady institution, and many of the trends of previous years coalesced by the end of the century. While several themes carried over from earlier eras, new journalism heightened the publicity surrounding the position, accentuating the various roles played by first ladies. The popularity of women's pages and magazines created a market for women's news, and first ladies helped to fill these pages. At the same time, the competing ideals of the true and new woman were used by journalists to

frame, and scrutinize, the private and public activities of first ladies. To an even greater extent than in previous years, journalists positioned first ladies as representatives of various interpretations of the ideals of American womanhood.

Conclusion

Since the birth of this nation, the notion of separate public and private spheres has dominated discussions of gender roles in the United States. American women have subsequently adopted, promoted, questioned, and rejected the gender ideologies that have sought to define their lives. Yet the notion of an ideal American woman persists, thanks in part to women's publications which use this ideal, no matter how unrealistic, to frame articles about women. First ladies, in particular, are subject to this framing because of their visibility and the gendered aspects of their position. This chapter's discussion of competing gender ideologies, the development of the first lady position, and press framing of the institution lays the groundwork for the analysis of the press constructions of the first lady institution in the twentieth century. There are four key points that inform the following chapters.

First, the metaphor of separate spheres plays a significant role in shaping gender roles. The one element that each of the gender ideologies reviewed has in common is the reference to a public and private sphere, each of which is defined by gender, race, class, and physical location. Republican motherhood and true womanhood used the separation of spheres to distinguish between the duties of women and men, and to highlight women's realm of influence. These ideologies both empowered and inhibited women by allocating them power, yet dictating that they could only wield that power within the confines of the home or philanthropic

extensions of the domestic sphere. The natural rights philosophy promoted by early woman's rights leaders did not reject the notion of separate spheres outright, but instead demanded women's access to the public sphere. These women knew firsthand the limitations on women's public activity because they were themselves constrained by social norms and laws aimed at keeping women out of the public sphere. The new woman, and the revised true woman of the late nineteenth century, sought a more indirect route into the public sphere by stretching the boundaries of the private sphere into public spaces and creating a "female public sphere." The concept of separate spheres continues to influence gender ideology and American life. Kerber explains why the metaphor remains resonant today, "For all our vaunted modernity, for all that men's 'spheres' and women's 'spheres' now overlap, vast areas of our experience and consciousness do not overlap. The boundaries may be fuzzier, but our private spaces and our public spaces are still in many important senses gendered."²⁰³

Second, gender ideologies are not static, and they are not absolute. Michael Calvin McGee asserts that ideology "is dynamic and a *force*, always resilient, always keeping itself in some consonance and unity, but not always the *same* consonance and unity."²⁰⁴ Gender ideologies, like true womanhood, have adjusted to social and cultural changes in order to remain viable, and they continue to alter in order to accommodate the cultural shifts of the twentieth century. Women's lived experiences and the ideals of American womanhood were often at odds. As Anne Firor Scott points out, if gender ideologies are placed on a continuum, most women would fall somewhere in-between "feminist" and "traditional" values, "often holding some part of each set of values simultaneously."²⁰⁵ This was often true of most first ladies.

Third, by the end of the nineteenth century, the foundation for the first lady institution had been established, which shaped both the collective memory of the first lady position and future expectations of presidents' wives. First ladies were expected to perform a variety of duties, many of which straddled the private and public spheres. The media memories of their performances helped to define both proper and improper performances of the first lady position. According to Thacker-Estrada, "Although the public sphere of men and the private sphere of women were supposedly sharply delineated, they strongly influenced each other in the executive mansion, both the office and the home of the president."²⁰⁶ Meanwhile, first ladies were required to perform their duties in the public spotlight amid much public and press scrutiny. Wertheimer notes that "no first lady has ever received unanimous acclaim for her performance."²⁰⁷ News articles support this statement. As the public visibility of first ladies increased, so did the press coverage of the institution. Meanwhile, the publicity of the position via the press helped to increase the visibility of the institution.

Fourth, and finally, press framing of the first lady conflates the performance of the first lady's duties with performances of gender. While the royalty frames of the early Republic gave way to descriptions of ladylike true women, press frames have always included a gendered element. These frames have reflected social, political, and historical conditions while reifying the prominent gender ideologies of the various eras. This trend intensified at the end of the nineteenth century as the publicity surrounding first ladies increased, and continued throughout the next century, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Two

First Lady as Public Woman, 1900-1929

“Who will be the First Lady of the Land the next four years?” According to a *Harper’s Bazaar* article of August 1900, that was “the paramount woman question of the pending Presidential campaign.” The author of the story, which compared the candidates’ wives, stated, “The election of Mrs. McKinley or Mrs. Bryan means elevating to a place of eminent dignity and importance a typical American woman, of contrasting schools of culture.”¹ These contrasts were evidenced for the press in each woman’s performance of gender, and the gender ideologies of true womanhood and the new woman were used to frame each woman.

The story positioned each woman as a personification of gender ideology; Ida McKinley exemplified the true woman ideal, while Mary Bryan personified the new woman of the era. The re-election of McKinley, the author believed, “would provide the American people a First Lady who exalts mere womanliness above anything that women dare to do.” The writer praised her performance of the first lady role, claiming “she has done her utmost” despite being an “invalid for many years past,” and concluding that McKinley was “an inspiration to all women who for one reason or another are hindered from playing a brilliant individual role in life.”² Bryan, in contrast, was introduced as “a woman of action—a successful woman” who “has been admitted to the bar—a full-fledged lawyer.” The author noted that she was a club woman interested in social reform. However, Bryan’s individual accomplishments never outranked her roles as wife and mother. According to the story, her “mind is a storehouse of information on all subjects that pertain to her

husband's duties and ambitions," adding it was a "well-known fact that she does assist her husband in his work," even writing some of his famous speeches. The writer continued, "Yet, with all the rest, Mrs. Bryan is versed in the domestic arts and sciences—a good housekeeper and a good mother." She was praised as "the rare instance of the logically impossible woman who accomplishes a man's success at no expense of her own"—the epitome of the new woman. The article concluded that, despite their differences, each woman personified a type of American womanhood that should be emulated, "Mrs. Bryan's influence as wife of the President of the United States would compel women to know and to think about the questions of the day. She would be a needed stimulant to the woman who aims at nothing at all. Mrs. McKinley—a vivid antithesis—is always a needed gentle sedative to the typical woman of today who aims to do too much."³

The McKinley-Bryan dichotomy is a prime example of the gendered journalistic framing of the first lady institution. It illustrates how these women personified for the press the gender ideologies that competed to define womanhood at the turn of the century, highlighting the complexities of gender performance. The story also points to the various roles first ladies were expected to play, and evaluates each woman's ability to do so. Finally, this story evidences the increased publicity surrounding the first lady position, especially during campaigns.

Press coverage of first ladies established these women as highly visible public figures and role models for American women by circulating their images and stories about their activities and interests in the public sphere. According to Lewis L. Gould, "By the end of the 1920s, the public had become accustomed to seeing First Ladies as

more visible figures than had been the case twenty years before.”⁴ This, in large part, was due to the press coverage of the first lady institution. But the fact that these women were increasingly performing more duties that garnered press attention was also a factor. Robert P. Watson argues, “The first ladies of the early twentieth century forged new roles for the institution. Indeed, the foundation for the modern first lady as an active presidential partner was firmly established during this period.”⁵ Eight women served as first lady between 1900 and 1929. Two of them, Ida Saxton McKinley (1897-1901) and Florence Kling Harding (1921-1923), had their time in the White House cut short by the deaths of their husbands. Their successors, Edith Kermit Carow Roosevelt (1901-1909) and Grace Goodhue Coolidge (1923-1929), went on to occupy the position longer than the other first ladies of this era. Ellen Axson Wilson (1913-1914) died just seventeen months into her tenure, leaving the White House without a first lady until her husband Woodrow married Edith Bolling Galt Wilson (1915-1921). The remaining first ladies of the modern era, Helen Herron Taft (1909-1913) and Lou Henry Hoover (1929-1933), held the position for only one term. The personalities of the women holding the position, the many duties of the modern first lady, and the expectations regarding the performance of those roles were reflected in the journalistic framing of the first lady institution.

During the modern era, personification framing reflected the changing status of women in American society. While turn-of-the-century first ladies, like McKinley and Roosevelt, embodied true womanhood, their successors increasingly personified both true womanhood and the new woman despite the conflicting gender prescriptions, evidencing the complexities of gender performance. Such framing

empowered women by recognizing the multiplicity of private and public roles they must play and by considering their activities as newsworthy.

Journalists also used gender framing to judge these women's performance of the duties associated with the first lady institution during the modern era. These stories focused on the roles of the first lady, like presidential helpmate, hostess, campaigner, and volunteer, which for reporters represented the performance of gender ideologies. While true womanhood dominated discussions of role performance, the new woman ideal increasingly was reflected in articles as the era wore on. In 1901, Edith Roosevelt could avoid campaigning and choose not to involve herself in volunteer work, and the ideology of true womanhood explained her limited performance of the first lady position. But as early as 1908, wives were taking a more active public role in their husbands' campaigns, and every first lady of this era except Roosevelt and Ida McKinley worked publicly on behalf of a social cause, mirroring the new woman ideology.⁶ By the end of the modern era, press coverage indicated that first ladies were expected to perform various private *and* public sphere roles in ways that reflected both traditional and newer gender ideologies, despite the inherent conflicts.

The increased publicity surrounding the first lady institution, coupled with journalists' framing of first ladies as personifications of American womanhood, helped to fashion first ladies as important *public women*. Editors needed stories to fill women's pages and magazines, and because of the visibility and various duties associated with their position, first ladies made good copy. During the modern era, journalists routinely began to treat the first lady as a newsworthy public figure,

regardless of the disposition of the women who held the position. Unlike their nineteenth-century counterparts, first ladies no longer could avoid the spotlight or their institutional duties, which subsequently challenged traditional notions regarding women's avoidance of publicity. Journalists often managed this contradiction by continuing to frame first ladies as true women or republican mothers, ideologies which characterized women's increasing political activity as extensions of their wifely role or domestic concerns. Just as expediency arguments helped to garner increased support for woman's suffrage, reporters' reliance on traditional gender ideologies as framing devices helped first ladies to become public women with less controversy surrounding their publicity. Thus, the gendered framing of modern era first ladies resulted in the emergence of the first lady as a public woman who was recognized by the press as a positive role model for American women.

Competing Gender Ideologies: The "New" Modern Woman

The modern era was a period of great social change, particularly for American women. According to Carolyn Kitch, "Between 1895 and 1930, the roles and status of American women underwent widespread discussion and some profound transformations."⁷ During this time, more women were actively participating in public sphere activities. Glenna Matthews notes, "In the first decades of the twentieth century women achieved many victories in the public sphere," most importantly the passage of the nineteenth amendment in 1920.⁸ Thereafter, many advocates focused their energies on encouraging women's political participation.⁹ Meanwhile, the progressive and women's club movements reached their zenith during the early years of the twentieth century, providing for middle-class women a politically-charged

space.¹⁰ Growing numbers of women entered colleges and the workplace, and joined organizations that reflected their educational and occupational interests.¹¹ All of this activity was reported in the women's pages of major newspapers and in women's magazines, which boasted millions of female readers.¹² Nancy Cott argues, "The growing frequency of women's new experiences in public, organizational, and occupational life marked one of the ways in which the outlines of twentieth-century America were already taking shape."¹³ Despite this increased acceptability of public activity, there remained a lack of consensus regarding the ideals of American womanhood. In fact, this increase in women's political participation stimulated the public debate over the conflicting gender ideologies of true womanhood, the new woman, feminism, and republican motherhood.

The nineteenth-century notion of true womanhood, which valued piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity, dominated the political and popular culture discourse surrounding gender performance well into the twentieth century.¹⁴ Theodore Roosevelt described the ideal American woman as "the housewife, the helpmeet of the homemaker, the wise and fearless mother of many healthy children" in his famous speech, "The Strenuous Life."¹⁵ His statement exemplified the original conception of true womanhood with its strict boundaries between the private and public spheres.¹⁶ However, as Carroll Smith-Rosenberg points out, "Social-structural changes further heightened the ironic tensions that developed between the dictates of the Cult of True Womanhood and the realities of the bourgeois matron's life," and such changes prompted women to seek ways to justify "new roles for women outside the family."¹⁷ One approach was to defend "the new ways in an old language."¹⁸ Cott

contends that many female reformers were quick to claim that “their ‘outside’ interests were really undertaken in the service of the home, though on a larger scale,”¹⁹ thus extending domesticity into the civic realm. Such “municipal housekeeping” was a hallmark of both progressivism²⁰ and social feminism.²¹ The use of domestic metaphors and maternal rhetoric, according to Kitch, “had reverberations throughout the twentieth century,” in part because journalists continued to promote true womanhood, particularly in publications aimed at women.²² Both the women’s pages in newspapers and women’s magazines used the frame of true womanhood to justify women’s public activities, even long after their acknowledgement of the growing phenomenon of the new woman.²³

At the same time, women’s roles within the home were impacted by social changes that gave women more control over the domestic sphere. Advances in science and technology led to the development of household engineering and home economics. These so-called “domestic reformers,” according to Mona Domosh and Joni Seager, sought to “make the private home more like public workplaces, with the goal of diminishing the distinctions between women’s work and men’s work.”²⁴ Domestic reformers like Ellen Swallow Richards and Lillian Gilbreth worked to professionalize the homemaker role, highlighting the importance of women’s domestic duties.²⁵ Collins asserts that Americans at the turn of the century were enamored with efficiency and “scientific management,” leading them to question “whether keeping house and raising children should become career specialties rather than the vocation of every married woman.”²⁶ Books on household management proliferated in the late 1800s and early 1900s and domestic science and home

economics courses, for females only, were established in high schools and colleges.²⁷

A major part of the scientific management of a household was women controlling the household budget and purchasing household items, from appliances to food. The press, and its advertisers, had long stressed women's role as the primary household consumer, and continued to do so as part of the new home economics trend.²⁸

Domosh and Seager note, "As the major consumers within Victorian society, women did gain a certain control over their home environments."²⁹ These developments helped to foster a sense of domestic empowerment for women within the home.

Many of the domestic reformers who promoted household engineering and home economics at the turn of the century exemplified the "new woman" ideology.

The new woman "stood for change in women's lives and change in America," representing "new social, political, and economic possibilities for women."³⁰

However, the image of the new woman varied greatly between 1900 and 1929, starting out as a serious-minded college or working woman interested in social reforms and devolving into the flirty flapper whose only interest was having fun.³¹

Cott states, "By the early twentieth century it was commonplace that the New Woman stood for self-development as contrasted to self-sacrifice or submergence in the family."³² One avenue of self-development was a college education; by 1920, women made up nearly half of the expanding college population.³³ Many of these college-educated women became involved in reform efforts like the settlement house movement, turning social work into a profession.³⁴

But most middle-class women continued to enter the public sphere through participation in women's clubs and voluntary associations. Roughly one million

women were affiliated with women's clubs in 1914.³⁵ The reform spirit of progressivism prompted such groups to take a more overtly political stance, although most continued to cloak their new woman practices in the rhetoric of true womanhood.³⁶ These female reformers specialized in lobbying and pressure-group politics, and were highly successful in gaining support for reform legislation throughout this era.³⁷ However, by the end of the 1920s, most reform-minded women would not have considered themselves new women, primarily because "the flapper was the dominant image of the new woman," especially in the media.³⁸ The changes in new woman ideology were reflected in journalists' use of the new woman as a framing device. As the new woman evolved from serious reformer to sexualized flapper, journalists routinely returned to promoting the frame of true womanhood. Reporters often pointed to the "new" new woman as proof that the values of the true woman should continue to define American womanhood, creating a backlash not unlike the one Susan Faludi argues occurred in the 1980s against second-wave feminism.³⁹

The term "feminism" also came into common usage during the modern era as a way to characterize the increasing political activities of American women. Cott states, "At the very point in the 1910s—the height of the suffrage campaign—when *the woman movement* began to sound archaic, the word *feminism* came into frequent use."⁴⁰ Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, defined feminism in 1914 as "world-wide revolt against all the artificial barriers which laws and customs interpose between women and human freedom."⁴¹ Feminism often was associated with suffrage, but Kitch notes that women who

“described themselves with this word agitated for reforms broader than suffrage,” including temperance, labor reform, and the settlement house movement.⁴²

Meanwhile, the suffrage movement had “gained momentum and nationwide support by the 1910s,”⁴³ in part because some of its leaders rejected the natural rights argument supported by early suffrage leaders in favor of an expediency argument. This approach “claimed the vote for women not as an end in itself but as a means to rid the society of vice and corruption and to make it a good place for families, women, and children.”⁴⁴ Janet Zollinger Giele explains, “Women’s competence for public service was by 1920 understood in a new way—as compatible with her role as wife and mother—that a democratic society should recognize.”⁴⁵ Feminism and suffrage, like the new woman ideology, started to reflect the rhetoric of true womanhood. By 1929, according to a magazine article by journalist and suffragist Ida Clyde Clarke, the “modern feminist” combined the best elements of true womanhood, the new woman, and the suffragist, resulting in a “well rounded, perfectly balanced, thoroughly informed and highly intelligent person . . . who manages her home, holds her job, and so on, in the normal way.”⁴⁶ Thus, the feminist frame, in just a few short years, had evolved from a way to describe women’s collective political activities to a more individualistic frame that conflated feminism with other existing gender ideologies like the new woman.

The persistence of maternal rhetoric helps to explain why even an eighteenth-century ideology like republican motherhood continued to have currency as a news framing device in the modern era. According to Linda Kerber, the republican mother “integrated political values into her domestic life.” Republican motherhood allowed

the American woman to claim “a significant political role, although she played it in the home.”⁴⁷ Giele points out that, as “citizen-mothers,” modern era women felt empowered to care for “society’s needy and dependent members” just as they would care for their own husbands and children.⁴⁸ Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Diane M. Blair argue that rhetorical activities of American first ladies extended the ideology of republican motherhood beyond the home. In particular, republican motherhood was useful in justifying social politicking and volunteerism. Parry-Giles and Blair state, “Reminiscent of their nineteenth-century predecessors, the volunteer activities of twentieth-century first ladies also reflected the ideology of republican motherhood, yet simultaneously expanded their space of authority to local, state, national, and international communities.”⁴⁹ Presidents Wilson, Harding, and Coolidge reflected the values of republican motherhood in their public statements regarding suffrage, according to Vanessa Beasley. For example, in Wilson’s statement urging Congress to support suffrage, Beasley argues that Wilson offered “good reasons why women could be viewed as good citizens while working both inside and outside of their homes during the war.”⁵⁰ Harding’s inaugural address envisioned republican mothers rocking the “cradle of American childhood” and providing the “education so essential to best citizenship,”⁵¹ while Coolidge praised women for “encouraging education” and “supporting the cause of justice and honor among the nations.”⁵² Republican motherhood was similarly used, albeit limitedly, by modern era journalists to frame the volunteer and political activities of first ladies. Like the presidents, journalists invoked republican motherhood in their discussions of women’s patriotism and

wartime contributions and their newfound status as citizens in the years immediately following suffrage.

Despite the increasing public presence of women, most continued to avoid publicity of their reform activities. With the exception of the leaders of various women's movements, who gave voice to their causes, the majority of women continued to work "behind the scenes" within a distinctly female public sphere. While women benefited from the experience of controlling their own organizations, they were not truly integrated into the male political sphere.⁵³ Thus, their political influence often was indirect. J. Stanley Lemons asserts, for example, that female reformers were very successfully at lobbying on the individual level, but rarely enjoyed, or sought, direct access to legislative bodies. Instead, male lawmakers spoke for them within the official political sphere.⁵⁴ Avoiding publicity, especially public speech, allowed politically active women to present themselves as true women, who justified their actions as extensions of their domestic roles.⁵⁵ But in doing so, they diminished their political agency and often surrendered their voices to the men, including journalists, who would speak on their behalf, as fathers and husbands had been doing for years.

The ideological shifts in the definitions of the modern American woman can be traced by looking at the ways journalists, many of whom were women, employed these overlapping gender ideologies and dealt with the paradoxes of public womanhood throughout this period. Kitch argues, "The close parallels between media imagery and the actual behavior of Americans enabled media of the era to 'report' these changes as reality. But these redefinitions were, to a great extent, constructed

and articulated in the mass media themselves.”⁵⁶ Because of the gendered nature of the first lady position, its expanding duties, and increased publicity surrounding first ladies, coverage of the institution became a *place* where journalists could “report” on these changing gender ideals and offer their own definitions of the ideal American woman, which allow for the increasing performance of the first lady as *public* woman.

Framing the First Lady Institution in the Modern Era

The gendered framing devices employed by journalists shape the resulting narratives about the first lady institution. By conflating performances of the first lady position with gender performance, journalists further engender an already gendered institution, which can result in constraints on the performance of the position by holding first ladies to institutional as well as gender ideals. First ladies not only have to measure up to historical standards set by their predecessors, but they must conform to social expectations regarding the performance of gender as well. Such framing also recognizes the complexities of the first lady position and gender performance. Traditional ideologies like true womanhood often are employed to justify the expansion of women’s interests to the public sphere. By considering the private and public activities of first ladies as newsworthy, journalists give voice to women’s experiences. Such publicity normalizes women’s place both in the press and in the public sphere. Coverage of the first lady institution then acts as a site of contestation over the private, public, and political roles of American women. The following examples illustrate the ways in which gender framing shaped stories about the first lady institution in the modern era.

From True Woman to New Woman: Personification Framing in the Modern Era

Journalists developed specific frames that they used in their coverage of the first lady institution in the modern era based on the gender ideologies of the day, reporters' understanding of the historical performance of the position, and the experiences and activities of each individual woman. Over the years, the first lady institution has been shaped by a combination of tradition, public expectations, and the performances and personalities of the women who have held the position. Yet this is too much information to be summarized in each news story written about the first lady, resulting in a dilemma for journalists, who routinely rely on existing knowledge in order to contextualize new(s) information.⁵⁷ Hence, they rely on ideological shortcuts that allow them to sum up over one hundred years of institutional memory and the complexities of gender performance in a word, phrase, or name. The resulting personification frames allow journalists to present and evaluate information about these women, and about the first lady institution, in a manner that fits their narrative style.

When used as a personification frame, a first lady or candidate's wife becomes the embodiment of gender ideologies, representing for journalists ideological definitions of American womanhood. This frame allows journalists to assess a woman's qualifications for the first lady role based on her performance of gender, which is then conflated with her ability to perform the duties of the first lady institution. This framing can be both limiting and empowering, sometimes simultaneously.

The first lady has long been considered a symbol of American womanhood by the press, public, and scholars.⁵⁸ The *Washington Post* argued in 1928 that the first lady position was “the highest dignity which can come to an American woman,”⁵⁹ and a *New York Times* article the following year stated, “Just as every American boy may hope to become President, so every American girl may hope to become a President’s wife.”⁶⁰ According to a 1904 *New York Times* article, “The President’s wife, the first lady of the land, is always an object of paramount importance, not only to the women of the country, but to the men as well.”⁶¹ When framed as a model of American womanhood, an individual first lady stands in for a particular gender ideology and her performance of gender is upheld by the press as an example for American women to follow.⁶² This form of personification framing is also commonly used in profiles of candidates’ wives as a way to gauge their qualifications and potential performance of the first lady position.

As noted earlier, the true woman ideology dominated the nineteenth century, so it is not surprising that Edith Roosevelt, who remained true to her Victorian upbringing, personified true womanhood for the press. One of the hallmarks of true womanhood was an avoidance of publicity. A 1904 *New York Times* article comparing Roosevelt to the wife of her husband’s opponent, Alton B. Parker, described both as model true women who remained within the boundaries of the domestic sphere and were uncomfortable with any attempt to lure them into the public sphere. Roosevelt was praised for avoiding the “fierce limelight of publicity,” claiming that she “always shrunk from being conspicuous in any way, and in fact would prefer to live the quietest and most domestic of lives,” while Mrs. Parker

(whose first name does not appear in the press) was described as a subservient woman who avoided “any publicity, and whose life is so bound up in her husband’s and in her own household that the affairs of the outside world . . . affect her not at all.”⁶³ The comments about the women avoiding publicity further anchored them in the private sphere, the proper place of the true woman, and also represented the characteristics of piety and purity.⁶⁴

Both women also were described as domestic, a prominent characteristic of true womanhood. Roosevelt, in particular, served as a model of domesticity for the press primarily because both she and her husband embraced the true woman ideology. According to the *New York Times* profile, “Whichever way the election goes, however, the women of America will have a good representative in the wife of the head of the nation. Homemakers in the best sense of the word are Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Parker,” further positioning both women as role models by claiming that “their success in the lines in which they have undertaken were something worth copying in these days when so much is said about the frivolity of women, their carelessness to their duties, and their lack of interest in anything serious.”⁶⁵ This comment mirrored the views of Roosevelt’s husband, who decried the increasing attention paid to leisure pursuits⁶⁶ and women’s subsequent avoidance of motherhood, which was evidenced in the declining birth rates at the turn of the century.⁶⁷ Roosevelt stated, “[W]hen women fear motherhood, they tremble on the brink of doom; and it is well they should vanish from the earth, where they are fit subjects for the scorn of all men and women who are themselves strong and brave and high-minded.”⁶⁸ By constructing the candidates’ wives as personifications of domesticity and thus true womanhood, the

writer not only praised the women, but also offered a critique of any woman who did not subscribe to domestic commitments, positioning the first lady as a symbol of true womanhood.

Several first ladies of this era found themselves at the center of the debate over changing gender roles. During this era, true womanhood was challenged by the ideologies of the new woman and feminism,⁶⁹ and one way that the press reconciled these competing ideologies was by emphasizing the more traditional aspects of the ideologies while still lauding the individual accomplishments of these women. A *Good Housekeeping* article from March 1913 discussed how new first lady Ellen Wilson balanced her work and her home life. The article opened with a discussion of Wilson's career as an artist, noting that her paintings "have been shown this winter in art exhibits in New York, Chicago, Indianapolis, and Philadelphia."⁷⁰ However, author Mabel Porter Daggett tempered her discussion of Wilson's artistic pursuits by focusing on her skills as a homemaker, concluding, "Woodrow Wilson's wife has a talent for painting. She has a genius for home-making."⁷¹ By framing Wilson as both a working artist, a public sphere activity, and a homemaker, a private sphere role, Daggett positioned Wilson as the embodiment of both the career-minded new woman and the domestic true woman.

Similarly, Lou Hoover embodied the qualities of both the new and true woman, according the 1928 *Washington Post* headline, "Mrs. Hoover Seen as Cosmopolitan, Social Worker, Devoted Mother and Real Companion to Husband." The same article concluded that "Mrs. Hoover will go to the White House with the ideal equipment of a point of view of the woman of the world, trained in official

entertaining, combined with a healthy, sane grasp of world needs and things which are not strictly social and withal the dreams of the idealist and the social service worker.”⁷² In a *New York Times Magazine* profile, Hoover was praised for her performance of roles associated with both the true and new woman, “She is not only a homemaker of the first rank and a sympathetic and understanding friend of children, but also a scientist, a linguist, an amateur architect, an accomplished sportswoman, and an able organizer.”⁷³ Hoover represented the growing number of college-educated women who balanced a number of roles that once were considered diametrically opposed. By using Hoover and Wilson to personify this blend of true and new womanhood, journalists were able to negotiate the complexities of gender performance while offering a preview of their tenures as first lady. Such framing allowed journalists to position these women as both modern (the new woman) and traditional (the true woman); it also reinforced an expectation that these women somehow had to do it all.

First ladies Edith Wilson and Florence Harding each personified republican motherhood in the press, although in different ways. While Wilson confined her actions to the private sphere, Harding’s activity took her into the public sphere. During times of war, the ideal of republican motherhood, which reconciles politics and domesticity,⁷⁴ often was used to justify women’s political participation. Such was the case with Edith Wilson during World War I. The *Ladies’ Home Journal* of July 1918 asked, “What is Mrs. Wilson Doing?” in relation to the war effort. The article claimed the women of the Wilson White House were deeply committed to the war effort, “Nor are these women at work in the war because they are members of the

immediate family of the President, but because they are, like all other women of America, deeply patriotic.” Furthermore, the writer stated, “So loyal are the present residents of the White House to the traditions of American home life, so far removed are they from all that is out of harmony with democratic simplicity, that their work in the war is almost unknown to Washington itself.”⁷⁵ The story detailed the various support efforts the women were engaged in, such as knitting warm clothing for the soldiers, and praised the fact that there was no “blowing of newspaper trumpets” in relation to their work. The article concluded that the work of Mrs. Wilson “is a testimony not only of her own patriotic self-sacrifice, but of the spirit of American womanhood in this crisis of our nation’s history.”⁷⁶ These words echo republican motherhood, which posits that women’s domestic skills can have political worth; these same sentiments appeared in President Wilson’s appeal in 1918 that women should be granted suffrage as a reward for their war-time service.⁷⁷ To paraphrase Kerber, Wilson claimed a significant political role, though she played it in the home. For the press, she came to embody feminine heroism.⁷⁸

In contrast, Harding personified the ways in which republican motherhood extended into the public sphere. For journalists, Harding embodied her husband’s vision of women’s political participation. In his inaugural, within a discussion of economic conditions, President Harding stated, “We want an America of home, illuminated with hope and happiness, where mothers, freed from the long hours of toil beyond their own doors, may preside as befits the hearthstone of American citizenship.”⁷⁹ Harding actively participated in women’s organizations, often writing letters of support to be read at their meetings when she could not attend in person,

recognizing that such acts would receive press coverage. Yet her conception of political participation, like her husband's, encouraged women to extend their roles as homemakers and mothers to the public sphere.⁸⁰ An example is offered in a *New York Times* story about the Southern Tariff Convention of Women. Harding's letter is quoted as saying, "Full citizenship with all its responsibilities has come to American women. It represents their opportunity to serve their homes and their country if they wisely exercise it." She argued that the tariff issue was "of the utmost interest to women, for they are the makers of household budgets, the managers of homes . . . and on them fall large responsibility for those measures of thrift, economy, and careful expenditure which greatly concern the welfare of our country's and the world's affairs."⁸¹ While Harding's comments embodied the patriotism of republican motherhood, they also echoed the progressive and social feminism concept of "municipal housekeeping," which struck a middle ground between the activism of the new woman and the domesticity of true womanhood.⁸² By allowing her voice to circulate in the public sphere, reaching both the female audience addressed in her letter and the promiscuous audience of newspaper readers,⁸³ Harding also contributed to the growing acceptance of the public woman.

In all of the articles mentioned, these women personified gender ideologies, reflecting the shifting definitions of American womanhood in the modern era. Roosevelt embodied true womanhood to the same extent that Hoover was represented as possessing all of the qualities of the new woman. Yet Hoover also was framed as a true woman, simultaneously representing tradition and change in women's roles. In the case of Harding, coverage of her captured a particular historical moment when

woman's suffrage and subsequent political participation was widely celebrated and embraced. She also embodied republican motherhood, implying that women's new civic roles were simply an extension of their domestic duties. In wartime, Edith Wilson, as a good republican mother, personified how women's domestic skills could be used for patriotic ends. For the most part, journalists emphasized what were viewed as the more traditional roles of women, namely wife, mother, and hostess, despite their increased attention to the expanding roles of women. The new woman may have been praised for her individual accomplishments, like Ellen Wilson's artistic endeavors; however, those accomplishments paled in comparison to her homemaking skills or devotion to her spouse. Reporters were able to satisfy the expectations of people who wanted first ladies to be equally traditional and modern by having these women personify both traditional true women and publicly active new women.

By the end of the modern era, first ladies were expected to balance the domesticity of true womanhood and the republican mother with the social activism of the new woman and the political visibility of feminists, despite the inherent contradictions of these different ideologies. Yet even when these women embodied more traditional gender ideologies, like true womanhood, press coverage ensured that their performance of gender roles took place on a very public stage, helping to position even the most private first ladies as public women.

From Hostess to Advocate: Framing the Performance of the First Lady Position

Journalists' use of gender ideologies as framing devices impacted the ways in which they covered the *duties* of the first lady position. The articles from the modern

era show a shift toward a more public woman in the framing of the first lady institution that mirrored the changes in women's roles and the expansion of the first lady's duties.

At the turn of the century, the frame of wife and mother dominated first lady coverage. Most of the stories about Edith Roosevelt revolved around her family, which is not surprising since there were six Roosevelt children, ranging in age from three to seventeen when they first occupied the White House.⁸⁴ A profile of "Mrs. Roosevelt and Her Children" in the August 1902 *Ladies' Home Journal* praised Roosevelt's devotion to her family, noting that, despite the demands of the first lady position, she "finds time still for the companionship with husband and children, which is, after all, the chief end of her life." Writer Jacob A. Riis proclaimed that her ideas "on home-making and child-training, which, if sometimes called old fashioned, one may be permitted fervently to hope, for the sake of our country, will never quite go out of fashion."⁸⁵ Despite acknowledgement of the public duties of first ladies, stories about Roosevelt located her primarily in the private sphere, the place where true women exerted their moral influence and found happiness by being good wives, mothers, and homemakers.⁸⁶ Roosevelt's influence on her family was noted in a *New York Times* story from the 1904 campaign, which framed her as a supportive spouse in the true woman tradition, "She found time amid the guidance and care of her little children and the directing of her household to always be with her husband when he needed her, to listen to his plans and again and again to aid him by her quiet counsel and good common sense."⁸⁷ According to these reporters, the ideals of true womanhood clearly influenced Roosevelt's performance of the first lady position.

However, it is interesting to note that, even though stories lauded Roosevelt as a model wife and mother, the fact that her ideas were called “old-fashioned” in a 1902 article shows that social views on women’s roles were in flux.

Presidential wives in the modern era increasingly were framed by the press as partners who played important roles in both the private and political lives of their husbands. This frame drew on the concept of a “companionate marriage,” which was promoted by social scientists, social workers, and journalists as the “new marital ideal.”⁸⁸ Several first ladies were commended for the companionship they provided to their husbands. According to the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, the Roosevelts would spend their evenings discussing “the high ideals they hold in common—in essentials always agreed, however they may differ, on points of less concern. For hers is no passive reflection of his robust intellect. She thinks as he acts, for herself, with full freedom and calm judgment—in this, as in all else, the helpmeet he needs.”⁸⁹ The Coolidges and Tafts were described in a similar manner. The *Ladies’ Home Journal* said of Grace and Calvin Coolidge, “Quite obviously both of these busy people manage to keep up a lot of interests and habits in common . . . now and again some phrase or a short conversation proves what a pleasant comradeship exists between the strong, still man and his animated, graceful wife.”⁹⁰ The *New York Times* claimed that Taft actively worked to keep abreast of her husband’s interests, “To any subject in which Mr. Taft is interested or of which he is making a study she also gives her attention. . . . It has intensified the sense of comradeship existing between them.”⁹¹ Edith Wilson was credited by the press with helping her husband to shoulder the burdens of World War I. According to the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, “One can hardly speak of, much less

attempt to measure, the results of her constant, never-failing companionship and sympathy.”⁹² The Hardings’ partnership combined their private and political lives. The *New York Times* claimed, “The two Hardings have blended their qualities and personalities perfectly through long experience in working together. Theirs has been a partnership of their work. . . . Together, they entered politics, Mrs. Harding in the background, devoted, confident, and forward looking, while her husband furnished the generous, amiable qualities that made him popular.”⁹³ By positioning these couples as exemplars of the companionate marriage model, reporters recognized the president’s wife as a partner who played an important role in her husband’s career, even if that role was relegated to the domestic sphere.

Another duty of first ladies related to their role as presidential partner is hostessing, and modern era journalists recognized both the social and political significance of this institutional obligation. Hostessing in Washington, D.C. has always been both personal and political, governed by etiquette and political protocol, with “social events serving as both private events and political arenas, often at the same time.”⁹⁴ Yet hostessing is also highly gendered, considered the province of women despite its influence on the public and political lives of men. Catherine Allgor, in her study of “parlor politics” in early America, says of Washington society, “Display, luxury, consciousness of public gaze, and the public nature and intention of sociability were its distinguishing forms. Homes retained their public, political functions rather than closing their parlors for intimate, private consumption.”⁹⁵ At the same time, White House hostesses had to avoid appearing too detached from the “vernacular gentility” of middle-class Americans, whose etiquette carefully blended

aristocratic yet democratic elements while strongly endorsing the idea of separate spheres.⁹⁶ In a 1968 book on the “American social establishment,” Stephen Birmingham argues that Washington society differed from the social scenes in other major U.S. cities, “[B]ecause of the nature of American government and politics, Washington is a town where everyone is given a fighting chance; in Washington, everyone is essentially nice to everyone else—even to total strangers who wander in. Those strangers could, if nothing else, be voters.”⁹⁷ Thus, hostessing demanded a delicate balance of democratic and aristocratic elements, requiring knowledge of etiquette, social customs, White House traditions, Washington and diplomatic protocol, and the political sentiments of both the administration and its guests, with the hostess always running the risk of being criticized for offending someone.

First ladies were expected by the press to be experts on etiquette, the principals which govern social behavior.⁹⁸ In 1909, an article in *Ladies' Home Journal* proclaimed that incoming first lady Helen Taft “enters the White House better equipped than most of the women who have presided there. . . . In addition to a familiarity with the usages of polite society, she enjoys a knowledge of precedence,” which the author credited to the hostessing experience she garnered as the “first lady of the land” during her husband’s tenure as Governor General of the Philippines.⁹⁹ According to the article, Taft’s qualifications included “an acquaintance with ceremonious etiquette which will make her an invaluable helpmate to her husband.”¹⁰⁰ In a similar fashion, a *Washington Post* profile claimed that Hoover’s years of hostessing experience prepared her for the first lady position, “Official entertaining will be no novelty to Mrs. Hoover, who is a true cosmopolitan and

through her eight years as Cabinet hostess in this capital knows the etiquette of Washington from A to Z.”¹⁰¹ Within the hostess frame, knowledge of “ceremonious etiquette” and experience with “official entertaining” are presented as qualifications for the first lady role.

Modern era journalists also recognized that a first lady’s success or failure as a hostess could impact her husband’s presidency, since the numerous social functions she presides over “affect the president’s political agenda and public image.”¹⁰² Birmingham notes that, in Washington, “Parties become a tool for doing business, and therefore, an implement of government. . . . The belief that they are helping the ponderous wheels of national government move an inch or two forward adds to the Washington hostesses’ sense of high calling.”¹⁰³ A 1902 *Ladies’ Home Journal* article about Roosevelt alluded to the importance of first lady as hostess, saying that her style “assured the success of the administration from a point of view often of more account than is commonly supposed.”¹⁰⁴ The *New York Times* argued that Taft recognized the political importance of the first lady’s hostessing duties, “[S]he considers a public office a public trust, socially as well as politically, and that the personal side of her husband’s administration will be conducted on a plane of the highest and broadest democracy, yet with the dignity benefiting the home of the Chief Executive of the greatest republic on earth.”¹⁰⁵ This statement reflects the balance of vernacular gentility, “the highest and broadest democracy,” with the “dignity” associated with aristocracy. The *New York Times Magazine* credited Herbert Hoover’s political success, in part, to his wife’s hostessing abilities, claiming that “Mr. Hoover could not have gone as far as he did without the calm, assured and

diplomatic backing of his wife. She made their home serene and hospitable, never stuffy or ostentatious.”¹⁰⁶ In this case, an aristocratic approach to hostessing is rejected in favor of a more democratic approach. The conflicting expectations surrounding the hostessing role highlight the complexities of this particular first lady duty. While some of today’s scholars have dismissed hostessing as a merely ceremonial role,¹⁰⁷ journalists covering the first lady have long recognized the political significance of hostessing, especially given the interconnectedness of society and politics in Washington, D.C.

Articles about the first lady institution during the modern era reflected not only the expanding duties of presidents’ wives, but the changing views on women’s roles. By this time, journalists had developed a set of frames that shaped their coverage of the first lady institution that reflected the changing expectations for women and public life. First ladies were expected to perform multiple duties, while continuing to embody often contesting ideologies, primarily true womanhood and the new woman. The domesticity of the true woman was the dominant frame in the coverage of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Taft. Their successors increasingly were framed as new women, who were socially and politically active, yet the true woman frame persisted, often in the same articles. These ideologies, which are contradictory in many ways, reflected both the growing duties of the first lady and the tensions that existed as modern era women expanded their public roles while continuing to be the primary caretakers of their homes and families.

Emergence of the First Lady as Public Woman

Stories about modern era first ladies reveal the emergence of the first lady as a public woman who was constructed by the press as a positive role model for American women. In her book, *The Rise of Public Woman*, Glenna Matthews argues that women achieved “a new kind of public power” in the modern era, “[T]hey began to win electoral office, they saw the enactment of major public policy for which they had struggled, and they enjoyed an increasing public presence.” However, she notes that “women’s power and women’s access to public influence still fell far short of that exercised by men.”¹⁰⁸ For first ladies, their public presence increased in part through the heightened press coverage provided by women’s pages and women’s magazines, and the gendered framing used to describe their activities evidenced the new “public power” and influence they wielded. As first ladies became more visible and vocal in the public sphere, largely via the press, they became public women, representing for the press the increasing roles women were playing in the political sphere. Yet by framing these women as both “true” and “new” women, journalists were able to justify the expanded roles of first ladies while continuing to position them as models of more traditional conceptions of American womanhood. The emergence of the first lady as public woman in press coverage paralleled the rise of the rhetorical presidency and the rhetorical first lady during this era, as presidents and their wives began “going public”¹⁰⁹ more frequently by targeting their messages to larger public audiences and developing new strategies for controlling their public image.¹¹⁰ Articles show that the first ladies of this era “went public” in various ways, all of which were significant in normalizing women’s presence and political participation in the public sphere.

Journalists' access to these women was a key factor in the emergence of first ladies as public women. By the turn of the century, first ladies were routinely the subject of news coverage.¹¹¹ Like their immediate predecessors, modern era first ladies developed strategies for dealing with the press, practices which became institutionalized by the end of this period and led to the development of the "office of first lady."¹¹² A major step in establishing the office of first lady occurred when Roosevelt became the first president's wife to hire a secretary, whose primary job was handling press inquiries. Roosevelt's strategy was to satisfy the press and public's curiosity while maintaining her family's privacy, which was accomplished mainly through the regular release of photographs of her family and press releases that detailed the activities of the Roosevelts.¹¹³ This approach allowed Roosevelt to avoid direct contact with reporters while maintaining a sense of control over publicity surrounding herself and her family.¹¹⁴ By participating in the image-making process, Roosevelt helped to promote constructions of herself as a dedicated wife, mother, and true (private) woman while simultaneously garnering the publicity which made her a public figure. Thanks to Roosevelt, the first lady's social secretary became a permanent fixture of the White House staff.

Other first ladies "went public" by granting interviews. McKinley, Taft, Ellen Wilson, Harding, and Hoover all talked with reporters and were sometimes quoted directly, which rarely occurred in articles prior to this period. These first ladies became public women by allowing their voices to circulate in the public sphere. By speaking to the press, they also played a more active role in constructing their public image. In some cases, these women boldly engaged in the prominent social debates of

their era, like the question of woman's suffrage. Prior to this period, no first lady had taken a public stance on suffrage. Yet during the modern era, both Taft and Ellen Wilson voiced their opinions on the issue to reporters, thereby entering the debate. Taft assumed the anti-suffrage stance in a 1908 *New York Times* article, "I am not a sympathizer with the woman suffragists." She explained that her opposition was based on the fear that suffrage and political participation would force women "to neglect other duties that they cannot possibly shift to others," such as childrearing. Her statements echoed her husband's position on suffrage,¹¹⁵ and reflected the anti-suffrage argument that "suffrage placed an additional and unbearable burden on women, whose place was in the home."¹¹⁶ Taft further stated, "We are not ready for women to vote, as not enough of them take an interest in political affairs, and until the majority of women want the vote they will scarcely be given the right."¹¹⁷ This was an interesting comment coming from a woman who was herself very interested in politics and actively involved in her husband's campaign and career.¹¹⁸

In contrast, Ellen Wilson was framed as a limited supporter of the suffrage cause. In a 1913 *Good Housekeeping* interview, Wilson credited her daughter Jessie, a settlement house worker, with influencing her views on the subject. "The arguments of my Jessie incline me to believe in the suffrage for the working woman."¹¹⁹ This quote reflected Wilson's progressivism and interest in social reform, without committing her fully to the suffrage cause. The vagueness of the statement, meanwhile, allowed Wilson to comment on the issue without having "embarrassed the president who had not yet come out for suffrage on the national level."¹²⁰ Despite Taft and Wilson's differing views, and the relatively conservative

tone of their comments, the very act of speaking out on a controversial issue was a milestone in the emergence of first ladies as public women. By articulating a political position in public, which was considered taboo only a few years earlier, these women helped to break down the barriers to women's publicity and political involvement. This new level of political and rhetorical activity for first ladies was further explored by Harding, whose written statements to women's political groups were often published, and Hoover, who frequently gave speeches and was the first president's wife to deliver a radio address.¹²¹

The first ladies of this period also became more vocal, and visible, on the campaign trail, further normalizing women's place in political life. The most publicly active campaigner of the modern era was Harding. According to Watson, "Florence Harding was one of the first spouses to take a prominent and openly public role in her husband's campaign, putting her impressive political skills to work by helping to manage the Harding campaign."¹²² Reporters noted Harding's influence on her husband's political career. During the 1920 campaign, the *Washington Post* described her as a "heap of ambitions, dreams, and political aspirations, not for herself but for her husband." Harding, who routinely talked to the press, promoted her role in the campaign. In the *Washington Post* article, Harding told reporters, "I have taken part in all of Senator Harding's campaigns and no matter how many engagements I may have, I never miss an opportunity to be present when he makes a speech. . . . The campaign at Chicago during the convention was very arduous, but I have enjoyed every moment of it." Harding made it clear that she would be participating in her husband's "front porch" campaign, stating, "it is there we shall remain this summer

and receive the delegates during the coming campaign.”¹²³ Harding’s contributions to the campaign were acknowledged by the *Washington Post*, which stated in an inaugural article that “hers had been an active part in bringing about this great triumph in her husband’s life.” The article, titled “Mrs. Harding Shares Tasks of President,” contained the following lead, “Just as through the presidential campaign, Mrs. Harding stood like a soldier beside her husband. During the great moments when he was delivering his inaugural address, she watched and weighed his every word. Yesterday, as always, Mrs. Harding shared his thoughts and aspirations.”¹²⁴ Harding, the first president’s wife to cast a ballot for her husband, was praised for her interest in politics. A *New York Times* profile called Harding “a woman of independent ideas” and proclaimed, “She likes politics. She likes to participate in activities until recently regarded as men’s spheres. She heartily believes in woman suffrage.”¹²⁵ Through her words and her actions, Harding helped to shape her image as a politically active public woman, while the positive press coverage of her rhetorical activities furthered legitimized women’s presence in the political sphere.

While Harding’s successors were not as vocal, they played visible public roles in their husband’s campaigns. Coolidge was one of the first candidates’ wives to appear alone at political rallies, a considerable step forward for public womanhood. She gave no formal speeches, but instead spent time interacting with audience members.¹²⁶ At a rally held by a Republican woman’s club, the *New York Times* noted that Coolidge “shook hands with all present” but “made no remarks.”¹²⁷ Lou Hoover accompanied her husband on his “speech making tours” but, according to the *Washington Post*, “made no speeches” of her own and took “no active part in the

campaign.” The article surmised that “there is no doubt but that her smiling personality has been a vote-getter just the same.”¹²⁸ Although Coolidge and Hoover took a more passive approach to campaigning, their presence on the campaign trail, either alone or standing alongside their husband, signaled the increasing political importance of candidates’ wives. The fact that women’s campaign involvement increased after 1920 can be attributed in part to the passage of the nineteenth amendment, and the need to attract female voters.¹²⁹ However, society’s changing views on women’s roles also opened the door for politically-inclined wives to assume a more public role without fear of serious recrimination from the press and public. Their quiet yet public performance made such acts of political publicity more palatable.

The political activities of modern first ladies were not confined to the campaign trail; some extended their political interests to the public sphere through volunteerism and social advocacy. Modern era first ladies regularly acted as honorary chairpersons of various volunteer organizations, drawing on their status as public figures. A *Ladies’ Home Journal* article about Edith Wilson’s wartime volunteer efforts commented, “Mrs. Wilson is not, of course, unaware of the prestige that attaches to her name and position. She has accordingly lent the use of her name, and has accepted honorary appointments when convinced that by doing so she could further the advancement of commendable causes, even though she might be unable to undertake active direction of the work itself.”¹³⁰ This quote indicates that first ladies like Wilson had become respected public figures, to the extent that their name alone could assist an organization. Groups like the Girl Scouts of America recognized that

the first lady's involvement helped to promote their organization. Both Harding and Hoover were honorary leaders of the Girl Scouts, and often were associated with the organization in articles.¹³¹ While Harding acted as a ceremonial figurehead, Hoover was actively involved with the group. She served as the national president of the organization and led her own troop before becoming first lady; she continued to work closely with the national office after entering the White House.¹³² Hoover promoted the organization as a model of the volunteerism encouraged by her husband in response to the Great Depression.¹³³ The press credited her with having "sold the Girl Scout movement to social and official Washington," many of whom became actively involved with the organization.¹³⁴ First ladies' involvement with voluntary organizations reflected the national trend of women's civic involvement during the progressive era.¹³⁵

While most first ladies of the modern era confined themselves to charitable work, Ellen Wilson's social advocacy extended into the policymaking arena, and serves as another example of the emergence of the first lady as public woman. Matthews argues that, during the modern era, "some women leaders began to engage in a new—for women— kind of intense politicking of the two parties and of male officeholders."¹³⁶ Wilson engaged in such politicking in her efforts to improve the housing of those living in the squalid alleys of the capital city. Housing reform was a key component of progressivism. According to Nancy S. Dye, "In the early years of progressive reform, women's efforts centered on improving the quality of life in American towns and cities through providing better city services," including improved living conditions.¹³⁷ And after 1910, "women increasingly turned to the

government, especially at the federal level, to implement their reforms.”¹³⁸ Thus, it is not surprising that social advocates enlisted the help of a first lady who shared their interest in progressive reform. A May 16, 1913, article titled “Mrs. Wilson Slumming” noted that Wilson was touring the alleys, “seeking first-hand information for the movement to improve the living conditions of the poor in Washington.” The article concluded that Wilson was “deeply impressed with the necessity of legislation to do away with the alleys.”¹³⁹ While the article recognized the political aspects of her alley tours, the title’s play on the word “slumming” reflects a sarcastic tone that can be read as a subtle critique of Wilson’s involvement in slum clearance.

The press continued to follow Wilson’s work on behalf of housing reform. An article from a week later noted that Wilson had donated “\$100 toward cleaning up the slums of the capital,” part of a larger fundraising effort, with the money going to “further eliminating unsanitary dwellings in the slums, and the substitution of clean and wholesome houses that can be cheaply rented.”¹⁴⁰ The article also mentioned Wilson’s donation of a White House automobile for tours of the alleys. When legislation related to slum clearance was introduced on May 24, 1913, the *New York Times* noted that the project was “indorsed [sic] by Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, who has made a personal inspection of the alleys and courts.”¹⁴¹ The legislation was dubbed “Mrs. Wilson’s bill,” the first to be named for a first lady, and was passed by both the House and Senate shortly before her death in 1914, marking the first time that a president’s wife was publicly acknowledged for her active involvement in policymaking.¹⁴² Wilson’s political activities, from fundraising to lobbying, were representative of the forms of political action female reformers engaged in during the

years prior to woman's suffrage.¹⁴³ Although her political influence was indirect, reminiscent of the "parlor politics" of early first ladies, the press coverage of Wilson's involvement added an element of publicity necessary to garner widespread public support for such causes. Given the progressive political climate of the time, and the active involvement of women in social reform efforts, Wilson's social advocacy and policymaking were, for the most part, positively framed. Such coverage of the institution helped to expand the acceptable roles, and the political agency, of first ladies.

Despite the emergence of positive representations of public womanhood during the modern era, Matthews contends that women faced more constraints than opportunities. She paints a bleak picture of public womanhood, noting that "the middle-class white woman of the 1920s confronted unpleasant realities should she contemplate becoming publicly active. There was no cultural expectation that a woman should be able to 'have it all.' If she chose serious engagement with politics, for example, she was unlikely to combine this with a husband, let alone raising children."¹⁴⁴ Yet this is exactly what modern era first ladies were able to do. Not only did these women become more publicly active, they were applauded by the press for doing so. Modern era first ladies, as a group, were more vocal, more politically active, and more publicly visible than the majority of their predecessors. Even the most reticent first ladies, like Roosevelt and Coolidge, played a role in constructing their public image and presenting themselves as public figures.

I contend that the gendered press framing of their public activities helped first ladies to avoid the pitfalls of public womanhood that Matthews describes. First ladies

in the modern era were expected to “have it all,” or at least to be able to balance their private role as wives with the public duties of the first lady position. By framing first ladies as true women or republican mothers, journalists helped to lessen the criticism usually associated with women’s publicity. Their increased presence in the public sphere was justified primarily as an expansion of their wifely duties, just as women’s increased political participation during this period, including suffrage, was largely defended as an extension of women’s domestic concerns. The heightened publicity surrounding first ladies was also a product of increased press coverage of and public interest in presidents and their families. Combined with a social climate that recognized women’s changing roles, such factors facilitated the emergence of first ladies as public women.

Conclusion

Coverage of the first lady institution during the modern era can be viewed as the basis for contemporary reporting on the first lady. For journalists, first ladies personified various gender roles, and coverage of the first lady institution served as a site of contestation where the prevailing gender ideologies competed to define women’s roles. While the true woman dominated coverage at the turn of the century, the ideal never was replaced by the new woman or feminism. Instead, the modern era press often used the competing ideologies to frame different aspects of a woman’s life, a practice which reflected the complexities of gender performance as first ladies increasingly “went public.” Kitch, who also looks at images of womanhood in the modern era, notes that “the messy representational contradictions” of this era are significant both historically and as a model for understanding current media.¹⁴⁵ The

representations of first ladies reflect the expanding expectations and publicity associated with the position in the twentieth century and the idea that first ladies must somehow be “simultaneously modern and traditional,” a concept that would lead to double binds in later years as the press increasingly critiqued first ladies’ gendered performance of their institutional duties.¹⁴⁶

Publicity surrounding the first lady institution increased during this era, thanks in part to the popularity of women’s magazines and women’s pages in newspapers. The positioning of first ladies as public figures in the political sphere helped to neutralize the stigma associated with women’s public sphere activity. This was accomplished primarily through the press practice of gendered framing. In framing first ladies as true women or republican mothers, journalists made the increasing political activity of these women appear less controversial by linking their actions to women’s traditional roles. The women who held the position handled press scrutiny in different ways. Some issued press releases as a way of avoiding reporters, while others granted interviews. As the era progressed, first ladies made more frequent public appearances independent of their husbands, meeting the public, posing for photographs, and sometimes making speeches. They also became more involved in supporting social and political causes. But because the first ladies of this era played a limited role in the construction of their public image, the press had considerable control in defining and interpreting their actions. The resulting constructions often tempered their individual agency by emphasizing their domestic roles. While women like Ellen Wilson and Florence Harding served as models of women’s increasing political efficacy, the press continued to remind readers that they were also true

women. Such gendered framing in some ways undermined their standing as independent public figures, yet it also helped to make their presence in the public and political sphere less controversial because their actions were not seen as an overt attempt to challenge or change traditional gender roles.

Press coverage of the first lady institution in the modern era was influential in promoting positive representations of public women by positioning first ladies as visible public figures and role models for American women. Stories and images of first ladies were disseminated to a wide audience through newspapers and magazines, establishing these women as prominent public figures acting in the political sphere. However, because these articles appeared primarily in publications targeted to female readers, first ladies' publicity was gendered and their actions were largely confined to a female political sphere. Such gendering justified their status as public women while also limiting their sphere of influence. Although none of the first ladies of this era achieved the level of celebrity that some of their successors did, each was recognized by the press as playing an important role in both their husbands' lives and in American culture. Their various ways of "going public" helped to create a climate in which first ladies could be more publicly and politically active without fear of serious recrimination. During this era, because of the flexibility of gender ideologies, journalists presented first ladies as able to be traditional *and* modern, private *and* public women. Hence, the modern era first ladies did not face the same double binds that would prove problematic for their successors, but they did encounter mounting expectations. A reporter for the *New York Times Magazine* noted in 1928 that first ladies were increasingly held to a "superwomanly ideal," a term that is often

associated with the women's liberation movement of the 1970s.¹⁴⁷ In recent years, the "superwoman" expectation has been used to describe the struggles facing the "modern" woman at the end of the twentieth century.¹⁴⁸ That the writer's comment would not seem out of place in an article published today is further evidence that coverage from the modern era continues to serve as the foundation for journalistic constructions of the first lady institution.

Chapter Three

First Lady as Gendered Celebrity, 1932-1961

In a 1932 *New York Times Magazine* article profiling the “Candidates for the Post of First Lady,” reporter Alice Rogers Hagar articulated the difficult duties of the first lady: “The President’s wife must be a silent partner. The unwritten law is that the First Lady gives no interviews, makes no public utterances. She appears at State functions, where her presence is expected, and she must have a smile for every guest, though guests number legions. She must do her utmost to shield the President from importunities, even when his secretaries are equally on guard. She must be prepared, when he is tired, to cover up his lapses with a friendliness so sincere that they are forgotten. She must never show weariness or distress.” Given the demands of the position, Hagar argued that it was the job of journalists to “discover what manner of American women are ‘candidates’ for this most difficult post . . . and to try to understand the character, background, training, and talents of the two, one of whom will spend at least four years as the exemplar of American living.”¹

The two women in question were Lou Henry Hoover and Anna Eleanor Roosevelt. According to Hagar, both “remarkable women” were equally prepared for the post, “There is no question of comparing them—each is a personality distinct. Yet contrasts are few and far to seek, for, broadly speaking, their lives run parallel. In greatness of heart, in quality of mind, in education, in spiritual independence, in vivid approach to living and in depth of experience they are sisters.” Hagar’s profile revealed that both Hoover and Roosevelt were committed to “outside interests of philanthropic or an educational nature.” Hoover was said to have “aided her husband

in his career,” while the Roosevelt’s “fine, frank comradeship” was commended. Devotion to their children was discussed, but each woman was also applauded for her individual accomplishments. In particular, Roosevelt was said to have “fingers in more pies at one moment than most mortals in a lifetime,” attested to by a list of her professional and organizational affiliations. Following her assessment of each woman, Hagar concluded, “The Great American Home would seem to be in excellent hands for the next four years when we can present two such ‘candidates’ for the First Ladyship as these American gentlewomen, Mrs. Hoover and Mrs. Roosevelt.”² While recognizing the superwomanly qualities needed to perform the first lady position, Hagar ultimately reinforced the domesticity of the institution in her closing statement. This article reflected the increased expectations faced by first ladies, and the complexities of performing the first lady position in accordance with gender norms of the era.

The first ladies of the early twentieth century, as noted in the last chapter, laid the foundation for the modern first lady by institutionalizing many of the duties that had been performed by their nineteenth-century predecessors.³ They also evidenced the rise of the first lady as *public woman*, which was tied to increased publicity of the first lady institution. However, Lewis L. Gould claims, “Before 1933, none of the First Ladies had exploited fully the possibilities inherent within the celebrity status of the institution.” For over thirty years, only four women served as first lady: (Anna) Eleanor Roosevelt (1933-1945),⁴ (Elizabeth) Bess Wallace Truman (1945-1953),⁵ Mamie Geneva Doud Eisenhower (1953-1961),⁶ and Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy (1961-1963).⁷ It was during the tenure of Eleanor Roosevelt, according to

Gould, that the first lady “blossomed as a national celebrity in ways that permanently altered the expectations for presidential wives who followed her.”⁸ This can be credited largely to the regular press coverage Roosevelt garnered through her many activities. Articles about Roosevelt were not only a constant fixture of women’s pages and magazines, but also appeared at times on the front pages of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Such positioning signaled that stories about first ladies were considered of interest to both male and female readers, extending the newsworthiness of first ladies beyond a solely female audience. Although Roosevelt’s successors did not emulate her approach to publicity, they each had to deal with the issues of public image, personality, and celebrity as they related to the first lady institution. This heightened publicity surrounding the first lady granted agency to these women by recognizing their individuality and legitimizing the roles they played in their husbands’ careers, but their individuality was sometimes limited by institutional expectations of the role and the gender ideologies that were visible in press frames.

This chapter will look at press framing of the first lady institution between 1932 and 1961. The frames used in stories about the first lady reflected the cultural changes of this period, particularly in relation to women’s roles. Women were increasingly recognized as citizens who made important contributions to American political culture, whether through rationing during wartime or endorsing Cold War consumerism. Their contributions, however, were tied primarily to the roles of wife and homemaker, reflecting an ideology of domesticity that permeated both the personal and political aspects of this era. Many feminist scholars have pointed to the postwar era as a period of “domestic containment,”⁹ which trapped (primarily middle-

class white) women in their suburban homes, where they sublimated personal ambition and independence to the needs of their families.¹⁰ The domination of the so-called “feminine mystique” during this era, which has been traced to the period between the world wars,¹¹ became an ideological catalyst that led to the emergence of the women’s liberation movement in the 1960s.¹² This perspective, while valid in many respects, ignores the positive facets of the domestic ideology of this era, primarily the sense of *domestic empowerment*, which granted women control over the private domain and authority within the home. Homemaking was often treated as a profession, an integral part of a two-person career, and the homemaker’s consumer responsibilities were imbued with political significance throughout this period. Both constructions legitimate women’s roles, even if they are contained within the private sphere, and contribute to the second-wave feminist idea that “the personal is political.” Thus, although this “in-between” period may have lacked the organized feminist activity that characterized the so-called first and second waves, gender roles continued to be in flux. While frustration with the domestic containment of this period unleashed a new tide of feminist activity in the 1960s, the domestic empowerment of homemakers, which began to recognize the personal as political, helped to foster the female consciousness necessary for social action in the coming years.

The press coverage of the first lady institution during this era reveals the expansion and limitation of women’s roles, both of which are significant in the history of feminism and contribute to our understanding of women’s place in American culture. The journalistic practice of personification framing promoted the

domesticity that pervaded this era. With such ideological short-cuts, Roosevelt became a stand-in for both social feminism and republican motherhood, while her successors embodied various aspects of the cult of domesticity. Such gendered framing also impacted journalists coverage of the duties of the first lady, the majority of which reflected the concept of the two-person career, which acknowledges a wife's role in her husband's career, from hostess to advisor to protector. This type of framing recognized the *political* importance of the first lady, evidencing the domestic empowerment of the homemaker role. But such stories also reinforced traditional gender roles by framing the first lady's duties as an extension of her role as wife and homemaker.

Gendered framing was also tied to an increasing focus on the first lady as celebrity. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, first ladies began seeking and attracting more press attention, which helped legitimate first ladies status as public women without fear of reproach. Press frames, which centered on the traits of true womanhood, were instrumental in negating the sexualized stigma against women and publicity. The first ladies of this era, with the exception of Truman, gained celebrity status as personalities independent of their husbands. This press phenomenon fed into journalists' notion that first ladies symbolize American womanhood and demonstrated the increased publicity focused on first ladies in this period. According to Chris Rojek, "Celebrities simultaneously embody social types and provide role models."¹³ For journalists, through the practice of personification framing, first ladies embody gender ideologies and provide role models for American women; hence, they become *gendered celebrities*. Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Kennedy all garnered

gendered celebrity status to the extent that the public and press felt comfortable referring to them as Eleanor, Mamie, and Jackie. In articles focusing on their celebrity standing, these women's husbands were rarely, if ever, mentioned, thereby recognizing these women as public figures in their own right. However, because reporters often focused on the physical appearances of first ladies and their consumer behavior, these women were at times reduced to their fashions and other superficial representations of their personalities. Gendered celebrity, thus, can be both empowering and constraining. The first ladies of this era represented for the press the sweeping changes in American culture that occurred between 1932 and 1961, highlighting in the process a gendered component of celebrity status.

Competing Gender Ideologies: From Rosie the Riveter to June Cleaver

The extremes that characterized this era resulted in mixed messages regarding the roles women should play, culminating in what some scholars regard as a backlash against women in public and political life.¹⁴ The New Deal included measures that increased legal protections for women and children and provided a platform for politically-active women to become involved in policymaking. Yet other New Deal policies discriminated against working women and limited women's control over the government policies affecting them by placing male bureaucrats in charge of the majority of New Deal programs.¹⁵ During the Depression, when any form of income could determine whether a family would survive or starve, women were encouraged, and at times forced, to leave the workforce in order to provide job opportunities for men.¹⁶ But when the United States entered World War II, women were recruited by the government to take on jobs created by the wartime industry and fill positions left

vacant by the men who went to war.¹⁷ Following the war, many women were once again forced out of the workplace, losing their jobs to returning soldiers; the same government that recruited them for wartime work now entreated women to pursue careers as homemakers.¹⁸ A healthy economy and the postwar baby boom helped to keep many women in the home throughout the 1950s.¹⁹ Yet in the following decade, these homebound years would be pointed to as the root of women's discontent.²⁰

Throughout these years, the gender ideologies that competed to define American womanhood reflected the times, particularly the contestation over women's roles in the private and public spheres. The prevailing theme of each ideology was domesticity. Although the egalitarian spirit of the early suffrage movement persisted, it was overshadowed by so-called social or "domestic" feminism, which saw its ideals reflected in Roosevelt's New Deal.²¹ The Depression and World War II, times of crisis that called for women's active involvement in the public sphere as well as in the home, created a climate in which both social feminism and republican motherhood flourished. The postwar years saw a retreat to suburbia and the promotion of domesticity and consumerism as powerful Cold War weapons. Following the war, the true womanhood ideology, also known as the cult of domesticity, was a convenient way to promote women's return to the home and subsequent retreat from public and political life.²² However, within the domestic sphere, homemakers were empowered in ways that exceeded the moral authority of Victorian era true women. Particularly through their role as the primary consumers for the family, women exerted more authority within the home than they had in previous generations.

Female leaders who joined together in the fight for suffrage prior to 1920 went their separate ways soon after the passage of the nineteenth amendment, divided mainly by philosophical differences regarding gender. Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party, embracing an egalitarian viewpoint, focused their energies on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), first introduced in 1923. But the majority of women's groups, including the League of Women Voters (formerly the National American Woman Suffrage Association) and the National Women's Trade Union League, opposed the ERA.²³ Members of groups like the LWV and NWTUL, who came to be identified as social feminists, believed that women were inherently different from men, and needed protective measures to prevent their exploitation in the workforce and improve their home lives. Barbara Ryan explains, "[T]hey worked not for equality between the sexes, but rather for legislative provisions for maternity and infant health care, restrictions on child labor, and protective labor legislation for women designed to shorten their hours of work and define the conditions under which they could work."²⁴ Such social feminists were the descendants of the new women of the progressive era who argued that "their domestic duties gave women special moral qualities and a special claim to influence in American society."²⁴ J. Stanley Lemons argues that "social feminists constituted an important link in the chain from the progressive era to the New Deal," providing the foundation for the social welfare system promoted by the Roosevelts.²⁶ Both Eleanor Roosevelt and Frances Perkins, FDR's Secretary of Labor, aligned themselves with leading social feminists and fought for protective legislation.²⁷

As in the past, republican motherhood was invoked to justify women's growing political participation. Believing that women's lives were defined by their roles as wives and mothers, social feminists felt that women were obligated as citizens to work on behalf of securing political rights and protections for women and children, within both the home and the workplace. This philosophy reflected the republican motherhood notion that "a mother, committed to the service of her family and to the state, might serve a political purpose."²⁸ Roosevelt often justified her active promotion of social reform by characterizing herself as a concerned mother, and the majority of causes she supported were aimed at improving the lives of women, children, and families.²⁹

Republican motherhood was also used to frame women's wartime roles. Gail Collins argues that, throughout U.S. history, rules regarding proper female comportment have been "temporarily abandoned whenever the country needed women to do something they weren't supposed to do."³⁰ Such was the case during World War II, when many middle-class white women, who for the past decade had been encouraged to stay out of the workforce, were "told it was their duty to take over for the men who had gone to the front."³¹ The government created one of the most famous American images, Rosie the Riveter, as part of a campaign that made factory work both patriotic and feminine.³² Meanwhile, women were reminded that it was also their duty to fight the war from the home front by rationing, buying war bonds, and volunteering at their local Red Cross or USO canteen.³³ Nancy Walker contends that women's magazines and advertisers, in particular, constructed even the most

basic of domestic duties as patriotic acts,³⁴ integrating political values into women's domestic lives, which is the premise of republican motherhood.³⁵

But when the war ended, the same government that recruited women workers started campaigning almost immediately to get them out of the workforce. Susan J. Douglas says that government officials were “fueled by the fear that there wouldn't be enough jobs for returning servicemen and that depression conditions might return.”³⁶ So, women were now told that it was their patriotic duty to give up their jobs to returning soldiers.³⁷ Rather than relying solely on republican motherhood, the gender ideology of true womanhood was brought to the forefront as a way of framing middle-class white women's return to the home.

Following the war, true womanhood and the cult of domesticity, in the guise of the postwar homemaker, emerged as the dominant gender ideology. The fictional Betty Crocker and June Cleaver were the images of the “new” true woman—ideal homemakers with perfectly coiffed hair.³⁸ Collins remarks that, following the war, “women seemed to have been catapulted back in time to the nineteenth century, to the cult of the True Woman and the corset that went with it.”³⁹ According to Ryan, “From the mid-1940s until the 1960s, traditional gender role divisions prevailed as the mythical ideal for American family life, an anomaly in the demographic and family trends that had been occurring in the United States since the turn of the century. The age of marriage dipped, the birth rate soared, and compulsory family togetherness took hold.”⁴⁰ In 1963, Betty Friedan argued, “In the fifteen years since World War II, this mystique of feminine fulfillment became the cherished and self-perpetuating core of contemporary American culture.” She claimed that white women

“had no thought for the unfeminine problems of the world outside the home; they wanted the men to make the major decisions. They glorified in their role as women, and wrote proudly on the census blank: ‘Occupation: housewife.’”⁴¹ These middle-class white women were part of an “unprecedented domestic revival.”⁴² This ideological shift “made home and family metaphors for America’s identity and security” during the Cold War.⁴³

Some scholars view the resurgence of true womanhood as a backlash against advances made by middle-class white women during the Depression and war years. Glenna Matthews states, “Coupled with the general conservatism which had been unleashed by Cold War anxieties—not to say hysteria—the backlash proved damaging to the cause of public womanhood.” Matthews notes that women’s magazines in particular “enjoined women to sacrifice their own ambitions for the sake of husband and children.”⁴⁴ This meant, for many white women, giving up jobs and a life outside the home that they enjoyed. Douglas claims the “backlash against our mothers, which began nine seconds after Japan surrendered, makes the backlash of the 1980s look flaccid.” She asserts further, “Because the contrast between the Rosie the Riveter campaign and the virulent antifeminism that followed it was so stark, it is easy to paint a black-and-white, before-and-after portrait of this period.” However, Douglas and others argue that the backlash and its promotion of true womanhood reflected earlier debates over women’s changing roles. Ruth Schwartz Cohen argues that the “feminine mystique,” which was a new take on the Victorian cult of true womanhood, appeared after World War I, dominated through the Depression, and then reappeared following WWII.⁴⁵

But there was a positive element to the postwar backlash in that it sparked the women's liberation movement of the 1960s.⁴⁶ Ryan claims that the rebirth of feminism can be traced to the "family-centered years of the 1950s" when "cultural ideology defined the wife/mother role as both women's special duty and path to fulfillment."⁴⁷ As Friedan found when she interviewed white middle-class housewives in the 1950s, many already wanted "something more than my husband and my children and my home."⁴⁸ By the early 1960s, the question regarding the status of American women would be taken up by a presidential commission, appointed by President Kennedy and chaired by former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt.⁴⁹

Another positive aspect of the domestic ideology of this era, which has often been overlooked by feminist scholars, was a sense of domestic empowerment that characterized the homemaker as playing a vital role in American civic and cultural life. Nancy Walker, in her study of women's magazines during this era, says that "domestic" was not a narrow term that referred simply to housekeeping, but encompassed family and social relationships, personal well-being and appearance, purchasing habits, schools and neighborhoods, recreation, and civic involvement. The term "domestic" also connoted that which was not foreign in Cold War rhetoric, linking home and family to national security. Walker argues that women's magazines "included debates on the nature and significance of the homemaker's role that reveal the cultural fluidity of such concepts as *home* and *domestic* at mid-century."⁵⁰

While a true woman exercised authority through her moral superiority to men, the homemaker's authority came largely from her buying power in the marketplace. Advertisers began to recognize women as the primary household consumers in the

late nineteenth century, but the economic pressures of the Depression and World War II imbued women's consumerism with added significance. The homemaker had both agency and influence as she made decisions regarding the family spending.⁵¹ This power was extended during the Cold War, when consumption represented "the superiority of the American way of life." May claims, "Although they may have been unwitting soldiers, women who marched off to the nation's shopping centers to equip their new homes joined the ranks of American cold warriors."⁵² As Walker concludes, "The domestic remained contested ground; the woman who mopped the kitchen floor wearing high heels was also a participant in the political process."⁵³ Such domestic empowerment helped to politicize the private sphere by linking it to the public marketplace and the political arena, and can be viewed as an early articulation of the second-wave feminist mantra "the personal is political."⁵⁴

The social conditions of these decades promoted this domestic ideal, which shaped definitions of womanhood in the same ways that true womanhood once dictated the performance of gender roles. The postwar backlash and subsequent "domestic containment" of the Cold War limited definitions of women's proper roles, and by extension, the performance of the first lady position;⁵⁵ the same ideology also promoted a domestic empowerment that acknowledged the social significance of homemaking and the growing power of women.

Framing the First Lady Institution at Mid-Century

The framing of the first lady institution between 1932 and 1961 accentuates the ideology of domesticity while recognizing the political contributions of the first lady. The press coverage of the first lady institution during this period, which

increased dramatically, brought attention to the contestation over women's roles and the competing gender ideologies, as well as the increasingly public roles women were playing. Roosevelt personified for the press the social feminist and the republican mother, while her successors embodied the Cold War homemaker. These ideologies were also used as framing devices in articles that assessed the performance of the various duties associated with the first lady institution. The heavy press coverage of Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Kennedy helped propel them to celebrity status, positioning each woman as a role model for American womanhood.⁵⁶

Embodying Domesticity: Empowerment and Containment

Throughout the history of the institution, journalists have presented the first lady as a model of American womanhood. However, there was an increase in this particular type of framing during this period that mirrored the growing pervasiveness of domesticity as the dominant ideology defining gender roles. Both the individual women who held the position and the cultural climate of the era amplified journalists' constructions of these first ladies as personifications of gender ideologies. Articles appearing in women's pages and magazines focused primarily on women's various domestic roles, infusing women with a sense of domestic empowerment that simultaneously contained their political influence. The first ladies of this era were more active than their modern era predecessors in terms of constructing their public image, either through their visibility or their evasion of the spotlight.⁵⁷ However, through practices such as personification framing, journalists remained the primary filter through which the words and images of first ladies were disseminated throughout the public sphere.

For journalists, Roosevelt personified the reformist spirit of the New Deal and social feminism, not only through her actions, but through her words. Roosevelt was the most active in respect to publicity; she held regular press conferences open only to women journalists,⁵⁸ gave speeches on an almost daily basis, published a daily newspaper column, hosted radio programs, and wrote for various publications, activities which garnered regular press coverage and expanded her exposure as a public woman.⁵⁹ Because she spoke so frequently, journalists often built their story around her quotes, positioning her as the physical embodiment of the ideals that she promoted in her speeches. Sometimes journalists went as far as using Roosevelt's name as a frame in the headlines of their stories, attributing the ideas in the story directly to her. For example, an article in the *New York Times* titled, "Housewives Entitled to Fixed Salaries, Like Any Worker, Mrs. Roosevelt Holds," opened with the following sentence: "The suggestion that wives who stay at home to look after the household should receive a definite salary for their work was advanced last night by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, wife of the President." The article went on to note that Roosevelt also supported protective legislation for working women, quoting her as saying, "a woman who works to give her children the necessities and some of the advantages of life should have her work day limited to eight hours."⁶⁰ Journalists framed such comments as representative of the views of groups like the Women's Trade Union League, of which Roosevelt was an active member. For journalists, Roosevelt became the embodiment of social feminism by giving voice to its ideological values and by acting out its basic tenets.

Roosevelt's activism, combined with her focus on domesticity, positioned her at times as a personification of republican motherhood. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Diane M. Blair argue that twentieth-century first ladies extended the republican motherhood ideology, resulting in the premise that "being a good first lady meant hailing, modeling, and promoting publicly the civic values that *good* mothers historically instilled."⁶¹ A 1933 *Washington Post* article featured a statement from Roosevelt telling her fellow homemakers that they had a significant role to play in the country's economic recovery: "We women have to go about our daily task of home-making, no matter what may happen, and we needn't feel that ours is an unimportant part, for our courage and our willingness to sacrifice may well be the springboard from which recovery may come."⁶² This statement imbued homemaking with political purpose, and empowered women to act as citizens, noting that their daily domestic duties have political consequences.

Such sentiments of domestic empowerment were echoed in articles during World War II when Roosevelt urged "the women of the country to do all in their power to help speed victory in the war" as homemakers and consumers. Under the headline, "First Lady Decries Home-Front Complaints and Urges Women to do Utmost to Aid War," a 1945 *New York Times* article stated, "Housewives of this country, she declared, should be able to take a ration stamp cut to distribute food supplies as equitably as possible without feeling that they are being badly treated." According to the story, "The First Lady asserted that women had a responsibility as buyers to stick to essentials and to pass useful articles on to others when they ceased to need them." The article pointed out how Roosevelt exhibited women's homefront

role by overseeing White House rationing, providing a “model for American housewives.”⁶³ Such framing recalls the actions of revolutionary era republican mothers, who contributed to the war effort by caring for their farms and families and boycotting British goods.⁶⁴ Although these stories conflate domesticity, consumerism, and patriotism, thereby defining women’s citizenship in relation to their roles as homemakers, they also recognize the significant civic role homemakers play, especially during times of crisis. Because women managed the households during this era, they were empowered to make decisions that not only impacted their own personal domestic spaces, but the nation as well.

Although social feminism and republican motherhood were both characterized by domestic discourse, these ideologies rarely appeared in the postwar era, replaced with a more fervent ideology of domesticity which dominated discussions of womanhood and the first lady institution. The Cold War incarnation of the cult of domesticity, later labeled “the feminine mystique” by Friedan, constructed women as “sexually attractive housewives and consumers under the American capital system.”⁶⁵ Such framing conflated domesticity with both femininity and consumerism. May argues that “this vision of domesticity,” which included “affluent homes, complete with breadwinner and homemaker,” was a powerful Cold War propaganda weapon.⁶⁶ For journalists, Mamie Eisenhower and Jacqueline Kennedy, and to a lesser extent, Bess Truman, personified this “vision of domesticity.”

For starters, the first ladies of the postwar era were the visual embodiments of femininity, looking the part of the average American woman. For postwar Americans, fashion represented femininity. Anne Norton contends, “Through commodities

Americans reveal their conception of their identities. . . . Commodities serve Americans as objectifications in the Hegelian sense: as material embodiments of the ideal.”⁶⁷ The *New York Times*’ Bess Furman reported that Truman was “as folksy in tone as is the Midwest itself,”⁶⁸ which matched her husband’s “plain Midwestern democracy” image.⁶⁹ In Martha Weinman’s review of first lady fashion, Truman was quoted as saying of the first lady, ““Why should she look different from anyone else?”” Reporters played on this personification, offering “homespun descriptions of her resemblance to ‘your next-door neighbor.’”⁷⁰ Eisenhower also personified the typical postwar housewife and came the closest to representing the American woman, according to Weinman, “Mamie has, in effect, come closer to the ideal than any other first lady of memory. . . . In addition to difficult hair, she looks average, as most women do; she loves clothes, as most women do; she dresses a bit more youthfully than is warranted by Paris standards, as most American women do; and she has a guilt about unnecessary spending as, again, most women have.” A “housewife” was even quoted as saying, “I’ve always sympathized with her because I’ve never been able to do anything with my hair, either.” Weinman concluded that Eisenhower was “typical, and thus ideal.” She argued that both Eisenhower and Truman embodied a shifting cultural perspective on the ideals of American womanhood: “The cozy conjunction of a White House wife who looks just like your neighbor roughly parallels Hollywood’s abrupt shift in leading ladies from goddesses to girls-next-door and is infinitely better suited to these identification-conscious times than the grand-lady manner of Dolly Madison’s day.”⁷¹ In a time when both print media and politicians were increasingly focused on images,⁷² Truman and Eisenhower visually

represented the average American housewife and Cold War femininity. Such framing encouraged readers to identify with the first lady, making the “ideal” of womanhood more attainable by the “typical” woman, primarily through consumption.

The emphasis on representing the “average” housewife was so pervasive in the postwar era that the first lady’s image became a campaign issue in 1960. Kennedy was more youthful and stylish than both her predecessors and the average American housewife, personifying for the press culture and sophistication. According to Gould, Kennedy’s legacy “was an image of beauty, culture, and good taste that no woman could easily match.”⁷³ But this younger, hipper first lady image was not immediately embraced by the public. Kennedy was criticized as being “too chic,” and some reporters argued that her cultured image alienated the “average American woman,” and could cost her husband votes. Weinman claimed, “This fall, the question of style for a President’s wife may be a Great issue. Can too much chic—or too little—mean votes?” She suggested that “if Mrs. Kennedy could un-chic a bit, she would make an admirable fashion diplomat.”⁷⁴ Meanwhile, the “conservative perfection” of Pat Nixon, Kennedy’s “competition” for the first lady position, was critiqued as having a “consciously manipulated air that poses certain problems vis-à-vis the public.” One observer stated that “Pat Nixon always looks too good to be true . . . [and] it irritates me.” By not looking like the average housewife, both Kennedy and Nixon found themselves under fire. Weinman focused primarily on controversy surrounding Kennedy, including a report that she and her mother-in-law spent “some \$30,000 a year in Paris salons” on clothes. Further, Weinman claimed that “Mrs. Kennedy’s coiffure seems to arouse even greater ire than her clothes. A picture of her that

appeared recently in *The Times* engendered several comments, including one that reads, ‘. . . we have better-looking floor mops than the bouffant coiffure worn by your favorite Bobby-Soxer. (Signed) Twenty Iowa Homemakers.’”⁷⁵ It was Kennedy’s “devil-may-care chic,” according to Weinman, that troubled American women, who could not identify as easily with the chic socialite as they could with her predecessors.

Kennedy’s livid reaction to this criticism in the press also set her apart from Eisenhower and Truman, who avoided expressing their opinions in public. Kennedy responded defensively to her critics a few days later, attacking Pat Nixon in the process. During an informal round of interviews with female reporters, which was supposed to focus on her new maternity wardrobe, Kennedy candidly spoke her mind about the press coverage of her fashion choices. Nan Robertson’s front page article in the *New York Times*, carrying the headline, “Mrs. Kennedy Defends Clothes; Is ‘Sure’ Mrs. Nixon Pays More,” opened with the following paragraph: “Mrs. John F. Kennedy, stung by reports that women resent her because she is ‘too chic’ and spends too much money on clothes, called her critics ‘dreadfully unfair’ yesterday.” Robertson noted that Kennedy “expressed hurt and surprise at slurs on her avant-garde dressing habits,” and quoted her as saying, ““They’re beginning to snipe at me about that as often as they attack Jack on Catholicism.”” She further stated, ““A newspaper reported Sunday that I spend \$30,000 a year buying Paris clothes and that women hate me for it. I couldn’t spend that much unless I wore sable underwear.”” Kennedy’s tone was both argumentative and flippant as she addressed her critics. Kennedy then attacked Pat Nixon, one of the first times a candidate’s wife openly challenged her opponent in the press: ““I’m sure I spend less than Mrs. Nixon on

clothes,' the 31-year-old wife of the Democratic candidate said. 'She gets hers at Elizabeth Arden, and nothing there costs less than \$200 or \$300.'"⁷⁶ By challenging her critics and Nixon, Kennedy violated the norm against women assuming a more aggressive rhetorical style in public. However, because Kennedy defended her own spending habits by attacking Nixon's consumerism, she helped to trivialize the debate by turning it into a competition between women rather than a matter of larger political significance.

The "fashion debate" highlights one of the problems of personification framing. Both Kennedy and Nixon were reduced to images that focused on fashion and failed to capture the complex personalities and interests of each woman. As Kennedy argued, such critiques were "'dreadfully unfair'" because they were based on incomplete, and sometimes false, information. Yet these journalists, many of whom were women, used these limited public constructions to critique each woman, as did Kennedy when she attacked Nixon's clothing expenditures. Placing such high importance on the candidates' wives fashion choices also ignored the complexities of the first lady institution. Despite the "fashion debate," Kennedy went on to become the "first lady of American fashion," personifying a youthful yet sophisticated image, complimenting her husband's public image that blended "Camelot and Catholicism, continental chic and touch football."⁷⁷

Throughout this era, journalists continued to position the first lady as a model of American womanhood. Each woman personified domesticity, but in ways that matched the social conditions of their time and their personalities. For journalists, Roosevelt's advocacy represented social feminism and made manifest the spirit of her

husband's New Deal. During both the Depression and the war, she embodied republican motherhood in articles in which she promoted patriotism and lauded women's contributions to American society. As the cultural climate shifted, first ladies personified the "domestic containment" of the postwar era with its focus on traditional gender roles and femininity. Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy represented different, but equally compelling, images of the ideal woman; Truman and Eisenhower looked like the typical American homemaker, whereas Kennedy resembled the movie stars in the fashion magazines that the typical American woman read, making both images familiar to the public. While Eisenhower represented the feminine mystique of the 1950s, Kennedy resembled the college-educated housewives of Friedan's study that were becoming disillusioned with the domestic ideal and searching for other avenues of personal fulfillment. By spotlighting domesticity and making the private lives of these women public, press framing encouraged female readers to identify with and emulate first ladies. These changes in definitions of domesticity impacted how journalists framed their discussions of the duties of the first lady institution.

The Two-Person Career: Framing the Performance of the First Lady Position

The coverage of the first lady position between 1932 and 1961 showed a shift in the framing of the institution that reflected an expansion of the first lady's duties as well as the domestic ideologies that governed gender performance during this period. The social feminism of the 1930s, mirrored in Eleanor Roosevelt's active performance of the position, slowly gave way to the cult of domesticity embraced by her successors. Both of these standpoints promoted a sense of domestic

empowerment, albeit in different ways. The majority of articles focused on the presidency as a two-person career.⁷⁸ This frame limited women to the traditional roles of wife and homemaker, but also recognized that wives play significant roles in their husbands' careers. While the two-person career frame, which can be traced back to the parlor politics of the new Republic, had been used by journalists over the years in their coverage of the first lady institution, it came to dominate discussions of the first lady's duties during this era. By this time, journalists routinely covered the first lady as part of a presidential couple.⁷⁹ In a 1960 article, the *Ladies' Home Journal* stated, "Politics today is a husband-wife partnership."⁸⁰ But Gil Troy notes that "such cooperation was seen not as a mark of liberation but as an appropriate extension of wifely duties."⁸¹ Thus, the two-person career frame was compatible with the domestic ideology that was also employed to frame the performance of the first lady position.

In discussing their roles, journalists continued to frame first ladies primarily as wives and mothers during this era, a frame which recognized that these women initially became public figures through marriage. The *New York Times* reported that Bess Truman was "devoted to her husband and daughter,"⁸² while Mamie Eisenhower "cherish[ed] her role as wife and mother."⁸³ According to a 1952 *New York Times* article, Eisenhower was not "frightened" of her new job "because it would mean playing the role of a wife, entertaining and meeting people, which was no different from what she had always done."⁸⁴ Most stories about Jacqueline Kennedy framed her as a "young wife and mother devoted to her husband and children."⁸⁵ Even Eleanor Roosevelt was lauded by *Good Housekeeping* for her commitment to her family: "despite her many outside activities, she is a fine and conscientious mother"

and a “devoted and supportive wife.”⁸⁶ Campbell argues that, in two-person careers like the presidency, “the division of labor will vary with the talents and attitudes of the partners and because the wife’s role combines state and domestic duties.”⁸⁷

Journalists recognized that, as devoted wives, these first ladies assumed various roles, from the more traditional helpmate to public surrogate and political advisor.

As helpmates, wives were loyal supporters of their husbands’ careers. In the first story written about new first lady Truman, the *New York Times* reported she was “on call twenty-four hours a day as her husband’s helper.”⁸⁸ This statement implied that Truman’s life revolved around her husband, echoing the subservience of the cult of domesticity. The notion of being “on call” around the clock, however, also indicated that her husband relied on her. Similarly, a 1956 profile of Eisenhower claimed, “Even as First Lady, Mrs. Eisenhower takes the feminine view. She sees her role, and lives it, as a husband-helper.”⁸⁹ In this case, the reporter explicitly links the helpmate role to gender ideology by referring to it as the “feminine view.” Despite the submissive tone, the language also implied that both Truman and Eisenhower were playing important roles in their husbands’ lives, one that had them “on call” as their husband’s “helper,” which alluded to a spousal advisory role.

According to the press, one way wives help their husbands is by acting as their protector, which is an example of women’s authority in the private sphere. The public statements of the first ladies encouraged the protector frame. According to the *New York Times*, Eisenhower believed that her primary job was “looking after Ike.”⁹⁰ A *New York Times* headline from 1952 proclaimed that “‘Policeman for Ike’ is wife’s idea of her principal role in public life.” According to reporter Laurie Johnston,

Eisenhower stated that she could do more good for her husband by “‘playing policeman—seeing that he gets to bed on time and doesn’t get irritated by small things’” than by making speeches or commenting on political issues.⁹¹ The image of Mamie ordering Ike to bed presents her as the authority figure within the home. Kennedy also assumed a protective role. Upon her husband’s election, it was reported that “her greatest immediate desire was that ‘Jack must get a month’s rest, or else he won’t be able to be a good president.’”⁹² Kennedy also insisted that her children were her first priority. She told Nan Robertson of the *New York Times*, “‘I’ll do everything I can and should do in any official way. But I don’t want my young children brought up by nurses and Secret Service men.’”⁹³ In this forceful statement, Kennedy articulated that she would not allow the duties of the first lady to infringe on her home life, thus marking her control of the private domain. The framing of both Kennedy and Eisenhower as protectors of the family emphasized the role of women as nurturers whose lives were defined by the need to care for their families. However, by highlighting the protector role these women assumed over their husbands, reporters, many of whom were women, helped imbue them with domestic authority. While such framing promoted domesticity, it also empowered each woman to make decisions to place limits on her public activities as first lady in favor of her private duties as wife and mother, as well as limiting the activities of her presidential husband.

The role of protector sometimes extended into the public sphere when journalists applied the protective helpmate frame to first ladies who acted as presidential surrogates. Eisenhower took on many of the ceremonial public appearances formerly associated with the presidency. She was credited for having

“taken from the President’s shoulders much of the load of making personal appearances and being photographed for worthy causes,” framing her as a helpmate and protective wife.⁹⁴ According to the *New York Times*, many of Roosevelt’s public appearances were an extension of her wifely helpmate role, “Since President Roosevelt’s disability makes it difficult for him, in spite of his robust general health, to get around, Mrs. Roosevelt has relieved him of a host of social duties performed by his predecessors.”⁹⁵ Since Martha Washington’s time, the surrogate role helped to justify a first lady’s public activities; in Roosevelt’s case, it allowed journalists to explain her expansion of the first lady’s duties.

The press often framed the Roosevelts’ marital partnership as a fusion of the personal and the political. Roosevelt expanded the role of presidential surrogate by parlaying it into an advisory role; not only did she appear on the president’s behalf, she also reported back to him the details of what she saw and heard, acting as his “eyes and ears.” For example, her extensive traveling was viewed, in part, as a way of helping her husband compensate for his disability, which made it difficult for him to make informal public appearances. As her husband’s emissary, she toured numerous New Deal program sites and communities during the Depression. Rita S. Halle, in a 1933 *Good Housekeeping* article, described Roosevelt as a figurative extension of her husband, “If in this remarkable partnership she is, as it has been said, ‘his ear to the ground,’ it is a natural and not a calculated thing. Because she can go places he can’t go, see people he can’t see, and because of her rare gift of articulate expression, can bring back to him as no one else can, visualizations which result in benefit to you and to me and to all the masses of people who make up America.” However, Halle

tempered her framing of Roosevelt as advisor with the following disclaimer, “I do not mean by this to give the impression that Mrs. Roosevelt interferes, or that she is solely responsible for the fine things that the President does. I want to show only that her attitude inevitably reflects itself in his actions, just as that of any wife who has earned respect for and faith in her views over the years, finds a response in the point of view of her husband.”⁹⁶ This claim seems designed to defend Roosevelt from critics who asserted that she was abusing the “pillow talk” power that wives possess and overstepping the boundaries of the first lady position. It also reasserted that Roosevelt’s *political* interests were simply an extension of her *personal* wifely duties, which were in part based on her husband’s physical limitations that were well known by members of the press yet seldom discussed.

Other articles clearly framed Roosevelt as one of her husband’s most trusted political advisors, extending the two-person career from the home to the office. In a 1936 profile, *New York Times* reporter Kathleen McLaughlin called Roosevelt an “aide and counselor to the President,” asserting, “In many places and on varying occasions she has been the eyes and ears through which he has saw and heard. Each of her jaunts as a presidential deputy terminates with a report to him—orally, if there is time on their schedule, typed out in detail if there is not—on different phases of the project or community she has been delegated to inspect.” McLaughlin described Roosevelt as a “keenly practical politician,” noting that she “incorporates into these reports her impressions of trends and shifts in the public mind on major enterprises and policies of the administration. These the President peruses and sometimes quotes to his other counselors.”⁹⁷ In this story, Roosevelt’s actions sound more like those of

a staff member rather than a wife. By overtly framing Roosevelt as an advisor whose work was comparable to other presidential counselors, her actions were given more political meaning in this story.

The two-person career frame was also used by journalists to explain the increasingly public, although not necessarily active, roles that wives played in their husbands' campaigns. Stories about the presence of wives on the campaign trail also helped to make these women, even the publicity-shy Bess Truman, recognizable public figures. Troy claims that "Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower each discovered how important a high-profile wife could be on whistle-stop campaign trips."⁹⁸ Watson notes, "Bess Truman was a visible part of Harry Truman's famous whistle-stop train campaigns, with crowds cheering as much for Bess as for the president."⁹⁹ A *New York Times* article attested to this: "Important assets to Mr. Truman on this trip have been Mrs. Truman and their daughter, Margaret. . . . When the train stops at a station, Mr. Truman appears first, makes his little speech, then says he would like to introduce his family. First it is Mrs. Truman, then the daughter, and they get a big hand."¹⁰⁰ The press, though, sometimes framed Truman as a passive, and somewhat reluctant, campaigner. The *New York Times* noted, "Mrs. Truman's role in the 1948 campaign will consist merely of accompanying her husband on trips."¹⁰¹ At a campaign stop in St. Louis, Truman was said to have "listened more passively" to her husband's speech than her daughter, who "smiled at the cutting thrusts of her father."¹⁰² Despite being described as passive at times, Truman was mentioned in almost every article about her husband's campaign, testifying to her presence on the campaign trail.

According to press constructions, Eisenhower seemed to genuinely enjoy the social aspects of campaigning, but was less interested in the political side.¹⁰³ One report noted that she was “the quintessential political wife, waving graciously and smiling at her husband’s side.”¹⁰⁴ The *New York Times* said of Eisenhower, “To campaign crowds she showed a double-dimpled smile and a full-armed wave of greeting that reflected her liking for people. . . . Often the whistle-stop crowds yelled, ‘We want Mamie,’ until she appeared on the back platform.”¹⁰⁵ Once again, both Truman and Eisenhower were framed as helpmates to their husbands, supporting their husbands’ careers by standing alongside them on the campaign platform. However, such appearances furthered their status as public women.

Surprisingly, Roosevelt was also framed as a supportive wife in campaign stories. Roosevelt continually told the press that she would not deliver campaign speeches, although her regular activities often had her speaking in support of her husband’s policies. A 1936 *New York Times* story stated that Roosevelt “declined to make ‘political speeches’ on the grounds that she was sticking to a resolution to let the President talk politics for the family,”¹⁰⁶ a statement that sounds much like Eisenhower’s claim in 1952 that “‘Ike speaks well enough for both of us.’”¹⁰⁷ These comments indicate that public speaking, especially on political issues, was still not a widely embraced activity for even publicly active women like Roosevelt, who was a prolific speaker.¹⁰⁸ One notable exception was Roosevelt’s delivery of the keynote address to the Democratic National Convention in 1940, where she appeared as a surrogate for her husband.¹⁰⁹ Despite being hailed by the *New York Times* as “the first wife of a President or nominee ever to address a major political party conclave,” there

was little fanfare surrounding her speech. In fact, rather than focusing on the speech, the headline proclaimed: “No Campaigning, First Lady States.”¹¹⁰ Both the *Times* and the *Washington Post* published the full text of the speech, which was standard procedure in convention coverage, and the *Times* commended Roosevelt for “an impressively delivered appeal for a united country.”¹¹¹ Despite the innovation of a first lady addressing a nominating convention, the focus of the framing remained on Roosevelt as a supportive wife.

As in most two-person careers, homemaking and hostessing are the domain of presidential wives, making them a common frame in coverage of the first lady institution. Previous first ladies, when framed as hostesses, were generally lauded for their etiquette and social graces; in contrast, the first ladies of this period were constructed primarily as smart consumers and skilled, hands-on managers, language which reflected the professionalization of homemaking.¹¹² Watson notes that the first lady “is the manager of the White House and its ample staff and resources,” overseeing everything from daily menus to planning for state events to renovations on the historic home.¹¹³ Roosevelt embraced home economics, which Cott argues, “valiantly compared homemaking to nondomestic work, analyzed it with reference to its managerial and worker functions or its business and spiritual elements, and assimilated it to a professional model.”¹¹⁴ According to a *New York Times* article, “Mrs. Roosevelt has given practical expression of her faith in home economics by testing out in the White House menus prepared by Miss Flora Rose of Cornell University, in which science and economy were combined to afford a maximum of nourishment at a minimum cost.”¹¹⁵ This was part of Roosevelt’s plan to “cut down

expenses at least 25 percent” in accordance with her husband’s policy that all government departments cut back on expenses.¹¹⁶ Truman was described as “a housewife who does her own marketing and cooking”¹¹⁷ and who “takes her housekeeping duties seriously.”¹¹⁸ According to the *Washington Post*, “Her object is to provide a pleasant setting for her family, and to keep the budget down.”¹¹⁹ Similarly, a close friend of Eisenhower was quoted as saying, “Mamie is a very good housekeeper. She knows what’s going on and how the money is being spent. She wants an orderly house.” After moving into the White House, Eisenhower “took a firm hand in the housekeeping, mastering the complexities of the major operation quickly and imbuing it with the warmth of her personality,” according to a *New York Times* article.¹²⁰ Despite the existence of a trained White House staff, such press accounts assured the American public that these first ladies were actively involved in managing the executive mansion’s household budget and operations. Such framing highlights the domestic empowerment of the first lady, who exercised complete control over the home much like any workplace manager, thus promoting homemaking as a career which took on extreme importance in an era marked by the Depression and fears of a possible postwar economic slump.¹²¹

Marital partnership and the various roles wives play in a two-person career were the dominant themes of coverage of the first lady institution during this era. Although individual interpretations of those roles varied, domesticity permeated the framing of each first lady’s performance of the position. Coverage of the institution supports Troy’s contention that, “During the Roosevelt’s extraordinary tenure . . . the idea of the presidential couple as a construct began to emerge. Politicians, reporters,

and citizens began looking at the president and his wife as a team.”¹²² Although the partnership frame appeared in earlier coverage, it did not dominate discussions of the institution as it did during this time period. The social, political, and economic conditions, from the paternalism of the New Deal to the domestic containment of the Cold War, provided a context for reporters’ focus on presidential couples. Such coverage intensified the spotlight on first ladies’ performance, turning women like Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Kennedy, who regularly appeared in newspapers and magazines, into media celebrities. However, gender continued to dictate the press framing of these women to the extent that they were constructed by journalists, particularly the growing number of women reporters, as role models for American womanhood.

Emergence of the First Lady as Gendered Celebrity

A residual effect of the increased publicity surrounding the first lady institution, and the gendered framing of the position, is the construction of certain first ladies as *gendered celebrities*. The technologies of this era, particularly the development of radio and television, and print’s increased use of photographs, placed a greater emphasis on the projection of image and personality,¹²³ which has been tied to the creation of what Rojek calls “celebrity culture.”¹²⁴ As Daniel J. Boorstin argued in 1961, “the celebrity is created by the media” and is distinguished “by his image or trademark.”¹²⁵ P. David Marshall defines celebrities as “overtly public individuals” who are given “greater presence and a wider scope of activity and agency” in the public sphere. Marshall further elaborates that, “Celebrity status also confers on the person a certain discursive power: within society, the celebrity is a voice above

others, a voice that is channeled into the media systems as being legitimately significant.”¹²⁶ During the modern era, the emergence of the first lady as public woman allowed for the development of the first lady as celebrity. As first ladies like Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Kennedy became more visible and vocal public women through the mass media, they achieved a celebrity status. Yet their celebrity was always connected with gender performance.¹²⁷ Marshall contends that “the celebrity *represents* something other than itself. The material reality of the celebrity sign—that is, the actual person who is at the core of the representation—disappears into a cultural formation of meaning.”¹²⁸ With first ladies, the individuality of these public women often “disappeared” as the press constructed them as representatives of gender ideologies and role models for American women. Thus, coverage of first ladies as gendered celebrities was an outgrowth of the press practice of personification framing and the legitimization of the first lady as public woman in the previous era. It also represented a press phenomenon where women journalists, empowered in their role as writers, helped construct first ladies as gendered celebrities.

Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Kennedy’s names became synonymous with a particular vision of American womanhood at the time when they served as first lady. Roosevelt achieved celebrity status through her unprecedented activity and activism as first lady. For reporters, Roosevelt represented the expansion of women’s, and the first lady’s, political roles during the Depression and wartime era.¹²⁹ Her successors embodied the “domestic containment” of the Cold War and its focus on women’s civic contributions as housewives and consumers.¹³⁰ Eisenhower and Kennedy

acquired celebrity largely through the images of femininity they projected. Their styles and fashions came to represent the 1950s and early 1960s. Rojek argues that “celebrity presents standards of emulation for the mass.”¹³¹ When treated as gendered celebrities, journalists presented these first ladies as role models worthy of emulation by American women.

Roosevelt became a celebrity through her unparalleled activity as first lady and through the press framing of the women reporters. She was viewed by many, including the women journalists who covered her, as the personification of women’s progress and the expansion of the first lady position. Roosevelt earned what Rojek calls “achieved celebrity,” which derives “from the perceived accomplishments of the individual.”¹³² Articles about Roosevelt frequently focused on such accomplishments. Women’s magazine writer Rita Halle stated, “No other First Lady did one half the things Mrs. Roosevelt has done, broke precedent the way she has broken it, or was in the limelight of the news so much or so often. . . . She breaks precedent by doing things, not by failing to do them. The difference between her and the other First Ladies is not in the things she leaves undone, but in those she adds to what others have done.”¹³³ Roosevelt’s precedents contributed to her celebrity, which she achieved independent of her husband. According to Elizabeth Gertrude Stein of the *New York Times*, “Roosevelt is the first to be a public figure and personage in her own right. Mistress of the White House, lecturer, a writer, civic leader, she is unique in the long line to which she belongs.”¹³⁴ In 1936, reporter Kathleen McLaughlin claimed that, “whatever may be said of her in this controversial period, [Roosevelt] will at least go on record as having made articulate that lay figure, the presidential

wife, who from the era of George Washington had been officially mute.”¹³⁵ In a 1944 profile, McLaughlin again said of Roosevelt, “She is no whit different from the energetic, indefatigable speaker, organizer, and executive who kept the public gasping during her first months in the White House. She still tosses off incredible numbers of tasks in any working day, still covers challenging distances, still accepts and discharges an imposing number of engagements, still extends hospitality to individuals, prominent and obscure.”¹³⁶ The focus on Roosevelt’s actions in these quotes is reflective of achieved celebrity, which is based on the activities and accomplishments of an individual.

One feature of gendered celebrity is a focus on first ladies’ “feminist” activities. Roosevelt, of course, became a role model for women’s increasing public activity, political advocacy, and individual agency, helping her achieve such celebrity stature. Women were encouraged to emulate Roosevelt by becoming more politically active. Throughout her tenure, Roosevelt persuaded women to get involved in political organizations,¹³⁷ to run for political office,¹³⁸ and to use their political power, both through the ballot and by working in their communities.¹³⁹ For example, Roosevelt entreated women to support labor unions and women workers by refusing to purchase garments made in sweatshops.¹⁴⁰ Roosevelt went as far as crediting her accomplishments to the expanding roles of American women. Upon receiving an award as “America’s best-known woman broadcaster” from the National Association of Broadcasters in 1945, Roosevelt stated, “I couldn’t have done anything as the wife of the President unless the women were accepting responsibilities and playing a great part in a great period.”¹⁴¹ Roosevelt’s achieved celebrity was viewed as exceptional,

particularly by a press corps composed predominantly of women, who Roosevelt helped empower through her press conferences. These journalists consistently noted that Roosevelt's activities were unique, not only for women, but for first ladies. Such coverage helped extend the boundaries of women's political activism, showing more positive consequences of a first lady's achieved celebrity status.¹⁴²

Eisenhower and Kennedy represented what Rojek calls "attributed celebrity," which results from "the concentrated representation of an individual as noteworthy or exceptional by cultural intermediaries," such as the press.¹⁴³ Eisenhower, for the press and public, exemplified Cold War domesticity to the point that the mere mention of the name "Mamie" conjured a particular image for Americans in the 1950s. Beasley and Belgrade argue that Eisenhower "embodied the traditional role expected of most American women during the 1950s—to be, above all, a devoted wife." They conclude that, for the most part, "Mrs. Eisenhower was portrayed by the press as a personification of the feminine mystique."¹⁴⁴ An example comes from Nona B. Brown's article about the 1956 campaign, in which Eisenhower was constructed as the personification of domesticity. Brown claimed, "Mrs. Eisenhower has generated a popular picture of herself as a warm, generous, friendly woman who devotes herself to her husband and family. This is a first lady stereotype that is immensely popular, so Mamie has merely to appear with Ike, even if only on a television screen, to evoke the warmest kind of response."¹⁴⁵ The Eisenhowers used Mamie's popularity and celebrity status to their advantage throughout their eight years in the White House.

Eisenhower's celebrity was largely tied to her fashion and appearance, as stories focused on the ways in which she personified the image of Cold War

consumption. “Celebrities,” according to Rojek, “humanize the process of commodity consumption,”¹⁴⁶ and stories about Eisenhower reflect the humanization of consumption. According to the *New York Times*, “‘Mamie’ is an affectionately regarded and familiar image to millions—with the little hats with matching gloves, bags, and shoes; the costume jewelry chosen for the right touch and the charm bracelets jangling with the symbols of her husband’s career.”¹⁴⁷ Marling, who argues that Eisenhower visually represented the 1950s, says that some designers “sniffed at Mamie’s relish for dyed-to-match shoes and colored stockings, mink coats, charm bracelets and bangs. In the end, however, what she called ‘looking high class’—adorning a basic style with marks of familial success and individuality—came to be known as ‘the Mamie look.’”¹⁴⁸ Marling also asserts that “Mamie’s fetish for pink,” which was widely publicized through the press, “may have helped to confirm the ultimate feminization of the color.” By 1955, “Mamie Pink” was a popular color for everything from dresses and hats to dishware and linoleum flooring.¹⁴⁹ In 1957, Eisenhower wore pale yellow at the Inaugural Ball, and a reporter predicted that, “as a result this color will be showing up in clothing, home furnishings, paints, plastics, and automobiles.”¹⁵⁰ The plethora of products associated with Eisenhower was representative of the postwar focus on consumerism. As May explains, “The family home would be the place where a man could display his success through the accumulation of consumer goods. Women, in turn, would reap rewards for domesticity by surrounding themselves with commodities.”¹⁵¹ In such stories, Eisenhower’s celebrity was linked to her personification of commodification as she embodied style and fashion, and in turn, promoted the products associated with her.

Eisenhower's celebrity was thus attributed to consumption; her image was dependent on products, from hats to minks to charms, which in turn inspired the creation of more consumer goods that were tied, however loosely, to that image of the 1950s woman. A *New York Times* story gave Eisenhower credit for helping to shape her image: "She has carefully considered her own stage presence, never appearing at any event without being 'turned out' for the occasion."¹⁵² This statement credits Eisenhower with carefully cultivating an image which personified the feminine ideal promoted by her husband's administration and represented many "depression-weary Americans [who] were eager to put the disruptions and hardships of war behind them and enjoy the abundance at home."¹⁵³ Like TV's Joan Clever and Donna Reed, "Mamie" became synonymous with white, middle-class women in the 1950s.

Kennedy was "something of an idol in the early 1960s."¹⁵⁴ Kennedy projected a very different image than Eisenhower, representing a younger generation of American housewives. Douglas argues that "Jackie personified a generation of women, who, in a variety of quiet, but significant ways, represented a departure from 1950s stuffiness, conformity, and confinement."¹⁵⁵ However, like her predecessor, Kennedy's celebrity was mainly associated with consumption. Marshall argues, "The celebrity is a commodity, and therefore expresses a form of valorization of the individual and personality that is coherent with capitalism and the associated consumer culture."¹⁵⁶ Kennedy's fashions were treated by the press as not only an expression of her personality, but as a visible indicator of the shifting cultural climate.¹⁵⁷ According to a *New York Times* article, "'Fantastically chic' was the phrase most often applied to her." The story went on to say that Kennedy was "a

pace-setter who has worn sausage-skin pants, streaked hair, chemise dresses and sleeveless tunics long before they became popular currency. At 30, she has the tall, slender, and rather muscular figure that seems to inspire creative American designers and the younger crop of Parisian couturiers.”¹⁵⁸

Kennedy’s celebrity and image were appropriated by retailers looking to sell the “Jackie look” to American women, who sought to emulate the first lady by looking like her. The *Washington Post* noted that “the entire fashion industry from wholesale to retail is discovering that the ‘Jackie Kennedy look’ is the hottest merchandising gimmick since Shirley Temple dolls.” The article stated that the pillbox hat, which has become associated with Kennedy in collective memory, was one of the top trends of 1961: “Pillbox hats are moving off millinery counters like soda pop at a Fourth of July picnic. Bonwit Teller, which advertised the pillbox sketched on a model who looked like a twin of the President-elect’s wife, has found that customers are asking for ‘the Kennedy hat.’”¹⁵⁹ Kennedy’s style came to define her to such an extent that an entire museum exhibit featuring her fashions and accessories was developed in 2001. According to curator Hamish Bowles, Kennedy “was at once a paradigm of old-fashioned dignity, sharing with her husband a love of history and a keen appreciation of ceremony, and a reluctant pop-culture icon, who like John F. Kennedy, had an intuitive understanding of the power of image in an age when television was becoming a potent medium.”¹⁶⁰ Like Eisenhower before her, reporters used the name “Jackie” as shorthand for the youthful and sophisticated style that Kennedy embodied. Douglas contends, “Jackie was tradition and modernity, the old femininity and new womanhood, seemingly sustained in a perfect suspension.”¹⁶¹

Despite her dislike of public life, Kennedy became an international celebrity who still represents the ideal of American womanhood in the early 1960s.

Gendered celebrity can be both empowering and constraining. Celebrity status empowers women, and first ladies, by normalizing the presence of women in the public sphere as celebrated individuals. According to Marshall, celebrities “often define the construction of change and transformation in contemporary culture. . . . They are the active agents that in the public spectacle stand in for the people.”¹⁶² Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Kennedy each stood in for a different performance of American womanhood, representing the changes in women’s lives during these years, particularly for the women journalists who covered the first lady on a regular basis. Roosevelt embodied the feminist ideal of women’s political activity while Eisenhower and Kennedy promoted women’s role as Cold War consumers. Such framing, in stories that were featured both on the front pages as well as in women’s publications, was instrumental in perpetuating the gendered celebrity of first ladies.

Through the media and their own image-making activities, these first ladies became celebritized public women, helping to alleviate the stigma once associated with public womanhood, publicity, and women’s agency. Roosevelt, in particular, represented women’s potential as political leaders. Her constant claims that she was no different than the average American woman equated her accomplishments with the achievements of all women, elevating the contributions of women to civic life. Rojek states that celebrity has “produced recognition and celebration of lifestyles, beliefs and forms of life previously unrecognized or repressed.”¹⁶³ Treating first ladies as celebrities recognizes the important role these women play in American culture and

celebrates the power and influence of women, even when that power is tied to traditionally feminine activities, like shopping. Particularly when celebrity is linked to domesticity, the roles that women play in both public *and* private are elevated, once again indicating a sense of “domestic empowerment,” which characterized much of the coverage of first ladies during this era.

Celebrity, however, can also be limiting. A danger of celebrity is that it “articulates the individual as commodity,”¹⁶⁴ reducing a person to an image that can be sold in the public sphere. Such was the case with Eisenhower and Kennedy, whose individual agency often got lost in the celebrification process. By linking women with consumption, their power was confined to more gendered and thus less threatening activities within the male public sphere. Whereas emulating Roosevelt required women to become politically active individuals, imitating Eisenhower or Kennedy called on women to consume, limiting their public power to buying a toaster in “Mamie pink” or wearing a “Jackie pillbox.” As Jennifer Scanlon notes, “When men spend money they commit a political act; when women spend money, they commit a social or cultural act.”¹⁶⁵ So, despite the political importance given to Cold War consumption,¹⁶⁶ Scanlon argues that the “consumer culture presented a unified and powerful vision of satisfaction not through social change but through consumption.”¹⁶⁷ Certainly the positive coverage given to Roosevelt expanded the political boundaries for women. Yet the prevalent focus on consumption reduced first ladies’ influence; rather than being positioned as models of American citizenship, their public performances are treated as representing consumption, which yielded visions of limited political influence for American women.

Conclusion

In 1936, writer Fannie Hurst proclaimed: “As for the one who follows [Roosevelt] into the White House, I say, God help her. I’m confident there will be no going back to the pastel tradition” of former first ladies.¹⁶⁸ However, the position quickly reverted to the “pastel traditions” that Hurst decried, and the White House was dominated by “Mamie Pink” throughout the 1950s. An examination of press coverage of the institution reveals a common theme that defined these years, and that was an ideology of domesticity that simultaneously empowered and restrained American women, including first ladies.

The first ladies of this era personified the various incarnations of the domestic ideal, from the maternalism of social feminism and republican motherhood to the new cult of domesticity, with its domestic containment and empowerment of the homemaker. This era has largely been dismissed in feminist histories because it did not feature an active woman’s movement. When this “in-between” period is mentioned, it is usually derided for its focus on domesticity, the so-called “feminine mystique,” which would be pointed to as the source of “the problem with no name” in the 1960s.¹⁶⁹ If press coverage of the first lady is any indication, however, the homemaker was not as powerless as Friedan made her appear. The homemaker was recognized by the press, comprised of a growing number of women journalists, as exerting authority over her domestic space, particularly through her role as consumer, which tied her activities to the public and political spheres, during times of both economic crisis and prosperity. This acknowledgement of the political efficacy of women’s traditional roles can be viewed as an important first step in creating a

feminist consciousness that recognizes “the personal is political.” Meanwhile, by positioning first ladies as role models for American women, the press helped to normalize women’s presence in public life and their increasing political involvement, which would set the stage for the emergence of the woman’s movement of the following era. The voices of first ladies were increasingly featured in the press through direct quotes, and their images as publicly active women were widely circulated. These women assumed a much more active role in their own image-construction, yet their voices and images were still filtered by the press, albeit one made up of in part of other women acting outside of the private sphere. By recognizing the roles these women played, both as individuals and in their husband’s campaigns and careers, women journalists in particular helped to validate women’s experiences as significant and newsworthy.

The first ladies of this era were viewed by the press as part of a marital partnership, and press framing of the first lady’s duties focused primarily on the first lady’s part in the two-person career. Such framing simultaneously reinforced traditional gender roles while imbuing wifely duties with political significance. Whether appearing as supportive wives on the campaign stump, acting as presidential surrogates, or managing the White House, the personal and public activities of these presidential wives became political. Troy contends, “No First Lady since Eleanor Roosevelt—including Bess Truman and Mamie Eisenhower—could avoid involvement in the political fray. Each presidency since the Roosevelts has thus been, to one extent or another, a co-presidency” focused mainly on “joint image-making, not power-sharing.”¹⁷⁰ Press framing of the first lady’s duties supports this

statement as the activities of most first ladies were consistently framed as extensions of her role as the president's wife, thus reinforcing the gendered performance of the position. Nevertheless, first ladies, like American women in general, were recognized as playing a larger role as citizens. They may have been cast as wives and mothers, with their main stage being the home, but they were nonetheless recognized by the press as important players in the nation's political drama.

One of the most notable changes in this period was the elevation of certain first ladies from public women to celebrity status. The development of the first lady as public woman in the modern era coupled with the journalistic practice of personification framing led to the establishment of Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Kennedy as gendered celebrities during their tenures. These women were recognized as public figures in their own right, granting them a level of agency often denied to previous first ladies and to women in general. Roosevelt, in particular, was lauded for her individual political accomplishments and her contributions both to women's progress and the expansion of the first lady institution. Her successors, Eisenhower and Kennedy, were among the most recognizable figures of this era, and their styles and fashions were enthusiastically copied by American women. By positioning these first ladies as role models, journalists recognized women's growing public influence on American politics and culture. Even when their civic contributions were limited to consumption, women were recognized as contributing to the postwar economy, thereby imbuing their actions with a sense of political efficacy. Such a focus on consumption likewise reveals the ways in which women's public and political role was contained ideologically. Centering women's agency in shopping for self and

family reduces the chance of their rallying against political oppression at a time when women's public and political influence began to grow.

The coverage of the first lady institution, particularly through personification framing, evidences a period of increased political activity for women and the presence of an ongoing debate over women's roles in American society. These stories are instructive to today's scholars who seek to contest the notion that the struggle for women's rights was limited to the historical periods referred to as the first and second waves. However, the pervasiveness of domesticity in the framing of the first lady institution and the increased celebrity of first ladies would be challenged by the social and political upheaval and changing cultural norms of the following decades. Press coverage would focus on the quandary of the next generation of first ladies: whether to question or accept domesticity as a defining quality of both the first lady institution and American womanhood.

Chapter Four

First Lady as Political Activist, 1964-1977

An article in the March 1964 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* observed that the “evolution of the role of First Lady in America during the past half century has been . . . almost as dramatic and sweeping as the expansion of the role of the Chief Executive.” The most significant development, according to the author, was the power acquired by the first lady through her position as a public figure, “Regardless of how much distaste the First Lady may possess for public life, her role can no longer be a private one; she acquires indirect power when her husband takes the oath of office as President of the United States. This power, or influence, a complex and delicate mixture of various social, political, and moral forces, bears upon nearly every important situation and tradition in our national life.”¹ This quotation recognized the influence that accompanies celebrity status in American culture. Even the title of the article, “The Spotlight Shifts in Washington: A New First Lady Moves to Center Stage,” indicated the celebrity associated with the first lady position and the evolution of their influence, as they moved from public women to gendered celebrities.

The gendering of first lady celebrity continued as the press constructed these presidential wives as role models for American women. The article said of Jacqueline Kennedy, “Her grace and charm as a White House hostess, her quiet pride in her family life, and her heroism in the face of a senseless tragedy have been brought to Americans in hundreds of pictures and articles.”² Kennedy was framed as a hostess, mother, and wife, all traditional feminine roles, even though her performance of those roles occurred on the most public of stages. Gendered frames were also used to

describe her successor, Lady Bird Johnson, but with different results. The author stated, “It would never do for a well-bred Southern lady to admit to possession of the tools of the intellect. Lady Bird’s deceptively feminine demeanor serves as a suitable disguise for a woman of stature and substance.”³ This article not only highlights the performative aspects of both gender and the first lady position, but also foreshadows a shift toward a more politically savvy, and active, first lady.

Myra G. Gutin says that, by the 1960s, every first lady “was a political wife and a veteran of campaign and public life.”⁴ During a thirteen year period, four political wives held the first lady position, and three of them served incomplete terms. Claudia Taylor “Lady Bird” Johnson (1963-1969)⁵ assumed the role following the assassination of President Kennedy. (Thelma) Patricia Ryan Nixon (1969-1974)⁶ left the White House upon her husband’s resignation in the wake of Watergate, promoting Betty Bloomer Ford (1974-1977)⁷ to the first lady position. Only Rosalynn Smith Carter (1977-1980)⁸ served an uninterrupted tenure in the White House. These women played active roles in their husband’s political careers, although their approaches sometimes differed based on their personalities and interests. As their husbands were elected to or assumed increasingly prestigious government positions, these women found themselves in the public spotlight, faced with both the benefits and constraints of their celebrity.

This chapter examines the press coverage of the first lady institution from 1964 to 1977. As in earlier eras, journalistic framing of first ladies mirrored the cultural climate, especially in relation to women’s place in society. In the past, true womanhood was a prevailing gender ideology; during this period, however, second-

wave feminism dominated the discourse and helped to define the ideals of womanhood. The perception of domesticity as “the feminine mystique” gave the ideology a negative connotation.⁹ The ideals of feminism and domesticity were often viewed as polar opposites, particularly after the appearance of the anti-feminist movement that embraced domesticity as women’s “true” nature. The biggest shift in the dominant discourse was seen, somewhat surprisingly, in women’s magazines, which have historically promoted domesticity. “Women’s lib” became a major issue for these publications during this era. Articles celebrated the new “liberated” (albeit white) woman, and encouraged their readers to expand their interests beyond the home. The first ladies of the era found themselves caught up in the second-wave. For journalists, Johnson, Ford, and Carter personified the “contemporary woman” who successfully balanced career and family. In contrast, Nixon embodied the Cold War domesticity of the previous era, which was often criticized during the height of feminist activity.

The women’s liberation movement also influenced the way journalists framed the first lady’s duties. For journalists, the activities of these first ladies were compared to women’s increased activism, and their various performances of the first lady position were viewed as an expansion of women’s roles beyond the domestic sphere. Journalists indicated that being “just a wife” was no longer considered acceptable for first ladies. Instead, journalists accentuated first ladies political activities like presidential advisor, campaigner, surrogate, and independent advocate. Such framing infused the first lady institution with a sense of empowerment and gave rise to the first lady as *political activist*. Rather than serving as helpmates, activist

first ladies like Johnson, Ford, and Carter were viewed as playing an influential role in the “co-career” they shared with their husbands; Nixon was conversely framed as a more traditional political wife, and thus considered a less influential first lady.

The political activism of first ladies, or lack thereof, also impacted press constructions of these women as gendered celebrities. The rise of a more adversarial relationship between politicians and the press during this era resulted in a more critical reporting style, which impacted first lady coverage.¹⁰ Journalists concentrated on gauging the increasing political influence of these first ladies by comparing them to former first ladies who had achieved iconic status and by scrutinizing their performance of gendered celebrity. Such reporting led to critiques regarding the extent of their influence, which sometimes resulted in double binds. These double binds were often perpetuated by women’s leaders, women’s magazines, and at times, women journalists, who simultaneously promoted first ladies as political activists and also challenged the appropriateness of their power. Such frames helped establish the notion that first ladies were central to women’s culture, with their expertise related primarily to women’s issues; women’s issues, though, were still marginalized in the male political sphere. And when these first ladies expanded their interests beyond women’s issues, critiques of their actions increased. The result was a no-win situation for activist first ladies when their influence extended too far beyond women’s designated space for political activities. On the other hand, Nixon’s lack of activity was also criticized, resulting in a no-win situation for her as well. Thus, coverage of first ladies in the 1960s and 1970s in many ways reflected the paradoxes of women’s lives that were addressed by second-wave feminism.

Competing Gender Ideologies: Liberating Women From the Feminine Mystique

The social and political unrest of the 1960s and 1970s provided a fertile environment for the so-called “rebirth of feminism.”¹¹ As noted in the previous chapters, feminism never disappeared from the cultural landscape, but the lack of an active feminist movement, coupled with the dominance of domestic discourse, overshadowed the feminist activity of the post-suffrage era.¹² Thus, the revival of an organized social movement in the 1960s has been referred to as the “second wave” of feminism. According to Barbara Ryan, the “ideological and material contradictions developing in women’s lives—as well as the actual constraints of the homemaker role” during the Cold War era played an important part in the resurgence of a feminist movement in the 1960s.¹³ As women began to evaluate their lives, Estelle B. Freedman claims that, “The old feminist calls for economic and political equality, and a new emphasis on control over reproduction, resonated deeply across generations, classes, and races.”¹⁴ But the “new” feminism did not resonate with all Americans. The movement faced ridicule from many men, women, and media outlets as well as vigorous attacks from well-organized opponents who embraced women’s traditional domestic roles. Despite these challenges, the call for women’s liberation was successful in generating widespread discussions of gender roles during this period.

The emergence of twentieth-century first ladies as public women and gendered celebrities in the press evidenced women’s increasing presence in the political sphere, helping to set the stage for women’s political activism during the era of second-wave feminism. By “going public” through the press in the earlier part of the century, first ladies helped to alleviate the stigma surrounding female publicity

and normalize women's roles as public figures in their own right. As some of the most prominent political women and gendered celebrities, first ladies represented for journalists women's growing influence, whether as social activists or consumers. Although gendered framing continued to characterize first ladies' activities as extensions of traditional domestic roles, which alternately served to justify, contain, and depoliticize women's power, the steady expansion of news coverage of the first lady institution throughout the century helped to justify women as newsmakers and women's issues and activities as newsworthy. Both the social feminism of women like Eleanor Roosevelt and the domestic empowerment and containment of the Cold War consumer helped to set the stage for the reemergence of an active women's movement in the 1960s.

A handful of events in the early 1960s are often credited with prompting the development of a social movement focusing specifically on women's rights. The 1961 President's Commission on the Status of Women, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, was one such precipitous act.¹⁵ The Commission's report, *American Women*, released in 1963, outlined "discrimination against women in every facet of American life," particularly in the workplace, where women earned up to 40 percent less than their male counterparts.¹⁶ The report was the "first effort on the part of the Federal government to address the question of women in American society," and led to the establishment of similar commissions in all 50 states by 1967.¹⁷ Members of the President's Commission also lobbied for the Equal Pay Act, passed in June 1963, which mandated "equal pay for equal work" and was the first piece of Federal legislation to prohibit sexual discrimination.¹⁸ The following year, Title VII of the

1964 Civil Rights Act barred discrimination in employment on the basis of “race, color, religion, sex, or national origin” and established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to field complaints regarding bias in the workplace.¹⁹ When it became clear that the EEOC was not enforcing the ban on sex discrimination, a group of delegates to the 1966 Conference of the Commissions on the Status of Women came together with activists like Betty Friedan to form the National Organization for Women (NOW), which quickly became the leading organization in the burgeoning women’s liberation movement.²⁰

Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, often receives credit for providing the ideological foundation for second-wave feminism. According to William H. Chafe, Friedan’s book “generated the kind of attention that made feminism a popular topic of conversation once again.”²¹ Juliet Mitchell proclaimed in 1971, “If a single inspiration for the movement is to be cited, it was the publication in 1963 of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*.”²² Friedan claimed that countless American women, deprived of the chance to develop their own identity, were suffering from a growing discontent with their roles as housewives and mothers.²³ She argued that the so-called “[feminine] mystique makes the housewife-mother, who never had a chance to be anything else, the model for all women.”²⁴ Her solution was for women to reject the feminine mystique and develop lives of their own, primarily through education and careers. Although Friedan’s analysis was heavily biased toward the experiences of white, middle- to upper-class women, the popularity of the book helped to begin a cultural conversation about women’s roles. Chafe notes that

even if readers disagreed with Friedan's conclusions, "they could not help but to reexamine their own lives in light of the questions it raised."²⁵

So-called radical feminists were some of the earliest women's rights activists of this period. Involvement in the Civil Rights and New Left movements led many younger women to question women's social status, particularly when they found themselves consigned to traditional female roles and ridiculed by male members when they brought up the issue of women's liberation.²⁶ These women formed a number of small groups, which varied in approach but all identified themselves as "radical." Ryan asserts, "The act of naming their brand of feminism 'radical' helped activists to define themselves as substantially different from 'reformist' women."²⁷ They were united, however loosely, by the philosophy that the root of women's oppression was a patriarchal social structure based on "competition, power over others, and male superiority."²⁸ In general, radical feminists believed that women's liberation could only occur through a social transformation of the unequal power relations between men and women.²⁹ Issues of importance for radical feminists included reproductive rights, battering and rape, pornography, and sex-role stereotyping.³⁰ An important contribution of radical feminism was consciousness-raising and its mantra "the personal is political."³¹ Freedman states, "Through the process of consciousness raising, second-wave feminists politicized the dilemmas of women's private lives. The blurring of the public/private divide redefined the political to include power relations between men and women."³²

Liberal feminists represented the mainstream of the women's movement for the media. According to Bonnie J. Dow, "The public orientation of NOW, and the

visible public events it created, were easier to report.”³³ Groups like NOW and the National Women’s Political Caucus, formed in 1971,³⁴ also had identifiable leaders, such as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and Congresswoman Bella Abzug—willing spokespersons who were experienced in dealing with the media.³⁵ Liberal feminists tackled a number of issues, from abortion rights to equal pay to the ERA.³⁶ According to Chafe, liberal feminists “sought to work within the existing social and economic framework to secure reforms for women and progress toward full equality of opportunity between the sexes.”³⁷ The “Women’s Strike for Equality” on August 26, 1970, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, “marked the beginning of women’s liberation as a mass movement.”³⁸ The strike also marked a milestone in media coverage of the movement. Dow notes that, for the first time, women’s liberation activity reached the status of “hard news” when the strike “led the evening newscasts on all three networks and received its first banner headline and front page above-the-fold coverage in the *New York Times*, a breakthrough in the amount, if not the quality, of coverage.”³⁹

The women’s liberation movement continued to make headlines as feminists claimed a number of key victories in the 1970s. Record numbers of women charged their employers with sexual discrimination in hiring and promotion,⁴⁰ including female employees at major magazines such as *Newsweek*, *Time* and the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, where over 100 feminists staged an 11-hour sit-in.⁴¹ In 1972, the Supreme Court began applying the Fourteenth Amendment to cases of alleged sexual discrimination,⁴² and handed down the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion in 1973.⁴³ Legislative victories were a result of the increased activism of

feminists in the 1970s. Klein argues, “Congress passed 71 pieces of legislation concerned with a broad range of women’s rights and needs, or almost 40 percent of all legislation aimed at women during this century.”⁴⁴ Among those bills passed in 1972 alone were Title IX of the Higher Education Act, the Equal Opportunity Act, and the Equal Rights Amendment. The latter was overwhelmingly approved by Congress on March 22, 1972, and sent to the states for ratification.⁴⁵ Deglar says that supporters believed that “passage of the ERA would imbed in the Constitution the legal basis for the feminist gains of the preceding decade and thus make their repeal difficult in the future” and “hasten the removal of the few remaining legal obstacles to full equality of opportunity between the sexes.”⁴⁶ Despite continued efforts in support of a number of issues, the ERA and its ratification “became the mobilizing issue for feminist activism”⁴⁷ in the late 1970s and often dominated discussions of the women’s movement, especially in the media.

Congressional passage of the ERA crystallized an organized movement that directly challenged feminism by promoting traditional gender roles. In 1972, Phyllis Schlafly established the National Committee to Stop ERA. Douglas asserts that Schlafly “became a media celebrity, and the media became her most powerful weapon.”⁴⁸ A number of similar organizations soon appeared, including WWW (Women Who Want to be Women), HOW (Happiness of Women), and FOE (Females Opposed to Equality).⁴⁹ According to Carl M. Degler, Schlafly “stumped the country for years telling women and legislators that the amendment would deprive them of their rights as wives and mothers.”⁵⁰ She claimed that the ERA would lead to a variety of problems, from the drafting of women into the military to unisex

bathrooms. Wandersee states that Schlafly played on the security of the Cold War domestic ideal, arguing, “If the states were forced to treat men and women equally in all circumstances, the effect would be to weaken the traditional family, and in particular, it would undermine the security of the middle-aged full-time homemaker with no job skills.”⁵¹ While liberal feminists argued that the separate spheres philosophy should be eradicated, Schlafly and her supporters countered with the claim that women and men were biologically different and that the domestic sphere should be protected.⁵² Degler concludes, “The women’s movement, in short, was not able to overcome the fears of many women that the amendment would disturb or threaten their traditional place in the family, just as many women during the suffrage fight earlier in the century had feared its impact on the relation between husband and wife.”⁵³ The highly publicized protest activities of Schlafly and the anti-ERA movement received much of the credit for defeating the constitutional amendment and contributing to the backlash against feminism in the 1980s.⁵⁴ Douglas contends that “Schlafly achieved this victory, in part, because she was brilliant at exploiting media routines, biases, and stereotypes to make the ERA seem both dangerous and unnecessary.”⁵⁵

Despite the failure to ratify the ERA, feminists claimed a number of victories in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Matthews, “The ‘second wave’ of feminism brought more women into public roles than ever before,”⁵⁶ including the housewives and mothers who joined Schlafly’s Stop ERA movement. Freedman argues that one of the most important contributions of the second wave of feminism was “the redefinition of the political to include both public and private realms, both male and

female concerns,”⁵⁷ which extended the work done by earlier public women including first ladies. Women’s issues once considered private, like abortion or breast cancer, were being discussed in public forums and made front-page news. The widespread social discussion regarding gender roles, prompted by second-wave feminism, heightened the salience of the issue for the press during this era. Chafe claims, “By the early 1970s, countless Americans were debating what could only be described as ‘feminist’ issues, whether the focus was on the Equal Rights Amendment, child care, abortion, ‘open marriage,’ greater sharing of household responsibilities, or the sexual revolution.”⁵⁸ Through the press, the first ladies of this era were among the countless Americans engaging in public debate over women’s changing roles.

Framing the First Lady Institution During the Second Wave

Press framing of the first lady institution between 1964 and 1977 mirrored the cultural conversation regarding women’s roles sparked by second-wave feminist activity. Coverage focused heavily on the public and political activities of the first ladies of this period. For journalists, Johnson, Ford, and Carter personified the “contemporary woman” who balanced traditional roles with feminist activism. In contrast, Nixon embodied Cold War domesticity. While her public activity was on par with her contemporaries, she was often criticized for her lack of activism and characterized as a throwback to the previous era. The result of such framing was the emergence of the first lady as political activist. However, as the period wore on, journalists increasingly questioned the extent, the limitations, and the appropriateness of first ladies’ political influence.

Personifying the Contemporary Woman of the Second Wave

Just as domesticity defined women's roles in the previous era, second-wave feminist ideals pervaded discussions of American womanhood during the 1960s and 1970s. Women's magazines like the *Ladies' Home Journal* praised "the power of a woman," proclaiming in the September 1969 issue, "The contemporary woman—better-educated, longer-lived, more involved in her community and the world—has a greater opportunity to improve and change the society around her."⁵⁹ The increased public and political activities of the first ladies of this era encouraged journalists to draw parallels between activism of first ladies and the activism of American women. For the press, particularly women's magazines, Johnson, Ford, and Carter were fitting role models for American women, in part because they supported feminist ideals without rejecting women's traditional roles. While Nixon personified the more traditional political wife, she was still recognized as a public figure in her own right. However, in some cases, Nixon represented the limitations of the "feminine mystique" that was so widely praised just a decade earlier.

Much like their predecessors, the first ladies of the second wave embodied for the press the shifting ideals of American womanhood. The ideal contemporary woman, according to journalists, was able to move beyond the confines of the domestic sphere without abandoning her family, or her femininity. For example, in introducing their "Women of the Year" in 1976, *Ladies' Home Journal* stressed that their awardees, which included scientists, educators, and leaders from various feminist, civil rights, and women's groups, "do not mark down the woman who moves in a smaller sphere—the wife, mother, and homemaker who expresses herself

in the creation of a home and family. (Indeed, many of these women have played that role.) Instead, their example proves that women today have many options, many talents, many goals.”⁶⁰ Thus, the contemporary women of the second wave balanced domestic duties with careers, civic responsibilities, and interests independent of their husbands and children, embodying *both* the activist spirit of second-wave feminism *and* the domesticity of traditional homemakers. This “superwomanly” ideal, which first appeared during the modern era, would become synonymous with second-wave feminism’s contention that women could “have it all.”⁶¹

For journalists, the first ladies of this era often personified contemporary womanhood, serving as role models for women who sought to balance their many private and public responsibilities. In a 1965 *Good Housekeeping* profile, anthropologist Margaret Mead defined Lady Bird Johnson as “a model for any responsible American woman, whoever she may be and wherever she may live.” Mead noted, “In her picture of contemporary women Mrs. Johnson includes married and unmarried women, career women and volunteers, all of whom she calls on in one sweeping challenge to be responsible individuals.” Drawing on Friedan’s work, Mead claimed that Johnson was “not troubled by what has been called the ‘feminine mystique.’ In her own life she has combined home and children and career, hard, exacting, successful activities for which she has taken full responsibility, and happy cooperation with her husband.”⁶² Another *Good Housekeeping* article similarly noted that Johnson “proved herself not only a devoted wife and mother, but also as a canny business executive and a seasoned political trouper.”⁶³ Christine Sadler’s profile of Johnson in *McCall’s* also referred, albeit indirectly, to Friedan’s work, observing,

“Not surprisingly, fancy treatises examining the status of women as an abstruse problem amuse her; but her interest in encouraging projects begun by women, or encouraging their broader education could hardly be more real.”⁶⁴ Johnson frequently spoke to audiences of young women, persuading them to become public women. According to a 1964 *New York Times* article, she told an audience that “women must take their place in public life as well as in home life,” stating, “Women can no longer afford to concern themselves only with the hearth—any more than men can afford to concern themselves only with their job.”⁶⁵ Mead concluded that by giving “new dignity to the role of wife, as one facet in the life of a ‘total woman,’” Johnson was a model of “what other American women can do and be in the mid-20th century.”⁶⁶ For reporters, Johnson’s actions and ideals embodied the spirit of the contemporary woman who balanced family, career, and civic responsibilities. She also reflected the ideals of the developing women’s liberation movement by encouraging women to expand their horizons beyond the domestic sphere.

The ability to balance femininity and feminism was another characteristic of the contemporary woman. According to reporters, both Johnson and Rosalynn Carter personified this balance. Ruth Montgomery’s *Good Housekeeping* profile of Johnson claimed that “behind her mild Southern manner is a remarkably capable and energetic executive.” The same article noted, “In addition to being competent, the new First Lady is friendly, good-looking, intelligent and faultlessly groomed.”⁶⁷ In these quotes, Johnson’s feminine manner and appearance are paired with references to her intelligence and abilities. In a similar statement, William V. Shannon of the *New York Times* proclaimed that, in Carter, “the nation’s women have acquired an articulate and

attractive spokeswoman, one who is a loving wife and devoted mother and also a strong, independent personality in her own right.”⁶⁸ By describing Carter as both articulate *and* attractive, a wife and mother *and* a “strong, independent personality,” Shannon highlighted the balance of feminine and feminist characteristics. Several stories highlighted the femininity of Johnson and Carter by drawing on their southern heritage. Elizabeth Janeway of *Ladies’ Home Journal* said of Johnson, “Her voice is Deep South . . . but Lady Bird Johnson is neither a Southern Belle nor a Southern Bigot. People who have begun to listen to her words instead of her accent find that her speech is tangy, terse, and individual.”⁶⁹ Carter was often referred to as a “steel magnolia,”⁷⁰ a phrase associated with Southern women’s mix of gentility and strength. A *New York Times Magazine* feature maintained, “After only two months in the White House, the ‘steel magnolia’ with the soft drawl promises to be the most active First Lady in decades.”⁷¹ According to the same story, she handled an appearance on *Meet the Press* “with the aplomb of Scarlet O’Hara,”⁷² referencing fiction’s archetypal steel magnolia. Such framing helped to feminize these women, particularly their voice, by once again infusing their political acumen with aspects of femininity.

The balancing act performed by contemporary women was viewed by some reporters as an embodiment of the feminist mantra “the personal is political.” By sharing the most intimate details of her life with the press, Betty Ford personified how the personal was inseparable from the political, particularly for first ladies. Known for her outspokenness, Ford freely admitted “to smoking, being divorced, seeing a psychiatrist, taking tranquilizers, drinking with her husband and—heaven

forbid—sleeping with him,”⁷³ making her someone that women could identify with. The *Washington Post* noted that Ford “was able to play many different roles and that left the public with the notion that she was a completely modern female,”⁷⁴ highlighting the point that contemporary women could support women’s liberation without rejecting traditional domestic roles. In 1976, Ford was named one of *Ladies’ Home Journal’s* “Women of the Year” for her “inspirational leadership” in making public her personal health crisis. Ford was lauded for “her courage and outspoken candor in her battle with breast cancer” and for being “an inspiration to women everywhere.”⁷⁵ By publicizing her experiences with breast cancer, Ford helped to raise awareness of an important women’s health issue.

The contemporary woman, who often ventured beyond the domestic sphere, was viewed as a departure from the Cold War homemaker, whose devotion to domesticity was derided as the “feminine mystique” by feminists. For journalists, Pat Nixon symbolized the feminine mystique, and was often framed as out-of-step with the times. Wandersee notes that “in the climate of the early women’s movement, she served primarily as a negative or passive example of women’s changing roles.”⁷⁶ For example, *Washington Post* reporter Dorothy McCardle called Nixon “a dutiful wife in the old-time sense.”⁷⁷ In a 1970 *McCall’s* profile, Nixon was described as “the paradigm of the proper, dutiful wife, and the proper, dutiful wife always defers to her husband, especially a husband whose career is politics.”⁷⁸ According to Elaine Tyler May, “Women of the fifties, constrained by tremendous cultural and economic pressures to conform to domestic containment, gave up their independence and personal ambitions.”⁷⁹ Nixon was framed as one of those women whose spirit, as one

reporter observed, had been “submerged forever in her relentlessly ambitious husband’s career.”⁸⁰ In a July 1968 *Good Housekeeping* article, Flora Rheta Schreiber described Nixon as “selfless,” noting that “her husband’s career has always come first.”⁸¹ When reporters constructed Nixon as the “dutiful wife,” their tone was often negative, mocking the domestic ideal that dominated news framing of women through the early 1960s.

During the second-wave, journalists’ practice of personification framing drew these first ladies into the cultural debate over women’s changing roles. By personifying the contemporary woman or the feminine mystique, the first ladies of this period helped call attention to the women’s movement.⁸² By linking first ladies, who were treated as role models for American women, to the women’s movement, journalists helped to legitimize feminist ideology as an acceptable way to define American womanhood. This type of framing appeared most frequently in women’s magazines, which embraced the women’s liberation movement while still touting domesticity. For these publications in particular, Johnson, Ford, and Carter each represented the “superwoman” who balanced her public and private roles, illustrating that women could be both contemporary and traditional. Such personification framing led to a focus on the role of first ladies as political activists.

The Emergence of First Lady as Political Activist

Coverage of the first lady institution during the 1960s and 1970s concentrated primarily on the public and political activities of these women, often framing them as “active, political partners of the president.”⁸³ Even profiles in women’s magazines, which traditionally highlighted first ladies’ domestic roles, focused more on the

political aspects of the first lady position. The emergence of the first lady as *political activist* was an extension of the first lady as public woman and gendered celebrity as well as an outgrowth of second-wave personification framing's focus on women's activism. By the 1960s, Gutin claims that, "the First Lady was not only a presence and a party hostess, but could also be communicator, advocate, politician, and advisor."⁸⁴ Like their predecessors, these first ladies played various political roles, including presidential advisor, campaigner, and social advocate. They also took advantage of their status as gendered celebrities, recognizing that their power rested chiefly in the publicity associated with the first lady position.

The public activity of a first lady was an overarching frame that appeared throughout this era in stories about the performance of the first lady position. For journalists, "activity" and "activism" often were conflated, which influenced their discussions of the first lady's duties. Johnson, Ford, and Carter were all defined, by the press and themselves, as "active" first ladies. Johnson was frequently referred to as a "can-do woman."⁸⁵ *Good Housekeeping* stated that Johnson "defined her role as one whose significance must 'emerge in deeds, not words.'"⁸⁶ Her numerous travels across the United States, campaigning for her husband, his "Great Society" programs, and her cause of beautification, supported this statement. Ford, during her first news conference, told the press she intended to be "an active first lady," working on behalf of the ERA and promoting the arts and programs for children and the elderly.⁸⁷ Likewise, a *New York Times* headline proclaimed, "Mrs. Carter Planning Active Role in Capitol,"⁸⁸ and her press secretary Mary Finch Hoyt predicted that "Rosalynn will be more active and effective than any First Lady in years."⁸⁹ Like Johnson, she

traveled extensively, representing her husband both at home and abroad. And like Ford, she lobbied for the ERA, while also acting as an advocate for mental health and the elderly and advising her husband on those issues and others. However, these quotes indicate that the rise of first ladies' political activism remained gendered as these women focused their energies primarily on causes associated with women, children, and beautification.

Nixon was the exception of this group. While the level of her activity was on par with her contemporaries, in terms of trips at home and abroad, campaigning, and public appearances, her performance of the role was judged as more passive because she was less political than her counterparts. Susanna McBee observed in her *McCall's* profile, "She wants to be an active First Lady. She wants to urge people to work voluntarily in their communities, but she seems to think that visiting a few projects and making a report will achieve that purpose."⁹⁰ McBee speculated, "I believe that Mrs. Nixon does indeed want to do inspiring things as First Lady, but she has been the docile wife for so long that it is hard now to shift gears."⁹¹ Thus, Nixon's failure to politicize her efforts in an era defined by women's political activism often made her the target of criticism.

While many first ladies throughout history "functioned as close political advisors" to their husbands,⁹² the activist first ladies of this era were more frequently framed in such ways by the press. A 1964 article in *Good Housekeeping* argued that Johnson "has always considered herself—and been considered—her husband's partner in all his affairs,"⁹³ while a profile in *McCall's* claimed, "she and the President are a team and always have been."⁹⁴ Johnson was quoted by the *Washington*

Post as saying that her husband accorded her ““the fine compliment of thinking I have good judgment and he also knows that I will tell him as I see it.””⁹⁵ She routinely helped her husband prepare his speeches, and he often consulted her regarding his “Great Society” programs.⁹⁶ According to a *New York Times* article about Johnson’s mail, the public recognized her advisory role, “There are more ‘tell-it-to-the-president’ letters to the First Lady than there have been in Administrations back to Franklin D. Roosevelt.” According to an aide, “Mrs. Johnson is so interested in anything having to do with legislation that people are writing in encouraging her to prod the President a little bit on different legislative matters, or telling her to commend him on various stands, such as the war on poverty.””⁹⁷ Like Johnson, Carter was framed by the press as one of her husband’s closest advisors. The *New York Times* pointed out that “Mr. Carter has described his wife as his ‘best friend and chief advisor.’”⁹⁸ Carter said, “Jimmy respects my judgment on things, that’s all. I think I have some influence on him.””⁹⁹ Carter became famous for sitting in on Cabinet meetings and for advising her husband on political appointments, which were viewed as very political acts.¹⁰⁰

The advisory role of first ladies has largely been played behind the scenes. In Ford’s case, reporters emphasized the personal nature of her political influence. An article in *McCall’s* stated, “While she has not invaded the Oval Office, Mrs. Ford gets her views across when she and the President are alone; she calls it ‘pillow talk.’” According to the story, Ford “claimed credit for the appointment of HUD Secretary Carla Hills. ‘I got a woman into the cabinet. I never give up. Now I’m working on getting a woman on the Supreme Court as soon as possible.’”¹⁰¹ In a rare presidential

interview with a women's magazine, Gerald Ford told the *Ladies' Home Journal*, "As a political partner, she is a prime asset."¹⁰² He credited his wife with persuading him to vote for the ERA: "She convinced me that women's rights have to be protected and guaranteed by law, just as the rights of racial and religious minorities, if there is to be genuine equality." He also admitted that she advised him on his economic program by telling him to "think about the millions of American women shopping each day for their families."¹⁰³ Whether their persuasive influence occurred in public or private, journalists framed these first ladies' advisory role as overwhelmingly political, highlighting the contributions these women made to their husband's political careers.

The campaign roles of wives were also framed as more political, with these women acting as independent political actors stumping solo in support of their husbands. Johnson actively campaigned, making unaccompanied trips to many areas that were solidly Republican.¹⁰⁴ Her ride through eight southern states in October 1964 aboard the "Lady Bird Special" was "the first whistle-stop campaign journey ever taken by a President's wife on her own."¹⁰⁵ Johnson's press secretary, Liz Carpenter, called the whistle-stop tour "a salvage operation in the wake of the Civil Rights Act of 1964."¹⁰⁶ Johnson made speeches at each of the 47 stops over the four-day period, drawing large, mixed crowds that included many African-Americans as well as small groups of heckling Goldwater supporters "yelling 'nigger-lover Johnson' and 'What about Vietnam?'"¹⁰⁷ Nan Robertson of the *New York Times* observed that "throughout Mrs. Johnson's trip, the outstanding visual impression by the sides of the railroad tracks was of black hands waving Johnson posters and white

hands holding posters for both presidential candidates,”¹⁰⁸ thus framing the trip within the context of civil rights, a major campaign issue in 1964. Claude Sitton of the *New York Times* credited the “Lady Bird Special” with garnering several firm endorsements from Southern Democratic leaders, tapping “new sources of active support, financial and otherwise,” and arousing “enthusiasm for the campaign that had been sorely missing.”¹⁰⁹ Robertson offered the following assessment of the success of Johnson’s trip: “On the trip, the President’s wife has spoken to tens of thousands of persons at rallies and from the rear of her observation car. But, perhaps more important, she has also been on the job constantly between stops, talking to a steady stream of politicians and party workers.”¹¹⁰ The “Lady Bird Special” capitalized on Johnson’s gendered celebrity, using her popularity to reach out to Southern voters who were deeply divided over civil rights. When her husband carried four of the eight states in the election, the “Lady Bird Special” received much of the credit.

First ladies campaigning independently of their husbands became commonplace during this era. Carter, who spent nearly two years on the road answering the question, “Jimmy who?,”¹¹¹ was framed by the press as an active solo campaigner. A *New York Times* article stated, “Unlike most candidates’ wives of the past, Mrs. Carter . . . campaigned on her own rather than with her husband in the Carters’ attempt to reach as many voters as possible.” According to a Carter aide, ““She didn’t do only women’s teas. She showed up at factories at 4 in the morning, at Democratic meetings, at church gatherings, shopping centers and public festivals—she held her own news conferences and did television interviews.””¹¹² Reporters

praised her ability to “speak without notes” and to connect with audiences from the stump.¹¹³ By highlighting that Carter campaigned alone, spoke to promiscuous audiences, and was an effective public speaker, these comments evidence that women’s presence in the political sphere was still considered somewhat unusual. Carter’s son Jack told *McCall’s* that ““it was like having two candidates, equally attractive. It meant we could travel twice as far and meet twice the number of people. I think that won it for us,””¹¹⁴ foreshadowing the concept of a “co-presidency” and the “two-for-one” mantra that appeared as framing devices in later news coverage. Carter became so well-known for her campaign efforts that in June of 1977, a *Washington Post* reporter referred to the increased presence of wives on the campaign trail as “the Rosalyn Carter phenomenon.”¹¹⁵ Ford also actively campaigned in 1976, representing her husband at several Republican state conventions during his tough primary race with Ronald Reagan.¹¹⁶ Upon Gerald Ford’s loss in the general election to Jimmy Carter, Ford literally spoke for her husband, who had lost his voice, reading his concession telegram to the press and thanking Ford supporters.¹¹⁷

Nixon was a regular feature on the campaign trail; however, both she and the press downplayed the political importance of her campaign presence. Nixon was framed primarily as a liaison to women voters, a more traditional campaign role for political wives. The *New York Times* stated in 1968, “This year, as in 22 of her 56 years, Mrs. Nixon is out on the campaign trail. She modestly calls herself ‘a volunteer for Nixon—his eyes and ears with the women voters.’”¹¹⁸ Nixon announced in a press conference that she would play ““an active role”” in the 1968 campaign. According to the *New York Times*, “He said she would spend her time consulting volunteer groups

and visiting women's organizations, meeting with the ladies of the press and making television appearances."¹¹⁹ However, an article claimed, "Mrs. Nixon said she had never spoken on the issues," and quoted her as saying, "I think women do like to see women, but sometimes they don't like to listen to them. I think women would rather hear the candidate speak than have the wife speak for him."¹²⁰ Her comments devalued women's speech, even to a non-promiscuous audience, reflecting the negative connotation long associated with women's publicity and political activism. For reporters, such a statement served as insight into Nixon's gendered performance of the first lady role and also marked a contrast between Nixon and Johnson, her activist predecessor.

Another role of the activist first lady was presidential surrogate. Johnson and Carter used their campaigning skills and gendered celebrity throughout their tenures to garner support and publicity for their husband's programs. A *Good Housekeeping* profile said that Johnson was "clearly more steeped in practical politics than any other First Lady, except perhaps Eleanor Roosevelt in her later years. Clearly, when Mrs. Johnson says she plans to help her husband in every way possible, she is uttering no platitude."¹²¹ One of the ways she helped was by traveling around the country promoting her husband's programs, particularly his "war on poverty" projects like Head Start and VISTA. She made front page news when she visited a "poverty pocket" coal town in Pennsylvania, where she told the crowd, "Last Wednesday I sat in the gallery of the Congress and heard my husband declare war on poverty in this country. Today, I feel as if I have been standing on the first battlefield of that war."¹²² She viewed her role as going "behind the cold statistics to the human needs,

problems, and hopes” of impoverished Americans, thus acting as a human link between her husband’s programs and the people, much like Eleanor Roosevelt did for the New Deal.¹²³ After being named the honorary chairperson of Project Head Start, Johnson helped garner publicity for the program by touring project sites and holding “poverty project teas” with leaders of national women’s organizations,¹²⁴ making the most of her gendered celebrity.

Like Johnson, Carter was framed as a surrogate for her husband, but her trips took her abroad.¹²⁵ Her most notable excursion was a “12-day tour of the Caribbean and Latin America,” which made daily headlines in both the United States and abroad.¹²⁶ She told reporters that her visit was ““on behalf of the President to express his friendship and good will and to conduct substantive talks with the leaders of these nations on issues of bilateral, regional, and global importance.””¹²⁷ As the first president’s wife to undertake such an important political assignment abroad, she often found herself having to defend her trip. Her response was, ““I think that I am the person closest to the President of the United States, and if I can help him understand the countries of the world, that’s what I want to do.””¹²⁸ To prepare, Carter “took Spanish lessons three times a week” and was “briefed by 40 experts on Latin America in 13 sessions lasting two to five hours each.”¹²⁹ David Vidal of the *New York Times* noted that, before the trip, “there was widespread skepticism that it could produce any results,” particularly since Carter was visiting a region “dominated by a male culture” and “would be unable to gain the ear of male leaders, often military men, on issues as varied and complex as nuclear proliferation, commodity prices, arms sales, trade and third-world development problems and, of course, human rights.” However, Vidal

concluded, “Mrs. Carter has achieved a personal and diplomatic success that goes far beyond the modest expectations of both her foreign policy tutors at the State Department and her hosts.”¹³⁰ Adding the role of diplomat to the first lady’s duties increased the political influence of the first lady position.

Press coverage of first lady activism and advocacy during this era helped to institutionalize the expectation that all first ladies actively champion a social cause that they were invested in personally.¹³¹ In some cases, advocacy also led to a first lady’s involvement in policymaking. However, as in the past, such activism was often gendered, which simultaneously justified and limited first ladies’ influence. Johnson’s primary personal project was “beautification.”¹³² Like Ellen Wilson and Eleanor Roosevelt before her, she took a particular interest in improving living conditions in Washington, D.C.¹³³ Johnson formed the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital with Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall for the dual purpose of making the Washington Mall more attractive and “beautifying Washington’s drabber and more squalid residential areas and downtown sections.” At a publicity event, Johnson “performed some symbolic gestures by planting a few pansies” but also “took the committee to a former slum area in southwest Washington where luxury apartments and public housing structures are now intermingled.”¹³⁴ Johnson lobbied on behalf of the 1965 Highway Beautification Act, dubbed “Lady Bird’s bill,”¹³⁵ and continued to call attention to conservation and environmental protection throughout her tenure.¹³⁶ However, the label of “beautification” gendered Johnson’s advocacy, overshadowing the more political aspects of her environmentalism.

As gendered celebrities, first ladies were often positioned by the press as spokespersons for women's issues. Ford became a spokesperson for breast cancer awareness after she underwent a radical mastectomy just a few weeks after moving into the White House.¹³⁷ An editorial in the *New York Times* said, "Mrs. Ford has set an admirable example in dealing forthrightly with an area still frequently beclouded by irrational flights from reality."¹³⁸ She wrote about her experience in *McCall's* a few months after her surgery: "Nobody used to talk about it years ago and, even now, few women will admit to having had a mastectomy. One of the things I'm most proud of is that we did talk about it openly and as a result I didn't feel ashamed or 'dirty' because I had cancer." Ford hoped that, "if I as First Lady could talk about it candidly and without embarrassment, many other people would be able to do so as well. I also wanted to feel that something good would come from my ordeal."¹³⁹ Within a few weeks of her surgery, the *New York Times* reported that "thousands of women across the country have been rushing to seek breast cancer examinations."¹⁴⁰ Ford was recognized by the American Cancer Society in 1976 for her "candid and optimistic response to the disease" and for her continued efforts to educate women about the benefits of early detection.¹⁴¹ Recognizing the power of the publicity surrounding the first lady, Ford successfully used her position to raise awareness and help alleviate the stigma associated with breast cancer.

Similarly, Carter used her position to bring attention to her two primary issues: mental health and aging. Her appointment as the honorary chairperson of the President's Commission on Mental Health helped garner coverage of the commission's efforts.¹⁴² She also chaired a "White House Conference on Aging" in

order to “help ‘personally spotlight’ the problems of old people in America.”¹⁴³ As a spokesperson for these issues, Carter was viewed as representing women everywhere who were caring for mentally ill or elderly family members.¹⁴⁴ These stories reveal the power of gendered celebrity, but such gendered framing also contained both Ford and Carter’s influence to women’s issues, which have traditionally been devalued within the male political sphere. Thus, while these activist first ladies were positioned as key players in women’s political culture, they remained on the fringes of U.S. political culture, gendering and thus limiting their political influence.

The women’s liberation movement also benefited from the first lady media spotlight thanks to Ford and Carter’s lobbying on behalf of the Equal Rights Amendment. A *McCall’s* reporter declared that Ford’s “increasing feminism and courage to speak out on issues has brought a totally unexpected bonus to those who prefer activism after years of silence from First Ladies.”¹⁴⁵ Similarly, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* asserted, “[H]er championing of the women’s rights movement—and specifically the Equal Rights Amendment—has meant much to its supporters.”¹⁴⁶ According to a February 1975 *New York Times* article, Ford was “making telephone calls and writing to legislators in several states where the amendment has recently come up for action, including Illinois, Missouri, North Dakota, Arizona, and Nevada.”¹⁴⁷ Ford described her lobbying as a “‘very soft sell’” and explained to *McCall’s* that she “‘merely asked that the amendment be allowed to get to the floor and to let the people vote their conscience.’”¹⁴⁸ Carter followed Ford’s example, making phone calls to legislators urging their support of the ERA. A headline on the front page of the *Washington Post* on January 19, 1977, proclaimed, “Indiana Ratifies

the ERA—With Rosalynn Carter’s Aid.” According to the article, Carter “called Democratic state Sen. Wayne Townsend, known to be wavering in the caucus, and persuaded him to switch his vote,” making Indiana the “35th state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment.”¹⁴⁹ Later that month, after Virginia failed to ratify the amendment by one vote, Carter was reportedly “working to change votes” by “calling several state legislators.”¹⁵⁰ The press considered such activism by first ladies on behalf of an active feminist movement unprecedented, even though their actions were extensions of previous first ladies’ social reform efforts. By publicly using the power of the first lady position to lobby for feminist legislation, Ford and Carter provoked a mix of praise and criticism that often played out in the press.

During this era, the media spotlight focused primarily on first ladies activities *outside* of the White House. There was a noticeable decrease in the number of stories about hostessing and White House homemaking, usually a staple of first lady coverage in both newspapers and women’s magazines. When these stories did appear, they often reflected the activism of the first ladies. For example, Johnson held a series of “women doers” luncheons to honor women “who had achieved distinction in many fields,”¹⁵¹ while Carter turned “a White House tea for Jihan Sadat of Egypt into an open forum . . . on a variety of social issues confronting both the United States and Egypt.”¹⁵² Because the focus was on the public activities of these first ladies, their activities within the White House were sometimes overlooked. Dorothy McCardle of the *Washington Post* said of Nixon, “I don’t think she gets enough credit for what she does. There’s been very little fanfare about the way she’s enlarged the Americana collection at the White House and restored the authentic nineteenth-century

spirit.”¹⁵³ Once again, Nixon suffered as a result of her perceived political inactivity, failing to garner the positive publicity granted by the press to the domestic activities of first ladies just a decade earlier.

An outgrowth of first ladies’ escalating political activism during this period was the recognition, by first ladies and journalists, of the growing power of the first lady position. A 1975 *McCall’s* profile observed that Ford “revels in the power the position holds and has learned to use that power for causes she espouses.”¹⁵⁴ Ford stated, “I have learned over the past few months the positiveness of the position—which I hadn’t realized before. I have come to realize the power of being able to help.” Another article pointed out that Ford “mentions the word ‘power’ more than once and speaks with pride, for example, of the clout her name now brings.”¹⁵⁵ Carter made a similar comment about the power of the position. According to the *Washington Post*, she told an audience of 2,200 Democratic women, “One thing I’ve had to adjust to is that my influence, no matter what I say, goes across the country.”¹⁵⁶ Such comments pointed to the fact that the power of first ladies was largely tied to their celebrity status and the press coverage accorded to them. As celebrity political activists whose performances occurred in very public, mediated spaces, these first ladies helped normalize women’s political activism and made significant contributions to the idea of a public, political woman. However, because their celebrity, and hence their power, was being routinely felt in the political sphere as never before, these first ladies faced questions about the extent, and potential abuses, of their influence as non-elected officials. Thus, as the activism and perceived

power of the first lady position increased, so did the press scrutiny of the first lady institution.

Assessing the Influence of the First Lady as Political Activist

While press framing during this era celebrated first ladies as political activists, news coverage also critiqued these women's growing influence; the resulting coverage represented the ideological contestation over women's changing roles. As a story in *McCall's* proclaimed, "While there is a loss of privacy and anonymity as First Lady, there is also direction, a well-defined role, an exalted status and a chance to influence public opinion that is unparalleled for any other woman in this country."¹⁵⁷ This quote reflected the first lady's evolution from public woman to gendered celebrity to political activist. The activist first ladies of this era used their gendered celebrity to "go public," which resulted in the opportunity to influence public opinion on a variety of subjects, from the ERA to breast cancer to their husband's economic and health agendas. In doing so, they also witnessed the limits of their gendered celebrity, at least in the estimation of journalists, who at times challenged this growing public and political *influence* of first ladies. Such coverage started to mark the boundaries of "proper" first lady performance. Drawing on the collective memory of the first lady institution, some journalists sought to put the activism of this era's first ladies into historical perspective by comparing these women to *iconic* first ladies, who represented a particular performance of the first lady position. Other reporters used gender prescriptions to judge the various levels of first lady activism. The resulting ways that journalists constructed gendered celebrity

in this era created a series of double binds that were ultimately used to question, and to contain, the growing political influence of first ladies.¹⁵⁸

Press Memory and Iconic First Ladies

During an era characterized by women's changing roles and first ladies' political activism, reporters increasingly asked the question, "What should a First Lady's role be, anyway?"¹⁵⁹ To answer this question, press coverage drew upon the collective memory of the first lady institution more frequently, comparing current first ladies to a handful of their predecessors who, in journalists' estimation, had achieved iconic status. S. Paige Baty defines icons as "culturally resonant units that convey a familiar set of 'original' meanings and images." Baty argues that icons "outlast single, short-lived versions of an event, character, or history: they are sites for repeated stagings of narratives, the sites on which the past, present, and future may be written."¹⁶⁰ Icons also serve as sites of ideological contestation, embodying particular past performances that can be used to frame current debates. Iconic framing is an outgrowth of both personification framing and gendered celebrity. For journalists, *iconic first ladies* personify an historical gendered performance of the first lady position that can be used to gauge the activities of present and future first ladies.¹⁶¹ Such historical memory is dependent on the frames that were used in years past to define gendered performances of the first lady position. The difference is that often these first ladies, through the work of collective or media memory, are further reduced to a single ideology or role.¹⁶² For reporters, Eleanor Roosevelt becomes an activist icon while Jacqueline Kennedy is reduced to a fashion icon, constructions that ignore Roosevelt's focus on domesticity and Kennedy's outspokenness in defense of

herself. Thus, the complexities of their performances diminish even more as time passes. Through such iconic framing, the press shows signs of establishing the parameters of first lady celebrity and their ideological performances.

Roosevelt and Kennedy personified contrasting performances of the first lady position, with other former first ladies thrown in as points of comparison. Mead claimed in her *Good Housekeeping* profile of Johnson that “before Eleanor Roosevelt and Jacqueline Kennedy, the role of the First Lady was usually played in such a low key that it might be said it was hardly played at all.” Mead discussed the impact of their gendered celebrity, noting that women “were inspired” and “roused to action” by Roosevelt while they were “frankly delighted” by Kennedy’s style.¹⁶³ Other reporters offered similar assessments of former first ladies. West asserted in her 1971 profile of Nixon, “We have had First Ladies who fitted easily into familiar categories. Bess Truman and Mamie Eisenhower were round-faced mothers and housewives. Eleanor Roosevelt was the homely, intelligent humanitarian.” In contrast, Kennedy was described as “beautiful, glittering and lavish as a star. She hated politics; she was high-handed, and she accompanied her husband only when she felt like it.”¹⁶⁴ Susanna McBee offered similar descriptions in a 1970 article, claiming that first ladies had two models to follow, “She may, if she wishes, be like that nice Army wife Mamie Eisenhower, or that social anonymity before her, Bess Truman, and do little more than go to luncheons.” Or, she could “pattern herself after such social or political or intellectual arbiters as Abigail Adams or Dolley Madison or Eleanor Roosevelt.”¹⁶⁵ Such constructions reduced the complexities of the performance of the first lady position to a series of binaries—public/private, active/passive,

political/nonpolitical—that mirrored the double binds used to critique the performance of the first lady position during this era. These quotes also established a sense of competition between these women by highlighting their differences rather than focusing on their similarities.

Not surprisingly, the activist first ladies were frequently compared to Roosevelt, the activist icon, and contrasted with their less political predecessors. For journalists, Roosevelt was the personification of the activist first lady, setting the standard by which her successors were measured. For example, one story proclaimed that Johnson would be “the first First Lady since Eleanor Roosevelt to make speeches on world conditions,”¹⁶⁶ while another article noted that, “unlike Jacqueline Kennedy, Mamie Eisenhower, and Bess Truman, Lady Bird Johnson has been and continues to be deeply involved in her husband’s political life.”¹⁶⁷ Similarly, a *New York Times* article about Carter said, “Neither Bess Truman nor Mamie Eisenhower involved themselves in their husband’s political lives.” In contrast, Carter was described as her husband’s “‘political partner,’ a definition that might have applied to Mrs. Roosevelt and, to a degree, to Lady Bird Johnson but to few other president’s wives.”¹⁶⁸ Other reporters called Carter “more determinedly activist than any First Lady since Eleanor Roosevelt, who is said to be her heroine and model,”¹⁶⁹ and suggested that she “may become the most influential First Lady since Eleanor Roosevelt.”¹⁷⁰ Ford was “‘flattered’” that people called her “the most outspoken First Lady since Eleanor Roosevelt.”¹⁷¹ One journalist remarked, “Mrs. Kennedy beautified the White House and Mrs. Johnson beautified the country, but issues were taboo. Mrs. Ford has invested her position with a sense of purpose not seen since Eleanor Roosevelt.”¹⁷²

Journalists claimed that Nixon disliked being compared to previous first ladies, but that did not stop reporters from making such comparisons. When asked by one reporter, “How are you different from Dolley Madison? Or Eleanor Roosevelt? Or Grace Coolidge—with whom you’ve been compared?,” her response was “Does it matter?”¹⁷³ Another profile noted, “She had to find her own unique style: not Lady Bird’s, not Jacqueline’s, not Mamie’s, but her own.”¹⁷⁴ In these stories, the mere mention of a former first lady’s name carried with it a specific, albeit limited, memory regarding a particular performance of the first lady position. Despite celebrities in their own time, celebrity faded for some, like Eisenhower, once they left the media spotlight, reflecting the historical amnesia of the press.

Comparisons usually oversimplified these first ladies’ performance of the position, evidencing the limitations of iconic framing and media memory. For example, during this activist period, the performances of Truman, Eisenhower, and even Kennedy, served as models of political inactivity, a criticism based on current standards that did not accurately represent the ways in which these women were framed during their tenures. Johnson, Ford, and Carter were viewed as following in Roosevelt’s activist tradition. Thus, their travels and public speaking were legitimized, as was their involvement in policymaking and playing the role of presidential advisor. However, unlike Roosevelt, these women did not have to justify their activity as an extension of their wifely role. Thanks to the influence of feminism on the gendered framing of the era and the activities of former first ladies, women’s political activism was not only accepted, it was expected. On the other hand, the

increasing political influence of first ladies was questioned, particularly because of the gendered nature of their power.

Challenging First Ladies' Political Activism

The heightened publicity surrounding these first ladies' political activism led to increased critiques of their influence, exhibiting the double binds that public women historically faced. P. David Marshall argues that celebrities "are not powerful in any overt political sense; some may possess political influence, whereas others exercise their power in less politically defined ways."¹⁷⁵ First ladies, however, are a unique case because their celebrity and influence are both gendered by being rooted in their marriage to the President of the United States, who is arguably one of the most powerful men in the world. The first ladies of this era, through their political activism, or lack thereof, prompted journalists to "reconsider the relationship between presidential spouses in order to infer the extent and character of a form of influence exerted largely outside public scrutiny."¹⁷⁶ Thus, journalists took it as their job to capture the extent of these women's influence. This reaction to the political activism of this period evidenced the limits of gendered celebrity, representing a backlash against the increased political power of first ladies specifically and women in general.

Some of the backlash was generated by the anti-feminist movement in reaction to first ladies' support of women's liberation, coverage of which pitted women against each other. As Douglas notes, "'Women Versus Women' was how the debate over the ERA was headlined in news articles, TV shows, interviews, and documentaries."¹⁷⁷ Both Ford and Carter were frequent targets of anti-ERA groups. In February 1975, the *Washington Post* reported that Ford's response was to "keep

lobbying for the Equal Rights Amendment in spite of heavy criticism from opponents of the measure who picketed the White House” with placards reading “Stop E.R.A.” and “Happiness is Stopping E.R.A.” Ford viewed the protests as a badge of honor, telling a reporter, “I’m the only First Lady to ever have a march organized against her.”¹⁷⁸ Ford publicly defended the ERA and its supporters. When asked by an interviewer from *McCall’s* “if she would debate Phyllis Schlafly, the high priestess of status quo for women and chief opponent of the Equal Rights Amendment. Said the First Lady, who has vociferously lobbied for the amendment, ‘I wouldn’t waste my time.’”¹⁷⁹ However, Ford challenged anti-ERA arguments in the press: “‘You get all this silly business about co-ed facilities as an argument against the amendment. Think about it: how many campuses have sexually integrated dorms and are perfectly accepted?’” She also took on Stop-ERA leader Schlafly, saying, “‘Phyllis Schlafly has her great motherhood thing. I’ve been through motherhood. I think it’s marvelous. But I’m not so sure mothers shouldn’t have *rights*.’”¹⁸⁰ Ford’s vocal support of the ERA generated criticism. At first, White House mail was “running 3 to 1 against her outspoken support of passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.”¹⁸¹ One of the letters asserted, “‘What right do you have as a representative of all women to contact the legislators and put pressure on them to pass the hated E.R.A.?’”¹⁸² Ford responded in the *McCall’s* article, saying “‘I see no reason why as First Lady I cannot go right ahead like any other woman.’”¹⁸³ A 1975 profile in *Ladies’ Home Journal* claimed, “She has stood by her support of the Equal Rights Amendment, provoking some criticism, but making many proud that a First Lady would campaign so forcefully for women’s rights.”¹⁸⁴

The anti-ERA movement also criticized Carter's lobbying efforts on behalf of the ERA; such criticism was highlighted in the press. Schlafly organized a White House protest against Carter, following her calls to Indiana and Virginia legislators regarding the ERA. She told the *Washington Post* that "'state legislators around the country resent this improper White House pressure.'" The 150 demonstrators carried signs that read, "Rosalynn Carter—if my daughter is ever drafted it will be your fault!" and "Mrs. Carter, you have no right to lobby ERA!" Carter declined comment, but her press secretary said that she would "'continue to work in support of ERA.'"¹⁸⁵ Following the protest and a "surge of critical calls," Carter "stopped announcing all of her activities on behalf of the E.R.A.," although she continued to lobby on its behalf.¹⁸⁶ Unlike Ford, who publicly challenged her detractors despite criticism, Carter responded to the pressures of her critics by silencing the publicity surrounding her activism. But in both cases, supporting the ERA pitted Ford and Carter against other women, which undermined the feminist notion of "sisterhood" and characterized the debate over women's rights as little more than a "political catfight."¹⁸⁷

Because of their political activism, or lack thereof, coverage of these first ladies reflected the ideological contestations over, and cultural ambivalences toward, women's equality that characterized this era. While the activist first ladies were praised by the press for their political influence, journalists also accused them of overstepping the invisible gendered boundaries that constrain the first lady position, resulting in double binds. Johnson was criticized by congressmen and lobbyists for her lobbying on behalf of the Highway Beautification Act.¹⁸⁸ Interestingly, Johnson's

press secretary Liz Carpenter said, ““We never were happy with that name (beautification),”” a more gendered term than conservation that did not reflect the controversy Johnson stirred, especially ““from national billboard lobbyists who tried, and sometimes, succeeded in getting the press to laugh at the tree planting and flower-spreading.””¹⁸⁹ Such gendered framing was deliberately used to depoliticized Johnson’s advocacy and undermine her political influence. Johnson’s efforts were thus caught in form of the femininity/competence bind, which devalues certain issues by labeling them as “feminine” and therefore unworthy of attention from male politicians.¹⁹⁰

Ford, who was often praised by journalists for her “candor,” was subsequently accused of being too outspoken, prompting one article to ask, “How much should a first lady say?”¹⁹¹ *Ladies’ Home Journal* claimed, “Betty Ford has won a reputation for speaking out on thorny issues, touching of the kind of controversy that some observers say has hurt her husband.”¹⁹² For example, when she told Morley Safer of the CBS news program *60 Minutes* that she ““wouldn’t be surprised”” if her 18-year-old daughter Susan told her she was having an affair and engaging in premarital sex,¹⁹³ her comments generated “a breathless front page tempest for days” and led to a flood of White House mail.¹⁹⁴ The *Ladies’ Home Journal* carried an article about “the Answer that rocked a nation,” featuring reactions from “famous mothers” including Betty Friedan and Phyllis Schlafly,¹⁹⁵ thus pitting women against women and tying Ford’s response to the debate over women’s liberation. Ford was also criticized for her statements on legalized abortion, particularly when she asserted that she was glad to see abortion ““brought out of the backwoods and put in the hospitals

where it belongs.”¹⁹⁶ She maintained her pro-choice position despite “a rash of criticism from Right-to-Lifers.”¹⁹⁷ Criticism of Ford’s public statements on sexual issues was not surprising given the long-standing negative connotations associated with public women, women’s speech, and sexuality. By speaking her mind, Ford challenged such taboos, but also invited critics’ sexualization of her comments, thus violating the double bind of silence/shame used to constrain women’s speech.¹⁹⁸

Journalists’ gendered critiques of Carter’s influence represented efforts to impose limitations on first ladies’ power as gendered celebrities. Reporters speculated whether she had too much political power for a first lady. Kandy Stroud characterized Carter as “a tough, shrewd power-behind-the-throne, ambitious both for herself and her husband.”¹⁹⁹ Similar comments were made by Meg Greenfield, who claimed there were many “downsides” of a politically active wife, “She is variously regarded as the seductress, the bewitcher, the mysterious power behind the throne, the possessor of unfair advantage and the wielder of undue influence.”²⁰⁰ These quotes sexualized public womanhood, harkening back to the days when women who dared to enter the public sphere were called “Jezebels,” comparing them to the biblical wife who exercised “undue influence” on her husband.²⁰¹ Carter’s Latin American trip sparked editorials about the appropriateness of the first lady assuming a diplomatic role. The *New York Times* questioned “whether it was somehow insulting to send the First Lady if the President and Vice President were too busy with other countries,” implying that both her gender and unofficial position were an issue. However, the editorial concluded that “it is the quality of her ambassadorship that should concern us, not the range of subjects on which the President might wish to exploit her prestige and

proximity.”²⁰² Greenfield, in a *Washington Post* op-ed, disagreed, claiming that “the question raised by her Latin American trip is not whether Rosalynn Carter is capable of serving as an agent of her husband’s government, but rather whether she should.” Greenfield asserted, “If Mrs. Carter is going to conduct diplomatic discussions abroad and enter into policy matters in a systematic way at home, her efforts and her influence are going to have to be judged as those of an ordinary professional.” She concluded that “before it’s over, Mrs. Carter—a remarkable woman—will have demonstrated whether or not a political wife who comes out of the kitchen can stand the heat.”²⁰³ For Greenfield, the issue was accountability. However, her final comment regarding political wives coming “out of the kitchen” unnecessarily gendered the question of Carter’s political activism.²⁰⁴ It is interesting to note that much of the gendered criticism came from women journalists. Likewise, such critiques appeared both in newspapers and in women’s magazines.

Nixon represented the other extreme, a political wife that was not active or outspoken enough, and was thus positioned by journalists as a model of what *not* to be. Female reporters in particular criticized Nixon for viewing herself as a wife first, and an individual second. McBee described Nixon as a follower of “the traditional rules” in relation to her performance of the first lady position, “Be an extension of your husband, not a public figure in your own right; avoid all public comments and controversy, for a misstatement may damage his career. Mrs. Nixon has been a political prop for so long that, at 58, she is having great trouble becoming anything more.”²⁰⁵ Stroud, who was the first to call Nixon “Plastic Pat,” offered the following assessment of her image, “I think she lost that spontaneity when she played to the

hilt the consummate politician's wife. Because she had to be inconspicuous and keep in the background, she lost her individuality and much of her confidence.”²⁰⁶ For these journalists, Nixon personified the ways that the feminine mystique deprived women of self-fulfillment, making her a disappointing role model in an era of feminist activism.

Nixon was also criticized for failing to exploit the power of the first lady position. In keeping with her more traditional performance of the first lady position, Nixon chose volunteerism as her cause; promoting “volunteerism,” however, was viewed as “safe,” if not downright dull, by reporters. *Washington Post* reporter Marie Smith said, “Both Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Kennedy had definite interests and promoted them effectively. Mrs. Nixon doesn't.” McBee offered the example of Nixon's tour of West Coast volunteer projects in 1968, “Every place she went was ‘fun’ or ‘exciting’ or ‘marvelous,’ and often all three. Such comments are polite, but they don't really say much about innovative ways that private citizens can constructively change their communities—a goal Mrs. Nixon has embraced.”²⁰⁷ McBee concluded that Nixon's “impact outside Washington has been so small it can be measured in millimeters.”²⁰⁸ Nixon's lack of political activity and avoidance of issues on the campaign trail was criticized by some reporters. In a 1972 article titled, “Mrs. Nixon, on 7-State Tour, Shuns Politics,” Nan Robertson of the *New York Times* pointed out that Nixon “made no speeches” and “never, never talked politics.” Reporters, frustrated with the lack of “newsworthy” activities, pressed Nixon during her only news conference, where Robertson noted she was “forced to tackle, or at least parry, the issues.” At the press briefing in Chicago, “She turned tense and

anxious as she was asked about the war, abortion, amnesty, the Watergate bugging, equal rights . . . and other thorny topics. It was, everyone who has followed Mrs. Nixon for years agreed, the toughest grilling she has ever undergone.”²⁰⁹ Nixon’s silence on political issues ended up hurting her, as she found herself forced to address such issues by the press, only to be critiqued for her responses, in some cases by women reporters who wanted more from a second-wave first lady.

Thus, the first ladies of this era increasingly found themselves ensnared in double binds that reflected both the ideological contestation over women’s roles and the limitations of gendered celebrity. While the public and press called on first ladies to be more active, they were warned not to overstep their boundaries or abuse their power. However if, like Nixon, they were not active enough, they were criticized for that as well, setting up a classic “no win” situation.²¹⁰ In a 1977 *Washington Post* feature on “First Families,” historian Joseph P. Lash was quoted as saying, “A President’s wife who undertakes a specific job in the government faces double jeopardy; she is without real authority, yet she is expected to perform miracles. When she dares to assert leadership, it is resented and resisted and if she does not, officials try to anticipate what she wants done.”²¹¹ Such double binds served to contain the power of first ladies. Thus, while first ladies’ gendered celebrity gave them the publicity needed to breakdown barriers for women’s political activism, it was still not powerful enough to overcome the obstacles questioning women’s appropriateness in the male political sphere. In certain instances, women journalists helped to promote first ladies’ political power yet also worked to limit it.

Conclusion

In 1977, a *Washington Post* article claimed that the first lady was “perceived as a force in American politics.”²¹² Journalists drew parallels between the increased political influence and public activism of the first ladies of this era and the changes in women’s lives called for by the women’s liberation movement. However, as their power and activity increased, so too did press criticism of the performance of the first lady position.

Once again, the gender ideologies of the period framed discussions of the first lady institution. Just as domesticity dominated discussions of American womanhood in the previous period, the ideals second-wave feminism shaped the cultural conversation regarding women’s changing roles in the 1960s and 1970s. The existence of an active feminist movement gave feminists the power to shape the conversation regarding gender roles. A stark contrast developed between the “traditional” true woman and the “contemporary” superwoman. In the modern era, the traditional ideology of true womanhood was used to balance the “new woman” or justify women’s expanding roles. In contrast, so-called “traditional” performances of gender were more apt to be criticized as a hindrance to being a “contemporary” (a.k.a. “liberated”) woman during this period, which was the case with Nixon.

Wandersee claims that the first ladies of this period were prevented from moving “beyond the confinement of an exceedingly demanding, yet rigidly defined role Their lives were truly appendages to their husbands.”²¹³ Yet press coverage of the first ladies of this era contradicts her statement. These women were routinely presented as influential and active public figures independent of their husbands,

traveling extensively and routinely speaking with the press as they campaigned independently for their husbands and advocated their own social causes. Even Nixon, who was the most traditional public wife of the period, was recognized for her individual achievements. Her problem, according to her press critics, was that she was not politically active enough. During an era of active feminist protest, Nixon had the misfortune of embodying the very ideology that feminists were rallying against, the “feminine mystique.” Despite being described as “warm” and “friendly” by reporters, Nixon often found herself under fire for being a “traditional political wife,” the role that she had been expected to perform throughout her public life.

Gendered framing also impacted the media memories of former first ladies. When framed as icons, the performances of former first ladies are further reduced to a single personification of ideologies or roles. However, the memory they are reduced to reflects the legacy of press framing as well as the politics of the second wave as much if not more than it does the first ladies’ lived performances.²¹⁴ Iconic framing thus reflects the limits of collective memory, particularly the problem of forgetting, which Maurice Halbwachs explains as “the disappearance of these frameworks or a part of them, either because our attention is no longer able to focus on them or because it is focused somewhere else.”²¹⁵ The focus on first lady’s activism during the second-wave impacted which first ladies were remembered, and how their images circulated as gendered celebrities. In the process, some first ladies’ activities, which garnered significant press coverage during their eras, were almost completely forgotten by media memory. The result is that, with the exception of a few iconic first ladies like Eleanor Roosevelt and Jacqueline Kennedy, gendered celebrity for most

first ladies is short-lived, further evidencing the limitations of both gendered celebrity and the media's historical memory.

As gendered celebrities, first ladies became sites of ideological contestation generated by the second-wave, which was constructed by the press as a competition between women that devalued the significance of feminist issues and perpetuated the patriarchal stronghold within U.S. political culture. The most notable feature of the press coverage of this period was an increasingly critical tone as journalists developed a more adversarial approach to reporting throughout this era.²¹⁶ David Weaver notes that most journalists “realize that they must meet organizational, occupational, and audience expectations. In addition, the news organizations within which they work are influenced by societal and cultural environments.” Thus journalists, even women journalists, are influenced by the gender ideologies that shape U.S. culture and their organizational culture, which in this era required them to challenge political officials, including politically active first ladies. Weaver further explains that “Given these layers of influences, it is not too surprising that the individual characteristics of journalists do not correlate strongly with the kinds of news content they produce.” Despite such cultural influences, Weaver also cautions that “it would be a mistake to think that individual journalists have no freedom to select and shape news stories.”²¹⁷ Given the tensions between journalism's adversarial culture and the politics of individual journalists, particularly women reporters who supported women's liberation, it is not surprising that the same journalists who praised the political activists as contemporary superwomen who could balance *both* feminist ideals *and* their traditional domestic roles also critiqued these women's performance of the first

lady position, questioning whether they were becoming *too* politically active. A consequence of such ambivalent reporting was a series of double binds that left first ladies in a no-win situation. A *Washington Post* article pointed out, “The capacity for accomplishment is great, but an activist First Lady is assured of not only rewards and heady personal power, but criticism and frustration as well,”²¹⁸ evidencing the double binds that were associated with an active performance of the position during this period. Conversely, Nixon was disparaged for being an “old-fashioned” political wife and judged as being *too* passive. The result was a number of highly critical articles, which rarely existed in earlier twentieth-century coverage, but would carry over into the next era. The empowerment and limitations of first ladies’ gendered celebrity witnessed during this period would be exacerbated as the feminist backlash gained momentum in the 1980s.

Chapter Five

First Lady as Political Interloper, 1980-2001

In a 2000 *New York Times* editorial, Jan Jarboe Russell noted the quandary first ladies have faced over the years, “From the beginning, Americans have not known quite what to do with the wives of presidents. Those who spoke their minds, like Mary Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt and Hillary Clinton, were vilified for meddling in the nation’s business. Those who failed to assert themselves as individuals, like Mamie Eisenhower and Pat Nixon, were derided as female furniture.” According to Russell, the latest contenders for the position, Laura Bush and Tipper Gore, were hoping to avoid this trap by taking a more “traditional” approach to the role than their predecessor, Hillary Rodham Clinton: “If Mrs. Bush or Mrs. Gore wants to be a stay-at-home wife, fine. However, let’s not expect her to do anything substantial about raising literacy rates or improving our mental health. And let us not have a first lady answer to any title that begins with ‘co’: co-partner, co-conspirator, co-president.”¹ This article evidences the dilemma facing first ladies: how to be a model of American womanhood while performing one of the most publicly visible and influential, yet undefined and unelected, positions in American culture.

At the end of the twentieth century, the first lady institution continued to serve as a site of ideological contestation over women’s roles, with the debate over gender performance arguably more heated than ever. The first ladies of the previous era mirrored the activism of the period and were judged in large part against the cultural backdrop of second-wave feminism. With the exception of Nixon, who embodied the Cold War homemaker, the first ladies of the second-wave era were framed as political

activists. However, their increased influence was met with heightened criticism over the power of the first lady position, evidencing the feminist backlash that swelled in the 1980s and 1990s. During the final decades of the twentieth century, journalists became preoccupied with assessing the influence of the first lady institution and questioning the first lady's "proper place" in American politics and culture. Gil Troy contends that "even in the vulgar 1990s, vestiges of gentility persist, the Victorian ideal still survives. This anachronistic post remains rooted in the leadership models of the late-nineteenth-century America in the public role of genteel matron."² The final three first ladies of the twentieth century, and the first to hold the position in the new millennium, were faced with negotiating the boundaries that defined and contained the performances of the first lady position. Two of these women, Nancy Davis Reagan (1981-1989)³ and Barbara Pierce Bush (1989-1993),⁴ represented the Cold War generation. They were followed by the first baby boomers to serve as first lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton (1993-2001)⁵ and Laura Welch Bush (2001-present).⁶ Like their predecessors, these women found themselves at the center of the cultural debate over women's roles at the end of the century.

Press coverage from 1980 through 2001, a period characterized by the so-called "postfeminist" backlash, reflected the larger cultural debate regarding women's place and power. Personification framing drew upon, and helped to perpetuate, the conflicts between the "traditional" domestic ideal and the feminist "superwoman." Reagan and Barbara Bush represented the Cold War domestic ideal, while baby boomer Laura Bush embodied the "new traditionalism" that emerged as an answer to the feminist superwoman, personified by Clinton. The result was competitive framing

that pitted these women against one another and reduced the complexities of gender performance to a series of dichotomies: feminine/feminist, submissiveness/independence, commitment to family/commitment to career.

Journalists also used gendered framing to judge these women's performance of the first lady institution's various roles, in the process setting the boundaries for the "proper" performance of the first lady position. Helpmate, protector, and volunteer were framed as proper first lady duties while advising, policymaking, and advocacy sometimes crossed the boundaries by extending these women's influence too far into the male political sphere. Stemming in part from the increased political activism of the previous era, questions regarding the political influence of first ladies became a defining issue of this period. Reflecting the legacy of "the personal is political," journalists expressed concerns over the "hidden power" of first ladies, whether in the form of private influence over their husband or personal political ambitions, with Reagan and Clinton serving as examples of women who sought to overextend or misuse the power of their position.

As in previous eras, the first lady institution served as a site of contestation over women's place and power at the end of the twentieth century. Well-established media frames were influential in defining the boundaries of the "proper" performance of the first lady position, with the primary focus being on containing the perceived power of first ladies. Drawing on media memory, journalists used iconic first ladies as boundary markers, noting historical limitations on the first lady position. When first ladies were perceived to be overstepping the boundaries and straying too far into the male political sphere, they were characterized as *political interlopers* by the press,

framing that sought to contain their “improper” influence. Meanwhile, the debate over women’s place became a central campaign issue, casting candidates’ wives as key players as each side sought to define “family values.” Once again, women were treated as opponents in a no-win contest that was portrayed by the press as a political catfight. All of this attention on the first lady institution, particularly the controversy surrounding Hillary Rodham Clinton in 1992, caused journalists, female reporters and editorialists in particular, to question the expectations and double binds containing performances of the position.

Competing Gender Ideologies: Feminism and Domesticity in a Postfeminist Era

On the verge of a new millennium, Americans were still debating women’s “proper” place in society. As Gail Collins states, “In the year 2000, the country was far from having worked out all the issues about gender and sex that had bedeviled it from the beginning.”⁷ The 1980s and 1990s were characterized by the conflict between the ideals of second-wave feminism and the feminist backlash, resulting in what some scholars and journalists have called the “postfeminist” era.⁸ As noted in previous chapters, the concepts of a feminist backlash and a postfeminist ideology are not new. Similar “backlashes’ to women’s advancement” have occurred in other periods of U.S. history, “triggered by the perception—accurate or not—that women are making great strides.”⁹ Thus, the backlash of the 1980s resembled the reactions to women’s increasingly public roles in the early 1900s as well as the Depression and World War II eras.¹⁰

In the wake of the social movements of the previous decades, Elaine Tyler May claims that it is no surprise that “the New Right emerged in the 1970s and 1980s

as a powerful political force with the dual aimsof reviving the Cold War and reasserting the ideology of domesticity.”¹¹ The New Right played on the perceived generation gap between the activist baby boomers and their more conservative parents. The anti-ERA and anti-abortion movements, which embraced the domestic ideal, were part of the New Right’s efforts to counter liberal politics, including feminism. According to Barbara Ryan, “The anti-feminist reaction took the form of a pro-family movement to bring back the middle class family model of breadwinning men supporting homemaking wives and children.”¹² Mary Douglas Vavrus states that the Reagan and Bush administrations “were especially influential in legitimating and normalizing right-wing rhetoric: a combination of laissez faire economic philosophy, conservative social policies, and fundamentalist Christianity,” a tradition continued by George W. Bush. According to Vavrus, the New Right was most successful “in defining ‘family’ in a manner that made it seem like the exclusive domain of conservatives—particularly those who claimed to espouse what they called ‘family values.’”¹³ Since the 1980s, “family values” has become a rallying cry for conservatives.

The rise of the New Right and the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 brought the feminist backlash to the political foreground. Susan Faludi contends, “Just as Reaganism shifted political discourse far to the right and demonized liberalism, so the backlash convinced the public that women’s ‘liberation’ was the true contemporary American scourge—the source of an endless laundry list of personal, social, and economic problems.”¹⁴ Topping that list was the disintegration of the nuclear family, a primary argument of the New Right. Feminism had become a symbolic lightning

rod for the problems of modern family life at the end of the century. Judith Stacey argues, “Because of its powerful and highly visible critique of traditional domesticity, and because of the sensationalistic way the media disseminated this critique, feminism has taken most of the heat for family and social crises that have attended the transition from an industrial to a postindustrial order in the U.S.”¹⁵ Thus, feminism continued to be depicted by the media as an extreme ideology, despite the fact that many of the advances sought by both the first and second waves of the women’s movement, especially women’s rights to pursue education and employment, had been embraced by U.S. culture.¹⁶

The result of the 1980s backlash, according to the news media and some scholars, was an era of postfeminism, a term which has been used by journalists to indicate the so-called “death” of the women’s movement.¹⁷ According to Beth E. Schneider, “Its use implies that the women’s movement in its active, public phase is over, if not dead, since a certain spark of freshness and excitement that characterized the 1970s generation is missing.”¹⁸ Stacey defines postfeminism as “the simultaneous incorporation, revision, and depoliticization of many of the goals of second-wave feminism” and argues that “the diffusion of postfeminist consciousness signifies both the achievements of, and challenges for, modern feminist politics.”¹⁹ The primary claims of postfeminism are that a collective feminist movement is no longer needed because the “playing field” has been leveled and that women now have the freedom to make individual choices regarding their lives.²⁰ Rayna Rapp asserts that the “depoliticization” of second-wave feminism “often takes the form of the reduction of feminist *social* goals to individual ‘life style,’”²¹ which can lead to the

commodification of feminism.²² This is similar to what happened during the 1920s backlash when the individualistic flapper lifestyle was represented by the media as the “independence” fought for by first-wave feminists.²³ Kitch contends that the postfeminist mentality of the 1920s “dismissed” feminist radicalism by contending that “the success and happiness of the individual . . . had made collective and group-based identities unnecessary.”²⁴ Similarly, Stacey believes that postfeminism is useful in describing the attitudes many women have toward feminism today, particularly the ways in which many feminist ideals are embraced while the “feminist” label is rejected. Often called the “I’m not a feminist, but . . .” phenomenon, postfeminism reflects the ambivalence of the woman (usually white and middle- to upper-class) who, according to Susan J. Douglas, “is torn between a philosophy that seeks to improve her lot in life and a desire not to pay too dearly for endorsing that philosophy.”²⁵

“Superwoman” is an important concept tied to both postfeminism and the feminist backlash. She is a woman who tries to “have it all” by balancing her increasing public sphere activity with traditional domestic sphere duties. The “superwoman” ideal, and press criticism of it, dates back to first-wave feminism.²⁶ During periods of backlash, feminism has historically been “blamed” for the unhappiness supposedly caused by the superwoman ideal, which tells women they can “have it all” yet does not explain the sacrifices they have to make in order to do so.²⁷ As William H. Chafe explains, “[W]omen in business and the professions too often were expected to be ‘superwomen,’ adding to their business responsibilities all the other activities traditionally associated with women’s roles.”²⁸ Vavrus argues that

postfeminists “take for granted the rights that first- and second-wave feminists fought for, such as access to higher education, but simultaneously argue that feminism actually harms women, overall, because it gives women unrealistic expectations—that we can ‘have it all.’”²⁹ Even feminist icon Betty Friedan entered the debate. According to Bonnie J. Dow, Friedan’s 1981 book, *The Second Stage*, was “not the first, but the most visible, in a wave of ‘feminist recantation’” that blamed “women’s current troubles with combining marriage, motherhood, and work or with finding suitable mates . . . on the misguided goals of second-wave feminism.”³⁰ However, Vavrus argues that demographic information from this era suggests that “structural inequities” such as the wage gap, lack of affordable day-care, and the “second-shift” at home, were more likely than feminism to be the root of women’s dissatisfaction, even for middle- and upper-class white women.³¹ But with a prominent feminist leader like Friedan presenting an essentialist argument that the second-wave “ignored the needs of the family, the differences between men and women, and the power of women’s traditional roles,”³² it is not surprising that the backlash produced ideologies that offered an alternative to the “superwoman.”

In the 1980s, “New Traditionalism” emerged as the salvation of stressed-out superwomen. New traditionalism was a revamped version of the Cold War feminine mystique created by advertisers and targeted to baby boomers. Faludi explains that the new traditionalist was “little more than a resurgence of the 1950s ‘back-to-the-home movement,’ itself a creation of advertisers and, in turn, a recycled version of the Victorian fantasy that a new ‘cult of domesticity’ was bringing droves of women home.”³³ The campaign, according to Vavrus, “consisted of a series of advertisements

that glorified domesticity and vilified feminism for failing women.”³⁴ The new traditionalist, as described in an advertising campaign for *Good Housekeeping* magazine, “found her identity” by serving home, husband, and children.³⁵ Thus, new traditionalism, in the spirit of postfeminism, advocated a lifestyle for women that involved exchanging their careers for the fulfillment of family life and promoted the domestic empowerment of consumerism. Stacey believes that many women and men found such pro-family ideologies appealing in the wake of the antifeminist backlash.³⁶ Vavrus, however, contends that the “return to the family ideal of domestic relations . . . is inappropriate for the vast majority of the U.S. population because of economic and occupational demands,” making the new traditionalist an unobtainable ideal for many American women, even if they wanted to give up their job.³⁷

The media’s juxtaposition of second-wave feminism with new traditionalism during this era of backlash created a dichotomy of feminism versus femininity, of nontraditional versus traditional, and of career versus family, which created often competing and contradictory prescriptions for women’s behavior. Stacey believes that postfeminism represents the middle ground where women attempt to “both retain and depoliticize the egalitarian family and work ideals of the second wave.”³⁸ While most of these scholars contend that the news media generally promoted new traditionalism’s vilification of feminism, journalists also reflected the ambivalence of postfeminism simply by taking many of the advances of feminism for granted and promoting the superwoman ideal.³⁹ May claims, “Although the cold war and the call for domesticity became fashionable once again, consensus no longer prevailed in the 1980s as it did in the years after World War II. The family landed squarely in the

center of hotly contested politics.”⁴⁰ As visible in press frames, such ideological contestation, played out through the first lady performance of “family values.”

Framing the First Lady Institution in the Postfeminist Era

Journalists’ framing of the performances of both gender and the first lady position during the final decades of the twentieth century reflected the ambivalence of postfeminism, pitting feminism against traditionalism and reducing women’s lives to a series of personal choices regarding the roles they played. Once again, increasing coverage of first ladies was coupled with increased scrutiny of the position, as the institution functioned as a site of contestation over women’s place and power. By the end of the century, the role of the first lady, particularly as a model of American womanhood, was a hotly contested topic, resulting in numerous newspaper and magazine articles assessing the institution and the women who held the position.

Feminist Vs. Traditionalist: Personification Framing and Postfeminism

The last two decades of the twentieth century were in many ways a culmination of one-hundred years of debate over women’s proper place in American society. In the wake of an active feminist movement, women were exercising their new legal rights and taking advantage of expanded opportunities in the public and political spheres. But like their modern era counterparts, women were also dealing with questions concerning how they would balance their new public roles with their traditional domestic concerns. At the same time, the Cold War domestic ideal resurfaced, and its focus on the nuclear family and women’s primary roles as homemakers and consumers was at odds with second-wave feminism’s promotion of women’s careers. “New traditionalism,” a repackaging of Cold War domesticity for

the baby boom generation, was presented as an alternative to the “superwoman” expectation. At the same time, the specter of “radical” feminism, based largely on negative constructions by both conservatives and the media, continued to haunt professional women. During this period, the women who were in the running for the office of first lady were positioned by many, including journalists, as personifications of these competing ideologies.

The 1980 election of the Reagan-Bush ticket reflected the new era of conservative politics rooted in Cold War ideals, including a renewed emphasis on the traditional gender roles of male breadwinners and female homemakers. For journalists, Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush represented Cold War domesticity. Reagan embodied the affluent homemaker and was routinely framed as a “devoted” and “adoring” wife.⁴¹ An article in the *New York Times Magazine* called Reagan “part of the Him Generation—a woman who, in the words of the Tammy Wynette song, stands by her man.”⁴² Another story said that Reagan “was brought up in a traditional style, and she knows how to be a wife and run a home.”⁴³ Barbara Bush, whose “grandmotherly image”⁴⁴ was frequently mentioned in stories, symbolized the average homemaker of her generation. A *New York Times* article referred to her as “an icon of an older generation of wives who stayed home”⁴⁵ while another story reported that “conservative Republicans hold Mrs. Bush up as a symbol of traditional wifeliness.”⁴⁶ According to a *Ladies’ Home Journal* profile, “She’s raised five children, lived in twenty-eight homes in seventeen cities, and been a grandmother ten times over, and has spent forty-three years cooking, carpooling, and, as she says, ‘keeping the bathrooms clean.’”⁴⁷ In the Bush household, the division of labor

remained along traditional lines. She asserted, ““I don’t fool around with his office and he doesn’t fool around with my household.””⁴⁸ This quotation reinforced her framing as a traditional homemaker and echoed the domestic empowerment of the Cold War era, which granted women control over private matters concerning home and family.

The return of the domestic ideal was part of the larger backlash against second-wave feminism. Journalists framed comments by both Reagan and Bush as representative of the conservative arguments that the women’s liberation movement undermined the nuclear family and devalued women’s roles as wives and mothers. Profiles of Reagan noted that she opposed “abortion on demand” and the ERA, the two defining issues of second-wave feminism.⁴⁹ Reagan stated she was “for equal pay if both men and women are equally qualified” but chided feminists for “knocking family life,” telling *Ladies’ Home Journal*, “‘I’m not for marches or placard waving. I think if we stopped giving all movements a ‘stage’ on TV, there would be fewer ‘performances.’”⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Barbara Bush defended homemaking as a career. *McCall’s* reported, “She genuinely enjoys her role as wife, mother and grandmother. Asked whether she regrets not having graduated from Smith College (she left after less than two years to marry George Bush) and pursuing a professional career, she put it this way: ‘Why, I have had my own career as a homemaker. I chose my life and I have no regrets.’”⁵¹ In another interview, she blamed second-wave feminism for steering women away from the homemaker role. Bush told the *New York Times* that “‘women’s lib has made it very hard for some women to stay home; the payoff if you do stay home is enormous.’”⁵² Speaking out against feminist activism and in defense

of the homemaker role contributed to the press framing of Reagan and Bush as embodiments of the feminist backlash.

Journalists often juxtaposed images of the traditional homemaker of the Cold War generation with the careerism of feminist baby boomers, and for journalists, Hillary Rodham Clinton was the embodiment of the feminist “superwoman.” Many articles framed Clinton as “Hillary the Superwoman” who personified the “working mother who does it all and has it all”⁵³ and represented the “professional women” of the baby boom generation.⁵⁴ The *New York Times* noted that Clinton had “come to symbolize the strong, independent woman of the late 20th century.”⁵⁵ A *Washington Post* article dubbed Clinton “the very model of the modern working women,” noting that “like most American women, Hillary Clinton has to struggle to balance the many facets of her life.”⁵⁶ According to a 1992 *Ladies’ Home Journal* profile, Clinton saw herself as “a working mother trying to balance all these responsibilities, very much like those that are faced by millions of American homes.”⁵⁷ In a series of articles looking at Clinton’s first hundred days as first lady, she was commonly cast “as a woman trying to balance work and home, able to work round the clock on health care yet manage to make scrambled eggs for a sick Chelsea.”⁵⁸ The “superwoman” framing continued in the 1996 campaign. One *New York Times* editorial called Clinton a “Supermom” who “packs an appeal as a mother as well as a loyal wife and professional balancing her obligations on a high wire.”⁵⁹

In the wake of the feminist backlash, Clinton also personified what many conservative critics deemed to be the negative aspects of second-wave feminism.⁶⁰ In a *New York Times* editorial, *Backlash* author Faludi contended that Clinton was

positioned as “an emblem of the modern women’s movement,” threatening conservatives with “her professionalism, her role in her husband’s career, her feminist views, her failure to produce a brood of young ‘uns and last, but not at all least, her financial independence.”⁶¹ Throughout the 1992 campaign, Clinton was portrayed as “a hard-edged careerist,”⁶² “a radical feminist in demure Talbot’s clothing”⁶³ and “an unwifely feminist with undue influence on her husband’s policy-making— Gloria Steinam with the claws of Madame Nhu.”⁶⁴ Her comments that she was “not some little woman standing by her man like Tammy Wynette” and that she could have “stayed home, baked cookies and had teas,” which were often repeated during the campaign, were interpreted as showing contempt for homemakers.⁶⁵ At the Republican National Convention, she came “under full-scale attack as the Republicans try to turn her into a symbol of anti-family values.”⁶⁶ Although conservatives were credited with creating these negative constructions, journalists promoted these backlash images by using them repeatedly to frame their discussions of Clinton.

The backlash also generated an “alternative” ideology to counter the feminist superwoman: the new traditionalist. New traditionalism was a useful framing device for journalists and conservatives because it bridged the generational divide by encouraging baby boom women to embrace the Cold War domestic ideal and reject the careerism of second-wave feminists like Clinton. New traditionalism took center stage in 1992 when Marilyn Quayle, “wife of the vice president and everything, she implied in a speech, that Hillary Clinton is not,” addressed the Republican National Convention. The *New York Times* called Quayle a “self-sacrificing 90s Supermom”

who served as “the campaign’s generational foil to Mrs. Clinton.”⁶⁷ Another article claimed Quayle “was the model baby boomer conservative: a career woman who for all but a few years of her adult life had refrained from actually practicing her career.”⁶⁸ A *New York Times* editorial asserted that Quayle’s thinly-veiled attacks on Clinton were also a challenge to the “superwoman” ideal: “That her law career never had a chance to bloom, as Hillary Clinton’s has, doesn’t mean she’s any less of an intellect—and makes her more of a wife and a mother. Take that, all you women who’ve fought to have it both ways—balancing careers with loving care of your families.”⁶⁹ The most quoted line of Quayle’s speech, “[m]ost women do not wish to be liberated from their essential natures as women,” was interpreted as support for “talented women who are not threatened by giving up their careers to stay home with the kids.”⁷⁰ Tipper Gore was also framed as a new traditionalist who “balance[d] out Hillary Clinton” on the 1992 Democratic ticket. One profile described her as a “perfect baby boomer wife who . . . had chosen to stay home with her children while her husband plunged into politics.”⁷¹ In the 2000 presidential race, Gore was often compared to fellow new traditionalist Laura Bush. Bush was consistently framed by journalists as a “loyal wife” and a “fiercely devoted mother.”⁷² According to the *Washington Post*, “Bush came of age in the ‘60s, but, as was the case with her husband, the cultural revolution passed her by.” However, the story also noted that “while she had the ‘luxury’ of staying home to raise the twins, she nonetheless considered herself a ‘contemporary’ woman,” who married late (at 31), earned a Master’s degree, and worked a decade in Texas public schools “before settling down” and willingly “trading her career for motherhood.”⁷³ As a news frame, new

traditionalism was presented as a “choice” made by these postfeminist women, an alternative to the careerism promoted by second-wave liberal feminism and personified by Clinton.

As in the past, the contestation over women’s changing roles played out in press coverage of the first lady institution. Candidates’ wives were positioned by reporters as models of American womanhood, personifying the ideals of Cold War domesticity, second-wave feminism, and new traditionalism. However, such personification framing severely downplayed the intricacies of gender performance by reducing these women to a single ideology that ignored the complexity of their lives. Some journalists recognized the reductive aspects of gendered framing. For example, Marjorie Williams of the *Washington Post* said that “Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Tipper Gore, and Marilyn Quayle all represent some rough attributes of their various generations, ideologies and backgrounds. . . . But for the three younger women in the race, there has been tension between their expectations as post-feminist baby boomers and the traditions of politics.” Williams argued that all three were “grouping toward some uneasy amalgam of autonomy and sublimation—in which their own legitimate ambitions and careerist personae are melded into their husband’s career. . . . At least Barbara Bush spares us the maddening fiction of the new woman embedded in the old family.”⁷⁴ But the performance of gender for even “traditional” political wives like Barbara Bush and Nancy Reagan was far more complex than Williams and her colleagues often recognized, particularly in relation to their duties as first lady.

The Emergence of First Lady as Political Interloper

Just as in previous decades, journalists used gender to frame their discussions of the performance of the first lady position, and in doing so defined and reified the boundaries of first lady performance based on gender prescriptions. Coverage of this era reflected the juxtaposition of traditionalism and feminism in the gender debate, with reporters viewing some roles as falling within the boundaries of “proper” first lady performance while others were framed as crossing such boundaries. According to press coverage, proper first lady comportment included acting as her husband’s helpmate and concerning herself primarily with traditional women’s public activities. In contrast, using the “hidden power” of the position to advance her own personal or political agenda, whether as an advisor, policymaker, or independent advocate,⁷⁵ was treated as overstepping the boundaries of first lady performance. And when these boundaries were violated, journalists’ framed these women as *political interlopers* who trespassed too far into the male political sphere. In such instances, journalists made the personal political for U.S. first ladies. By highlighting the inappropriateness of their actions, such framing contributed to assumptions that first ladies’ influence should be contained to women’s issues, hence limiting the power of this unelected position.

The frame of helpmate, which was frequently used by journalists throughout the first half of the twentieth century to describe first ladies’ duties, reappeared in this era. Like many of their predecessors, Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, and Laura Bush were all framed as helpmates. Reporters claimed that Reagan’s “greatest role was that of supportive wife”⁷⁶ and observed that “she wants only to help her husband.”⁷⁷

According to the *Ladies' Home Journal*, "She's proved that there's still a place for the old-fashioned wife whose main function is helping her husband."⁷⁸ Reagan told *Ladies' Home Journal*, "I know it's old fashioned, by my first duty is to be the best wife I can be."⁷⁹ Barbara Bush was viewed similarly. The *New York Times* declared Bush "the quintessential traditional political wife—deferential to her husband and ambitious for him, determined to remain uncontroversial, deeply involved with her family."⁸⁰ A *Washington Post* profile called her "a steadfast helpmate, tending her family's needs while her husband worked his way to the presidency."⁸¹ Similarly, daughter-in-law Laura Bush was described primarily as a helpmate. In a *Washington Post* profile, her husband was quoted as saying, "I have the best wife for the line of work I'm in. She doesn't try to steal the limelight."⁸² During rallies with her husband, the *New York Times* noted that "Mrs. Bush leads the George Bush cheering section."⁸³ Another *Times* article claimed that she was "an integral part of her husband's success, not because she is a second engine of his ambition, but because she is a shock absorber, keeping him calm, keeping him steady and, occasionally, keeping his mischievous and arrogant streaks in check."⁸⁴ During the campaign, Bush frequently traveled with her husband because, according to the *Washington Post*, "the governor functions better when his wife is with him . . . she's a calming presence."⁸⁵ As in previous eras, the helpmate frame simultaneously constrained and empowered these women. By framing their influence as wifely concerns, their contributions were confined to the private sphere, yet still important to their husbands' successes.

The frame of protector, an extension of the helpmate role prevalent in the early Cold War, reemerged during this period as well. Reagan was frequently framed

as her husband's "chief protector."⁸⁶ During the 1980 campaign, Reagan "came out swinging" over what she called "a character assassination" of her husband.⁸⁷ She said in a campaign advertisement she resented President Carter's "vicious" attacks on her husband "as a wife and a mother and a woman."⁸⁸ As first lady, the *New York Times* noted that she kept track of "Mr. Reagan's schedule and anything that she considers might be harmful to his political or personal interests."⁸⁹ The protector frame was also applied to Barbara Bush. A 1989 *New York Times* story stated, "Just as Nancy Reagan protected her husband's stately persona, challenging advisers when her Ronnie was being overstuffed with facts or overbooked for public appearances, so Barbara Bush keeps a tigress's eye on people who make her husband look bad." A White House official said Bush "feels protective of the man and the office. And if she feels her man or the Presidency is being trivialized, she will certainly let you know."⁹⁰ According to *Ladies' Home Journal*, Bush "insisted" that she never lobbied her husband because "the President needs a respite from the pressures of the office. 'I love my husband too much,' she says, 'to add to his burdens.'"⁹¹ As with earlier first ladies, the protector frame served as a form of domestic empowerment, recognizing these women's power within the private sphere. However, because their protection sometimes extended into political affairs, this form of domestic empowerment was scrutinized to a further extent than that of their predecessors. For example, Reagan was harshly criticized for having *too* much power over her husband's schedule, whereas Mamie Eisenhower, who as protector also kept a close eye on the activities of her husband, did not face the same level of press questioning.⁹²

Criticism of Reagan's private influence evidenced fears of the "hidden power" of first ladies, a phenomenon that intensified during this era.⁹³ Speculation regarding first ladies' hidden power appeared most often in stories that framed these women as presidential advisors. Articles about both Reagan and Clinton constructed them as influential presidential advisers, which often led to the charge that they were "the power behind the throne."⁹⁴ Reagan's influence was characterized as stemming from her close relationship with her husband. According to a 1980 *New York Times Magazine* profile, "She is constantly by her husband's side, and he considers her his best friend. She often attends staff meetings, and her husband uses her as a sounding board, discussing with her almost every important decision he makes."⁹⁵ A *New York Times* story in 1985 assessed Reagan's "evolving and growing role" that combined "what her friends call a powerful protective streak for her husband and her own input in the day-to-day workings of the Administration."⁹⁶ As a result, reporters questioned her level of influence, like when she appeared to prompt her husband's answer to a question about talks with the Soviet Union.⁹⁷ Accounts of her role in dismissing key aides throughout her husband's political life, particularly chief of staff Donald Regan, also "contributed to the image of Nancy Reagan as a behind-the-scenes manipulator"⁹⁸ and, thus, a political interloper. Both Reagan and her husband responded to such charges by downplaying her influence. A 1984 *Washington Post* article noted that her husband "was clearly annoyed by reports that she is 'the power behind the throne, directing me or something.'"⁹⁹ Another story stated, "Denying that her influence is pervasive, Mrs. Reagan said: 'I read that I make decisions and I'm the power behind the throne, and that I get people fired. I don't get people fired.'"¹⁰⁰ But

after years of such denials, Reagan “acknowledged wielding power over her husband on some personnel decisions, and added, ‘In no way do I apologize for it.’”

According to the *New York Times* article, which appeared after the 1988 election, she claimed she felt “compelled to exert influence in President Reagan’s eight years in office because she did not believe that his staff generally served him well.”¹⁰¹ The timing of the article seems to indicate that Reagan felt safe to admit her influence *only after* it was politically expedient and such comments could not be used against the Republican ticket in the election. It also suggests that the politicization of the first lady’s power was so feared that Reagan wielded it far away from the media spotlight.

Journalists speculated that Clinton was not just the “power behind the throne” but a usurper interested in personal political power. The Clinton campaign’s claim that voters would get “two for the price of one”¹⁰² raised fears of a first lady as “co-president,”¹⁰³ which became a dominant theme in the framing of Clinton as a political interloper. Clinton’s husband regarded her as “a political and policy adviser” and promised she would play a prominent role in his administration.¹⁰⁴ According to *Ladies’ Home Journal*, “When a reporter asked him who would be his Robert Kennedy—his most trusted policy adviser and confidant—Clinton answered without hesitation that it would be his wife.”¹⁰⁵ Fears of “undue influence” of an “unelected individual”¹⁰⁶ became a common topic of reporters’ stories and a central campaign issue. A 1992 *New York Times* article stated, “Many people who are uncomfortable with the notion that she might act as an unelected co-president have been quick to revive the phrase Mrs. Clinton used early in the campaign: ‘If you vote for him, you get me.’”¹⁰⁷ Another *Times* story noted that “the couple’s ‘buy-one-get-one-free’

approach soured when voters began viewing Mrs. Clinton as a hardheaded careerist who dominated her mate and seemed contemptuous of ordinary housewives.”¹⁰⁸

According to other reports, the perception was “of a woman who wants power for herself,”¹⁰⁹ and campaign researchers discovered that ““more than Nancy Reagan, she is seen as running the show.””¹¹⁰ Such negative perceptions, tied to press framing of Clinton, prompted an image makeover that downplayed her role as presidential advisor and instead presented her in the more traditional first lady roles of “loyal helpmate and attentive mother.”¹¹¹

Scrutiny of Clinton’s advisory role continued when she assumed a policymaker role. The press noted that Clinton was going beyond the boundaries of first lady performance when she was appointed to “the most powerful official post ever assigned to a First Lady,” chairing a committee “to prepare legislation for overhauling the nation’s health-care system.”¹¹² Reporters highlighted the unusualness of a first lady venturing so far into traditionally masculine political territory. The *New York Times* reported, “Breaking decades of tradition, Hillary Rodham Clinton will set up shop in the West Wing of the White House, alongside the President’s senior staff members, where she will help formulate policy on health care and other domestic issues.”¹¹³ She made front-page news when she traveled to Capitol Hill for a “closed-door policy discussion with leaders from both parties.” Calling the visit a “vivid display of her clout,” the *New York Times* claimed that the trip, “extraordinary for a First Lady, was the latest manifestation of her influence” and that “on a symbolic level,” the meeting underscored the importance “of Mrs. Clinton within the power structure of Washington.”¹¹⁴ The language in these articles

underscored the boundary-violating aspects of Clinton's role. By tying her visits to her "influence" and "power" rather than framing them as a routine part of her position as a task force chair, journalists implied that her actions were atypical for a first lady. After the failure of health care reform, Clinton "retreated" from taking the lead in shaping policy, playing a "less public" role according to press reports.¹¹⁵ A 1997 article claimed that her "failed attempt" at reforming health care "taught" Clinton the limitations of the first lady position.¹¹⁶

In the wake of the critical press coverage of both Reagan and Clinton as political interlopers, their successors were often framed as avoiding advisory or policymaking roles. In an attempt to distance themselves from the criticism faced by their predecessors, both Barbara Bush and Laura Bush claimed to be uninvolved in their husband's work. A *Ladies' Home Journal* article, indirectly referencing Reagan, noted that Barbara Bush "does not wish to be seen as the power behind the throne. Her political instincts, she insists, are 'around zero.'"¹¹⁷ The *Washington Post* echoed that theme, claiming Bush "does not seek an active political or policy role."¹¹⁸ Stories about Laura Bush's disinterest in acting as a presidential advisor made direct references to Clinton. According to reporters, Laura Bush was "not involved in the mechanics of her husband's career in the mode of Hillary Clinton."¹¹⁹ The *New York Times* said, "Mrs. Bush made it clear that her interest was in helping him, not promoting herself, and that she was not offering voters two for the price of one." Bush claimed she was "'not that knowledgeable about most issues,'"¹²⁰ and as first lady "declared policy questions off limits."¹²¹

While these women did not generate the same level of criticism as their predecessors, journalists remained skeptical regarding first ladies' efforts to downplay their political influence. Barbara Bush's evasion of an advisory role was viewed by some journalists as a calculated attempt to avoid criticism. A *Ladies' Home Journal* article noted that Bush "won't even hint at substance in public. Some might call her self-imposed silence muzzling; to others it's simple wisdom."¹²² The *Washington Post* asserted that "behind the non-threatening white hair and wrinkles ticks the mind of a politically shrewd woman who choreographs her moves as carefully as her husband does his own,"¹²³ thus highlighting Bush's "hidden power." Reporters were quick to note occasional cracks in her façade. When she made an "off-the-cuff" remark on gun control in 1989 that was at odds with her husband's views, her press secretary announced she would "stop talking publicly about controversial issues."¹²⁴ However, she "made a sharp break with her practice of not speaking out on policy matters" when she told reporters during the 1992 campaign that abortion was "a personal thing" and should not be included in the GOP platform.¹²⁵ According to the *New York Times*, she quickly silenced herself and "retreated from the fuss she created, insisting that she had no place in policy-making."¹²⁶ This quote implied that Bush recognized her status as political interloper and retreated in order to quell criticism. Such coverage also indicated that journalists continued to be suspicious about the extent of her political interest and private influence.

The coverage of these women reflects Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's assertion that "presidential wives raise the more problematic issue of the relationship between women, *sexuality*, and power," a relationship that came under scrutiny during the

previous era.¹²⁷ A 1992 article echoed Campbell's view: "All First Ladies influence their husbands to some degree. . . . Voters can live with this influence, as long as it's relatively subtle and can fall under the rubric of a wife looking after her husband's interest."¹²⁸ For journalists, the Bush women usually fell safely under that rubric, whereas Reagan and Clinton were charged with overstepping such boundaries, evidencing a greater concern over the private power of first ladies during this era.

Concerning their social influence, the first ladies of this era concentrated their efforts on helping women and children, leading journalists to frame their advocacy almost exclusively as an extension of their role as mothers. Barbara Bush's support of numerous causes was framed as "noblesse oblige."¹²⁹ David S. Broder of the *Washington Post* said, "She comes from a tradition that says those who are favored with wealth and power thereby acquire reciprocal obligations to those who lack any advantages."¹³⁰ One article claimed that Bush "has always been noted for her lady bountiful, noblesse oblige attitude toward capital causes."¹³¹ The *Washington Post* stated in 1992 that, "for the last four years, every benefit has had Barbara Bush as an honorary chairman," recognizing the power of lending her name to cause.¹³² She demonstrated the "compassion" promoted by her husband's administration when she "cradled an infant, kissed a toddler and hugged an adult AIDS victim" at a hospice for AIDS-infected infants. An AIDS activist told the *Washington Post*, "'You can't imagine what one hug from the first lady is worth. . . . that's worth more than a thousand public service announcements.'"¹³³ Her primary cause was literacy, though, which reinforced the maternal aspects of her volunteerism.¹³⁴ Like her mother-in-law, Laura Bush devoted herself to literacy as well as other educational issues. In a story

about Bush's plans to recruit new teachers and promote early childhood learning, Ann Gerhart of the *Washington Post* called her "a high-profile cheerleader for public education" who could "back up her rhetoric with a remarkable talent for reading upside down while showing a picture book to students." She noted that Bush had "taken care to showcase herself as an informed supporter of her husband rather than a policy advocate."¹³⁵ Such gendering of Bush's advocacy, by both herself and through Gerhart's framing, depoliticized her efforts.

Advocacy efforts were used to help rehabilitate the public images of both Reagan and Clinton by containing their influence to women's issues. Reagan's "Just Say No" to drugs program aimed at children and teenagers¹³⁶ was credited with "bringing her popularity to an all-time high."¹³⁷ Following the failure of health care reform, Clinton's policymaking and advising were largely characterized as advocacy efforts on behalf of women and children, framing that helped to contain her power and limit her influence to gender-appropriate issues. In 2000, the *Ladies' Home Journal* listed "extending health care to children" and "helping to change the adoption and foster care system" as Clinton's principle advocacy accomplishments as first lady.¹³⁸ Clinton, as "the most traveled first lady in history,"¹³⁹ also acted as an advocate for women internationally. In a story about her 1997 tour of Africa, the *Washington Post* called her an "international feminist . . . urging 'solidarity' among women of the world,"¹⁴⁰ noting that "as in her other trips, she has convened round-table discussions at nearly every stop in Africa to talk with local women's leaders about the challenges facing them in their home countries, from family planning to education and economic advancement to domestic violence."¹⁴¹ She promoted the

same causes domestically, including family planning, early childhood education, and start-up aid for small businesses.¹⁴² James Bennet of the *New York Times* observed in 1997 that “while the White House may lump her various causes under the anodyne rubric of ‘children’s issues,’ Mrs. Clinton is still pursuing a far broader agenda of causes—including foreign development, immunization in the inner cities and expanding financial credit for women—than almost any predecessor in the undefined role of First Lady.”¹⁴³ By acting as advocates for women and children, Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Diane M. Blair argue that first ladies “helped to define the parameters of women’s political space” and in many ways “reified the nineteenth-century assumption that women’s political space was somehow different from men’s.”¹⁴⁴ Their more traditional gender performances also helped to diffuse press criticism of their advocacy.

Throughout this era, gender continued to define role performance in ways that increasingly constrained these women’s actions to a greater extent than their predecessors. It was as if the first lady position, particularly under Reagan and Clinton, had exceeded its limits in influence both privately (Reagan) and publicly (Clinton). Any exercise or perception of power, even in the private sphere, was scrutinized by journalists. The resulting coverage focused on conflicts, contrasts, and criticisms of the women who held the position and the first lady institution.

Exploring the Boundaries of First Ladies’ Gendered Celebrity

Throughout its history, the first lady institution has served as a site of contestation regarding women’s “proper” place. The women who held the position became powerful symbols of women’s roles and the first lady’s duties through the

practice of personification framing, evolving from public women to gendered celebrities to political activists. By treating first ladies as public figures functioning in the political sphere, their news coverage helped to normalize women's public participation and political efficacy. However, because their performances were judged in relation to the prevailing gender ideologies of their eras, their influence was consistently restricted to serving as role models for American women or champions of women's issues. Thus, the performance of the first lady position has often been viewed as tangential to women only instead of all citizens, furthering the assumption that women and women's issues remain less central to U.S. political culture. As Linda Witt, Karen M. Paget, and Glenna Matthews argue, "the press coverage of women in politics is an artifact of this country's age-old but unresolved debate over women citizen's proper roles versus 'proper women's' place."¹⁴⁵ By the end of the century, the performance of gender roles and the subsequent gendered performance of the first lady institution were the subject of a heated debate. Journalists, through their gendered framing of the first lady institution, helped create boundaries of empowerment and containment that marked the "proper" performance of the first lady position. Iconic first ladies and gendered prescriptions were used as boundary markers, delineating the elasticity and limitations of first lady performance. When a first lady was suspected of straying too far into the male political sphere, the press framed her as a *political interloper*, evidencing a discourse of containment regarding first ladies' political activities as well as the cultural fears over women's power and place within U.S. political culture.

Iconic First Ladies as Historical Boundary Markers

Journalists continued to compare and critique first ladies past and present as they sought to define the “proper” role of the contemporary first lady. Reporters increasingly looked to the legacy of the first lady institution in an effort to contextualize, albeit in a limited way, current coverage of president’s wives. In such stories, iconic first ladies, representing an amalgam of gender and role performance, functioned as boundary markers, delineating the historical limits of the gendered performance of the first lady position. These iconic first ladies were used by journalists to frame their contemporary counterparts, evidencing the historical extent and limits of gendered celebrity as well as the consequences of press framing.

Activist icons were often used by journalists to establish the boundaries of the first lady’s political influence, particularly in relation to their advisory role. For example, Gwen Ifill of the *New York Times* said in 1992, “The role of the President’s wife has always been a subject for debate, particularly during the years of such close Presidential confidantes as Abigail Adams, Eleanor Roosevelt, Rosalynn Carter and Nancy Reagan. But Mrs. Clinton’s much more publicly acknowledged influence has raised new questions.”¹⁴⁶ Because Clinton’s influence seemingly extended beyond her predecessors, she was viewed as exerting too much power. Reagan’s and Clinton’s political influence was often measured in comparison to Eleanor Roosevelt and Rosalynn Carter, who represented the extremes of the first lady’s advisory role. In terms of Reagan’s influence, one profile asserted, “Nancy Reagan is a modern political wife, far more involved in the political process than, say, Mamie Eisenhower was, but she should not be compared to Rosalynn Carter, a very active First Lady.”¹⁴⁷

A 1984 *New York Times* article by Dowd stated that Reagan was “careful not to appear too influential,” quoting an aide who said, ““She doesn’t want to come across as an Eleanor Roosevelt or a Rosalynn Carter.””¹⁴⁸ Yet, despite these efforts to distance herself from activist icons, Reagan was judged by journalists to be a more powerful “hidden hand” advisor in some respects than either Roosevelt or Carter, evidencing the anxieties over the first lady’s private power in the post-second wave period.

Because she overstepped the boundaries of first lady performance, journalists lumped Reagan in with activist icons Roosevelt and Carter in their coverage of Clinton. A 1992 *New York Times* article said that Reagan was remembered “as a behind-the-scenes manipulator who was the real power behind a pliant husband.”¹⁴⁹ In some articles, Reagan was mentioned in tandem with Carter, like a *Washington Post* story that referred to Reagan and Carter as “objects of continual controversy.”¹⁵⁰ Next to Reagan, Clinton was most frequently compared to Roosevelt, whom she routinely cited as one of the women she most admired.¹⁵¹ According to a *Washington Post* article, “many liberal women have elevated Hillary Clinton to Eleanor Roosevelt status.”¹⁵² Clinton frequently noted that, like herself, Roosevelt was criticized by the press even before she moved into the White House,¹⁵³ and said she often pondered what Roosevelt would do in certain situations.¹⁵⁴ In these stories, activist icons marked the extremes of a first lady’s influence, noting that such performances regularly generated controversy and criticism by being “too influential,” “very active,” or “the real power.” Rather than acting as positive models of first lady performance, the activist icons primarily served as cautionary tales regarding the

consequences of overstepping the boundaries, helping to create limitations on the political influence of the first lady advisory role.

Activist icons also served as contrasts to more traditional first ladies. Barbara Bush “cautioned reporters that she disliked comparisons to Eleanor Roosevelt, who was not as beloved in the Republican household where Barbara Bush was reared as in many other Depression-era homes.”¹⁵⁵ A *New York Times* profile of Bush claimed, “Unlike Nancy Reagan or Rosalynn Carter, she professes not to have much interest in her husband’s business.”¹⁵⁶ Clinton’s activism was used to frame Laura Bush as a “more traditional” first lady. Elaine Sciolino of the *New York Times* stated, “Mrs. Bush has made it clear that she will not be a policy-making first lady in the mold of Mrs. Clinton, an ambitious, outspoken, high-profile lawyer who alienated much of official Washington and many Americans with her determination to be a player on hot-button issues like health care.”¹⁵⁷ Such contrasts reassured readers that these first ladies had no plans to overstep the boundaries of their position as their activist predecessors did, evidencing the reification of such gendered restrictions that press coverage helped promulgate.

To assess current first ladies, journalists also used references to iconic political wives, who were remembered primarily for their more passive performance of the first lady position. *Ladies’ Home Journal* proclaimed Barbara Bush “the most popular first lady in years—arguably the most beloved since Bess Truman,”¹⁵⁸ an assessment echoed by first ladies scholar Betty Boyd Caroli, who told the *Washington Post*, “She reminds me of Bess Truman.”¹⁵⁹ A *New York Times* story likened Bush “to Jacqueline Kennedy for her skill at molding her public persona and for her upper-

class savoir-faire.”¹⁶⁰ Bush cited Pat Nixon as a role model, calling her ““courageous, loyal”” and ““down-to-earth.””¹⁶¹ These comparisons to more traditional political wives implied that Bush was personally disinterested in politics, which in turn contributed to her popularity. Similar framing was used with Laura Bush. According to a *New York Times* profile, “Some historians predict that the first lady she may come to resemble most is Mamie Eisenhower.” First ladies scholar Gil Troy claimed, ““Laura Bush is most like Mamie Eisenhower in that she will resolutely in public refuse to appear to be interested at all in wielding power in any way. Like Mamie, you’ll get that traditional, reassuring feminine presence.””¹⁶² These articles reinforced journalists’ framing of Barbara Bush and Laura Bush as “more traditional” first ladies, whose performance of the first lady position did not court controversy because it remained safely within gendered boundaries. Within this context, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Nixon were remembered for distancing themselves from politics, a major shift from the previous era of feminist and first lady activism, when these women were judged more critically for their *lack* of political activity.

First lady as fashion icon frequently appeared as a frame in discussions of the first lady’s cultural influence. When it came to fashion, reporters repeatedly measured Reagan against Jacqueline Kennedy’s memory. The *New York Times* stated that “no one could compete with Mrs. Kennedy for stylishness until Mrs. Reagan came along with her high-fashion wardrobe.”¹⁶³ A *Washington Post* article surmised that “not since Jacqueline Kennedy have a first lady’s clothes, figure, friends, family life and age aroused such interest.”¹⁶⁴ The *Ladies’ Home Journal* declared, “Her taste and style have the fashion industry declaring that this First Lady is doing more for

American clothing than anybody since Jacqueline Kennedy.”¹⁶⁵ Through such favorable comparisons to Kennedy, reporters elevated Reagan to fashion icon status; just as Kennedy symbolized “the exciting early sixties,” Reagan represented “the high-living eighties.”¹⁶⁶ As the *Washington Post* asserted, Reagan “symbolized conspicuous affluence,”¹⁶⁷ providing journalists with a real-life version of the opulence represented in television shows like *Dynasty*. According to a story about the 1981 inaugural, “Limousines, white tie and \$10,000 ball gowns are in . . . as Nancy Reagan sweeps from fete to fete in a glittering full-length Maximilian mink.”¹⁶⁸

However, Reagan also faced criticism for her extravagant tastes.¹⁶⁹ The *New York Times* claimed in 1981 that Reagan was “being hailed by some as a glamorous paragon of chic and criticized by others for exercising her opulent tastes in an economy that is inflicting hardship on so many.”¹⁷⁰ One article pointed out Reagan’s coverage was reminiscent of the criticism Kennedy faced for reportedly “spending thousands of dollars on clothing from Paris designers,” although critiques of Reagan were much more consistent, and negative, than Kennedy’s.¹⁷¹ For journalists, Reagan violated the boundaries of gendered celebrity by being too out of touch with the average woman, a critique also leveled at times against Kennedy. Because Reagan’s extravagant tastes were difficult to emulate, she thus failed to serve the first lady’s function as a role model for American women, further revealing the ways in which first lady iconicity worked to contain contemporary performances of first lady roles.

During this era, journalists used iconic first ladies to mark the boundaries of the gendered celebrity of the first lady. As in the previous era, Eleanor Roosevelt and Jacqueline Kennedy anchored the extremes of first lady celebrity and ideological

performance, with Roosevelt representing the political influence of activist icons and Kennedy signifying the cultural influence of fashion icons. While Barbara Bush and Laura Bush remained safely within the boundary markers, Reagan and Clinton were frequently framed as trespassing such boundaries, either by being too political or too extravagant. Such framing delineated historical boundaries of gender performance that were used by reporters to critique current gendered performances of contemporary first ladies.

Boundaries of Empowerment and Containment

The boundaries of gender and role performance constructed and reified by media framing have simultaneously empowered and contained the women who have held the first lady position. As Winfield claims, “For more than two hundred years, the American media have both judged and relayed societal expectations about what is acceptable or not acceptable behavior for a first lady.”¹⁷² By defining what was deemed a proper or improper performance of the first lady position, journalists created many of the invisible boundaries that first ladies were subsequently accused of trespassing.

The age-old question of women’s “proper” sphere of influence was still a hot topic in the 1990s. Women’s roles, in families, in the workforce, and in politics, were a central issue of the 1992 campaign. As Judy Mann of the *Washington Post* put it, “The domestic debate in this year’s election is going to be about the proper role of women in society. This is why Hillary Clinton is such a flashpoint. It is why Barbara Bush is not.”¹⁷³ A *Washington Post Magazine* article by Marjorie Williams contended that the 1992 election represented “a symbolic referendum on all America’s

conflicted feelings about feminism, family and child-rearing,” claiming that “both the warring campaigns and the news media have found these four women irresistible as manipulable symbols of some of the most powerful themes in Americans’ lives.”¹⁷⁴ According to the *New York Times*, the strategy was “to paint Mrs. Clinton as a radical feminist, in contrast with her Republican counterparts: Barbara Bush, quintessential grandmother, and Marilyn Quayle, who, like Mrs. Clinton, is a lawyer but has put aside her own career to support her husband’s.”¹⁷⁵ Mann argued that the two major parties were offering opposing images of women’s place, with the Democrats “welcoming women into the public sphere and starring them as candidates who wield power on behalf of other women,” and the Republicans “playing the Barbara card, playing to the themes of family values and family protection, more code words for pushing women out of the public sphere and enshrining them in the private sphere where they can shine as nurturers, mothers, and support players.”¹⁷⁶ Such constructions promoted the domestic empowerment of women over private family matters, evidencing the legacy of ideologies like true womanhood and republican motherhood, yet contained women’s influence to the home, relegating women to the fringes of political culture and implying that women’s “proper” place was still the home. The resulting “family values” debate was primarily framed as a competition between the wives.

When “family values” took center stage as a campaign issue in 1992, so too did the more “traditional” candidates’ wives, who were empowered by strategists, pundits, and the press as embodiments of their husbands’ “family values.” Barbara Bush was so frequently referred to as her husband’s “secret weapon”¹⁷⁷ that one story

called her the “un-secret weapon” and “the worst-kept secret of the 1992 campaign.”¹⁷⁸ According to the *New York Times*, “Her political mettle, backed by favorability ratings in public opinion polls that are nearly three times higher than her husband’s, scares Democrats.”¹⁷⁹ Both the traditionalist Bush and new traditionalist Marilyn Quayle were featured speakers at the 1992 Republican National Convention. The *Washington Post* reported, “Barbara Bush and her family values message—both in carefully chosen words and unmistakable image—have made it to center stage this year, casting her in a more visible campaign role than she has ever played before.”¹⁸⁰ The Republicans thus pitted Bush’s popular grandmotherly image against the feminist careerism of Clinton, framing Bush with a rhetoric of familial and thus political empowerment.

In fact, Clinton was consigned to the background at the Democratic convention, “listening to her husband speak and wearing the traditional gaze of the political spouse.”¹⁸¹ As Anna Quindlen noted in a *New York Times* editorial, Clinton would have caused “an uproar” if she had taken the podium at the DNC, “People would have said she was ambitious and power mad.”¹⁸² The “retro-mom and retro-granny combo”¹⁸³ of Quayle and Bush avoided such criticism, according to Mann, because “[u]nlike Hillary Clinton, Barbara Bush and Marilyn Quayle are support players. Hillary Clinton is a player, and there’s the rub.”¹⁸⁴ Thus, like many of their predecessors, traditional gender framing was used to justify Bush and Quayle’s political participation, whereas the presumed interloper status of Clinton was used as a justification for her political containment. Catherine Manegold of the *New York Times* claimed that “after hailing Hillary Clinton as a model new woman able to

balance a family and a thriving law practice, Democrats retreated in the face of stinging criticism” and changed Clinton’s image to “a presumably kinder, quieter wife and mother who beams incessantly at her man.”¹⁸⁵ Similarly, a *Times* editorial said, “She’s softened her hair, wardrobe and makeup, and even seems to have abandoned her yuppie headband—all with the none-too-subtle intent of making her appear more maternal, domestic, average, likeable.”¹⁸⁶ Hence, Clinton was put in her “proper (gendered) place” and her alleged quest for personal power was contained, at least for the moment. However, the press remained suspicious of Clinton and viewed her image makeover as a possible ruse to mask her political ambitions.

As personifications of gender ideologies, these women were pitted against each other, a point made by several female journalists. Manegold concluded that the result was little more than a “political catfight” pitting “‘good mom’ versus ‘bad mom’” while ignoring issues.¹⁸⁷ Similar comments were made by Amy E. Schwartz of the *Washington Post*, who argued that both the campaign and the media were “pitting women against one another, Marilyn vs. Hillary, Barbara vs. Hillary, even, in some earlier coverage, Tipper vs. Hillary—is an old-fashioned way to replace a straightforward policy fight with a presumably more entertaining catfight.” These quotes support Douglas’ contention that “the catfight remains an extremely popular way for the news media to represent women’s struggles for equality and power.”¹⁸⁸ According to Schwartz, “The notion that women owe the family some specific amount, which can be measured and therefore judged, is intertwined with the idea that one woman can be contrasted to another in a good girl/bad girl scenario.” She concluded that “there is something morally disgusting about the spectacle of

politicians, candidates, and commentators sitting around and calibrating the exact amount of personal sacrifice by women . . . that qualifies as upholding ‘family values,’ and damning certain women’s self-sacrifice or self-subordination as inadequate.”¹⁸⁹ The result, as Williams observed, was that “our conversation about women’s responsibilities and women’s lives is artificially polarized by the two options of professional self-fulfillment and children”¹⁹⁰ rather than reflecting the complexities of women’s lives. While these female journalists pointed out how the “catfight” frame served to politically contain and devalue these women and the family values debate, they failed to note that many of the articles that pitted these women against each other were written by women or appeared in women’s publications, thus making women complicit in creating containment boundaries.

A result of the debate over the “proper” roles of women and first ladies was a series of unattainable ideals and a no-win situation. Ann Gerhart, in a *Washington Post* profile of Bush, pointed out the tendency of journalists to create such “either-or” double binds, “In this Age of Celebrity, how we love to stereotype public personalities to fit our mood of the moment. We are so eager to take all of the ‘ands’ of a complex personality and replace every single one with an ‘or.’” Gerhart offered the example of Clinton, who “stars as the Neo Feminazi Witch or the Fully Actualized Modern Female, depending on which type is doing the typing.”¹⁹¹ In the case of Laura Bush, Gerhart claimed that reporters were obsessed with questions like, “Is Laura Bush a ‘50s retro wife? Or a thoroughly modern woman? Whatever that means. Is she publicly genteel and privately tart? Is she a stealth adviser, influential behind the scenes, or a dutiful helpmate, fading into the background?”¹⁹² Similar

comments were made in a 1992 story about Barbara Bush. Previewing her convention speech, a *Washington Post* article asked “which Barbara Bush will be speaking? The devoted wife, loving mother, down-to-earth grandmother. . . . Or the cagey political partner, who will capitalize on her image as the most popular first lady in decades, to keep her man in the White House?”¹⁹³ According to the *Washington Post*’s Sally Quinn, Reagan “got criticized no matter what she did. She played the adoring, supportive wife and got killed for it—especially for ‘the Gaze.’”¹⁹⁴ Such frames worked to contain the influence of first ladies, but because the boundaries of gendered performance were so confining, the result was a no-win situation, not for just first ladies, but for all women.

Female journalists, in particular, recognized that unrealistic expectations for performing the first lady role created double binds, many of which developed in the previous area as a reaction to the activist first ladies. Quinn concluded “it is a thankless and confusing role—you are damned if you do and damned if you don’t. The First Lady (the title itself is hopelessly outdated) has always been in limbo, in a twilight zone.”¹⁹⁵ Joyce Purnick asserted in a 1992 *New York Times* editorial, “Even as the public learns to accept flawed candidates, it persists in demanding some idealized, elusive perfection from political wives. And just whose perfection is it anyway?” This ideal, according to Purnick, forces first ladies to walk a tightrope between “too much” and “not enough,” resulting in criticism stemming from such double binds: “Eleanor Roosevelt was too independent. Jacqueline Kennedy too passive. Nancy Reagan too controlling. Barbara Bush too gray. Hillary Clinton . . . too independent.” Purnick wondered “what it is in the American psyche that wants its

political wives to be Stepford Wives, fantasy femininity?”¹⁹⁶ Quindlen made a similar observation, noting that “the remarkable thing about how long the fantasy of the adoring and apolitical First Lady has endured is how few occupants of the job have conformed to it.”¹⁹⁷ Marjorie Williams urged journalists, politicians, and the public to put an “end to the phony family politics that now turn political wives into Rorschach images” and “role models” when their lives are actually “fantastically distorted by the practice of politics.”¹⁹⁸ By pointing out the boundaries containing the performance of the first lady, these women journalists, like many of their predecessors, helped defend the political activities of first ladies. Yet they also reified those boundaries by normalizing the first lady role as a no-win situation, particularly by referencing the iconic, and thus reductionist, first ladies to bolster their claims.

Consequences of Violating the Boundaries: The Case of Hillary Rodham Clinton

While many journalists recognized the double binds that complicated the performance of the first lady position, the press continued to participate in the containment of first ladies, particularly those who sought to cross those boundaries constraining the first lady position. The coverage of Clinton is an example of the consequences faced by a first lady who, as a political interloper, refused to be contained by gender prescriptions, historical standards, or media frames.

Of the four women in the 1992 race, Clinton “carried the biggest share of the symbolic weight,”¹⁹⁹ becoming a critical site of contestation over women’s place and power at the end of the twentieth century. In 1992, *Ladies’ Home Journal* proclaimed, “Hillary is the campaign.”²⁰⁰ Columnist Ellen Goodman said the “Hillary Watch” was actually “a conversation about social and generational issues. It fits into the ‘Year of

the Woman' and the year of the baby boom generation taking power.'"²⁰¹ In a front page *Washington Post* story from 1992, Howard Kurtz observed, "Hillary Clinton has become a blank canvas upon which ideologically inclined authors paint their brightest hopes and darkest fears."²⁰² Similarly, the *Post's* Martha Sherrill claimed that Clinton had come to "signify much more" for American women, "Women all over—Republicans, Democrats, feminists, anti-feminists—have endless opinions about what she should be."²⁰³ Journalists also made endless observations regarding what Clinton should be. Quindlen noted that Clinton was "a lightening rod for the mixed emotions we have about work and motherhood, dreams and accommodation, smart women and men's worlds."²⁰⁴ Frank Rich of the *New York Times* argued that reactions to Clinton dramatized "how many Americans, and not just men, are still flummoxed by women occupying traditionally male turf. So much for three decades of 'consciousness-raising.'"²⁰⁵ Quindlen surmised that "so much of the discussion has not been about her at all. It has been about how we feel about smart women, professional women, new women."²⁰⁶ Clinton's symbolic importance as a personification of contemporary womanhood positioned her, according to the press, as "one of the most controversial women of our time," "one of the [Democratic] party's most polarizing figures" and a "cultural lightening rod" for criticism on a host of subjects.²⁰⁷

Because of her ideological significance, conservative critics constructed Clinton as a woman who refused to be contained, an image that was perpetuated by the media as they repeatedly referenced such negative constructions, which countered expectations of the first *lady*. According to a 1992 *Ladies' Home Journal* profile, Clinton's critics saw her as a "tactlessly outspoken, driven woman who is using her

husband as a surrogate for her own ambition.”²⁰⁸ One article reported that some voters found Clinton “pushy, strident, too independent”²⁰⁹ while another said she “was seen as tough, aggressive, angry, humorless, power hungry.”²¹⁰ These descriptions suggested that a woman’s ambition, when unchecked, was a threat. Witt, Paget, and Matthews claim that Clinton inadvertently “played into one of the conceptual frames by which news of women is defined: She confirmed male fears of a too-powerful woman who doesn’t mind her proper place.”²¹¹ As such, Clinton was framed as a political interloper who sought to advance into the political realm by way of the bedroom.

In an effort to contain Clinton, conservative critics used a series of phrases, often repeated in the press, aimed at stigmatizing Clinton. Popular descriptors included “a radical feminist,” “a hard-edged career woman,” “a feminist shrew,” “the Yuppie Wife from Hell,” “Lady Macbeth” and both “the Evita Peron” and “the Winnie Mandela of American politics.”²¹² These negative monikers created by conservatives dominated media coverage of Clinton. According to the *New York Times*’s Robin Toner, “at least 20 articles in major publications this year involved some comparison between Mrs. Clinton and a grim role model for political wives: Lady Macbeth.”²¹³ Such negative constructions of Clinton as public woman was reminiscent of press framing from the earliest decades of this country’s history, when presidents’ wives like Dolley Madison and Rachel Jackson were labeled “Jezebels.”²¹⁴ In Clinton’s case, “Lady Macbeth” replaced “Jezebel” as the epitaph for a political wife who sought to use her husband to achieve her own ends as a public woman. Like the biblical Jezebel, Lady Macbeth exercised “undue influence” on her husband, leading

to his downfall.²¹⁵ By casting Clinton as a modern-day Lady Macbeth, critics constructed her as a political interloper to be feared for her refusal to be contained as well as for the potential consequences of women's unchecked power in the male political reserve.

According to journalists, Clinton's behavior was aberrant because she failed to show the reluctance expected of first ladies by admitting, and even relishing, her power. As Faludi noted, "what galls her detractors isn't so much that she is independent—but that she *enjoys* it."²¹⁶ Robert Pear of the *New York Times* claimed, "Presidents' wives have always exercised influence and power, but they have often been reluctant, in their public comments, to acknowledge their full scope, for fear of offending voters." Similarly, James Bennet, also of the *Times*, asserted that "Some of her allies believe that Mrs. Clinton's public image suffered from her early honesty about her influence. Previous First Ladies, they argue, cannily downplayed their influence."²¹⁷ Such assessments are supported by the findings of this study. Faludi noted that the problem with Clinton was that she was acting as a "public woman" without the requisite modesty usually used to justify women's public activity. Echoing Matthew's work on public womanhood, Faludi explained, "Enthusiastic activism is cast in the same dim light as sexual activity. Indeed, the phrase 'public woman' has traditionally meant a prostitute; the lady of the evening and the lady of social advocacy often seem interchangeable in society's eyes." Clinton presented herself as "an independent woman who has happily and openly ventured into the stream of public life"²¹⁸ and, as noted above, was met with sexually-charged comparisons to real and fictional "Jezebels" who were seen as political interlopers.²¹⁹

Clinton's critics were successful, to an extent, in containing her political influence and silencing her. After undergoing an "image makeover" prior to the 1992 Democratic National Convention in order to quell criticism, the "new Hillary" was presented as a "more traditional"²²⁰ political wife. As the *New York Times* observed, "The campaign dismissed any suggestion of independence on her part and presented her to voters as something closer to a cookie-baking mom than the candidate's chief advisor."²²¹ The campaign went as far as silencing Clinton at the convention by denying her a speaking role. Another article from 1992 claimed that Clinton's "potential White House role has been reduced to 'a voice for children,'"²²² thus containing her influence to traditionally maternal issues. During the 1996 race, Clinton "remained on the fringes of the race, avoiding overly partisan comments and presenting herself as a respectful wife, a devoted mother," which was attributed to another "makeover."²²³ One story reported that "her tone of voice was compassionate, nurturing" and "any talk of programs and policies was attributed solely to 'the President' or 'my husband.'"²²⁴ The *Washington Post* observed that, in the Democrat's efforts to reclaim "family values" in 1996,²²⁵ Clinton was cast as "the concerned mom insisting family issues should be above the crass considerations of politics. Her role allows her to speak to women voters without annoying men and without stepping on the message of her husband."²²⁶ Following the failed attempts to reform health care, Clinton largely retreated from policymaking efforts. A 1997 *New York Times* article stated, "Scorched by the fallout after Mrs. Clinton's leadership in seeking universal health care coverage, the White House has labored to play down her influence, describing a conversion from policy-maker to speech-maker, helpmate, and

goodwill ambassador.”²²⁷ While the news media was not alone in containing Clinton, press frames contributed to and perpetuated her containment. Clinton largely avoided the press following the health care initiative. According to one report, she “felt singled by encounters with the news media and largely eschewed them in recent years.”²²⁸

Despite her efforts to conform to the mediated boundaries of the first lady position, the images of Clinton as a politically ambitious woman who refused to be contained continually reappeared in the press throughout first lady tenure. When she ran for Senate in 2000, many stories had a “told-you-so” tone, justifying their framing of Clinton as a political interloper. As one editorial noted, “We should know from observing Hillary Clinton that a woman who has her own fierce ambitions cannot easily give up her personality to a subservient role. That particular game of pretend is up.”²²⁹ That same year saw the return of a “more traditional” first lady to the White House, one who did not seek to challenge the boundaries containing the gendered performance of the first lady position.

Conclusion

A 2000 *New York Times* editorial posed the question, “Does it still make sense to have a first lady who is not hired, elected or paid by anyone, but is treated like knockoff royalty and held to archaic standards of behavior?”²³⁰ Given the press coverage of the last twenty years, the question is relevant. As more women run for political office and have careers of their own, reporters increasingly question what to make of political wives who garner power through marriage yet play an important role in a two-person career like politics. Journalists themselves are facing a double bind: how to cover a position that is both traditional *and* nontraditional. This would

force them to abandon the false dichotomies and competitive frames that make for entertaining and easy-to-write stories. It would also require them to rethink the boundaries of performance and containment they have helped to create and sustain.

Journalists' use of gender framing in this era limited representations of gender performance. The conflicting gender ideologies of feminism and traditionalism were frequently juxtaposed with political wives personifying one or the other, a reductive and simplistic form of framing that ignored the complexities of gender performance and first ladies' lives. For example, Barbara Bush told *McCall's* in 1992, "'You know, I don't sit home and bake cookies all day long. I'm a little tired of that [impression].'"²³¹ While coverage generally praised traditionalism, some journalists were critical of this return to constructions of women they viewed as constraining and limited. One author concluded that Clinton, "and not someone like Barbara Bush, truly represents the majority of American women today."²³² Thus, these women ended up in a no-win situation, constantly facing both praise and criticism.

Such gendered framing carried over into discussions of the first lady role. When these women acted as helpmates and advocated causes benefiting women and children, they were deemed to be acting within the "proper" boundaries of first lady performance and their coverage was more positive, often reflecting the domestic empowerment of previous eras. However, when first ladies were perceived to have too much power, either in public like Clinton or in private like Reagan, their coverage was critical. Both Reagan and Clinton represented political interlopers who abused the power of the position, whether by acting as the "power behind the throne" or by embodying personal political ambition like Lady Macbeth.

Hence, the framing of the first lady institution from 1980-2001 focused largely on the gender debate over the “proper” place and power of women in general and the first lady in particular. The culmination of over two hundred years of gendered framing was the creation of boundaries that served to alternately define, empower, and contain the gendered performance and political influence of the first lady position. Iconic first ladies were used by journalists to mark the historical boundaries of first lady performances, helping to naturalize the limitations for first ladies. These same boundaries were subsequently used to define proper comportment for contemporary first ladies. The women who embraced domesticity were pitted against political interlopers like Clinton. The “traditional” wives were allowed access to one of the most exclusive political arenas, the convention floor, precisely because they served as symbols of women’s place and promptly retreated to the home once the campaign ended. In contrast, the framing of Clinton as a political interloper functioned as a rhetoric of containment in relation to her political influence by implying she was someone to be feared, shamed, and silenced. Thus, at the end of the century, journalists were still pondering the “proper” place of women and the “proper” role of the first lady, coming no closer to a resolution than their predecessors, yet still using many of the same frames rooted in the gendered prescriptions of the early nineteenth-century to assess the performance of the first lady position.

Afterword

A recent *Washington Post* story on Laura Bush offered the following observation regarding media coverage of first ladies, “First ladies seem to be publicly defined in relation to one another. Is a first lady or a prospective first lady like Jackie Kennedy or Nancy Reagan? It’s like descriptions of hail—is it the size of a marble or a golf ball?—as if first ladies exist as some kind of environmental phenomenon that come in a handful of predetermined sizes.” According to the story, Bush believes that “the American public actually has broad and nuanced perceptions of first ladies. But the media are inclined to use a shorthand. ‘It’s easier to put people in a box, let it be either/or.’” Despite pointing out the limitations of media framing, this article used the same framing formula, focusing on the differences between Bush and Teresa Heinz Kerry right down to the headline that claims, “On the Campaign Trail, Laura Bush is 180 Degrees from Teresa Kerry.”¹ While many aspects of media coverage have changed since a magazine offered “A Comparison” of Ida McKinley and Mary Bryan in 1900, there are still some striking similarities, particularly when it comes to the gendered framing of the first lady institution.²

This project examines the ways that journalists framed stories about the first lady institution throughout the twentieth century and assesses specific implications of such framing practices. This process was necessarily selective and interpretive, given the scope of the study and sheer wealth of press coverage devoted to first ladies. As I analyzed the articles, I was particularly sensitive to cultural patterns and recurring frames that shaped first lady coverage throughout the twentieth century, especially the ways in which coverage of the first lady institution reflected the intersection of

gender, publicity, and power within each historical era. Through the journalistic practice of personification framing, first ladies served as sites of ideological contestation over women's roles as represented through the gendered coverage of the first lady position. First ladies were routinely positioned by the press as role models for American women, resulting in the emergence of first ladies as public women, gendered celebrities, political activists, and political interlopers in various eras. Such publicity made first ladies some of the earliest, and most visible, public women, helping to legitimize women's political activity and influence. However, while their status as public women and gendered celebrities resulted in both access to and influence within U.S. political culture, first ladies remained on the fringes, with their influence largely limited to domestic matters and women's issues. And when their influence trespassed too far into the male political reserve, the coverage exhibited a rhetoric of containment that suggests the political activities of certain first ladies violated the gendered boundaries that the press helped erect. As I review the contributions of this study, I detail five key implications that emerge from my analysis of the press and its framing of the first lady institution throughout the twentieth century. In the process, I will also assess the implications' applicability to the 2004 campaign coverage of Laura Bush and Teresa Heinz Kerry.³

Personification Framing: First Ladies as the Embodiment of Gender Ideologies

First, my analysis identifies and names the journalistic practice of *personification framing*, in which an individual is positioned as the embodiment of an ideological performance, thus rendering the complexities of that performance quickly and easily comprehensible. Framing first ladies as personifications of the dominant

and competing gender ideologies reflects the contestation over women's roles within the limited narrative framework of a single story. Examining the ways in which first ladies function as embodiments of gender ideologies reveals how media texts serve as sites of cultural conflict over women and politics.

The gender ideologies that compete to define American womanhood are based, in some way, on the concept of separate spheres. Tensions exist between ideologies that promote the domestic sphere as women's primary place and those that extend women's roles into the public and political spheres. True womanhood, a Victorian era ideal that dominated gender prescriptions at the turn of the twentieth century, prized women's domesticity and viewed the home as women's proper place. Throughout the century, true womanhood's focus on domesticity continued to influence gender prescriptions, serving as the basis for the domestic ideal of the Cold War homemaker as well new traditionalism's "return to the home." Even feminism, with its call for expanded rights for women, at times reflected the tenets of true womanhood. Early twentieth-century social feminism and the ideology of the new woman shared the true woman's belief in women's moral superiority; they used such expediency arguments to justify women's social reform and political activities as a necessary extension of their domestic roles. Similarly, the ideology of republican motherhood validated women's civic participation and was frequently used to frame women's volunteerism. Political activism, though, was the hallmark of second-wave feminism as the women's liberation movement sought to improve women's political, economic, and legal standing within U.S. culture. The feminist mantra "the personal is political," with roots in the post-World War II era, helped to justify women's

empowerment by blurring the boundaries between the private and public spheres. Many women throughout the years, first ladies in particular, found themselves balancing their domestic duties with their growing roles outside the home, prompting the notion of the “superwoman” who successfully moved between the private and public spheres.

The press coverage of first ladies reflected the competing gender ideologies of their eras, often symbolizing both traditional and modern ideals of womanhood, thus serving as a site of contestation over women’s roles. While Ida McKinley and Edith Roosevelt personified true womanhood at the turn of the twentieth century, their modern-era successors were viewed as balancing the domesticity of true womanhood with the civic engagement of the new woman and republican motherhood. However, because public women were still viewed as suspect, the increased political activity of first ladies sometimes raised questions. For journalists, gender ideologies helped to explain women’s participation in social and political reform. The maternalism of social feminism and republican motherhood, for example, helped to justify the advocacy efforts of Ellen Axson Wilson, Florence Harding, and Eleanor Roosevelt. By characterizing their activities as extensions of their roles as wives and mothers, press framing aided in quelling criticism of first ladies’ political activities and helped to normalize women’s presence, albeit limited, in the political sphere. The locus of women’s political power shifted primarily to the private sphere during the postwar period. Bess Truman, Mamie Eisenhower, Jacqueline Kennedy, and Pat Nixon all personified the domestic ideal of women as homemakers, helpmates, and Cold War consumers. Even Roosevelt’s efforts were often constructed as extensions of the

home. Such framing imbued women's roles with a sense of domestic empowerment while simultaneously containing women's political influence to matters concerning home and family.

By the time Nixon became first lady, the ideals of second-wave feminism were influencing press discussions of women's roles and the Cold War domestic ideal was widely derided as the "feminine mystique." As such, Nixon was criticized as a throwback to the previous era, while her counterparts were framed as contemporary women who, like many of their modern-era predecessors, embraced the political activism and independence promoted by second-wave feminism without rejecting their roles as wives and mothers. The adversarial press culture that flourished during this era also led journalists to critique the activism of Lady Bird Johnson, Betty Ford, and Rosalynn Carter, questioning women's growing political influence. Such ambivalent coverage created double binds by simultaneously praising and critiquing first ladies' political influence, framing some first ladies as too political and others, like Nixon, as not political enough.

The backlash against second-wave feminism at the end of the twentieth century perpetuated the double binds used to critique first ladies' performance of gender. This period saw a return to the domestic ideal, as embodied by Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, and Laura Bush, which was pitted by the press against second-wave feminism as personified by Hillary Rodham Clinton. Such framing created a sense of competition between these women that reflected the larger cultural debate over women's roles. While personification framing was able to capture the contention over women's roles in various eras, such framing reduced the complexities

of women's lives by relying on gender ideologies as short-cuts that often oversimplified discussions of gender performance.

The contestation over women's roles continues in the current postfeminist climate, with new traditionalist Laura Bush playing the more domestic role of the supportive political wife, pitted against feminist Teresa Heinz Kerry, who is often framed as a more independent—and controversial—political player. As Ginia Bellafante of the *New York Times* explains, “Another battle of sorts has intensified following the Democratic National Convention—this one over the many contrasts in taste and appearance and comportment between the potential first ladies. It is a pageant that many might prefer did not exist, but which nonetheless occupies a corner of voters' minds.”⁴ In news reports, Bush is routinely framed as “a calm, loving helpmate and mother.”⁵ According to the *New York Times*, “Campaign strategists . . . are putting Mrs. Bush forward as a model wife and traditional first lady who is a Republican antidote to Mrs. Heinz Kerry.”⁶ A *New York Times* editorial claimed that even President Bush, in joking that the best reason to vote for him was to keep his wife in the White House, was “pushing the comparison between Mrs. Bush, a political spouse in the traditional model, and Mrs. Kerry, the unconventional widow-heiress.”⁷ These stories reflect the competitive framing that has characterized coverage in the postfeminist era and represent a limitation of personification framing, which portrays women as the embodiments of contrasting gender ideologies.

Journalists' descriptions of Kerry help to frame her as an unconventional political wife. Kerry has been referred to by journalists as “eccentric,” “odd,” “kooky,” “unique,” “authentic,” “strong-willed,” and “imperious.”⁸ Kerry is most

often described as “outspoken” and “unscripted,”⁹ characteristics that have drawn both praise and criticism. Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times* proclaimed, “She’s unlike any other political wife I’ve ever seen—unscripted and ready to do as she likes, in her intriguing, world-weary way.”¹⁰ In a *New York Times* profile, Jodie Wilgoren said that Kerry “says what she thinks, when she thinks it.” Wilgoren highlighted the unusualness of such behavior, noting that Kerry “goes beyond the typical spousal cheerleader to give longer, freewheeling remarks” at campaign rallies and freely speaks on policy issues, “sounding more candidate than companion.”¹¹ Following Kerry’s speech at the Democratic National Convention, Evelyn Nieves of the *Washington Post* asserted that, “although she did not use the word, she defined herself as a feminist.” Kerry told the crowd, “My right to speak my mind, to have a voice, to be what some have called ‘opinionated,’ is a right that I deeply and profoundly cherish,” expressing her hope that one day women, “instead of being labeled opinionated will be called smart and well-informed—just like men.”¹² Joyce Purnick of the *New York Times*, also pointing to Kerry’s convention comments, asserted that her lack of “patience for Stepford-like pretense” was not likely to “fly with an electorate that admires the modest Laura Bush.”¹³ This comment again pits these women against each other and reinforces their personification of competing ideals of American womanhood.

The practice of personification framing continues to use gender ideologies to frame political women, with the conflict between ideologies often constructed as a clash between the women embodying these ideals. The double binds characterizing such coverage often results in a no-win situation for these women. For speaking out

and asserting her independence, Kerry is alternately lauded as a feminist and condemned for being too outspoken, gendered framing that results in the age-old double bind constraining women's public speech. Likewise, while Bush's modesty is sometimes extolled, her more traditional performance of the political spouse role is also criticized at times for being too submissive. Through such framing, journalists help to define the gendered boundaries that influence the coverage of first lady role performances.

News Frames as Boundaries of Empowerment and Containment

The second implication of this analysis is related to the role of press framing in depicting the "proper" performances of the first lady institution. By reporting on the various duties of first ladies, journalists legitimize those roles as part of the first lady institution. Stories about the increasing public and political activities of presidents' wives helped to expand the boundaries of first lady performance, positioning first ladies as public women, gendered celebrities, and political activists, all of which empowered women as citizens to varying degrees.

As public women and gendered celebrities, the press positions first ladies as role models for American women, hence the empowerment of their gendered celebrity says something about women's status in U.S. political culture. Gendered celebrity and its requisite press coverage made many first ladies prominent public figures in their own right, placing them at the center of women's public culture. Some first ladies represented the domestic empowerment of women, particularly as consumers. Both Florence Harding and Eleanor Roosevelt promoted women's consumerism as an act of citizenship. Other first ladies, like Mamie Eisenhower,

Jacqueline Kennedy, and Nancy Reagan, endorsed Cold War consumption through their personal style, which American women were encouraged to emulate by the press. First ladies have also used their status as celebrities and political activists to work on behalf of issues impacting women and children. Ellen Axson Wilson, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Lady Bird Johnson all promoted housing reform in Washington, D.C. Betty Ford's candor regarding her personal battle with breast cancer helped to alleviate the stigma associated with the disease. Both Barbara Bush and Laura Bush promoted literacy and educational programs. Hillary Rodham Clinton worked not only to reform health care, but also the foster care and adoption systems in the United States. By lending their names to causes and advocating social reform, first ladies expanded upon the tradition of upper-class women's volunteerism. Coverage of first ladies' public activities helped to normalize women's place in the public sphere, yet also worked to establish boundaries that contained women's political influence to domestic matters.

Problems existed, though, when first ladies overstepped these boundaries; the result was the framing of these women as political interlopers, which functions as a rhetoric of containment with visible results in certain cases. Rosalynn Carter, for example, stopped releasing information regarding her lobbying efforts on behalf of the Equal Rights Amendment after being accused by ERA opponents of overstepping the boundaries of first lady political influence. Nancy Reagan repeatedly refuted claims that she wielded hidden-hand influence over her husband during his tenure, only admitting to the press the extent of her influence as she prepared to leave the White House. Barbara Bush publicly denied having interest in political matters; when

she violated the boundaries by speaking out on issues, she quickly censured herself, claiming that her personal opinions were not of political importance. Most strikingly, Hillary Rodham Clinton underwent an “image makeover” during the 1992 campaign, taking on the more traditional role of helpmate in order to counter criticism that she was a political interloper whose personal political ambitions included serving as “co-president,” framing that dominated her press coverage. All of these first ladies were charged at some point with being “the power behind the throne,” a sexualized discourse that has long been used to critique and contain women’s political influence. Thus, gendered media frames function alternately as boundaries of empowerment and containment, giving journalists extraordinary power in defining and assessing the gendered performance of the first lady position.

Such boundaries have implications for first ladies as well as all women within U.S. culture. Their status as *gendered* celebrities impacted first ladies’ ability to extend their influence beyond issues tied to the domestic sphere. When first ladies ventured too far into the male political sphere, their actions were contested, often through press coverage that characterized such activities as violations of the boundaries of proper first lady comportment. As role models and prominent political women, press coverage of first ladies implies that women, while influential in regards to domestic and maternal matters, remain on the fringes of the larger U.S. *political* culture, which continues to be a primarily male domain.

To that end, framing of the first lady institution throughout the twentieth century evidences the powerful role journalists play in shaping social reality. Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki argue that “frames define the boundaries of

the discourse concerning an issue and categorize the relevant actors based on some established scheme of social taxonomy.”¹⁴ In the case of first ladies, gendered frames have defined the boundaries of both gender and institutional role performance, categorizing first ladies based on their private and public activities as well as their political influence. By positioning first ladies as role models for American women, journalists have promoted ideologies that delineate the boundaries of gender performance and seek to define women’s “proper” place in U.S. political culture. In doing so, journalists play a significant role in shaping both cultural and political norms. As Stephen D. Reese notes, framing perpetuates “certain routine and persistent ways of making sense of the social world, as found through specific and significant frames” that “find their way into media discourse, and are thus available to guide public life.”¹⁵ Because of the cultural significance attributed to the first lady institution, largely by the press, the ways in which media frames empowered and contained first ladies as political women helped to make sense of women’s presence in the public and political spheres and have guided public expectations regarding women’s gendered performance of their various social roles.

Current campaign coverage evidences that journalists are continuing to define and monitor the boundaries of first lady empowerment and containment that question a first lady’s place in the political sphere, and the extent of her political influence. Such coverage evidences both the double binds and competitive framing that continue to characterize coverage of candidates’ wives. While Bush has operated safely within the mediated boundaries of proper first lady performance, her lack of political activity has sometimes been critiqued. Alessandra Stanley of the *New York Times* noted,

“Even after four years in the White House, the unflappable Mrs. Bush never seems to get into trouble. There are no famous Laura Bush false steps or East Wing to-dos.” Stanley concluded that Bush “has a dignity and discipline in public life that few first ladies have managed.”¹⁶ This quotation infers the existence of boundaries delineating the public performance of the first lady position that must be negotiated. On the campaign trail, Bush has adopted the more traditional wifely role of helpmate, serving as her husband’s surrogate with women voters and picking “campaign stops that will bolster her wholesome, nonpolitical image.”¹⁷ According to the *Washington Post*, Bush “will rarely discuss herself at any great length beyond how it relates to her role as the president’s soul mate, best friend, and chief character witness.”¹⁸ A *New York Times* profile claimed that Bush “is clearly aware of her image as a first lady who has not been involved in policy making or political infighting,” noting that she “assiduously avoids contentious issues,”¹⁹ positioning her on the fringes of the political sphere. Her apolitical image, however, has sometimes garnered press criticism. The *Washington Post*, for example, referred to a recent Bush campaign swing as “her two-day tour of scripted sweetness and devotion to George W. Bush—in other words, her ‘I’m not Teresa Tour,’”²⁰ a comment that subtly critiques Bush while playing up the perceived competition between these women. In stories about a “rare” foray into policy issues, Bush was characterized as “defend[ing] the limits her husband had imposed”²¹ on stem cell research and offering “spousal support for her husband’s policy.”²² Such framing downplayed the political aspects of her comments. Thus, while Bush’s influence is contained within the boundaries of proper first lady performance, the tone of her coverage sometimes suggests that she is *too* contained.

Kerry, in contrast, has been the subject of considerable press criticism for violating the boundaries and for what is perceived to be her refusal to be contained. Some journalists, on the other hand, have welcomed Kerry's spontaneity. Kerry is defined as the "free campaign spirit"²³ that "elicits strong and sometimes nasty reactions."²⁴ One story noted that Kerry "wants to hold on to her own identity and quirky persona," telling the *New York Times*, "I won't be packaged."²⁵ When Kerry told a conservative newspaper editor to "shove it," the confrontation led the news,²⁶ resulting in "what many Democrats had dreaded . . . the candidate's wife running off the carefully laid rails at the Democratic National Convention."²⁷ When asked if she "regretted the outburst," she said she did not.²⁸ Kerry aroused criticism a week later at a Milwaukee campaign stop when she responded to Bush supporters chanting "Four more years!" by telling the crowd, "They want four more years of hell."²⁹ Stories claimed that the Kerry campaign resorted to a "let Teresa be Teresa philosophy," in part because she gave them no choice, evidencing for the press her refusal to be contained. A former staff member told the *New York Times*, "There was a feeling early on that she was a liability. The fact that she was from another country, the fact that she wasn't programmed, wouldn't stay on script."³⁰ But current campaign officials claim that Kerry's overall effect on the campaign has been positive, "infusing it with some welcome spontaneity and excitement." Like Bush, Kerry reportedly connects "especially well with women,"³¹ and nearly half of her solo events have been "geared toward women, focusing on child care, health care, and the environment."³² By framing her interests as "women's issues," the story (and the campaign) depoliticizes Kerry's prior involvement in policymaking as head of a

major philanthropy and think tank. Being described as “organic” and “mother-earthly”³³ has also helped to foster a maternal image. Yet her potential role as a presidential advisor remains a point of contention in the upcoming election. Howard Kurtz of the *Washington Post* claimed, “The subtext to the debate is whether this strong-willed woman will wield considerable influence in a Kerry White House.”³⁴ Even though Kerry’s interests have been framed as “women’s issues,” there is still concern that she will overstep the boundaries of first lady influence and become a political interloper.

Like their predecessors, Bush and Kerry are being positioned by the press as gendered celebrities. Both are empowered as political surrogates, helping their husbands connect with women voters, in part by touting the candidates’ domestic agendas. Yet much of the coverage scrutinizes these women’s performances, perpetuating double binds. The key bind is based on the critique that Bush is too personally and politically contained while Kerry is too empowered through her alleged refusal to be contained. Kerry, as a potential political interloper, is viewed at times as a political liability. The controversy surrounding her outspokenness, a clear violation of gendered boundaries, has generated more press coverage than Bush’s more traditional spousal role. However, the coverage of both women suggests that the expectations promoted by journalists’ critical culture are so caught up in double binds that no first lady (or would-be first lady) can seem to get it just right.

Iconic First Ladies as Boundary Markers

Evidencing the role of collective memory in press framing, iconic first ladies function as key boundary markers in press assessments of the gendered performance

of the first lady position. Barbie Zelizer explains, “Journalists become involved in an ongoing process by which they create a repertoire of past events that is used as a standard for judging contemporary action.”³⁵ In this case, journalists elevate a select group of first ladies to iconic status, positioning them as representatives of a particular gendered performance of the position. In turn, these mediated memories set both historical and contemporary standards for judging current and future first ladies. These same iconic first ladies, though, can function differently depending on the historical context in which they are being used. As Schudson notes, “the past is forever subject to reconstruction and rewriting to accord with present views.”³⁶ The press practice of comparing and contrasting first ladies past and present also employs a competitive framework that highlights these women’s differences rather than their similarities, reflecting the press memory of these women’s performances and limiting their potential influences.

The memories of several iconic first ladies have been used to frame coverage of Kerry and Bush. Hillary Rodham Clinton serves as a typical iconic frame for Kerry. Clinton’s memory has been primarily reduced to images from the 1992 campaign. Kurtz observed, “As a potential first lady with a penchant for controversy, Heinz Kerry has been a magnet for media attention good and bad, in much the same way that Hillary Rodham Clinton was in 1992.”³⁷ Purnick’s article about Kerry’s convention speech speculated that as Clinton was “listening to the wife of Senator John Kerry demand her independence, her right to speak her mind and to ‘have a voice,’ Senator Clinton’s thoughts wandered back to the days of headbands, cookies, and Tammy Wynette, to the time when she learned the etiquette of a political wife the

hard way.” By comparing Kerry’s outspokenness to some of Clinton’s most infamous comments, Purnick implied that Kerry was in danger of violating the proper “etiquette” of political wives; Clinton functioned as a reminder of such boundaries. Later in the story, Purnick outlined the boundaries marked by other iconic first ladies: “Only Eleanor Roosevelt broke the mold. Jackie Kennedy was admired for her sense of style. Nancy Reagan, a force on the inside, was famous for her adoring gazes on the outside. Lady Bird Johnson, the savvy businesswoman, promoted the innocuous concept of highway beautification.”³⁸ In Purnick’s assessment, only Roosevelt was able to move beyond the boundaries that have historically contained the political influence of first ladies. The act of such boundary crossing represents Roosevelt’s iconic legacy in the media’s memory. Forgotten also are Johnson’s political contributions to the environment, Kennedy’s commitment to historical preservation, and Reagan’s efforts to promote an anti-drug culture among U.S. youth.

While Kerry has elicited comparisons to Clinton, iconic first ladies have been used by journalists to define Bush in reference to what she is not. In a *Washington Post* editorial, Michael Kinsley observed that “Laura Bush has not had her Lady Macbeth moment. This is the period . . . when the media discover that the president’s wife is the power behind the throne. She is not the sweet helpmate she appears to be. Underneath, there is steel.” According to the article, “Rosalynn Carter, Nancy Reagan, and Barbara Bush all had their moments,” as did Clinton, but Laura Bush has been the exception. Instead, Kinsley claimed, “she has loyally played along with the treachery conceit, assigned to her at the beginning of the administration, that her only public policy passion is libraries.” Furthermore, Kinsey declared that her recent

comments on stem cell research were “hardly her breakthrough moment.”³⁹ To begin with, these constructions reify the sexualization of women in politics, conflating first ladies political activities with performances of sexuality. The article also further evidences the double binds that first ladies face. On one hand, Bush is implicitly condemned for not at least attempting to break out of the containment like her predecessors Carter, Reagan, and Barbara Bush. On the other hand, the press continues to frame her as a first lady who appropriately remains within the gendered boundaries of her position by accentuating her loyalty to her husband.

The use of iconic first ladies to reify gender boundaries says much about the ways in which media memory operate. In a story about first lady style, Jacqueline Kennedy once again is reduced to a fashion icon. The article stated that “the scrutiny and fascination with the style of first ladies began with Jackie Kennedy, and redoubled with Nancy Reagan and Hillary Rodham Clinton.” However, the story maintained that focusing on fashion is not an exclusively modern phenomenon. Kerry was compared to Grace Coolidge for their looks of “vague aversion to the constraints of political life.” The story also discussed the style of Francis Cleveland, Julia Tyler, and Dolley Madison.⁴⁰ Stories that feature iconic first ladies offer mini-history lessons to readers, highlighting the memories of certain first ladies that the press helped to create by writing the first draft of history. Over time, such chapters are reduced to single remembrances or mere captions. The number of articles referencing iconic first ladies has grown considerably since the 1960s, evidencing the celebrity status of first ladies like Roosevelt and Kennedy. Stories from the last twenty years

have also reflected the growing scholarly interest in first ladies, routinely quoting first ladies scholars or referencing recent books about presidents' wives.

Journalistic Conventions as Acts of Engenderment

This study shows that gendered framing has also impacted story placement over the years. The majority of stories about first ladies appeared in women's magazines and women's pages targeted to a female audience. Even in later eras, when the women's pages became "Style/Lifestyle" sections, most first lady stories ran in these sections. Relegating first lady stories to women's publications implied that they were newsworthy primarily for other women. Such placement reinforced first ladies' status as role models for American women, but also devalued their importance as public figures and political agents, containing their influence while politically empowering men further.⁴¹ While first ladies were represented by the press as central to the public and private life of the nation, their positioning asserted that they were much *less* pivotal to U.S. political culture in general. When stories about first ladies managed to make the front pages or national sections, journalists often made a point to explicate the newsworthiness of the first lady's activities in order to justify the article's placement. Having to qualify the newsworthiness of a first lady, often by highlighting the unusualness of her actions, further underscored the notion that first ladies have limited significance within U.S. political culture. Since the late 1970s, stories about first ladies have slowly started to shift from the "Style" to the "National" section and the editorial pages, although front-page coverage is still limited. Campaign coverage in particular helped to justify higher-profile story placement, particularly in years when the wives have been key players in the campaign.

However, unusual behavior is still treated as more newsworthy, a claim confirmed by current coverage. Not only has Kerry generated more news coverage than Bush, stories about Kerry have more frequently been featured in the front section of the newspapers.⁴²

Gendered elements, including story placement and personification framing, also contribute to the characterization of first lady coverage as “soft news.” News about national political figures has traditionally been treated as “hard news,” appearing in the front sections of newspapers. Even articles that could be characterized as “soft news,” like the president weekending at Camp David, have appeared in the “National” section (sometimes even making the front page on a “slow” news day). First ladies have rarely been treated as “hard news,” and when they have been, once again the unusualness of their actions is a feature of the coverage. Such framing places first ladies on the fringes of political culture, often characterizing them as interlopers when they moved too far toward the center of political activity, which has occurred in stories about Kerry. Even Bush has noted that she has been framed, somewhat unjustly in her opinion, as someone who is far-removed from political culture. According to Randy Kennedy of the *New York Times*, Bush said “she was often frustrated by being portrayed in the news media as shy and retiring, a reluctant speaker, someone who knows little about her husband’s policies,” telling Kennedy, ““Even when I do speak about policy it’s still sort of disregarded, and I think it’s just a stereotype.”⁴³ Hence, labeling stories about first ladies as “soft news” also helps to contain women’s political influence by reifying gendered boundaries that imply women’s political activities are less newsworthy than those of men.

Women Covering Women: Discourses of Empowerment and Containment

The majority of stories about the first lady institution over the years have been written by women journalists, and most of the reporters who have been routinely assigned to cover first ladies have been women. Women covering women helped solve problems of propriety particularly during eras when addressing promiscuous audiences violated norms of gender etiquette. Thus, speaking to women reporters was considered acceptable, and such journalistic practices helped break down barriers to women's presence in the public sphere. Yet there was also the assumption that women understood each other and shared similar interests, rooted primarily in home and family. As first ladies became more publicly and politically active, the number of stories written by male journalists increased. However, as pointed out throughout this study, the gender of the reporter has not prevented the journalistic practice of gendered framing from dominating the coverage of the first lady institution.

The relationship between first ladies and women journalists over the years warrants further study. In some ways, women journalists benefited from being assigned to cover first ladies. For example, Eleanor Roosevelt's practice of limiting her press conferences to women forced some news organizations to hire women and helped ensure that other female reporters would keep their jobs during the Depression. Roosevelt's constant activity and activism gave women reporters plenty to write about, sometimes helping to land them on the front page and ensuring that their work was read by a larger audience. Similarly, Lady Bird Johnson's active schedule kept the women of the press corps busy, helping to earn them front-page bylines on occasion. In turn, women journalists often promoted the gendered celebrity

and political activism of first ladies. Women reporters, particularly those working for women's magazines, also wrote countless stories touting the domesticity of first ladies, often helping to promote the notion of women's domestic empowerment. First ladies, through the visibility and duties associated with their position, were easy for women journalists to position as role models for their female readers. Thus, these women helped to empower first ladies by contributing to the emergence of first ladies as public women, gendered celebrities, and political activists throughout the twentieth century.

Eventually, though, as coverage of the first lady institution became more critical, women journalists actively participated in critiquing first ladies, thus playing a major role in reifying the boundaries of first lady and gender performance. While the constraints of double binds were frequently pointed out by women writers, they were also complicit in their creation, particularly when they characterized first ladies as political interlopers. Thus, women journalists have acted as both supporters and critics of first ladies, creating an interesting dynamic between these public women.

This study of first lady press coverage evidences that progress over the past century is visible as first ladies' participation in public life is normalized and even anticipated. First ladies are expected to use their influence to promote social causes, continuing women's legacy of volunteerism. Some have used the power of their position to push for political initiatives, venturing into the male-dominated political sphere: Eleanor Roosevelt promoted numerous reform efforts; Ellen Axson Wilson and Lady Bird Johnson helped to draft federal legislation; Betty Ford and Rosalynn Carter lobbied for political and public support of the ERA; Carter, Hillary Rodham

Clinton, and Laura Bush all testified before Congress. The public and political activities of first ladies, even when they aroused criticism, played a significant role in expanding the boundaries of first ladies' influence, helping to legitimize women's entrance into the political sphere. The turn of the twenty-first century saw a first lady move from the White House to the floor of the U.S. Senate, evidencing that some of the boundaries of containment can be eroded.

At the same time, some of the same obstacles to women's participation in the *political* sphere in particular still persist. The question of women's "proper" place in political culture is as relevant today as it has been during any historical period. Press framing of the first lady institution still places first ladies at the heart of women's *public* culture, yet continues to consign them primarily to the periphery of U.S. *political* culture. By positioning first ladies as role models for American women, journalists imply that women also function largely at the margins of U.S. political life, despite the increasing numbers of women (including a former first lady) pursuing political careers. This study exhibits the ways in which gender influenced the media coverage of some of the earliest, and most visible, public women. Just as first ladies are bound by a tradition dating back to Martha Washington, journalistic practices rooted to a great extent in nineteenth-century gender prescriptions continue to define coverage of first ladies. Until such practices are more forcefully challenged, possibly by the first woman who runs for the presidency, women will continue to be relegated to their "more traditional" supporting role in U.S. political culture. As a recent article asserts, "The public will some day accept a fully independent first lady."⁴⁴ Someday, but not yet.

Introduction Notes

1. *Pennsylvania and Daily Advertiser*, 26 May 1789, 1.
2. Lewis L. Gould, *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Legacies* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), xix.
3. Betty Boyd Caroli, *First Ladies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), xvii.
4. My understanding of the distinctions between private, public, and political spheres comes from both Habermas and feminist interpretations of the concept of separate spheres. In his article “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article” [*New German Critique* 3 (1974): 49], Habermas offers the following definition of the public sphere, “By the ‘public sphere’ we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. They then behave neither like a business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave like a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions—about matters of general interest.” Habermas’ reference to publishing has led some scholars, like Michael Schudson, to argue that the press has always been “a central institution of the public sphere” [*The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 32]. Meanwhile, Habermas’ distinction between the public and political spheres has been the starting point for many feminist critiques. Mary P. Ryan notes that

“Habermas’ construction of the public sphere had a singular advantage for feminists: it freed politics from the iron grasp of the state, which, by virtue of the long denial of the franchise to women and their rare status as public officials, effectively defined the public in masculine terms” [in “Gender and Public Access: Women’s Politics in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Boston: MIT Press, 1992), 261]. Ryan believes that the boundaries between public and political, and even private, were historically more fluid than the constructions offered by contemporary scholars. She argues that “the public as read through women’s history spotlights the simple colloquial meaning of ‘public,’ that of open access to the political sphere. The women’s politics of the last century warns against a spatial or conceptual closure that constrains the ideal of the public to a bounded sphere with a priori rules about appropriate behavior therein” (“Gender and Public Access,” 285). Meanwhile, the metaphor of separate spheres also dominates women’s history, and is used to describe “an ideology *imposed on* women, a culture *created by* women, [and] a set of boundaries *expected to be observed* by women,” according to Linda K. Kerber [“Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History,” *The Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 17]. References to the idea of men’s and women’s separate spheres of influence are prominent in nineteenth-century literature, although Kerber and others contend that “the distinction between the private and the public was deeply embedded in classical Greek thought” (“Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place,” 18), a point which shows the connections between the work of female historians and scholars who have examined Habermas’ conception of the public, political, and private spheres.

5. Kathleen Prindiville, *First Ladies*, 2nd ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1964), ix.

6. Gould, *American First Ladies*, xv.
7. Betty Houchin Winfield, “The First Lady, Political Power, and the Media: Who Elected Her Anyway?,” in *Women, Media, and Politics*, ed. Pippa Norris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 166-80.
8. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Rhetorical Presidency: A Two-Person Career,” in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 181-2. While there are many definitions of gender, I agree with feminist media scholar Liesbet van Zoonen’s description, “Gender can thus be thought of as a particular discourse, that is, a set of overlapping and often contradictory cultural descriptions and prescriptions referring to sexual difference, which arises from and regulates particular economic, social, political, technological and other non-discursive contexts” [in Liesbet van Zoonen, *Feminist Media Studies* (London: Sage, 1994), 33]. As a social construction, gender has both prescriptive and performative aspects. Feminist media scholar Lana Rakow, in “Rethinking Gender Research in Communication,” *Journal of Communication* 36 (1986), 21, defines gender as “both something we do and something we think with, both a set of social practices and a system of cultural meanings. The social ‘doing’ of gender—and the cultural meanings—‘thinking the world’ using the categories and experiences of gender—constitute us as women or men, organized into a particular configuration of social relations.” Because gender is a social construct, it is not static, despite the tendency of people to define it as such. Joan W. Scott argues that gender roles must be historically contextualized in any study that presumes to examine historical constructions of gender. Scott asserts that the social construction of gender “can only be determined specifically, in the context of time

and place. We can trace the history of that process only if we recognize that ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are at once empty and over-flowing categories. Empty because they have no ultimate, transcendent meaning. Over-flowing because even when they appear to be fixed, they still contain within them alternative, denied, or suppressed definitions” [in Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Association* 5 (December 1986), 1053-4]. This study examines journalists’ constructions of gender ideals in coverage of the first lady institution within a historical context that considers the prevailing gender ideology at a particular historical moment.

9. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 1 (1998): 2-4. Rooted in the work of Judith Butler, Campbell argues that gender is a social construction that must be performed.

10. There are multiple models, or gender ideologies, that have influenced the gender norms and ideals over the years. These ideologies, which are often contradictory, overlap during particular historical moments. The subsequent chapters will discuss such gender ideologies.

11. Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *First Ladies: The Saga of Presidents’ Wives and Their Power, 1789-1961* (New York: Quill, 1990), 7-8.

12. Lewis L. Gould, “First Ladies,” *American Scholar* 55 (1986): 529.

13. Kay Mills, *From Pocahontas to Power Suits: Everything You Need to Know About Women’s History in America* (New York: Plume, 1995), 294; Gould, *American First Ladies*, 224; Gil Troy, *Mr. and Mrs. President: From the Trumans to the Clintons* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 1-2; Myra G. Gutin, *The President’s Partner: The First Lady in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989),

2. There is some dispute over the origin of the title of “first lady.” Mills claims that the “the term First Lady was not used until 1877, when Lucy Hayes was so described by a magazine writer.” Gould, in *American First Ladies*, also states that the press popularized the term in their coverage of Hayes, “Newspaper correspondents noted that Lucy—the first president’s wife to have graduated from college—was striking and self-confident, and, for the first time, they used the term First Lady regularly in their reporting.”

However, other scholars argue that a play popularized the term. Troy states that the title First Lady “seems to have been used as early as 1863 and became popular after Charles Nirdlinger’s 1911 play about Dolley Madison, *The First Lady in the Land*.” Gutin offers a story that combines parts of both accounts, “*The Dictionary of American History* notes that it was first applied to Lucy Webb Hayes upon her husband’s inauguration in 1877, but it did not come into general use until 1911. At that time, Charles F. Nirdlinger’s play about Dolley Madison, *The First Lady of the Land*, was produced, and the new designation for the president’s wife was popularized.” Either way, the press played a significant role in determining how to publicly refer to the wife of the president.

14. Kathleen J. Turner claims that “rhetorical criticism seeks to understand the message in context,” a concise definition that reflects a general understanding of my role as a rhetorical critic. Likewise, I agree with Bonnie J. Dow’s statement that one of the key “biases of a rhetorical perspective” is “a belief in the importance of context.” See Kathleen J. Turner, “Rhetorical History as Social Construction: The Challenge and the Promise,” in *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1998), 2; and Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time*

Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement Since 1970

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), xiv.

15. Gould, *American First Ladies*; Caroli, *First Ladies*; Anthony, *First Ladies*; Gutin, *The President's Partner*; Robert P. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives: Reassessing the Office of First Lady* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000). These books are the most comprehensive historical works on first ladies. Scholarly interest in first ladies developed in the early 1980s, when the presidential libraries began to make available the papers and files of first ladies. Gould, in his article "Modern First Ladies and the Presidency," explains that "these White House social files were a storehouse of fresh and important information. . . . For the first time, it became possible to examine the historical record for presidential wives in as much detail as had always been true for the chief executives themselves" (677-8). Since that time, the scholarship on first ladies has grown exponentially, although, as researchers point out, it still lacks the status given to presidential studies. Space does not permit a discussion of every book, chapter, or article written about first ladies, even if the survey were limited to scholarship since the 1980s. This review will examine works that deal primarily with first ladies and the media. However, there are a number of books and articles about individual first ladies that inform my analyses of press coverage. These works will be cited in the relevant forthcoming chapters.

16. Gould, "First Ladies," 529.

17. The most comprehensive treatment of the press coverage of nineteenth-century first ladies is offered by Anthony (*First Ladies*). The relationship between first ladies and the press prior to 1900 will be detailed in the following chapter (Chapter One).

18. Gould, "First Ladies," 529; Winfield, "The First Lady, Political Power, and the Media," 171.

19. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 110-1. See also Gould, "First Ladies," 529-30; Lewis L. Gould, "Modern First Ladies: An Institutional Perspective," *Prologue: Journal of the National Archives* 19 (1987): 72-4.

20. Quoted in Maurine H. Beasley, *Eleanor Roosevelt and the Media: A Public Quest for Self-Fulfillment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 38. For more of Roosevelt's press conferences, see Maurine H. Beasley, ed. *The White House Press Conferences of Eleanor Roosevelt* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1983); Maurine H. Beasley, "Eleanor Roosevelt's Press Conferences: Case Study in Class, Gender, and Race," *The Social Science Journal* 37 (2000): 517-28.

21. Gould, "First Ladies," 532.

22. Beasley, *Eleanor Roosevelt and the Media*, 4.

23. Lewis L. Gould, "First Ladies and the Press: Bess Truman to Lady Bird Johnson," *American Journalism* 1 (1986): 48.

24. Gould, "First Ladies and the Press," 49-54. Eisenhower held the first televised press conference by a first lady shortly after entering the White House, but it wound up being her only press conference (Maurine Beasley and Paul Belgrade, "Media Coverage of a Silent Partner: Mamie Eisenhower as First Lady," *American Journalism* 3 (1986): 43).

25. Gould, "First Ladies and the Press," 55.

26. Winfield, "The First Lady, Political Power, and the Media," 178.

27. Winfield, "The First Lady, Political Power, and the Media," 178.

28. Beasley, *Eleanor Roosevelt and the Media*, 4.
29. Betty Houchin Winfield, "The Making of an Image: Hillary Rodham Clinton and American Journalists," *Political Communication* 14 (1997): 241.
30. Shawn J. Parry-Giles, "Mediating Hillary Rodham Clinton: Television News Practices and Image-Making in the Postmodern Age," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 17 (2000): 206-7.
31. Erica Scharrer and Kim Bissell, "Overcoming Traditional Boundaries: The Role of Political Activity in Media Coverage of First Ladies," *Women and Politics* 21 (2000): 55-83.
32. Liz Watts, "Magazine Coverage of First Ladies From Hoover to Clinton: From Election Through the First One Hundred Days of Office," *American Journalism* 14 (1997): 495-519.
33. Troy, *Mr. and Mrs. President*, ix.
34. Gould, "First Ladies," 535.
35. Gould, "First Ladies," 535.
36. Campbell, "The Rhetorical Presidency," 181.
37. Watson, *The President's Wives*, 20-1.
38. Caroli, *First Ladies*, xxi-xxii.
39. Troy, *Mr. and Mrs. President*, xi.
40. Leesa Tobin, "Betty Ford as First Lady: A Woman for Women," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20 (1990): 761.
41. James G. Benze, Jr. "Nancy Reagan: China Doll or Dragon Lady," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20 (1990): 778.

42. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 13, 16, 4. A double bind, according to Jamieson, “is a rhetorical construct that posits two and only two alternatives, one or both penalizing the person being offered them.” The historical basis for the double binds facing women is the public/private sphere dichotomy. Jamieson notes that, “Historically, the place for women is in the private sphere of the home—centered, metaphorically, not in the bedroom or the parlor, but in the nursery and the kitchen.” When women venture out of their “proper” sphere, they often find themselves “caught in situations in which they are damned if they do and damned if they don’t.”

43. Schudson, *The Good Citizen*, 32. Schudson positions the press, primarily newspapers, at the center of his review of democracy and civic life in the United States.

44. The phrase “going public” comes from Samuel Kernell’s book *Going Public: New Strategies of Political Leadership*, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1997).

45. Mel Laracey, *Presidents and the People: The Partisan Story of Going Public* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2002), 8-9. Laracey claims that the rhetorical presidency, in which presidents communicate directly with the public to seek support on policy matters, is not just a twentieth-century phenomenon by examining the widespread use of newspapers by nineteenth-century presidents.

46. Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman: Woman’s Power and Place in the United States, 1630-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.

47. James W. Carey, “American Journalism On, Before, and After September 11,” in *Journalism After September 11*, ed. Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan (London: Routledge, 2002), 78.

48. The “first lady institution” is similar, in definition, to the term “the presidency.” I agree with Robert Watson, who sees the first lady institution as part of the presidency, noting that “she has become an institution of the presidency, the U.S. political system, and, in a larger sense, U.S. society” (*The Presidents’ Wives*, 24).

49. The debate regarding objectivity in journalism is still alive and well, as evidenced in even the most recent journalism textbooks, despite a growing belief among scholars that objectivity is an impossible standard. For a concise overview of the debate over journalism objectivity, see Peter Golding and Phillip Elliot, “News Departments and Broadcasting Organizations—the Institutionalization of Objectivity,” in *Approaches to Media: A Reader*, eds. Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Chris Newbold (London: Arnold, 1995), 300-05.

50. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr. and August E. Grant, eds., *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001), 11.

51. Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman, *The Press Effect: Politicians, Journalists, and the Stories That Shape the Political World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), xiii.

52. Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 64.

53. Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media In the Making and the Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 2.

54. Gaye Tuchman, *Making News* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 183-4. Tuchman argues that journalists are active participants in the social construction of reality. However, because social construction is a complex, social process, there are many factors that influence media framing, including societal norms, journalistic practice, and the overall historical context.

55. Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward a Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43 (1993): 52.

56. Entman, "Framing," 51.

57. Paul D'Angelo, "News Framing as a Multiparadigmatic Research Program: A Response to Entman," *Journal of Communication* 52 (2002): 875-8.

58. D'Angelo, "News Framing as Multiparadigmatic Research Program," 881.

59. See Tuchman, *Making News*, 216; and Gaye Tuchman, "Introduction: The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media," in *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, eds. Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, and James Benet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 8. According to Tuchman, while some social constructions of news are a conscious effort of a journalist, others can be classified as unconscious reflections of socialization, journalistic practice, or ideological standpoint. Tuchman notes, "Dominant American ideas and ideals serve as resources for program development, even when the planners are unaware of them, much as we all take for granted the air we breathe" (in "Introduction," 8). This can be seen in the case of gendered framing. She also states, "The production of meaning is intricately embedded in

the activities of men and women—in the institutions, organizations, and professions associated with their activities and that they produce and reproduce, create and recreate” (in *Making News*, 216).

60. Pamela J. Creedon, “The Challenge of Re-Visioning Gender Values,” in *Women in Mass Communication* ed. Pamela J. Creedon (Newbury Park: Sage, 1989), 21.

61. Cynthia Carter, Gill Branston, and Stuart Allan, eds., *News, Gender, and Power* (London: Routledge, 1998), 6.

62. Pippa Norris, ed., *Women, Media, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6.

63. Norris, *Women, Media, and Politics*, 7.

64. Linda Witt, Karen M. Paget, and Glenna Matthews, *Running as a Woman: Gender and Power in American Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 194.

65. I agree with Michael Calvin McGee’s conception of ideology: “Since the clearest access to persuasion (and hence to ideology) is through the discourse used to produce it, I will suggest that ideology in practice is a political language, preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behavior” [in Michael Calvin McGee, “The ‘Ideograph’: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 5]. This understanding of ideology helps to explain how various gender ideologies can exist, and compete, during a historical moment to “dictate” gender performance and “control public belief and behavior” in regard to gender roles. I also concur with McGee’s assertion that ideology “is dynamic and a *force*, always resilient, always keeping itself in some consonance and unity, but not always the *same* consonance and unity” (McGee, “The ‘Ideograph,’” 9). This statement

helps to explain how gender ideologies, like true womanhood or republican motherhood, can shift over time in response to social, political, and historical factors. The various gender ideologies that have helped shape news narratives will be detailed in the following chapters.

66. Tuchman, "Introduction: The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media," 18. Emphasis in original.

67. James W. Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication," *Communication* 2 (1975): 8.

68. The gender ideologies that have shaped media coverage will be detailed in the subsequent chapters.

69. Several scholars note that the "ideal American woman," as historically presented in the media, is both white and middle/upper middle class. The following works are suggested: Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World: American Women's Magazines* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), xi; Janet M. Cramer, "Woman as Citizen: Race, Class, and the Discourse of Women's Citizenship, 1894-1909," *Journalism and Communication Monographs* 165 (March 1998): 31; Helen Damon-Moore, *Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies' Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post, 1880-1910* (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), 7.

70. Denise Riley, "Am I That Name?": *Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 2.

71. Ava Baron, *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 21.

72. van Zoonen, *Feminist Media Studies*, 41. Similarly, Bonnie J. Dow argues that media texts are polyvalent. She defines polyvalence as “the process through which audiences *receive* essentially similar meanings from television texts but may *evaluate* those meanings differently depending upon their value systems,” thus allowing for an active audience (in *Prime Time Feminism*, 12).

73. Mitchell Stephens, *A History of News* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace, 1997), 1-4.

74. S. Elizabeth Bird and Robert W. Dardenne, “Myth, Chronicle, and Story: Exploring the Narrative Qualities of News,” in *Media, Myths, and Narratives: Television and the Press*, ed. James W. Carey (Newbury Park: Sage, 1988), 73. For example, Bird and Dardenne argue that “news values,” which journalists often imply are intrinsic in events, “are culturally specific story-telling codes.”

75. Barbie Zelizer, “Journalists as Interpretive Communities,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 10 (1993): 221.

76. Michael Schudson, “The Sociology of News Production Revisited,” *Mass Media and Society*, eds. James Curran and Michael Gurevitch (New York: Arnold, 1996), 154-5.

77. This reflects what Walter Fisher calls narrative fidelity and probability. For more, see Walter R. Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984).

78. Zelizer, “Journalists as Interpretive Communities,” 224.

79. John Bodnar, “Public Memory in an American City: Commemoration in Cleveland,” *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 76. Much of the work on collective memory is indebted to the insights of Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. and ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

80. Bruce E. Gronbeck, "The Rhetorics of the Past: History, Argument, and Collective Memory," *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 57.

81. Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 (1995): 215.

82. Barbie Zelizer, *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, The Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 8-9; Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities," 223-5.

83. John Nerone and Ellen Wartella, "Social Memory," *Communication* 11 (1989): 87.

84. Richard W. Waterman, Robert Wright, and Gilbert St. Clair, *The Image-Is-Everything Presidency: Dilemmas in American Leadership* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 128.

85. Gutin, *The President's Partner*, 176.

86. Betty Houchin Winfield, "The First Lady's Relations with the Mass Media," *Laura Bush: The Report to the First Lady*, ed. Robert P. Watson (Huntington, NY: Nova History Publications, 2001), 45-51.

87. Karrin Vasby Anderson, "The First Lady: A Site of 'American Womanhood,'" in *Inventing a Voice: The Rhetoric of American First Ladies of the*

Twentieth Century, ed. Molly Meijer Wertheimer (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2003), 18.

88. See Kathleen E. Kendall, *Communication in the Presidential Primaries: Candidates and the Media, 1912-2000* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 6-7; Schudson, *The Good Citizen*, 166-7; and Watts, "Magazine Coverage of First Ladies From Hoover to Clinton," 495-519. The exact period of analysis will run from June of an election year, which follows the primary elections and marks the beginning of the national campaign, through the June of the following year. Kendall notes that presidential primaries are a "twentieth century phenomenon." She points to the election of 1912 as the first year of "multiple primaries." Schudson notes that between 1900-1920, states started requiring primary elections. By 1916, presidential primaries were adopted by twenty-six states. This study will concentrate on coverage of the national election, beginning with the party conventions; articles about primaries will be excluded. The decision to look at coverage extending through June of the following year allows for the inclusion of articles that assess how the new first lady is adjusting to her position. Watts notes that the first one hundred days is the traditional "honeymoon period" in which presidents and first ladies enjoy a heightened level of news coverage.

89. Schudson, *The Good Citizen*, 287.

90. Schudson, *The Good Citizen*, 178-80.

91. Schudson, *The Good Citizen*, 180.

92. Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 179-80.

93. Several political communication scholars point to the importance of campaigns as times of national reflection, conversation, and reengagement with the political process. The following authors reflect the views presented in this rationale: Roderick P. Hart, *Campaign Talk: Why Elections Are Good For Us* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas M. Holbrook, *Do Campaigns Matter?* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996); and Schudson, *The Good Citizen*.

94. See note 88 for more information.

95. As explained earlier, the “first lady institution” refers to all aspects of the first lady position. Articles that make reference to the first lady institution or the performance of the position will be included in this study. Those articles that do not discuss the institution in any way will be excluded from this study (i.e., biographies of candidates’ wives that do not discuss the first lady position).

96. Lauren Danner and Susan Walsh, “‘Radical’ Feminists and ‘Bickering’ Women: Backlash in U.S. Media Coverage of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 16 (1999): 70. Danner and Walsh offer a similar rationale for their use of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* in their qualitative study of news articles.

97. Scharrer and Bissell, “Overcoming Traditional Boundaries,” 67. This study also uses both the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, offering a similar rationale.

98. Cynthia M. Lont, *Women and Media: Content, Careers, and Criticism* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995), 70-1.

99. Richard Schickel, *Intimate Strangers: The Culture of Celebrity* (New York: Fromm International Publishing, 1986), 28.

100. Personification framing is similar, in some respects, to other concepts that seek to explain how individuals are constructed as embodiments of ideologies. Among them are Kenneth Burke's notion of characterizations [in *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969)]; see also John Lucaites and Celeste Michelle Condit, "Reconstructing <Equality>: Culturetypal and Counter-Cultural Rhetorics in the Martyred Black Vision," *Communication Monographs* 57 (1990): 5-24], Robert N. Bellah et al.'s "representative character" [in *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985)], Alasdair MacIntyre's concept of social characters and civic identity [in *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981)]; extended by Robert Hariman's discussion of Cicero's civic identity in *Political Style: The Artistry of Power* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 95-140], and Trevor Parry-Giles' "ideological embodiment" [in "Character, the Constitution, and the Ideological Embodiment of 'Civil Rights' in the 1967 Nomination of Thurgood Marshall to the Supreme Court," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 364-382]. While all of these ideas inform my conception of personification framing, I believe that personification framing differs in that it both names *and* critiques a particular institutional practice of American journalism, combining the notion of ideological embodiment with an understanding and critique of press practices.

101. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency: A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising* (New York: Oxford, 1996), 17; Schudson, *The Good Citizen*, 166-7. Jamieson notes that William Jennings Bryan "pioneered the modern campaign" in the 1896 against William McKinley. The two men faced each other again

in the race of 1900. Schudson argues that the “reform[s] of campaign practice” beginning in 1900, particularly the institution of the primary system, “altered political culture profoundly” and ushered in a new era of political campaigning.

Chapter One Notes

1. Martha Washington to Fanny Bassett Washington, 8 June 1789, in “*Worthy Partner*”: *The Papers of Martha Washington*, ed. Joseph E. Fields (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 215.

2. Quoted in Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *First Ladies: The Saga of Presidents’ Wives and Their Power 1789-1961* (New York: Quill, 1990), 48.

3. Quoted in Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Helped Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 20.

4. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 7.

5. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 23, 73-4. An example of this is hostessing, a role primarily associated with wives that takes on political connotations when it involves the presidency, thus garnering attention from journalists. According to Allgor, “society” in the new Republic was the sphere in which the political and the private overlapped. Allgor argues that, in Washington, social events served as both private gatherings and political arenas, often at the same time.

6. For my understanding of public, private, and political spheres, see the Introduction, note 4, page 26.

7. Gaye Tuchman, “Introduction: The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media,” in *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, eds. Gaye

Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, and James Benet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 3.

8. Tuchman, "Introduction," 5. For a further discussion of gender stereotyping in the media, see Liesbet van Zoonen, *Feminist Media Studies* (London: Sage, 1994), 30-1.

9. Joanne Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 231.

10. Karrin Vasby Anderson, "The First Lady: A Site of 'American Womanhood,'" in *Inventing a Voice: The Rhetoric of American First Ladies of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Molly Meijer Wertheimer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 18. See also Edith P. Mayo and Denise D. Meringolo, *First Ladies: Political Role and Public Image* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1994).

11. Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman: Woman's Power and Woman's Place in the United States, 1630-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

12. Nan Johnson, *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866-1910* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 2-18. Like Matthews, Johnson looks at how gender roles constrained women's access to the public and political spheres.

13. Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), 7. See also Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (New York: Knopf, 1996); and Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).

14. Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 17-19.
15. Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 82.
16. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place," 20.
17. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place," 20. Kerber notes that the feminist perspective which argued for full political participation for women was articulated during this era by Mary Wollstonecraft in England and Etta Palm in France.
18. Gail Collins, *America's Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 86. See also Linda K. Kerber, "Daughters of Columbia: Educating Women for the Republic, 1787-1805," *The Hofstadter Aegis: A Memorial*, eds. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick (New York: Knopf, 1974), 35-59.
19. Catherine Allgor, "Political Parties: First Ladies and Social Events in the Formation of the Federal Government," *The Presidential Companion: Readings on the First Ladies*, eds. Robert P. Watson and Anthony J. Eksterowicz (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 49.
20. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 23.
21. Allgor, "Political Parties: First Ladies and Social Events," 41.
22. Allgor, "Political Parties: First Ladies and Social Events," 36.
23. Robert P. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives: Reassessing the Office of First Lady* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 49. Washington's letters indicate that she was concerned about the role she would play once she arrived in New York and her

uncertainty about her new position. Her letters have been published in a volume titled “*Worthy Partner*”: *The Papers of Martha Washington*, ed. James E. Fields (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994).

24. Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives*, 49.
25. Although Rachel Jackson died on December 24, 1828, thus never serving as first lady, the campaign coverage of her warrants mention in this chapter. For more on Jackson, see Anthony, *First Ladies*, 111-4; and Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 195-7.
26. Robert P. Watson, “Introduction,” in *The Presidential Companion: Readings on the First Ladies*, eds. Robert P. Watson and Anthony J. Eksterowicz (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 6.
27. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 1.
28. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 241.
29. Allgor, “Political Parties: First Ladies and Social Events,” 42.
30. Patricia Brady, “Martha Washington and the Creation of the Role of the First Lady,” in *The Presidential Companion: Readings on the First Ladies*, eds. Robert P. Watson and Anthony J. Eksterowicz (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 26.
31. Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives*, 50.
32. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Rhetorical Presidency: A Two-Person Career,” in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 179-95. Other scholars, including Watson (cited earlier) and Gil Troy [*Mr. and Mrs. President: From the Trumans to the Clintons* (Lawrence:

University Press of Kansas, 2000)], also promote the concept of the presidency as a co-career.

33. Betty Boyd Caroli, *First Ladies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), xviii.

34. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 50.

35. Watson, "Introduction," 5. Brady makes a similar observation in her essay, "Martha Washington and the Creation of the Role of the First Lady," 21-34.

36. Martha Washington to Fanny Bassett Washington, 8 June 1789, in "*Worthy Partner*," 220.

37. Quoted in Molly Meijer Wertheimer, "First Ladies Fundamental Rhetorical Choices: When to Speak? What to Say? When to Remain Silent?" in *Inventing a Voice: The Rhetoric of American First Ladies of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Molly Meijer Wertheimer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 1.

38. See Jeffrey L. Pasley, "*The Tyranny of Printers*": *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 1-12; and William David Sloan, "'Purse and Pen': Party-Press Relationships, 1789-1816," *American Journalism* 6 (1989): 103-27. While a majority of printers aligned themselves with a particular political viewpoint during this era, some newspapers continued to be a collection of shipping reports, local announcements, and foreign news clippings. These types of papers have traditionally been classified as mercantile papers.

39. David Sloan, "The Early Party Press." *Journalism History* 9 (1982): 19; Carol Sue Humphrey, *The Press of the Young Republic, 1783-1833* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), xiii-xiv. For more information on newspapers and editors of this era, the

following works are suggested: William E. Ames, *A History of the National Intelligencer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972); Michael Emery and Edwin Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996); Richard N. Rosenfeld, *American Aurora: A Democratic-Republican Returns* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); William David Sloan and James D. Startt, *The Media in America: A History*, 4th ed. (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1999); and James Tag, *Benjamin Franklin Bache and the Philadelphia Aurora* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

40. Karen List, "The Media and the Depiction of Women," in *The Significance of the Media in American History*, eds. James D. Startt and William David Sloan (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1994), 116. List states, "The types of news appeared in different proportions, with newspapers devoting more than ninety percent of their editorial space to political information. Because of women's absence from politics, the newspapers devoted far less space to them than did the magazines." Meanwhile, some early female journalists, like Margaret Bayard Smith and Anne Royall, provided a female perspective on life in Washington City during the partisan era. For more information on Smith, see Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 243, 132-3. The most notable of Smith's books, related to this project, is *The First Forty Years of Washington Society* (New York: F. Ungar, 1965). For information on Royall, the following works are suggested: Maurine Beasley, "The Curious Career of Anne Royall," *Journalism History* 3 (1976-77): 98-102; Maurine H. Beasley and Sheila J. Gibbons, *Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism*, 2nd ed. (State College: Strata Publishing, 2003), 57-8; Bessie Rowland James, *Ann Royall's U.S.A.* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press,

1972); Alice S. Maxwell and Marion B. Dunlevy, *Virago! The Story of Ann Newport Royall (1769-1854)* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1985); and Ishbel Ross, *Ladies of the Press: The Story of Women in Journalism by an Insider* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1936).

41. Karen K. List, "Realities and Possibilities: The Lives of Women in Periodicals of the New Republic," *American Journalism* 11 (1994): 34. List looks at three partisan newspapers, Fenno's *Gazette of the United States*, Bache's *Aurora*, Cobbett's *Porcupine's Gazette*, and fifteen magazines published in Philadelphia between 1790 and 1800. She argues that the few stories printed about women in public life focused on royals like Queen Elizabeth or the empress of Russia, whose lives were "not anything like the women who lived in the new Republic."

42. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 4. A popular synonym for a public woman was a "Jezebel," named for the biblical wife of Ahab, which referred to a "wicked and/or unclean woman whose sexuality constituted a threat to the well-being of the community."

43. List, "The Lives of Women in Periodicals of the New Republic," 36.

44. List, "The Lives of Women in Periodicals of the New Republic," 37.

45. List, "The Lives of Women in Periodicals of the New Republic," 35.

46. Watson's *The President's Wives* offers a synopsis of negative press coverage of first ladies on pages 36-8.

47. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 48.

48. Margaret Truman, *First Ladies* (New York: Random House, 1995), 18.

49. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 10.

50. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 84, 98.

51. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 148-52; Anthony, *First Ladies*, 104-5; Lewis L. Gould, *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Legacies* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 76-77.

52. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 110.

53. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 23, 73-4. As noted earlier, Allgor claims that “society” was the sphere in which the political and the private overlapped during this era. She says that both Washington and Adams knowingly mimicked the courts of Europe, in an effort to follow the etiquette of the age, while at the same time trying to make their events more egalitarian, and hence republican, affairs.

54. Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives*, 76.

55. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 75-6.

56. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 83.

57. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 54.

58. Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives*, 75.

59. See Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives*, 75. See also Ethel Stephens Arnett, *Mrs. James Madison: The Incomparable Dolley* (Greenville, SC: Piedmont Press, 1972); and Margaret Brown Klaphor, *The First Ladies* (Washington, D.C.: White House Historical Association, 1994). Madison also granted the first press interview of a presidential wife to none other than Anne Royall. When Royall arrived unannounced at the White House, a relative attempted to turn her away. Madison, however, overheard the commotion and invited Royall to spend the day interviewing her.

60. See Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 98; and Anthony, *First Ladies*, 83, 94-5. The editors of *Port Folio* magazine had a woodcut engraving copied from a portrait of Madison and used it to illustrate the cover of their April 1818 issue.

61. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 103.

62. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 37-8.

63. Volunteerism in the United States was based on both religion and republicanism. Quaker doctrine encouraged women to become involved in volunteer activities, eventually leading some to participate in the abolition and woman's rights movements. Meanwhile, the American Revolution spurred many women, like Washington, to become involved in volunteer activities. For more on volunteerism, the following works are suggested: Carol Ruth Berkin and Mary Beth Norton, *Women of America: A History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 131; Karen List, "The Media and the Depiction of Women," 111; Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 45; Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Diane M. Blair, "The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women's Voice, 1789-2002," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 565-99.

64. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 54-5. There is also an interesting article, "Martha, Wife of Washington," that appeared in the September 1890 (p. 277-85) issue of *The Home-Maker* that details Washington's volunteer work both during and after the war, noting how she frequently gave her own money to veterans in need. The article also claims that Washington often petitioned her husband informally to have the government provide pensions for ailing veterans.

65. See Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 98; and Anthony, *First Ladies*, 83, 94-5. While serving as the “First Directress” of the Washington Female Orphan Asylum, Madison donated a cow and twenty dollars to the cause as well as making clothes for the orphans.

66. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 98.

67. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 4.

68. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 80. Other stories claimed that Madison and her sister Anna were “pimped” by Jefferson and Madison to curry support from foreign diplomats.

69. Sloan and Startt, *The Media in America*, 87.

70. See Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 195; and Mary French Caldwell, *General Jackson's Lady* (Nashville: Kingsport Press, 1936): 339-43. Jackson's supporters charged the opposition press with making “unchivalrous” accusations rather than addressing the bigamy charges directly, but then countered with the charges that the Adamses had sexual relations before they were married.

71. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 111; Truman, *First Ladies*, 262-3.

72. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 196-7.

73. List, “The Media and the Depiction of Women,” 110.

74. See George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999) 1; and Henry F. Graff, ed. *The Presidents: A Reference History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1997), 105-6.

75. Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 18. Lerner argues that in the 1830s and 1840s, women's public activities were becoming more restricted, mainly by social conventions like true womanhood. She gives the example that women were no longer permitted to

enter most of the business and professional occupations, like printing, that had previously been open to them.

76. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," in *The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective*, ed. Michael Gordon (New York: St. Martin's, 1973), 225.

77. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*, vol. 1 (New York: Praeger, 1989), 10.

78. Carl M. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 26.

79. Collins, *America's Women*, 88.

80. Degler, *At Odds*, 27.

81. Mary P. Ryan, "Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America," *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Boston: MIT Press, 1992), 273.

82. Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 9-10. For more on the constraints facing female speakers, see Susan Zaeske, "The 'Promiscuous Audience' Controversy and the Emergence of the Early Women's Rights Movement," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 191-207.

83. Degler, *At Odds*, 26.

84. Alexis de Tocqueville, "Chapter XII – How the Americans Understand the Equality of the Sexes," *Democracy in America* on-line text, <<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/home.html>>

85. Glenna Matthews, *“Just a Housewife”*: *The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 34.
86. Deglar, *At Odds*, 28. See also Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977).
87. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 116.
88. Collins, *America’s Women*, 97-8.
89. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 116.
90. A. Cheree Carlson, “Creative Casuistry and Feminist Consciousness: The Rhetoric of Moral Reform,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992): 17.
91. Carol Smith Rosenberg, “Beauty, the Beast, and Militant Women: A Case Study in Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian America,” *American Quarterly* 23 (1971): 565.
92. Collins, *America’s Women*, 188-92.
93. Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman’s Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 74-77.
94. Janet Zollinger Giele, *Two Paths to Women’s Equality: Temperance, Suffrage, and the Origins of Modern Feminism* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 56-62.
95. The movement received generally negative coverage in its early years. With the exception of Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune*, editors paid scant attention to the woman’s rights conventions. In order to compensate for a lack of mainstream press coverage, the movement created their own journals. Chief among them were Swisshelm’s *Pittsburgh Visiter*, Amelia Bloomer’s *The Lily*, Paulina Wright Davis’ *The Una*, and the

Woman's Advocate, published by a group of women led by Anna McDowell. For more, see Martha M. Solomon, *A Voice of Their Own: The Woman Suffrage Press, 1840-1910* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991).

96. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 51.

97. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 35-45. During the Jackson and Van Buren administrations, the White House was without a first lady for twelve years. When William Henry Harrison was elected in 1841, Anna Harrison cited illness as the reason for missing her husband's inauguration. Harrison had been active in her husband's front porch campaign; in June of 1840, one of her sons died, and she stopped appearing in public. Cincinnati newspapers began to describe her as an "invalid." Harrison planned to move to Washington, D.C. in the spring, but her husband died before she could make the trip.

98. Elizabeth Lorelei Thacker-Estrada, "True Women: The Roles and Lives of Antebellum Presidential Wives Sarah Polk, Margaret Taylor, Abigail Fillmore, and Jane Pierce," in *The Presidential Companion: Readings on the First Ladies*, eds. Robert P. Watson and Anthony J. Eksterowicz (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 77.

99. Gould, *American First Ladies*, 121-23.

100. Gould, *American First Ladies*, 140.

101. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 73.

102. Thacker-Estrada, "True Women," 80.

103. Gould, *American First Ladies*, 121.

104. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 65.

105. Gould, *American First Ladies*, 140.

106. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 73.

107. Thacker-Estrada, "True Women," 81.

108. Thacker-Estrada, "True Women," 96.

109. Impressed by her book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, Greeley hired writer Margaret Fuller in 1844, making her the first woman to work full-time for a newspaper. Along with her literary critiques, she wrote exposés on public institutions and spearheaded a campaign to open a home for freed women convicts. See Beasley and Gibbons, *Taking Their Place*, 71; Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper*, 42; and Nicole Tonkovich, *Domesticity With a Difference: The Nonfiction of Catherine Beecher, Sarah J. Hale, Fanny Fern, and Margaret Fuller* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 14-25.

110. Sloan and Startt, *The Media in America: A History*, 133. In 1846, Fuller traveled to Europe, becoming the first female foreign correspondent. She reported on social conditions in Great Britain, France, and Italy, and covered the Italian revolution of 1848-1849. One of the first women to cover international news on a regular basis was Eliza Blair, who wrote the foreign news columns for the *Washington Globe*.

111. Horace Greeley also hired the first female Washington correspondent, Jane Grey Swisshelm, paying five dollars a week in 1850 for her columns covering Washington, D.C. Swisshelm petitioned Vice-President Millard Fillmore to sit in the Senate press gallery with the male reporters. Fillmore tried to dissuade her, saying the gallery would be an unpleasant place for a lady, but he finally relented. On April 17, 1850, she sat in the gallery, but never returned. Swisshelm eventually lost her press pass

and Greeley fired her for a hearsay report that charged prominent Whig Senator Daniel Webster with fathering mulatto children. See Emery and Emery, *The Press and America* 112; Kathleen Endres, "Jane Grey Swisshelm: 19th Century Journalist and Feminist," *Journalism History* 2 (1975-76): 128-32; Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 82; Donald A. Ritchie, *Press Gallery: Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 43-44; and Jane Grey Swisshelm, *Half a Century* (Chicago: Jensen, McClurg, 1880), 130.

112. Beasley and Gibbons, *Taking Their Place*, 87-8; William E. Huntzicker, *The Popular Press, 1833-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 86-7; Sloan and Startt, *The Media in America: A History*, 215. Among the earliest female columnists were Sara Willis Parton, a.k.a. "Fanny Fern," who wrote short satirical articles for various publications, Jane Cunningham Croly, the first society reporter, and Mary Clemmer Ames and Emily Briggs, both of whom wrote columns about Washington, D.C. that mixed news of society and politics. A collection of Parton's work, *Fern Leaves From Fanny's Port-Folio*, became a best-seller in 1853. That same year, she was hired for one hundred dollars a week by the *New York Ledger* to write a weekly column. She remained with the *Ledger* until her death in 1872. While there she supported a number of woman's issues, including equal pay, greater opportunities, and eventually suffrage. Croly was hired by James Gordon Bennett in 1855 for the *New York Herald's* new society page. Under the pen name "Jennie June," Croly became famous for her articles about fashion, beauty, and social gatherings, which were aimed at a female audience. She later wrote the first syndicated column intended for women.

113. Beasley and Gibbons, *Taking Their Place*, 34-5; Huntzicker, *The Popular Press, 1833-1865*, 15. The most famous editor of the era was Sarah Josepha Hale, who edited *Godey's Lady's Book* from 1837 to 1877.

114. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 110.

115. See Anthony, *First Ladies*, 118; and Truman, *First Ladies*, 290. Tyler was already a celebrity in her hometown of New York. A wealthy New York socialite, she shocked her family by modeling in an advertisement for a New York clothing store. In the 1839 lithograph handbill, she was fashionably dressed, carrying a handbag that read, "I'll purchase at Bogert and Mecamby's No. 86 Ninth Avenue. Their goods are beautiful and astonishingly cheap." Her nickname, "the Rose of Long Island," appeared below the drawing. This early example of celebrity endorsement caused a storm of controversy among New York's elite, and the future Mrs. Tyler was quickly shipped to Europe by her embarrassed parents.

116. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 171-6.

117. *Leslie's Weekly*, 22 February 1862: 1.

118. While cultural standards of beauty change over time, physical attractiveness has often been used as a standard to judge femininity, particularly by the media. This is one of the primary arguments offered by Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth* (New York: Morrow, 1991). Several authors, including editor Pippa Norris, address the media's focus on women's physical appearance in *Women, Media, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

119. Katherine Fishburn, *Women in Popular Culture: A Reference Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 9.

120. Truman, *First Ladies*, 101.

121. See Anthony, *First Ladies*, 134; and Caroli, *First Ladies*, 61. She helped direct her husband's 1844 presidential campaign from home, and her letters often included the latest newspaper reports regarding his chances. For more information on Sarah Polk, see Jimmie Lou Sparkman Claxton, *88 Years With Sarah Polk* (New York: Vantage Press, 1972); and Charles Sellars, *James K. Polk* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

122. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 65.

123. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 140.

124. Robert Seager, *And Tyler Too* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962), 188.

Rumors began circulating before the wedding that Tyler would marry Julia only if he was elected in 1844, and on good faith that she would campaign for him in the “fashionable Northern watering holes.”

125. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 129-33.

126. See Caroli, *First Ladies*, 48; and Gould, *American First Ladies*, 162.

According to Caroli, Fillmore was described by a Washington journalist as “tall, spare, and graceful with auburn hair, light blue eyes, a fair complexion—remarkably well informed.” She chose to spend her time reading, and created the first White House library. For more on Abigail Fillmore, see Benson Lee Grayson, *The Unknown President: The Administration of Millard Fillmore* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981).

127. Gould, *American First Ladies*, 187.

128. Linda Kerber argues that the concept of republican motherhood was based, in part, on women's political activities during the American Revolution. She cites activities such as sewing clothing for soldiers, making bandages, visiting wounded soldiers, boycotting products and shop owners, and frugality at home as political (and patriotic) activities of revolution-era women. The journalists' critiques discussed in this paragraph mirror these standards for patriotic activities of women. For more information, see Kerber, *Women of the Republic*.

129. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 181.

130. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 170. Among other things, newspapers accused Lincoln of being a spy because she had relatives who were enlisted in the Confederate Army. Editors including Thurlow Weed claimed that Lincoln had been banished from Washington, D.C. for being a traitor.

131. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 129.

132. See Anthony, *First Ladies*, 212-3, 132; Caroli, *First Ladies*, 46; and Truman, *First Ladies*, 294. Much like Dolley Madison before her, Julia Tyler eventually returned to live in Washington, D.C. and was treated like the "Queen Mother," often visiting the White House and establishing relationships with most of her successors.

133. Gould, *American First Ladies*, 190.

134. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 84-5.

135. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 147, 151.

136. Anne Firor Scott, *Making the Invisible Woman Visible* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 65-6. Scott views gender ideologies as a continuum, allowing for flexibility and modification. She notes that, as society changes, ideologies morph to

mirror the social conditions and remain relevant. This is the case with gender ideologies examined in this study.

137. Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 2. The most popular and successful of these magazines became known as the “Big Six,” and included *Ladies' Home Journal*, *McCall's*, and *Good Housekeeping*.

138. Fishburn, *Women in Popular Culture*, 17. Fishburn claims that the need for consumption stimulated the rapid growth of the advertising industry, which from the very beginning addressed its messages primarily—and often exclusively—to women.

139. Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 4. These publications also employed a number of female writers and editors, working women who in turn promoted domesticity and the notion of separate spheres for their readers.

140. Michael Calvin McGee, “The ‘Ideograph’: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 9. For more, see Introduction, note note 65, page 37.

141. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 155; Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 156-78.

142. Giele, *Two Paths to Women's Equality*, 117.

143. Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 11.

144. Despite the fact that newspapers increased coverage of women, the suffrage movement continued to be viewed with suspicion in the mainstream press. In response, several suffragist newspapers were founded, including Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Revolution* (1868-1870), Clara Bewick Colby's *Woman's Tribune*

(1883-1909), and the *Woman's Journal* (1870-1914) published by Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell and later by Alice Stone Blackwell. These papers discussed issues beyond suffrage and provided women with a sense of community that extended beyond the confines of their individual homes. The more radical *Revolution* focused on working women, prostitution, divorce laws, women's education and professional opportunities. The more conservative *Journal* included articles about temperance and women's clubs, as well as articles about states' efforts to enfranchise women. For more details, see Beasley and Gibbons, *Taking Their Place*, 81-5; and Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 150-3.

145. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 147-54; Emery and Emery, *The Press and America*, 145.

146. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 86.

147. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 179.

148. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 182.

149. Giele, *Two Paths to Women's Equality*, 109-11.

150. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 158-9.

151. Estelle Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930," *Feminist Studies* 5 (1979): 512-18.

152. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 52.

153. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 52.

154. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 84.

155. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 53.

156. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 116.

157. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 203. Anthony reports, “‘My dears,’ Eliza Johnson pointedly told reporters at one of her rare public appearances, ‘I am an invalid.’”

158. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 221, 210.

159. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 91, 94.

160. Collins, *America’s Women*, 246.

161. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 104-5.

162. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 233.

163. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 241.

164. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 235.

165. Gould, *American First Ladies*, 287.

166. Watson, “Introduction,” 6.

167. Gould, *American First Ladies*, 267.

168. Gould, *American First Ladies*, 287.

169. For more on the era of new journalism, the following sources are recommended: Douglass, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper*, 96-7; George Juergens, *Joseph Pulitzer and the New York World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Richard L. Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Michael Schudson, *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1998); and W.A. Swanberg, *Pulitzer* (New York: Scribner’s, 1967).

170. Beasley and Gibbons, *Taking Their Place*, 64-73; Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 50-1. One of the most famous reporters of this era was Elizabeth Cochrane, better known as “Nellie Bly,” who was hired by Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World* in 1888. Using

various ruses to obtain access, Cochrane reported on mental asylums, women's prisons, the plight of workers, prostitution, gambling, and other social issues. She and others, like Winifred Black Bonfils (a.k.a. "Annie Laurie" of the *New York Journal*), were known as "stunt reporters." Cochrane's most famous stunt was traveling around the world in less than eighty days, breaking the record of fictional character Phileas Fogg.

171. Beasley and Gibbons, *Taking Their Place*, 90-1; Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 326. Mary Clemmer Ames, whose column "Woman's Letter from Washington" ran from 1866 to 1884, was widely regarded as the highest paid female journalist of her time. Sara Willis Parton and Jane Cunningham Croly (better known as Fanny Fern and Jennie June), who set the standards for reporting on high society, continued to dominate the scene during this era, successfully expanding their work to include books (Parton) and syndication (Croly).

172. After being denied access to the all-male New York Press Club when Charles Dickens visited in 1868, Croly founded Sorosis, the first club for newspaper women; in 1889 she helped start the Women's Press Club. In 1882, Emily Briggs, a Washington-based columnist, formed the Women's National Press Association. See Agnes Hooper Gottlieb, "Women's Press Club of New York City, 1889-1980," in *Women's Press Organizations, 1881-1999*, ed. Elizabeth V. Burt (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 251; and Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 44-5, 326.

173. Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 3. The *Ladies' Home Journal* passed the one-million circulation mark during this period, while other women's magazines boasted healthy circulations in the half-million range.

174. Susan Henry, "Changing Media History Through Women's History," in *Women in Mass Communication*, ed. Pamela J. Creedon (Newbury Park: Sage, 1989), 51.

175. Sloan and Startt, *The Media in America*, 239, 244.

176. See Helen Damon-Moore, *Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies' Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post, 1880-1910* (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), 11; and Cynthia M. Lont, *Women and Media: Content, Careers, and Criticism* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1995), 5.

177. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 210.

178. See Emily Apt Greer, "Lucy Webb Hayes and Her Influence Upon Her Era," *Hayes Historical Journal* 1 (1976) 27. See also Greer's *First Lady: The Life of Lucy Webb Hayes* (Kent State: Kent State University Press, 1984).

179. Mary Clemmer Ames, "Woman's Letter From Washington," *The Independent* 15 March 1877: 2. Anthony (page 226) and Caroli (page 86) also mention Ames' account. The reference to Protestant leader John Wesley reflects Hayes' devotion to the Methodist faith.

180. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 91.

181. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 263.

182. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 104.

183. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 90.

184. Mary Clemmer Ames, "Woman's Letter From Washington," *The Independent* 15 March 1877: 2. Anthony (page 226) and Caroli (page 86) also mention Ames' account.

185. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 111.

186. "Mrs. McKinley, Mrs. Bryan: A Comparison," *Harper's Bazaar*, 11 August 1900.

187. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 98.

188. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 240.

189. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 106.

190. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 267-71.

191. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 253.

192. Gould, *American First Ladies*, 259.

193. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 89.

194. Although presidents' wives had traditionally been involved in public sphere activities like volunteerism, the expectation that first ladies involve themselves in such efforts increased as more American women joined clubs and practiced benevolent volunteerism. For a discussion of this issue, see Parry-Giles and Blair, "The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady," 571-5.

195. Quoted in Greer, "Lucy Webb Hayes and Her Influence Upon Her Era," 27.

196. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 233.

197. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 237.

198. Truman, *First Ladies*, 51.

199. For more on Frances Cleveland, the following books are recommended:

Allan Nevins, *Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1933);

Allan Nevins, *Letters of Grover Cleveland, 1850-1908* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin,

1933); and Rexford Tugwell, *Grover Cleveland* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

200. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 267-71. Harrison headed the Women's Medical Fund of Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, which aimed to raise the half million dollars needed to build the school, under the condition that the school admit women. She also served as the first president-general of the Daughters of the American Revolution, formed after the Sons of the American Revolution refused to include women. The DAR consisted mainly of government workers, and Harrison hoped it would become a "powerful political force for women." She talked about the power of women during her speech to the group, which is the first recorded instance of a first lady delivering a speech from a prepared text.

201. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 213.

202. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 89.

203. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place," 39.

204. McGee, "The Ideograph," 9.

205. Scott, *Making the Invisible Woman Visible*, 65.

206. Thacker-Estrada, "True Women," 80.

207. Werthheimer, "First Ladies Fundamental Rhetorical Choices," 2.

Chapter Two

1. "Mrs. McKinley, Mrs. Bryan: A Comparison," *Harper's Bazaar*, 11 August 1900, 955.

2. "Mrs. McKinley, Mrs. Bryan," 955-6.

3. "Mrs. McKinley, Mrs. Bryan," 956.

4. Lewis L. Gould, *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Legacies* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), xvii.

5. Robert P. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives: Reassessing the Office of First Lady* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 54.

6. Betty Boyd Caroli, *First Ladies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 117-184. Caroli mentions Helen Taft's involvement in her husband's campaign on page 130. In these two chapters, she details the volunteer and social advocacy activities of the first ladies of this era.

7. Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 8.

8. Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman: Woman's Power and Place in the United States 1630-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 172.

9. Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 322-8. See also Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 172-84.

10. Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 16; J. Stanley Lemons, *The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), vii-xi; Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), xii-xvii.

11. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 22; Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 8

12. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 4; Michael Emery, Edwin Emery, and Nancy L. Roberts, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), 237, 239. By 1905, Kitch notes that the *Ladies' Home Journal* boasted over one-million subscribers, while other women's magazines had healthy readerships closer to the half-million mark. According to Emery, Emery and Roberts, the *New York Times'* daily circulation rose from 100,000 in 1901 to 330,000 in 1921, while the Sunday edition enjoyed a circulation of a half-million by the 1920s.

13. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 22.

14. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," in *The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective*, ed. Michael Gordon (New York: St. Martin's, 1973), 225.

15. Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life* (New York: The Outlook Company, 1900), 5.

16. Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life*, 5.

17. Carrol Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 224, 264.

18. Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 264.

19. Nancy F. Cott, "Introduction," in *Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of Women*, ed. Nancy F. Cott (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1972), 26

20. Nancy S. Dye, "Introduction," in *Gender, Class, Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era*, ed. Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 3.

21. Lemons, *The Woman Citizen*, viii-ix.
22. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 10.
23. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 20.
24. Mona Domosh and Joni Seager, *Putting Women in Place: Female Geographers Make Sense of the World* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001), 15.
25. Gail Collins, *America's Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines* (New York: William Morrow, 2003), 296-7.
26. Collins, *America's Women*, 297.
27. Domosh and Seager, *Putting Women in Place*, 15.
28. Katherine Fishburn, *Women in Popular Culture: A Reference Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 17; Jennifer Scanlon, "Old Housekeeping, New Housekeeping, or No Housekeeping? The Kitchenless Home Movement and Women's Service Magazines," *Journalism History* 30 (2004): 2-10; Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 2. Fishburn argues that the need for consumption stimulated the rapid growth of the advertising industry, which often targeted women exclusively, while Scanlon notes that, after the Civil War, women were increasingly viewed as consumers, and thus an important demographic for newspaper and magazine advertisers.
29. Domosh and Seager, *Putting Women in Place*, 14.
30. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 8.
31. Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to Present* (New York: Viewpoints, 1975), 256-7.

32. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 39.
33. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 148.
34. Domosh and Seager, *Putting Women in Place*, 20; Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform* 66-7. Domosh and Seager note that the settlement house movement, in particular, was an effort to “spread the home ‘gospel,’ bringing domestic doctrine to working-class and immigrant women.”
35. Janet Zollinger Giele, *Two Paths to Women’s Equality: Temperance, Suffrage, and the Origins of Modern Feminism* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 159.
36. Lemons, *The Woman Citizen*, ix.
37. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 97-99.
38. Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen, “Introduction,” in *Decades of Discontent: The Women’s Movement, 1920-1940*, eds. Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 5.
39. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 11-13; 184. Kitch is referring to Susan Faludi’s *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown, 1991).
40. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 3. Emphasis appears in the original.
41. “Mrs. Catt on Feminism,” *Woman’s Journal*, 9 January 1915, 12. A longer version of Catt’s definition appears in Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 14. Cott notes that Catt’s comments on feminism were also printed as a flyer titled “Feminism and Suffrage.”
42. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 9.

43. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 9.
44. Giele, *Two Paths to Women's Equality*, 173.
45. Giele, *Two Paths to Women's Equality*, 159.
46. Ida Clyde Clarke, "Feminism and the New Technique: Strike for High Places," *The Century*, April 1929, 753.
47. Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), 11-12.
48. Giele, *Two Paths to Women's Equality*, 69.
49. Shawn J. Parry Giles and Diane M. Blair, "The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women's Voice, 1789-2002," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 567.
50. Vanessa Beasley, "Engendering Democratic Change: How Three U.S. Presidents Discussed Female Suffrage," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 87.
51. Warren G. Harding, "Inaugural Address," in *The Presidents Speak*, ed. Davis Newton Lott (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 249. See also Beasley, "Engendering Democratic Change," 92.
52. Calvin Coolidge, "Inaugural Address," in *The Presidents Speak*, ed. Davis Newton Lott (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 261. See also Beasley, "Engendering Democratic Change," 93.
53. Estelle Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930," *Feminist Studies* 5 (1979): 512-29.
54. Lemons, *The Woman Citizen*, ix.

55. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*, vol. 1 (New York: Praeger, 1989), 9-10. Campbell notes that “no ‘true woman’ could be a public persuader.”

56. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 12.

57. Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 64.

58. Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives*, 78.

59. “Mrs. Hoover Seen as Cosmopolitan, Social Worker, Devoted Mother and Real Companion to Husband,” *Washington Post*, 7 November 1928, 9.

60. “The Lady of the White House,” *New York Times Magazine*, 10 March 1929, 1.

61. “The Wives Behind Presidential Candidates,” *New York Times*, 23 October 1904, 6.

62. Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives*, 78. Watson lists “symbol of the American woman” as one of the duties of first ladies. While this notion is evident in the overall gendered framing of first lady duties, to be discussed in the following section, the articles analyzed in this section directly frame the women as embodiments of a particular gender ideology and hold these women up as models of American womanhood.

63 “The Wives Behind Presidential Candidates,” 6.

64. Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” 225. The “cult of true womanhood” is also referred to as the “cult of domesticity.”

65. “The Wives Behind Presidential Candidates,” 6.

66. Maureen E. Montgomery, *Displaying Women: Spectacles of Leisure in Edith Wharton's New York* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 6. Montgomery states that, at the turn of the century, leisure became the “key to upper-class identity precisely because it was an important marker of class.” In his speech “The Strenuous Life,” Roosevelt admonishes the elite for their avoidance of work in favor of leisure.

67. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 165-6. According to Cott, birth rates, primarily among middle and upper-class white women, were down significantly by 1900, prompting concern among some, like Roosevelt, who feared that the immigrant population was overrunning society.

68. Roosevelt, “The Strenuous Life,” 6.

69. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 10. For a detailed discussion of the tensions between true womanhood, the new woman, and feminism, see Glenda Riley, *Inventing the American Woman: A Perspective on Women's History, 1865 to the Present*, vol. 2, (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, 1986).

70. Mabel Porter Daggett, “Woodrow Wilson's Wife,” *Good Housekeeping*, March 1913, 318.

71. Daggett, “Woodrow Wilson's Wife,” 323.

72. “Mrs. Hoover Seen as Cosmopolitan,” 9.

73. “The Lady of the White House,” 1.

74. Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 12.

75. Dudley Harmon, “What is Mrs. Wilson Doing? The Part the President's Wife and His Daughters Have in the War,” *Ladies' Home Journal*, July 1918: 22.

76. Harmon, “What is Mrs. Wilson Doing?” 44.

77. Beasley, "Engendering Democratic Change," 88.
78. Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 12.
79. Harding, "Inaugural Address," 249. This portion of Harding's inaugural address was also quoted in the following article: Constance Drexel, "Mrs. Harding Shares Tasks of President," *Washington Post*, 5 March 1921, 2.
80. Anthony, *Florence Harding*, 315. Anthony notes, "The First Lady raised consciousness about women's fiscal responsibility by using herself as an example." He also mentions her letter to the Southern Tariff Convention of Woman.
81. "Mrs. Harding on Tariff," *New York Times*, 19 January 1921, 2.
82. Dye, "Introduction," 1. Dye discusses how "municipal housekeeping" was a way for women to justify political participation.
83. A promiscuous audience consists of both men and women. During this era, the stigma surrounding women speaking to mixed audience was decreasing. For a more detailed discussion of female speakers and promiscuous audiences, see Susan Zaeske, "The 'Promiscuous Audience' Controversy and the Emergence of the Early Woman's Rights Movement," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 191-207.
84. Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *America's First Families* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 89.
85. Jacob A. Riis, "Mrs. Roosevelt and Her Children," *Ladies' Home Journal*, August 1902, 6.
86. Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," 225.
87. "The Wives Behind Presidential Candidates," 6.

88. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 156. For more on “companionate marriage,” see John C. Burnham, “Medical Specialists and Movements Toward Social Control in the Progressive Era,” in *Building the Organizational Society: Essays on Associational Activities in Modern America*, ed. Jerry Israel (New York: Free Press, 1972), 19-30.

89. Riis, “Mrs. Roosevelt and Her Children,” 6.

90. Princess Cantacuzene, “The First Lady of the Land at Home,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, June 1924, 85.

91. “When Mrs. Taft Replaces Mrs. Roosevelt,” *New York Times*, 15 November 1908, 7.

92. Harmon, “What is Mrs. Wilson Doing?,” 22.

93. “A Glimpse of Mrs. Harding,” *New York Times*, 14 November 1920, 6:8. In a similar statement, the *Washington Post* said of Florence Harding, “Mrs. Harding’s mind and heart are actively engaged in whatever problems he has before him” (in “Mrs. Harding Shares Tasks of President,” 2).

94. Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 23.

95. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 212.

96. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 75, 231. Allgor notes, “The new vernacular gentility focused on family and valued propriety over public dignity, respectability over eminence, and private standards over political expediency. In this formulation women’s influence may perform a general public good or public virtue function, but it cannot serve anything as crass or specific as a political purpose.”

97. Stephen Birmingham, *The Right People: A Portrait of the American Social Establishment* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1968), 227.
98. Caroli, *First Ladies*, xviii; Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 76.
99. George Griswold Hill, "The Wife of the New President," *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1909, 6.
100. Hill, "The Wife of the New President," 6.
101. "Mrs. Hoover Seen as Cosmopolitan," 9.
102. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 76.
103. Birmingham, *The Right People*, 233.
104. Riis, "Mrs. Roosevelt and Her Children," 6.
105. "The New Regime Within the White House," *New York Times*, 14 March 1909, 5:1.
106. "The Lady of the White House," 1.
107. One notable example is Myra Gutin, whose focus on first ladies as public communicators leads her to criticize the women she calls "social hostesses and ceremonial presences" (Florence Harding, Grace Coolidge, Bess Truman, and Mamie Eisenhower) because they had "extremely limited contact with the public, and devoted little if any thought to communicating their ideas to the country" [in *The President's Partner: The First Lady in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 2]. This classification in the case of Harding ignores the active political role she played during her husband's campaign, as discussed earlier. Another is Betty Houchin Winfield, who classifies hostessing as a more "traditional" and less political role [in "'Madam President'—Understanding a New Kind of First Lady," *Media Studies Journal* 8 (1994):

59]. However, Catherine Allgor argues that hostessing has always been a political as well as social role, offering Dolley Madison and Louisa Catherine Adams as examples of highly political hostesses [see *Parlor Politics* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000)].

108. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 172.

109. Mel Laracey, *Presidents and the People: The Partisan Story of Going Public* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2002), 8-9. Laracey contends that the press is a primary way that political figures have “gone public.” For more on first ladies “going public” through the press, see the discussion on pages 24-5 of the Introduction to this work.

110. I recognize that the “rhetorical presidency” is not a solely a twentieth-century phenomenon. I concur with authors like Laracey, who argue that “going public” was central to the presidency well before the twentieth century. However, the ways in which modern era presidents (and first ladies) communicated directly with the public has been the primary focus of scholars, particularly the political scientists who developed the notion of a “rhetorical presidency.” The modern era has been credited as the period in which the rhetorical presidency emerged. This period was also important in the development of the rhetorical first lady, according to Parry-Giles and Blair. Martin J. Medhurst distinguishes between those who study the “rhetorical presidency” (mainly political scientists) and those who study “presidential rhetoric” (primarily rhetoricians). Political scientists, in general, have viewed the “rise of the rhetorical presidency,” which involves the use of rhetoric aimed at the general public “as a way of circumventing or bypassing congressional deliberation,” as a cause for alarm. In contrast, rhetorical

scholars view the presidency as a “particular arena within which one can study the principles and practices of rhetoric, understood as the human capacity to see what is most likely to be persuasive to a given audience on a given occasion” [in Medhurst, “Introduction,” *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), xiii-xiv]. For a more thorough discussion of these issues, the following sources are recommended: Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1986); Laracey, *Presidents and the People*; Medhurst, ed. *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*; Parry-Giles and Blair, “The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady;” Jeffrey K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

111. The relationship between nineteenth-century first ladies and the press is detailed in Chapter One. The section on the Gilded Age first ladies (1865-1900) in particular details the increasing publicity surrounding the first lady, which laid the foundation for coverage of the modern era (pages 29-38).

112. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 117. Caroli says the office of first lady is a “twentieth-century development.” She notes, “Gradually, presidents’ wives began to hire separate staffs of their own, take more public roles in policy and personnel decisions, and lead important reform movements.”

113. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 120-1. Caroli states, “[S]he had to cope with being a first lady whose activities the public wanted to see in print every day. By supplying posed photographs of herself and her children, she solved most of the problem. *McClure’s*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Harper’s Weekly*, and *Review of Reviews* all ran pictures of the Roosevelt family but gave little information. . . . Anyone who thought the formal, posed

photographs of the White House family represented increased access was wrong because Edith Roosevelt instituted changes to increase, not lessen, the distance between her brood and the public.”

114. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 121. According to Caroli, “Her stepdaughter Alice explained how Edith was not above ‘managing’ the news. She would wear the same dress several times but instruct reporters to describe it as ‘green’ one evening and ‘blue’ the next.”

115. Lewis L. Gould, *The Modern American Presidency* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 41. Gould notes that Taft “did not act in the mold of the presidential activist and instead pursued moderate ends,” remaining silent on the controversial subject of woman’s suffrage.

116. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 296.

117. “Glorious, Says Mrs. Taft; Loves Public Life,” 3.

118. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 128-30.

119. Daggett, “Woodrow Wilson’s Wife,” 323.

120. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 140.

121. For more on the rhetorical activities of Harding and Hoover, see Parry-Giles and Blair, “The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady.”

122. Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives*, 85. For a detailed account of Florence Harding’s life, see Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *Florence Harding: The First Lady, The Jazz Age, and the Death of America’s Most Scandalous President* (New York: Quill, 1998).

123. “Mrs. Harding Declaras [sic] Kansas; Delegates’ Switch Made Her Sure Her Husband Would Be Nominee,” *Washington Post*, 15 June 1920, 5.

124. Constance Drexel, "Mrs. Harding Shares Tasks of President," *Washington Post*, 5 March 1921, 2.

125. "A Glimpse of Mrs. Harding," *New York Times*, 14 November 1920, 6:8.

126. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 120; Beasley, "Engendering Democratic Change," 92-3; Ishbel Ross, *Grace Coolidge and Her Era: The Story of a President's Wife* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1962), 107. According to Caroli, Calvin Coolidge did not permit his wife to give interviews during her time as first lady. Ross confirms that Coolidge's interactions with the press were controlled by her husband, "The President had no objection to specific news items involving official appearances, but no personality stories, quotations, or personal interviews were permitted." This helps to explain why there is so little press coverage of Coolidge, compared with her counterparts in this era. Meanwhile, Beasley notes that Coolidge was largely silent on the issue of suffrage, referring only briefly in his inaugural address to the "intuitive counsel of womanhood."

127. "Mrs. Coolidge at Rally," *New York Times*, 20 September 1924, 8.

128. "Mrs. Hoover Seen as Cosmopolitan," 9. Hoover's limited campaign role is interesting given that she would become the first president's wife to deliver formal speeches and radio addresses on a variety of subjects (see Gutin, *The President's Partner*, 45-6).

129. Beasley, "Engendering Democratic Change," 89; Kristi Anderson, *Beyond Suffrage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 71-4. Beasley states that women helped to elect Harding, making up one-third of the electorate in 1920. Anderson argues that, by 1928, candidates Herbert Hoover and Al Smith actively sought women's votes.

130. Harmon, "What is Mrs. Wilson Doing?," 22.

131. Frances Parkinson Keyes, "Letters from a Senator's Wife," *Good Housekeeping*, May 1922, 49; Dorothy Canfield, "A Good Girl Scout," *Good Housekeeping*, April 1930, 24.

132. Canfield, "A Good Girl Scout," 24. Hoover stated that the organization made girls "better homemakers, better citizens, better friends."

133. Caroli, *First Ladies*, 183. Caroli, when discussing Hoover's volunteerism, notes, "She tailored her own suggestions for economic recovery to fit her husband's remedies, and her public pronouncements on how to end the Great Depression reinforced her husband's reputation for relying on volunteerism."

134. "Mrs. Hoover Seen as Cosmopolitan," 9.

135. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 16. Cott notes that, while volunteerism expanded women's work into the public sphere, such work was often characterized as an extension of their domestic duties, which made such public activity acceptable.

136. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 173.

137. Dye, "Introduction," 4.

138. Dye, "Introduction," 2.

139. "Mrs. Wilson Slumming," *New York Times*, 16 May 1913, 2.

140. "Cleansing Capital's Slums," *New York Times*, 23 May 1913, 1.

141. "Parks for Capital's Slums," *New York Times*, 24 May 1913, 4.

142. The legislation never went into effect due to a lack of funding. For more, see Lisa M. Burns, "A Forgotten First Lady: A Rhetorical Reassessment of Ellen Axson

Wilson,” in *Inventing A Voice: The Rhetoric of American First Ladies of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Molly Meijer Werthheimer (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

143. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 97. Cott contends that “women’s organizations pioneered in, accepted, and polished modern methods of pressure-group politics.”

144. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 178.

145. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 182.

146. Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives*, 78.

147. Wandersee, *On the Move*, 148.

148. Faludi, *Backlash*, xii-xiii.

Chapter Three Notes

1. Alice Rogers Hager, “Candidates for the Post of First Lady,” *New York Times Magazine*, 2 October 1932: 5.

2. Hager, “Candidates for the Post of First Lady,” 5, 16.

3. Robert P. Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives: Reassessing the Office of First Lady* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 54.

4. Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives*, 54. Watson says of Roosevelt, “She did more to change the institution of first lady than perhaps any other single person, event, or historical period.” Roosevelt received the most press coverage in this era, and not simply because she spent twelve years in the White House. In fact, there were more stories written about Roosevelt in the nine months before she officially became first lady than were written about any of her successors during the time periods being examined in this study. Roosevelt expanded many of the existing first lady duties through her extensive

travels and speeches in support of her husband's New Deal and wartime programs, her advocacy of numerous social issues, and her almost daily public appearances, all of which received press coverage. There have been a number of books written about Eleanor Roosevelt. For more on her life and tenure, the following select works are suggested:

Allida M. Black, ed., *What I Want to Leave Behind: The Essential Essays of Eleanor Roosevelt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Allida M. Black, *Casting Her Own Shadow: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Shaping of Postwar Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume I, 1884-1933* (New York: Viking, 1992); Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume II, 1933-1938* (New York: Viking, 1999); Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Times: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994); Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin* (New York: Norton, 1971); Eleanor Roosevelt, *This is My Story* (New York: Garden, 1937); Eleanor Roosevelt, *This I Remember* (New York: Harper, 1949); Eleanor Roosevelt, *The Autobiography of Eleanor Roosevelt* (New York: Harper, 1961).

5. The majority of first ladies scholars acknowledge Bess Truman's political savvy and activity, and her daughter Margaret discusses her parents' political partnership in detail in her biography of her mother, *Bess W. Truman* (New York: Jove Books, 1987). The Trumans' correspondence also evidences their political partnership, and is collected in Robert H. Ferrell's *Dear Bess: The Letters From Harry to Bess Truman, 1910-1959* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1983).

6. The only first lady of this era to even come close to Roosevelt in sheer volume of coverage was Eisenhower, who was the first lady for most of the 1950s. While the

coverage of these two women differed greatly, each woman welcomed the publicity that accompanies the first lady position, and often used it to their advantage. Watson claims that Eisenhower was successful at “projecting the ideal of American womanhood and motherhood during the 1950s” (*The Presidents’ Wives*, 55). Myra Gutin notes that Eisenhower held just one press conference and gave only one brief speech during her tenure [*The President’s Partner: The First Lady in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 30]. Eisenhower was frequently photographed, and the brief blurbs written about her were often smaller than the photograph they accompanied. Such coverage established Eisenhower as a visual icon of the 1950s, from her infamous bangs to her charm bracelets [Kara Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 28]. For more on Mamie Doud Eisenhower, the following biographic works are suggested: Lester David and Irene David, *Ike and Mamie: The Story of a General and His Lady* (New York: World Publishing, 1981); Julie Nixon Eisenhower, *Special People* (New York: Simon, 1977), 187-217; Susan Eisenhower, *Mrs. Ike: Memories and Reflections on the Life of Mamie Eisenhower* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1996).

7. Many biographies have been written about Jacqueline Kennedy. The following are suggested for accounts of her White House years: James Abbott and Elaine Rice, *Designing Camelot: The Kennedy White House Restoration* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1998); Stephen Birmingham, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis* (New York: Grosset, 1978); Barbara Leaming, *Mrs. Kennedy: The Missing History of the Kennedy Years* (New York: The Free Press, 2001); Mary Van Rensselaer, *Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967).

8. Lewis L. Gould, "First Ladies," *American Scholar* 55(1986): 531.
9. Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), xxiv-xxv.
10. Glenna Matthews, "*Just a Housewife*": *The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 196.
11. Ruth Schwartz Cohen, "Two Washes in the Morning and a Bridge Party at Night: The American Housewife Between the Wars," in *Decades of Discontent: The Women's Movement, 1920-1940*, eds. Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 177-8.
12. I am referring to Betty Friedan's publication of *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, which has largely been credited with spurring the so-called "second wave" of feminist activity.
13. Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 16.
14. Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Womanhood: Woman's Place and Power in the United States, 1630-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 189.
15. Janet M. Martin, *The Presidency and Women: Promise, Performance, and Illusion* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 23; Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 152-4.
16. Lois Scharf, "'The Forgotten Woman': Working Women, the New Deal, and Women's Organizations," in *Decades of Discontent: The Women's Movement, 1920-1940*, eds. Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen (Boston: Northeastern University, 1982), 243-45.

17. For a general overview of these years, the following books are suggested:

David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1939* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002); Eugenia Kalendin, *Daily Life in the United States, 1940-1959: Shifting Worlds* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000).

18. Susan M. Hartman, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), 1-5; Gail Collins, *America's Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 394-5.

19. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 222; Barbara Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement: Dynamics of Change in Social Movement Ideology and Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 36.

20. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 223-4; Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell, 1983), 15-32.

21. J. Stanley Lemons, *The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 180. Lemons characterizes this division as "feminists against Feminists," with social feminists, who supported protective legislation, representing the small "f" faction and the big "F" feminists being the proponents of the Equal Rights Amendment.

22. Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World: American Women's Magazines* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), ix.

23. William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 47-9.

24. Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement*, 34.

25. Matthews, "Just a Housewife", 160.

26. Lemons, *The Woman Citizen*, viii.
27. Lois Scharf, "Introduction," in *Decades of Discontent: The Women's Movement, 1920-1940*, eds. Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1983), 11. Much of the press coverage of Roosevelt's social advocacy framed her actions as examples of social feminism.
28. Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1980), 283.
29. Maurine H. Beasley, "Eleanor Roosevelt's Press Conferences," *The Social Science Journal* 37 (2000): 519. Beasley states that Roosevelt's advocacy work has been characterized as "projecting values long related to motherhood, such as housing and health, on to the nation's agenda.
30. Collins, *America's Women*, xv.
31. Collins, *America's Women*, 371.
32. Kalendin, *Daily Life in the United States, 1940-1959*, 18.
33. Collins, *America's Women*, 385-88.
34. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World*, 80.
35. Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 11.
36. Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994), 47.
37. Collins, *America's Women*, 394-5.
38. Marling, *As Seen on TV*, 5, 202-40; Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 222; Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' Lives*, 150. Marling has an entire chapter on Betty Crocker and the impact of her image on homemaking in the 1950s. Matthews notes that

television celebrated “traditional” family values through women like June Cleaver, who “invariably yielded to her husband Ward’s superior intelligence.”

39. Collins, *America’s Women*, 398.

40. Ryan, *Feminism and the Women’s Movement*, 36.

41. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 18.

42. Lary May, *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 5.

43. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers’ Worlds*, 10.

44. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 188-9.

45. Cohen, “The American Housewife Between the Wars,” 177-8.

46. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 49.

47. Ryan, *Feminism and the Women’s Movement*, 41-2.

48. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 32.

49. Martin, *The Presidency and Women*, 59-86.

50. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers’ World*, xi.

51. May, *Homeward Bound*, 63-4; Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers’ World*, 24.

52. May, *Homeward Bound*, 149-50.

53 Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers’ World*, xiii.

54. The recognition of individual agency and political efficacy is considered a necessary precursor to collective action. For more, see Ethel Klein, *Gender Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 97-101.

55. May, *Homeward Bound*, 1-4.

56. My definition of celebrity comes from Daniel Boorstin, who said in 1961, “The celebrity is a person who is known for his well-knownness” [*The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 25th anniversary ed. (New York: Anthem, 1987), 57]. The connection between celebrity, publicity, and the press is discussed by Joshua Gamson in *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

57. Roosevelt was the most active in terms of image-making. Her close ties to journalists, from her weekly press conferences to her own work as a columnist and radio broadcaster, greatly increased the number of newspaper and magazine articles about her, and allowed her to play a role in the construction of her public image. Her successors chose to deal with the press less directly. Both Eisenhower and Kennedy granted interviews during campaigns, but as first ladies, they limited their contact with the press, relying primarily on social and press secretaries as intermediaries. Truman actively avoided the press, refusing to continue the press conferences for female journalists started by Roosevelt and responding to journalists’ questions only through her secretary. For more on the relationship between these women and the press, see: Maurine Beasley and Paul Belgrade, “Media Coverage of a Silent Partner: Mamie Eisenhower as First Lady,” *American Journalism* 1 (1986): 42-45; Lewis L. Gould, “First Ladies and the Press: Bess Truman to Lady Bird Johnson,” *American Journalism* 3 (1986): 50-8.

58. Maurine H. Beasley, *Eleanor Roosevelt and the Media: A Public Quest for Self Fulfillment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 42. One of the reasons why Roosevelt decided to limit press conferences to women reporters was to help them keep

their jobs during the Depression. She also “hoped to make her position of use to others and so to convince herself that her life had importance.”

59. For more on Roosevelt’s relationship with the press and her journalistic activities, the following works are recommended: Maurine H. Beasley, ed. *The White House Press Conferences of Eleanor Roosevelt* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1983); Beasley, *Eleanor Roosevelt and the Media*; David Emblidge, ed. *My Day: The Best of Eleanor Roosevelt’s Acclaimed Newspaper Columns, 1936-1962* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2001).

60. “Housewives Entitled to Fixed Salaries, Like Any Worker, Mrs. Roosevelt Holds,” *New York Times*, 13 May 1937, 1.

61. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Diane M. Blair, “The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women’s Voice, 1789-2002,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 576-77.

62. “Crowd Mind Read By Mrs. Roosevelt,” *Washington Post*, 5 March 1933, 7.

63 “First Lady Decries Home-Front Complaints and Urges Women to do Utmost to Aid War,” *New York Times*, 3 January 1945, 20.

64. For more on women’s efforts during the revolutionary war, see Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 35-67.

65. May, *Homeward Bound*, 13.

66. May, *Homeward Bound*, 149. This vision promoted a suburban, white, middle to upper-middle class image, yet May notes that it was an ideal that was embraced by the working class, African-Americans, immigrants, and other groups “who longed for the ‘good life,’ just like anyone else” (p. 18).

67. Anne Norton, *Republic of Signs: Liberal Theory and American Popular Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 52.
68. Bess Furman, "Trumans Give Up 5-Room Residence," *New York Times*, 14 April 1945, 8.
69. Norton, *Republic of Signs*, 91.
70. Martha Weinman, "First Ladies—In Fashion, Too?" *New York Times Magazine*, 11 September 1960, 130.
71. Weinman, "First Ladies—In Fashion, Too?" 130.
72. Marling, *As Seen on TV*; Richard W. Waterman, Robert Wright, and Gilbert St. Clair, *The Image-Is-Everything Presidency: Dilemmas in American Leadership* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999). Both Marling, in his work on the visual culture of the 1950s, and Waterman and his colleagues, in their study of the rise of image-making in presidential campaigns, argue that images began to dominate all forms of media in the 1950s, prompted in part by the introduction of television and the success of photographic magazines during this era.
73. Gould, "First Ladies," 533.
74. Weinman, "First Ladies—In Fashion, Too?," 32-33.
75. Weinman, "First Ladies—In Fashion, Too?," 132.
76. Nan Robertson, "Mrs. Kennedy Defends Clothes; Is 'Sure' Mrs. Nixon Pays More," *New York Times*, 15 September 1960, 1. While I cannot say for certain that this is the first time a candidate's wife openly attacked her opponent during a press interview, it is the first example that I have come across in this study, or in any of the works that I have used as resources.

77. Norton, *Republic of Signs*, 91.
78. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetorical Presidency: A Two-Person Career," in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 180. All of Watson's fundamental duties of the first lady were used as framing devices in coverage, but the concept of a "two-person career" was the frame most often used throughout this period. Watson identifies the following eleven duties of the modern first lady: "wife and mother," "public figure and celebrity," "nation's social hostess," "symbol of the American woman," "White House manager and preservationist," "campaigner," "social advocate and champion of social causes," "presidential spokesperson," "presidential and political party booster," "diplomat," and "political and presidential partner." Not surprisingly, coverage of Eleanor Roosevelt recognized all eleven duties (Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 72).
79. Gil Troy, *Mr. and Mrs. President: From the Trumans to the Clintons* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), viii-ix.
80. Quoted in Troy, *Mr. and Mrs. President*, 3.
81. Troy, *Mr. and Mrs. President*, 3.
82. Furman, "Trumans Give Up 5-Room Residence," 8.
83. "Capital Homemaker: Mamie Doud Eisenhower," *New York Times*, 14 November 1956, 24.
84. Lucy Freeman, "The General and His Wife," *New York Times*, 5 November 1952, 20.
85. "It Was a Long, But Proud Day For Wife of the New President," *New York Times*, 21 January 1961, 11. One photographer was so eager to get the first pictures of

Kennedy after she gave birth to son John, Jr. that he hid in a hospital room for several hours. While he managed to snap the first pictures, his film was confiscated by the Secret Service and he was escorted from the hospital (in W.H. Lawrence, “Kennedy Alters Schedule to Stay Close to New Son,” *New York Times*, 25 November 1960, 1).

86. Rita S. Halle, “That First Lady of Ours,” *Good Housekeeping*, December 1933, 195.

87. Campbell, “The Rhetorical Presidency: A Two-Person Career,” 181.

88. Furman, “Trumans Give Up 5-Room Residence,” 8.

89. “Capital Homemaker: Mamie Doud Eisenhower,” 24.

90. “Mrs. Eisenhower a Mystery Fan,” *New York Times*, 9 November 1952, 64.

91. Laurie Johnston, “‘Policeman for Ike’ is Wife’s Idea of Her Principal Role in Public Life,” *New York Times*, 3 September 1952, 23.

92. Nan Robertson, “Election ‘Unreal’ to Mrs. Kennedy,” *New York Times*, 11 November 1960, 22.

93. Robertson, “Election ‘Unreal’ to Mrs. Kennedy,” 22.

94. “Capital Homemaker,” 24. Much of the coverage of Eisenhower pictured her cutting ribbons, accepting gifts, and greeting people.

95. Kathleen McLaughlin, “Mrs. Roosevelt Goes Her Own Way,” *New York Times Magazine*, 5 July 1936, 7.

96. Halle, “That First Lady of Ours,” 195.

97. McLaughlin, “Mrs. Roosevelt Goes Her Own Way,” 7. The article pointed out that Roosevelt paid special attention to projects and organizations in which she was

personally invested, such as the Arthurdale Homestead, the National Youth Congress, and the Works Progress Administration.

98. Troy, *Mr. and Mrs. President*, 2.
99. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 85.
100. Anthony Leviero, "Campaigner Truman Makes Some Headway," *New York Times*, 13 June 1948, E7.
101. "Truman's Family Going Home," *New York Times*, 20 July 1948, 14.
102. Anthony Leviero, "Truman in St. Louis Predicts Victory," *New York Times*, 31 October 1948, 1.
103. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 85. Eisenhower told reporters the nicest part of the whistle-stop campaign was "meeting all the people who come aboard the train" ("Mrs. Eisenhower Will 'Miss Our Gang,' Calls People Nicest Park of Train Swing," *Washington Post*, 25 October 1952, 8).
104. Beasley and Belgrade, "Media Coverage of a Silent Partner," 39.
105. "Mrs. Eisenhower a Mystery Fan," 64.
106. "Women Extolled By Mrs. Roosevelt," *New York Times*, 1 November 1936,

1. To offer other examples, in a 1933 article, Roosevelt is quoted as telling reporters:

"Politics! Politics! You know I never discuss anything dealing with politics."

Roosevelt routinely, even during the latter part of her tenure, told reporters that she would not answer political questions nor would she discuss politics, even though the majority of her speeches, broadcasts, and writings could be characterized as political in subject and tone ("President's Wife Pays Speedy Visit," *New York Times*, 25 May 1933, 7). She was quoted in a 1936 article as saying "I'm not going to make any campaign speeches" (in

“Plans Remodeling of the White House,” *Washington Post*, 3 July 1936, 5). She frequently told audiences, “I am not going to make a campaign speech; you know where I stand” (in “First Lady Urges All to Cast Vote,” *New York Times*, 5 November 1944, 41).

107. Johnston, “Policeman for Ike,” 23.

108. Gutin, *The President’s Partner*, 81-107.

109. Diane M. Blair, “No Ordinary Time: Eleanor Roosevelt’s Address to the 1940 Democratic National Convention,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 4 (2001): 203-22; Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives*, 88.

110. Kathleen McLaughlin, “No Campaigning, First Lady States,” *New York Times*, 19 July 1940, 1.

111. McLaughlin, “No Campaigning, First Lady States,” 1.

112. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 164. Cott argues that female home economists of the 1930s “avidly built up and explicated the complex significance of what went on in the home, in order to both counter the devaluation of the housewife (of which they were well aware) and to justify their own field of work.”

113. Watson, *The Presidents’ Wives*, 80-1.

114. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 165.

115. “Mrs. Roosevelt For Home Science,” *New York Times*, 27 March 1933, 17.

116. “Crowd Mind Read By Mrs. Roosevelt,” 7.

117. Furman, “Trumans Give Up 5-Room Residence,” 8.

118. “New First Lady Puts Housekeeping First,” *Washington Post*, 14 June 1945,

16.

119. “New First Lady Puts Housekeeping First,” 16.

120. “Capital Homemaker: Mamie Doud Eisenhower,” 24.

121. May, *Homeward Bound*, xxi-xxii. May argues that the “family-centered culture” of the postwar era was due in part to the legacy of the Depression. She summarizes the fears of many postwar Americans, who had lived through the Depression: “Prosperity had returned, but would there be a postwar slump that would lead to another depression, as there had been after World War I? Would the GIs be able to find secure positions in the postwar economy?”

122. Troy, *Mr. and Mrs. President*, ix.

123. Robert S. Cathcart, “From Hero to Celebrity: The Media Connection,” in *American Heroes in a Media Age*, eds. Susan J. Drucker and Robert S. Cathcart (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1994), 36-46. Several authors equate the development of television in the 1950s, and to a lesser extent radio in the 1930s, with a shift in approaches to political image-making. Roderick Hart talks about the rise of personality politics [in *Seducing America: How Television Charms the American Voter* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999), particularly 21-71]. Bruce E. Gronbeck argues that “the electronic presidency is fundamentally different from the presidency as it has operated and been experienced during any other epoch.” He also notes that, “In 1952 television became a significant force.” [“The Presidency in the Age of Second Orality,” in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 31, 33]. Kathleen Hall Jamieson begins her study of presidential campaign advertising with Eisenhower’s 1952 campaign [*Packaging the Presidency: A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford

University Press, 1996), 39-89]. Richard W. Waterman, Robert Wright, and Gilbert St. Clair argue that Nixon was the first “image-is-everything president.” However, they recognize the increasing importance throughout the twentieth century of controlling political image-making (*The Image-Is-Everything Presidency*).

124. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 13. According to Rojek, “mass-media representation is the key principle in the formation of celebrity culture.” He also argues that “celebrity must be understood as a *modern* phenomenon, a phenomenon of mass-circulation newspapers, TV, radio, and film” (p. 16).

125. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 25th anniversary ed. (New York: Anthem, 1987), 61. Boorstin defines a celebrity as “a person who is known for his well-knownness. . . . He is the human pseudo-event” (p. 57). According to Joshua Gamson, Boorstin’s definition has influenced much of the scholarship on celebrity (in *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*, 8-10).

126. P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), ix -x.

127. I would agree that all celebrities could be considered “gendered celebrities.” However, I would argue that first ladies in particular are gendered by journalistic framing in more overt ways than their husbands. This happens, in part, because hegemonic white heterosexual masculinity is normalized to the extent that it often becomes invisible and thus does not act as a frame for news narratives [see Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, “Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 291-309; and Nick Trujillo, “Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 8

(1991): 290-308], whereas gender performance is frequently the dominant theme of news narratives about first ladies, overtly gendering discussions of their activities, their interests, and their appearance.

128. Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 56-7.

129. Her constant traveling, her numerous public speeches, her advocacy of social issues, and the press coverage which such activity attracted, established her as a popular, and sometimes controversial, public figure.

130. May, *Homeward Bound*, xxv. May contends, “More than merely a metaphor for the cold war on the homefront, containment aptly describes the way in which public policy, personal behavior, and even political values were focused on the home.”

131. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 198.

132. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 18.

133. Halle, “That First Lady of Ours,” 20.

134. Elizabeth Gertrude Stein, “Exacting Role of the First Lady,” *New York Times Magazine*, 14 March 1937, 144.

135. McLaughlin, “Mrs. Roosevelt Goes Her Own Way,” 7.

136. McLaughlin, “Mrs. Roosevelt Wants ‘Just a Little Job,’” 16.

137. In a 1936 *New York Times* article, Roosevelt was quoted as saying, “I think we are seeing political parties and organizations being tremendously influenced by the kind of spirit which the women are bringing to the government as a whole. They see their work as a civic duty” (“Women Extolled by Mrs. Roosevelt,” 33).

138. According to the *Washington Post*, “Women of America were urged tonight by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt to prepare themselves to hold public office.” Roosevelt

told members of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, "More and more women are going to hold office, and if this is the case they must be competent to do so without fear or favor. Therefore, I hope they will work in their respective parties, familiarize themselves with the mechanics of government, learn to get on with each other and with the men, and when they do take a responsible office, serve conscientiously and courageously" ("Mrs. Roosevelt Says Women Must Fit Selves for Office," *Washington Post*, 1 February 1933, 14).

139. Roosevelt wrote a series of three articles on "Women in Politics" for *Good Housekeeping* in 1940 (appearing in the January, March, and April issues) in which she encouraged women to vote and to involve themselves in a variety of civic activities, from joining women's clubs to working for their political party to running for local office.

140. Addressing a meeting of the League of Women Voters in April of 1933, Roosevelt told the audience, "The consumer must be moved somehow to realize the responsibility of buying only such articles as are made under acceptable conditions. Surely no rightminded woman would want to wear a dress if she knew it was made under conditions ruinous to the health of the worker who sewed it" ("Debutantes Show 'Fair Wage' Gowns at \$30, In Women Voters' Drive on the Sweatshop," *New York Times*, 21 April 1933: 19). A 1933 *New York Times* article stated, "If the buying public would make it its business to find out the wages paid in the production of things it buys, sweatshop conditions could be largely reduced, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt said yesterday. . . . Women must be shown, she said, that they have an individual responsibility for the sufferings of other human beings when they buy goods produced under unfair wage conditions" ("Fair Pay Plea Made by Mrs. Roosevelt," 20 June 1933: 21).

141. "Women Hear Plea for World Parley," *New York Times*, 18 February 1945: 24.
142. Such coverage from the press of her era has contributed to Roosevelt's status as the most influential first lady of the twentieth century. These press accounts have become part of scholars' assessments of Roosevelt's contributions to the first lady institution.
143. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 18.
144. Beasley and Belgrade, "Media Coverage of a Silent Partner," 39, 43.
145. Nona B. Brown, "Women's Vote: The Bigger Half?" *New York Times*, 21 October 1956, 28.
146. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 14.
147. "Capital Homemaker," 24.
148. Marling, *As Seen on TV*, 26.
149. Marling, *As Seen on TV*, 39, 38.
150. "White House Influence," *New York Times*, 8 February 1957, 20.
151. May, *Homeward Bound*, 146-7.
152. "Capital Homemaker," 24.
153. May, *Homeward Bound*, xiii.
154. Dean Keith Simonton, "Presidents' Wives and First Ladies: On Achieving Eminence Within a Traditional Gender Role," *Sex Roles* 35 (1996): 322.
155. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 38.
156. Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 19.

157. Douglas says, “No Mamie Eisenhower sausage-like bangs or crinolined skirts for her. Jackie’s smooth, glamorous bouffant hairdo seemed to symbolize a new, relaxed style, an uncoiling of the constraints that had hemmed in other, older first ladies” (p. 38).

158. Marilyn Bender, “The Woman Who Wins High Fashion’s Vote is Jacqueline Kennedy,” *New York Times*, 15 July 1960, 17.

159. “Mild Fever Gets to City Via Capital,” *Washington Post*, 19 January 1961, 32.

160. Hamish Bowles, “Defining Style: Jacqueline Kennedy’s White House Years,” *Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Years*, ed. Hamish Bowles (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2001), 17. This book is based on the exhibition of Kennedy’s fashion held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, from May 1 through July 29, 2001. The exhibit also traveled to museums in several American cities. The author viewed the exhibit at the Corcoran Museum of Art in Washington, DC.

161. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 38.

162. Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 244.

163. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 191.

164. Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, xi.

165. Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 229-30.

166. Marling, *As Seen on TV*, 279. Marling claims that “the housewife’s choice of a new appliance—pink, square, nonsensical, irrational: whatever—was a choice

nonetheless and the habit of making them was a good working definition of the American way of life. The public virtues of democracy were woven into the fabric of private life.”

167. Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 230.

168. “Sees Mrs. Roosevelt as Tradition Breaker,” *New York Times*, 26 June 1936, 12.

169. Cowan, “The American Housewife Between the Wars,” 185.

170. Troy, *Mr. and Mrs. President*, xiii.

Chapter Four Notes

1. Katie Louchheim, “The Spotlight Shifts in Washington: A New First Lady Takes Center Stage,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, March 1964, 55.

2. Louchheim, “The Spotlight Shifts in Washington,” 55.

3. Louchheim, “The Spotlight Shifts in Washington,” 56.

4. Myra G. Gutin, *The President’s Partner: The First Lady in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 71.

5. Johnson’s tenure as first lady is discussed in detail in the following works: Liz Carpenter, *Ruffles and Flourishes* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Company, 1970); Lewis L. Gould, *Lady Bird Johnson: Our Environmental First Lady* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999); Lady Bird Johnson, *A White House Diary* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970); Janet L. Mezzack, “‘Without Manners You Are Nothing’: Lady Bird Johnson, Eartha Kitt, and the Women’s Doers Luncheon of January 18, 1968,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20 (1990): 745-60; Jan Jarboe Russell, *Lady Bird: A Biography of Mrs. Johnson* (New York: Scribner, 1999); Nancy Keegan Smith,

“Private Reflections on a Public Life: The Papers on Lady Bird Johnson at the LBJ Library,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20 (1990): 737-44.

6. The following works on Nixon are recommended: Lester David, *The Lonely Lady of San Clemente: The Story of Pat Nixon* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1978); Julie Nixon Eisenhower, *Pat Nixon: The Untold Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986).

7. For more on Betty Ford, the following works are suggested: Betty Ford with Chris Chase, *The Times of My Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979); Myra Gregory Knight, “Issues of Openness and Privacy: Press and Public Response to Betty Ford’s Breast Cancer,” *American Journalism* (2000): 53-71; Leesa E. Tobin, “Betty Ford as First Lady: A Woman for Women,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20 (1990): 761-68.

8. Further details on Rosalynn Carter can be found in the following: Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady From Plains* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984); Faye Lind Jensen, “An Awesome Responsibility: Rosalynn Carter as First Lady,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20 (1990): 769-76.

9. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell, 1983), 15-32.

10. Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 163. Schudson argues that the “adversary” or “critical culture” that emerged in the 1960s “denied to government a level of trust it had come to expect and provided an audience for a more aggressive and more skeptical journalism.”

11. Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman: Woman’s Power and Place in the United States, 1630-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 223.

12. Barbara Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement: Dynamics of Change in Social Movement Ideology and Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 38. Despite continued activity by women's organizations throughout this period, Ryan notes that only the National Woman's Party "was the only organization during the 1920-1960 period that explicitly identified itself as feminist." Thus, feminism came to be identified with the NWP's primary goal, passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

13. Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement*, 36.

14. Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), 5.

15. Janet M. Martin, *The Presidency and Women: Promise, Performance, and Illusion* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 57-86. The committee was headed by labor lobbyist Esther Peterson, director of the Women's Bureau, and chaired by former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Both Peterson and Roosevelt opposed the Equal Rights Amendment in favor of protective legislation for women workers. So, not surprisingly, the Commission's report did not voice support for the ERA, but did call for a number of legislative reforms.

16. Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement*, 43.

17. Carl M. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 441-2.

18. Martin, *The Presidency and Women*, 71-3.

19. Miriam Schneir, *Feminism in Our Time: The Essential Writings, World War II to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 71-5.

20. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 229; Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement*, 44.

21. William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 195.

22. Juliet Mitchell, *Woman's Estate* (New York: Penguin, 1971), 52.

23. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 15-32. Friedan labeled this "the problem that has no name."

24. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 43.

25. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 197.

26. Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation*, 59-61.

27. Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement*, 63. "Reformist" women included liberal feminists, like the members of NOW.

28. Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement*, 55. Space does not allow for a thorough discussion of the various strands of radical feminism. For more, see Ryan and other sources listed in this section.

29. Books like Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*, and Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is Powerful*, all published in 1970, outlined the arguments of radical feminists.

30. Ethel Klein, *Gender Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 24-6; Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement*, 56-8.

31. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 207; Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement Since 1970* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 64. For more on consciousness raising, see

Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation*, 85-6, 103-46; Klein, *Gender Politics*, 2; and Anita Shreve, *Women Together, Women Alone: The Legacy of the Consciousness-Raising Movement* (New York: Viking, 1989).

32. Freedman, *No Turning Back*, 327.

33. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism*, 29.

34. For more on the founding of the National Women's Political Caucus, see Bella Abzug and Mim Kelber, *The Gender Gap: Bella Abzug's Guide to Political Power for American Women* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 21-52.

35. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism*, 29. Both Friedan and Steinem worked as journalists, making them well aware of the media's reliance on official spokespersons, while Abzug, through her work on Capitol Hill, dealt with the media on a regular basis.

36. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 201.

37. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 203.

38. Klein, *Gender Politics*, 1; Winifred D. Wandersee, *On the Move: American Women in the 1970s* (Boston: Twayne, 1988), 43.

39. Bonnie J. Dow, "Fixing Feminism: Women's Liberation and the Rhetoric of Television Documentary," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 55-6. Dow notes that "there is consensus among historians and media critics that 1970 was the year of the 'grand press blitz' of women's liberation."

40. Wandersee, *On the Move*, 182.

41. Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 166; Klein, *Gender Politics*, 24.

42. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 236-7.

43. Wandersee, *On the Move*, 182.
44. Klein, *Gender Politics*, 22.
45. Klein, *Gender Politics*, 25.
46. Degler, *At Odds*, 448.
47. Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement*, 73.
48. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 233. Within a few months, Stop ERA had several-thousand members representing 26 states. In 1975, Schlafly established a second organization, The Eagle Forum, which also focused most of its energy on defeating the ERA. One of the keys to Schlafly's success was her use of organization newsletters, distributed not only to members but to the media as well, that provided a forum where her arguments regarding the ERA could appear unchallenged.
49. Wandersee, *On the Move*, 180.
50. Degler, *At Odds*, 447.
51. Wandersee, *On the Move*, 181-2.
52. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 203. Liberal feminists argued that sex and gender should be discounted in matters such as employment, education, and the law.
53. Degler, *At Odds*, 447.
54. Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), xviii-xx. For more on Stop-ERA, see Martha Soloman, "The Positive Woman's Journey: A Mythical Analysis of the Rhetoric of STOP ERA," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65 (1979): 345-57.
55. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 233.
56. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 223.

57. Freedman, *No Turning Back*, 327.
58. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 211.
59. “The Power of a Woman,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, September 1969, 93.
60. “Women of the Year 1976,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, May 1976, 73.
61. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 223.
62. Margaret Mead, “Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson: A New Kind of First Lady?” *Good Housekeeping*, July 1965, 12.
63. Ruth Montgomery, “What Kind of Woman Is Our New First Lady?,” *Good Housekeeping*, March 1964, 32. Another profile noted that Johnson “sees no conflict between her public activities and her private role as a devoted wife and mother” (“Our First 90 Days in the White House,” *Good Housekeeping*, May 1964, 152).
64. Christine Sadler, “Our Very Busy First Lady,” *McCall’s*, March 1964, 189.
65. “Mrs. Johnson Cites Women’s Challenges,” *New York Times*, 4 June 1964, 27. Similarly, Johnson told graduates at Texas Woman’s University, “Your horizons are not finite. You were born at the right time. It is a good time to be a woman. It is a good time to be alive” (Nan Robertson, “Mrs. Johnson Gets Doctorate; Tells Students of Opportunities,” *New York Times*, 1 April 1964, 25).
66. Mead, “Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson: A New Kind of First Lady?,” 20.
67. Montgomery, “What Kind of Woman is Our New First Lady?,” 32.
68. William V. Shannon, “The Other Carter in the Running,” *New York Times*, 15 September 1976, 45.
69. Elizabeth Janeway, “The First Lady: A Professional At Getting Things Done,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1964, 64.

70. Wayne King. "Rosalynn Carter, a Tough, Tireless Campaigner, Displays Same Driving Quality as Her Husband," *New York Times*, 18 October 1976, 33; Judy Klemesrud, "For Mrs. Carter, a Rest at Last," *New York Times*, 11 June 1976, 1; Myra MacPherson, "First Families," *Washington Post*, 20 January 1977, 15.

71. Kandy Stroud, "Rosalynn's Agenda in the White House," *New York Times Magazine*, 20 March 1977, 20.

72. Stroud, "Rosalynn's Agenda in the White House," 63.

73. Myra MacPherson, "The Blooming of Betty Ford," *McCall's*, September 1975, 120.

74. MacPherson, "First Families," 15.

75. "Women of the Year 1976," 74.

76. Wandersee, *On the Move*, 157.

77. Jean Libman Block, "The Pat Nixon I Know," *Good Housekeeping*, July 1973, 126.

78. Susanna McBee, "Pat Nixon and the First Lady Watchers," *McCall's*, September 1970, 140.

79. Elaine Taylor May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 201.

80. Lenore Hershey, "The 'New' Pat Nixon," *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1972, 125.

81. Flora Rheta Schreiber, "Pat Nixon Reveals For the First Time: 'I Didn't Want Dick to Run Again,'" *Good Housekeeping*, July 1968, 62.

82. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 165. Douglas argues that “by treating the women’s liberation movement as a big story, the news media also brought millions of converts to feminism, even if the version many women came to embrace was a shriveled compromise of what others had hoped was possible.” The same can be said about stories that positioned first ladies as embodiments of feminist ideals.

83. Robert P. Watson, *The President’s Wives: Reassessing the Office of First Lady* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 56.

84. Gutin, *The President’s Partner*, 72. According to Gutin, “political surrogates and independent advocates” like Johnson, Ford, and Carter “had a strong base from which to launch their own attempts to educate, to improve, and to influence.”

85. Louchheim, “The Spotlight Shifts in Washington,” 56.

86. Mead, “A New Kind of First Lady?,” 12.

87. John Herbers, “Mrs. Ford Tells News Parley She’s Busy and Happy,” *New York Times*, 5 September 1974, 25.

88. “Mrs. Carter Planning Active Role in Capitol,” *New York Times*, 18 November 1976, 26.

89. Barbara Gamarekian, “A Spokesman Who’s ‘a Worrywort,’” *New York Times*, 3 February 1977, 50.

90. McBee, “Pat Nixon and the First Lady Watchers,” 140.

91. McBee, “Pat Nixon and the First Lady Watchers,” 144.

92. Robert P. Watson, “Introduction,” in *The Presidential Companion: Readings on the First Ladies*, eds. Robert P. Watson and Anthony J. Eksterowicz (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 9.

93. "Our First 90 Days in the White House," 150, 152.
94. Sadler, "Our Very Busy First Lady," 79.
95. "Mrs. Johnson Explains Her Role as a Leveler," *Washington Post*, 23 August 1964, 82.
96. Nan Robertson, "Mrs. Johnson Holds the Bible for the Oath-Taking," *New York Times*, 21 January 1965, 16.
97. Nan Robertson, "Public Writing Many Letters to Mrs. Johnson," *New York Times*, 1 March 1964, 54. The article noted that Johnson received 1500 to 2000 letters a week.
98. Wayne King. "Rosallynn Carter, a Tough, Tireless Campaigner; Displays Same Driving Quality as Her Husband," *New York Times*, 18 October 1976, 33.
99. Klemesrud, "For Mrs. Carter, a Rest at Last," 1.
100. Trude B. Feldman, "Rosallynn Carter at 50," *McCall's*, August 1977, 126.
101. MacPherson, "The Blooming of Betty Ford," 124.
102. Trude B. Feldman, "Our Private Life in the White House," *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1976, 84.
103. Feldman, "Our Private Life in the White House," 86.
104. In August 1964, Johnson made a four-day swing through Montana, Utah, and Wyoming, where "all of the governors are conservative Republicans and the state legislatures are solidly G.O.P." (Nan Robertson, "Mrs. Johnson Sets a Campaign Tone," *New York Times*, 19 August 1964, 20). In September, she traveled to Ohio, a key state, to "nail down votes for the President," meeting factory workers in Akron (Nan Robertson, "Mrs. Johnson's Akron Visit Opens Campaign Trip," *New York Times*, 20) and speaking

to a group of Democratic Women in Columbus, where she “delivered the most partisan speech of her White House career in a Republican City” (Nan Robertson, “Mrs. Johnson, in Ohio Bastion of G.O.P., Praises Her Party” *New York Times*, 19 September 1964, 14). Later in the campaign, she stumped in Pennsylvania, Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Indiana, Kentucky, and Virginia (“Four Day Trip Planned by Mrs. Johnson,” *Washington Post*, 23 October 1964, 28).

105. Nan Robertson, “First Lady Starts Solo Swing Through the South Tomorrow,” *New York Times*, 5 October 1964, 26. The train carried the Southern first lady and 225 members of the press 1,682 miles, much of it “through enemy territory” (Claude Sitton, “Mrs. Johnson’s Southern Trip Spurs New Support,” *New York Times*, 11 October 1964, 72).

106. Carpenter, *Ruffles and Flourishes*, 144.

107. Carpenter, *Ruffles and Flourishes*, 145, 154; Nan Robertson, “Mrs. Johnson Ends 8-State Rail Tour of the South,” *New York Times*, 10 October 1964, 15.

108. Robertson, “Mrs. Johnson Ends 8-State Rail Tour of the South,” 15.

109. Sitton, “Mrs. Johnson’s Southern Trip Spurs New Support,” 72.

110. Robertson, “Mrs. Johnson Ends 8-State Rail Tour of the South,” 15.

111. King, “Rosallynn Carter, a Tough, Tireless Campaigner,” 33.

112. Klemesrud, “For Mrs. Carter, a Rest at Last,” 1.

113. King, “Rosallynn Carter, a Tough, Tireless Campaigner,” 33; Klemesrud, “For Mrs. Carter, a Rest at Last,” 1.

114. Feldman, “Rosallynn Carter at 50,” 198.

115. Megan Rosenfeld, "Candidates' Wives Carry Share of Load; Not Mere Symbols, They Have Their Own Charisma," *Washington Post*, 10 June 1977, C1.
116. "Mrs. Ford to Seek Votes in Minnesota for Husband," *Washington Post*, 22 June 1976, 26.
117. "Transcripts of the Statements of the President and Mrs. Ford and Carter," *New York Times*, 4 November 1976, 23.
118. Charlotte Curtis, "Pat Nixon: Creature Comforts Don't Matter," *New York Times*, 3 July 1968, 30.
119. "Mrs. Nixon Outlines Her Campaign Plans," *New York Times*, 16 August 1968, 37.
120. Nan Robertson, "Mrs. Nixon Plans a Tour for the G.O.P.," *New York Times*, 8 October 1968, 32.
121. Sadler, "Our Very Busy First Lady," 188.
122. Nan Robertson, "Mrs. Johnson Cheered in 'Poverty Pocket' Coal Towns," *New York Times*, 12 January 1964, 1.
123. Robertson, "Mrs. Johnson Cheered in 'Poverty Pocket' Coal Towns," 1.
124. "Mrs. Johnson to Give Poverty Project Tea," *Washington Post*, 14 February 1965, 56; "Mrs. Johnson Urges Help for Children," *New York Times*, 20 February 1965, 11. She also presented diplomas to the first graduating class of Volunteers in Service to American (VISTA) and toured "sites where they received on-the-job training" ("Mrs. Johnson to Address First 'Vista' Graduates," *New York Times*, 17 February 1965, 46).

125. She made her first trip as her husband's representative to the inauguration of Mexico's new president, over a month before officially becoming first lady ("Mrs. Carter in Mexico for Inauguration," *New York Times*, 1 December 1976, 14).

126. The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* each carried 14 articles about Carter's Latin American trip.

127. Laura Foreman, "Mrs. Carter Leaves on Latin Tour Today," *New York Times*, 30 May 1977, 4.

128. Linda Charlton, "Mrs. Carter's Model is Very Much Her Own: Mrs. F.D.R.," *New York Times*, 5 June 1977, 54.

129. Susanna McBee, "Mrs. Carter's Trip Carefully Crafted to Make Policy Points," *Washington Post*, 29 May 1977, 6.

130. David Vidal, "Ambassador Rosalynn Carter: First Lady Confounds the Skeptics and Makes a Striking Success of Her Latin American Tour," *New York Times*, 14 June 1977, 18.

131. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives*, 93. Watson uses the term "pet project" to describe first lady causes, noting: "These projects provide a national voice for important issues and have been used as an instrument of positive media and public relations for both the first lady and the president."

132. MacPherson, "First Families," 15.

133. Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *First Ladies: The Saga of the Presidents' Wives and Their Power, 1961-1990* (New York: Quill, 1991), 114.

134. Nan Robertson, "Mrs. Johnson Leads Capital Tour," *New York Times*, 10 March 1965, 26.

135. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 136.

136. Lewis L. Gould, *Lady Bird Johnson: Our Environmental First Lady* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999).

137. The first stories regarding Ford's surgery ran on September 28, 1974, and received daily coverage for nearly two weeks, with follow-up coverage continuing throughout her time in the White House.

138. "Mrs. Ford's Ordeal," *New York Times*, 30 September 1974, 34.

139. Betty Ford, "I Feel Like I've Been Reborn," *McCall's*, February 1975, 142.

140. "Mrs. Ford Cheered by Her Mail; Her Rapid Recovery Continues," *New York Times*, 4 October 1974, 16. See also Lillian Barney, "Many More Women Seek Breast Cancer Exams, but Find Few Places to Go," *New York Times*, 20 October 1974, 118.

141. Emanuel Perlmutter, "Mrs. Ford Asks Drive for Cancer Diagnosis," *New York Times*, 2 December 1976, 52. Ford reflects on her cancer surgery, and her advocacy efforts, in her memoir (Ford, *The Times of My Life* 199- 207).

142. James F. Clarity, "Mrs. Carter, at a Hearing, Opposes Sending Mentally Ill to Institutions," *New York Times*, 25 May 1977, 16; Marjorie Hunter, "Mrs. Carter's Mental Health Drive Has Tight Budget," *New York Times*, 22 April 1977, 17.

143. Nancy Hicks, "Mrs. Carter Plans White House Conference on Aging," *New York Times*, 16. Carter held a series of round-table discussions on the problems of aging, hearing from experts on issues including "mandatory retirement, health care, housing, and nutritional needs" (Donnie Radcliffe, "Rosallynn Carter Takes Up Cause of Nation's 22 Million Elderly," *Washington Post*, 11 May 1977, 5). She used the information to

advise her husband on Social Security reform and lobby congress to pass a series of legislation aimed at addressing the issues of the elderly (Carter, *First Lady From Plains*, 268).

144. Donnie Radcliffe, “Mrs. Carter Begins Fulfilling Her Pledge; Launches Campaign to Aid Elderly, Mentally Disabled,” *Washington Post*, 19 April 1977, 10.

145. MacPherson, “The Blooming of Betty Ford,” 122. According to Wandersee, Ford was “warmly embraced” by the mainstream women’s liberation movement and “supported most of its political goals,” including the ERA and abortion rights (Wandersee, *On the Move*, 158).

146. “Women of the Year 1976,” 74. The article called Ford “a very special (and somewhat controversial) First Lady.”

147. “Mrs. Ford Scored on Equality Plan: Letters Running 3 to 1 Against Her Lobbying Efforts,” *New York Times*, 21 February 1975, 32.

148. MacPherson, “The Blooming of Betty Ford,” 124.

149. Myra MacPherson, “Indiana Ratifies ERA—With Rosalynn Carter’s Aid,” *Washington Post*, 19 January 1977, 1. Senator Townsend later denied that Carter “swayed” his vote, although he did admit to speaking with her (“Mrs. Carter Intervenes in Indiana E.R.A. Vote,” *New York Times*, 20 January 1977, 19).

150. Paul G. Edwards, “Rosalynn Carter Seeks Virginia Votes for ERA,” *Washington Post*, 29 January 1977, B1.

151. “Miss Hayes Guest of Mrs. Johnson: First Lady Starts a Series of Informal Luncheons,” *New York Times*, 17 January 1964, 22. The most notable, and newsworthy, luncheon was held in January 1968. The topic was crime, and singer Eartha Kitt was

invited because of her participation in inner-city youth programs. At the luncheon, Kitt made a statement attacking the Johnsons for the escalating war in Vietnam. Johnson responded, recognizing Kitt's comments but noting that there was still much that could be done to curb crime in the United States. The incident made the front pages ("Eartha Kitt Denounces War Policy to Mrs. Johnson," *New York Times*, 19 January 1968, 1). For more, see Janet Mezzack, "'Without Manners You Are Nothing,': Lady Bird Johnson, Eartha Kitt, and the Women Doers' Luncheon of January 18, 1968," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20 (1990): 745-60.

152. Donnie Radcliffe, "A Different Kind of Tea," *Washington Post*, 5 April 1977, B2. Carter told reporters this was "the kind of tea I like – I feel like I learned something and I feel that she (Mrs. Sadat) learned, too."

153. Block, "The Pat Nixon I Know," 126.

154. McPherson, "The Blooming of Betty Ford," 93.

155. McPherson, "The Blooming of Betty Ford," 122.

156. Donnie Radcliffe, "A Low-Key Debut Appearance by the First Lady," *Washington Post*, 6 April 1977, D10.

157. MacPherson, "The Blooming of Betty Ford," 122.

158. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5.

159. McBee, "Pat Nixon and the First Lady Watchers," 77.

160. S. Paige Baty, *American Monroe: The Making of a Body Politic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 59-60.

161. Similarly, the power of celebrity status “operates as a way of providing distinctions and definitions of success” within a particular domain, like politics. When a celebrity’s “strategies are successful, the achieved celebrity may acquire enduring iconic significance” [P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), x].

162. Barbie Zelizer, “Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 (1995): 224. As Zelizer argues, “No single memory contains all we know, or could know, about any given event, personality, or issue. Rather, memories are often pieced together like a mosaic.”

163. Mead, “Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson: A New Kind of First Lady?,” 12.

164. Jessamyn West, “The Real Pat Nixon,” *Good Housekeeping*, February 1971, 57.

165. McBee, “Pat Nixon and the First Lady Watchers,” 77.

166. “Our First 90 Days in the White House,” 152.

167. Nan Robertson, “Public Writing Many Letters to Mrs. Johnson,” *New York Times*, 1 March 1964, 54.

168. Charlton, “Mrs. Carter’s Model is Very Much Her Own: Mrs. F.D.R.,” 54.

169. Charlton, “Mrs. Carter’s Model is Very Much Her Own: Mrs. F.D.R.,” 54.

170. Curtis, “What Kind of First Lady Will She Be?,” 22.

171. MacPherson, “The Blooming of Betty Ford,” 93.

172. MacPherson, “The Blooming of Betty Ford,” 122.

173. West, “The Real Pat Nixon,” 124.

174. Hershey, “The ‘New’ Pat Nixon,” 125.

175. Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, ix.

176. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetorical Presidency: A Two-Person Career," in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 181.

177. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 226.

178. MacPherson, "The Blooming of Betty Ford," 124. See also Judy Klemesrud, "Mrs. Ford Helps 'Remember the Ladies' of Revolutionary Era," *New York Times*, 30 June 1976, 77.

179. MacPherson, "The Blooming of Betty Ford," 120.

180. MacPherson, "The Blooming of Betty Ford," 124. Emphasis in original.

181. "Mrs. Ford Scored on Equality Plan: Letters Running 3 to 1 Against Her Lobbying Efforts," 32. However, a later article noted that "there was a dramatic turnaround" in the White House mail, "Of some 10,000 letters, the majority favored the ERA" (MacPherson, "The Blooming of Betty Ford," 124).

182. "Mrs. Ford Scored on Equality Plan," 32. In contrast, a supportive note stated, "It is so nice to have a First Lady who is concerned about people and not just clothing or decorating or trees," an indirect attack on both Kennedy and Johnson.

183. MacPherson, "The Blooming of Betty Ford," 124.

184. Candice Bergen, "An Intimate Look at the Fords," *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1975, 75.

185. "Anti-ERA Protests Aimed at First Lady," *Washington Post*, 5 February 1977, B2.

186. Stroud, "Rosallynn's Agenda in the White House," 20.

187. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 221-44. Douglas devotes an entire chapter to “The ERA as Catfight.”

188. Anthony, *First Ladies*, 137. Unfortunately, the news coverage of her lobbying does not fall within the parameters of this study. However, Anthony reports that most of the press criticism took the form of political cartoons. Some stories reported criticism from congressmen like Bob Dole, who “sarcastically suggested that ‘Lady Bird’ be substituted every time ‘secretary of comment’ appeared in the bill.”

189. MacPherson, “First Families,” 15.

190. Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind*, 121.

191. “How Much Should a First Lady Say?,” *McCall’s*, February 1976, 49.

192. Feldman, “Our Private Life in the White House,” 84. Similarly, a 1976 article in *McCall’s* noted that “the wives of presidents have never said much, especially on sensitive subjects. Then the warm, voluble and unintimidated Mrs. Gerald Ford let candor and plain talk out of the closet,” speaking her mind “on some of the most significant social issues confronting women and their families, from the ERA to abortion, marijuana and premarital sex” (“How Much Should a First Lady Say?,” 49).

193. Her complete response went into further detail regarding her reaction, although news reports often focused only on the shortened answer. An article in *Ladies’ Home Journal* published her complete answer: “Well, I wouldn’t be surprised. I think she’s a perfectly normal human being like all young girls. If she wanted to continue, and I would certainly try to counsel and advise her on the subject, I’d want to know pretty much about the young man that she was planning to have the affair with; whether it was a worthwhile encounter or whether it was going to be one of those—she’s pretty young to

start affairs” (“Mrs. Ford and the Affair of the Daughter,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, November 1975, 118).

194. MacPherson, “First Families,” 15.

195. “Mrs. Ford and the Affair of the Daughter,” 118, 154. Not surprisingly, Friedan praised Ford’s comments, stating, “[y]our sensitivity and strength are going to be a wonderful boost for millions of mothers and daughters and American women generally,” while Schlafly attacked Ford, asserting that “it is no justification for Mrs. Ford to say her daughter is a ‘big girl’ and ‘a normal human being.’ To approve sin because other people are doing it was the moral sickness of Watergate.”

196. “How Much Should a First Lady Say?,” 49.

197. MacPherson, “The Blooming of Betty Ford,” 124. She told McPherson: “‘I feel it is the right of a human being to make her own decision. . . . If one suspects a pregnancy, she should go immediately to her doctor. If she doesn’t want to have a child, it should be taken care of under supervision, the sooner the better.’”

198. Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind*, 80. Jamieson explains, “Just as public speech by a woman invited references about promiscuity, so too her silence testified to her modesty.”

199. Stroud, “Rosalynn’s Agenda in the White House,” 58.

200. Greenfield, “Mrs. President,” 17.

201. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 4.

202. “Rosalynn Carter Elected,” *New York Times*, 15 June 1977, 20.

203. Meg Greenfield, “Mrs. President,” *Washington Post*, 15 June 1977, 17.

Reprinted from *Newsweek*.

204. Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind*, 121. Jamieson describes this situation as the femininity/competency bind, “The words commonly associated with the femininity/competence bind are ‘too’ and ‘not . . . enough.’ The evaluated woman has deviated from the female norm of femininity while falling short of the masculine norm of competence.”

205. McBee, “Pat Nixon and the First Lady Watchers,” 140.

206. Black, “The Pat Nixon I Know,” 126. Stroud referred to Nixon as “Plastic Pat” in a *Women’s Wear Daily* article.

207. McBee, “Pat Nixon and the First Lady Watchers,” 138.

208. McBee, “Pat Nixon and the First Lady Watchers,” 77.

209. Nan Robertson, “Mrs. Nixon, on 7-State Tour, Shuns Politics,” *New York Times*, 23 September 1972, 14.

210. Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind*, 120.

211. MacPherson, “First Families,” 15.

212. MacPherson, “First Families,” 15.

213. Wandersee, *On the Move*, 162.

214. Bruce E. Gronbeck, “The Rhetorics of the Past: History, Argument, and Collective Memory,” *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 57. Gronbeck argues that current interpreters have the power to reshape past events to make sense of the present.

215. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. and ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 172.

216. Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 163.

217. David Weaver, "Women as Journalists," in *Women, Media, and Politics*, ed. Pippa Norris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 38-9.

218. MacPherson, "First Families," 15.

Chapter Five Notes

1. Jan Jarboe Russell, "Not Queen, Not Prisoner—Just the President's Wife," *New York Times*, 30 August 2000, 23.

2. Gil Troy, *Mr. and Mrs. President: From the Trumans to the Clintons* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 392.

3. First lady scholarship blossomed during this era, resulting in numerous books and articles about the first lady of this period. Thus, the following lists are not exhaustive, but include sources that were of particular interest to this study. For more on Nancy Reagan, see: James G. Benze, Jr. "Nancy Reagan: China Doll or Dragon Lady," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20 (1990): 777-822; Karen O'Connor, Bernadette Nye, and Laura Van Assendelft, "Wives in the White House: The Political Influence of First Ladies," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26 (1996): 835-51; Erica Scharrer and Kim Bissell, "Overcoming Traditional Boundaries: The Role of Political Activity in Media Coverage of First Ladies," *Women and Politics* 21 (2000): 55-83; Nancy Reagan with William Novak, *My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1989).

4. The following sources on Barbara Bush are recommended: Barbara Bush, *Barbara Bush: A Memoir* (New York: St. Martin's Paperbacks, 1994); O'Connor, Nye, and Van Assendelft, "Wives in the White House: The Political Influence of First Ladies," 835-51; Scharrer and Bissell, "Overcoming Traditional Boundaries: The Role of Political

Activity in Media Coverage of First Ladies,” 55-83; Liz Watts, “Magazine Coverage of First Ladies from Hoover to Clinton: From Election Through the First One-Hundred Days of Office,” *American Journalism* 14 (1997): 495-519.

5. Clinton has been one of the most written-about first ladies. The following works are suggested: Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 1 (1998): 1-19; Jeffrey E. Cohen, “The Polls: Public Favorability Toward the First Lady, 1993-1999,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30 (2000): 575-85; Janis L. Edwards and Huey-Rong Chen, “The First Lady/First Wife in Editorial Cartoons: Rhetorical Visions Through Gendered Lenses,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 23 (2000): 367-91; Sandra Goodall, “De/Reconstructing Hillary: From the Retro Ashes of the Donna Reed Fantasy to a ‘90s View of Women and Politics,” in *Bill Clinton on Stump, State, and Stage*, ed. Stephen A. Smith (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1994); Janette Kenner Muir and Lisa M. Benitez, “Redefining the Role of the First Lady: The Rhetorical Style of Hillary Rodham Clinton,” in *The Clinton Presidency: Images, Issues, and Communication Strategies*, eds. Robert E. Denton Jr. and Rachel L. Holloway (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996); O’Connor, Nye, and Van Assendelft, “Wives in the White House: The Political Influence of First Ladies,” 835-51; Shawn J. Parry-Giles, “Mediating Hillary Rodham Clinton: Television News Practices and Image-Making in the Postmodern Age,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 17 (2000): 205-26; Scharrer and Bissell, “Overcoming Traditional Boundaries: The Role of Political Activity in Media Coverage of First Ladies,” 55-83; Dean Keith Simonton, “Presidents’ Wives and First Ladies: On Achieving Eminence Within a Traditional Gender Role,” *Sex Roles* 35 (1996): 309-26;

Charlotte Templin, "Hillary Clinton as Threat to Gender Norms: Cartoon Images of the First Lady," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 23 (1999): 20-36; Betty Houchin Winfield, "'Madam President'—Understanding a New Kind of First Lady," *Media Studies Journal* 8 (1994): 59; Betty Houchin Winfield, "The Making of an Image: Hillary Rodham Clinton and American Journalists," *Political Communication* 14 (1997): 243; Betty Houchin Winfield, "The First Lady, Political Power, and the Media: Who Elected Her Anyway?" *Women, Media, and Politics*, ed. Pippa Norris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

6. A few books have been written thus far about Laura Bush. See Christopher Anderson, *George and Laura: Portrait of an American Marriage* (New York: William Morrow, 2002); Antonia Felix, *America's First Lady, First Mother* (New York: Adams Media Corporation, 2002); Ann Gerhart, *The Perfect Wife: The Life and Choices of Laura Bush* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004).

7. Gail Collins, *America's Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines* (New York: William Morrow, 2003), 448.

8. Barbara Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement: Dynamics of Change in Social Movement Ideology and Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 54-5. For more on liberal, radical, and socialist feminism, see: Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1975); Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings From the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970); Miriam Schneir, ed., *Feminism in Our Time: The Essential Writings, World War II to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books,

1994); Winifred D. Wandersee, *On the Move: American Women in the 1970s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988).

9. Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), xix, 48-55.

10. Faludi, *Backlash*, 50; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 201.

11. May, *Homeward Bound*, 201.

12. Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement*, 103.

13. Mary Douglas Vavrus, *Postfeminist News: Political Women in Media Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 16. Vavrus states that the New Right also “reframed issues and even dismantled policies that second-wave feminists had fought to create and manage.”

14. Faludi, *Backlash*, xviii.

15. Judith Stacey, “Sexism by a Subtler Name? Postindustrial Conditions and Postfeminist Consciousness in the Silicon Valley,” *Socialist Review* 17 (1987): 8. Vavrus makes a similar point, noting that for the media, “feminism has become a scapegoat social movement—a straw figure easy to attack because it has been constructed as so extreme and counterproductive to women’s lives as to be laughable” [in “Putting Ally on Trial: Contesting Postfeminism in Popular Culture,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 23 (2000): 415].

16. Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women’s Movement Since 1970* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 87.

17. Postfeminism is sometimes conflated with “third wave feminism” by journalists, particularly when the term is used to discuss young women’s views on the ideals of second wave feminism. However, the two words are not synonymous. “Third wave” is often used to refer to “women who were reared in the wake of the women’s liberation movement of the seventies” [Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 13]. Other scholars see third wave feminism as the championing of difference as well as the increasing feminist activity around the world [see Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women’s Movement Anthology* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1984)]. Because the women being covered fall into the baby boomer category, not Generation X, I will use the term postfeminist in reference to the media’s characterization of the general social attitude regarding feminism and will not conflate it with “third wave feminism.”

18. Beth E. Schneider, “Political Generations and the Contemporary Women’s Movement,” *Sociological Inquiry* 58 (1988): 10. Several scholars discuss the news media’s pronouncement of the “death” of feminism, including: Baumgardner and Richards, *Manifesta*; Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism*; Susan Faludi, *Backlash*; and Stacey, “Sexism by a Subtler Name.”

19. Stacey, “Sexism by a Subtler Name?,” 8. Stacey notes that many feminists find the term “postfeminist” offensive because they believe the media employ the term simply “to give sexism a subtler name,” which was the conclusion offered by Geneva Overholser in a *New York Times* editorial titled, “What ‘Post-Feminism’ Really Means” (19 September 1986, p. 30).

20. Vavrus, *Postfeminist News*, 23.
21. Rayna Rapp, "Is the Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism Postfeminism?," *Socialist Review* 18 (1987): 32. Emphasis appears in original.
22. Robert Goldman, Deborah Heath and Sharon L. Smith, "Commodity Feminism," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 8 (1991): 333-51.
23. Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 172; Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 184. Cott states that, in the 1920s, the emerging consumer culture translated the rhetoric of feminism into the "consumerist concept of choice" based on packaging the "modern woman" into commodity form.
24. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 184.
25. Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 270.
26. During the modern era, women like first ladies were expected to combine the virtues of true womanhood with the public concerns of new women and feminists.
27. Faludi, *Backlash*, 77-8.
28. William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 223.
29. Vavrus, *Postfeminist News*, 22. Similarly, a *Time* magazine cover story titled "Women Face the '90s" in December 1989 claimed, "In the '80s they tried to have it all. Now they've just plain had it. Is there a future for feminism?" (in Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 275).

30. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism*, 88.
31. Vavrus, *Postfeminist News*, 17-9. See also Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism*, 94-5.
32. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism*, 88. Meanwhile, a new surge of “maternal” or “difference” feminism, reminiscent of the expediency arguments of the first wave and the social feminists of the progressive era, emerged in the 1980s. Maternal feminism, as defined by Dow, is “the idea that inherent qualities of womanhood (often linked to motherhood) should be valued for their positive application in the public sphere” (p. 165). This “new school of feminist thought” focused on a separate women’s culture and women’s “special ‘difference,’” reflecting true womanhood’s essentialism while rearticulating the republican motherhood and social feminist position that women, through their roles as wives and mothers and their inherent moral superiority to men, could improve public and political life. Just as in the past, arguments that tied women to their traditional roles as wives and mothers were used to help alleviate the stigma associated with feminism. Faludi claims, “Under the backlash, proponents of women’s ‘difference’ found that they were rewarded with approving critical and media attention” (*Backlash*, 327). However, difference arguments were also co-opted by conservatives as an abandonment of feminist ideals and “proof” that women’s “proper place” was in the domestic sphere (Faludi, *Backlash*, 331).
33. Faludi, *Backlash*, 56.
34. Vavrus, *Postfeminist News*, 17.
35. Faludi, *Backlash*, 93.
36. Stacey, “Sexism by a Subtler Name,” 11.

37. Vavrus, "Putting Ally on Trial: Contesting Postfeminism in Popular Culture," 415.

38. Stacey, "Sexism by a Subtler Name," 24.

39. Meanwhile, reporters also recognized feminism's role in phenomena such as the "gender gap" of the 1980s and 1992's so-called "Year of the Woman." According to Abzug, the "gender gap" emerged in the 1980 elections and by 1982 was considered "an alarming trend" by the Reagan White House in which "women were voting differently than men, and they were voting *against* the President's policies and candidates" [Bella Abzug with Mim Kelber, *Gender Gap: Bella Abzug's Guide to Political Power for American Women* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 1]. The "Year of the Woman" was widely referred to by the media "to herald a purportedly pro-woman political climate." According to Vavrus, the "year" was actually a "thirteen-month phenomenon from the time Anita Hill's name appeared in public discourse (October 6, 1991) to the presidential election of 1993 (November 6), when Barbara Boxer, Carol Mosley-Braun, Dianne Feinstein, Patty Murray, and Lynn Yeakel ran for U.S. Senate Seats" (Vavrus, *Postfeminist News*, 5).

40. May, *Homeward Bound*, 202.

41. Lally Weymouth, "The Biggest Role of Nancy's Life," *New York Times Magazine*, 26 October 1980, 45.

42. Weymouth, "The Biggest Role of Nancy's Life," 45.

43. Enid Nemy, "Words From Friends: A New White House Style Is On the Way," *New York Times Magazine*, 9 November 1980, 80.

44. Bush's status as a "grandmother" was mentioned in almost every story written about her. The following are just a sample from 1992 that use the phrase "grandmotherly image": Diana McLellan, "Barbara Bush," *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1992, 192; Donnie Radcliffe, "Granny Get Your Gun: The Other Mrs. Bush," *Washington Post*, 19 August 1992, B1; Alessandra Stanley, "Barbara Bush: the un-Secret Weapon," *New York Times*, 19 August 1992, A15; Charles Strum, "Barbara Bush: Bush's 'Secret Weapon' Enters New Jersey Battle," *New York Times*, 22 October 1992, A21.

45. Alessandra Stanley, "Republicans Present Marilyn as a Self-Sacrificing 90s Supermom," *New York Times*, 18 August 1992, A7.

46. Alessandra Stanley, "First Lady on Abortion: Not a Platform Issue," *New York Times*, 14 August 1992, A1.

47. Cindy Adams, "Talking With the Next First Lady," *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1988, 154.

48. Donnie Radcliffe, "Barbara Bush: Unassuming, Underestimated, Stumping for the Veep," *Washington Post*, 5 June 1988, F1.

49. Weymouth, "The Biggest Role of Nancy's Life," 45.

50. "Nancy Reagan Face-Off," *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1980, 111.

Reagan's comments were reminiscent of those made by Pat Nixon made a decade earlier. Nixon was quoted as saying, "I am for women. I am for equal rights and equal pay for equal work. But I don't believe in parades and things like that I don't think women gain anything when they use loud techniques. The smarter thing would be to work quietly, to write your Congressman. And above all, to be qualified" (Lenore Hershey, "The 'New' Pat Nixon," *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1972, 125).

51. Sharon Olsen, "George and Barbara: A Sense of Sharing," *McCall's*, September 1988, 84.
52. Bernard Weinraub, "'Barbara Bush Links Her Weight to Thyroid Condition,'" *New York Times*, 30 March 1989, A17.
53. Frank Rich, "Whose Hillary?," *New York Times Magazine*, 13 June 1993, 70.
See also: Felicity Barringer, "From Lawyer to Mother; Now, Both of the Above," *New York Times*, 30 October 1992, A18.
54. Felicity Barringer, "Hillary Clinton's New Role: The Description is Wide Open," *New York Times*, 16 November 1992, A1.
55. Felicity Barringer, "The White House Office That Isn't There" *New York Times*, 6 December 1992, 4:1.
56. Sally Quinn, "Is America Ready for Hillary Clinton? The Candidates' Wife is the Very Model of the Modern Working Woman," *Washington Post*, 9 August 1992, C1.
57. Catherine Breslin, "Hillary Clinton," *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1992, 190.
58. Robin Toner, "Hillary Clinton is Back! Details Inside," *New York Times*, 7 May 1993, A18.
59. Steven R. Weisman, "St. Hillary's Homecoming," *New York Times*, 28 August 1996, A18.
60. Chafe says that the "pro-family, anti-ERA coalition powerfully evoked themes of religiosity and patriotism. Feminists were associated with secular humanism, an anti-religious force that placed human beings ahead of God and the selfish individual ahead of society" (Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 217).

61. Susan Faludi, "The Power Laugh," *New York Times*, 20 December 1992, 4:13.
62. Amy E. Schwartz, "'Good Girls, Bad Girls,': Pitting Women Against Each Other in a Family Values Farce," *Washington Post*, 5 September 1992, A29.
63. Stanley, "Republicans Present Marilyn as a Self-Sacrificing 90s Supermom," A7.
64. Alessandra Stanley, "'Family Values' and Women: Is G.O.P. a House Divided?," *New York Times*, 21 August 1992, A1.
65. Lloyd Grove, "The Woman With a Ticket to Ride; Hillary Clinton's New Image: Fresh From the Oven," *Washington Post*, 16 July 1992, C1; Howard Kurtz, "Portraits of a First Lady: Media Strive to Define Hillary Clinton," *Washington Post*, 21 November 1992, A1.
66. Tamar Lewin, "Legal Scholars See Distortion in Attacks on Hillary Clinton," *New York Times*, 24 August 1992, A1.
67. Stanley, "Republicans Present Marilyn as a Self-Sacrificing 90s Supermom," A7.
68. Marjorie Williams, "Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore," *Washington Post Magazine*, 1 November 1992, 11.
69. "A Word From the Wives," *New York Times*, 21 August 1992, A24.
70. Elizabeth Kolbert, "On TV, a Victory in Family Numbers," *New York Times*, 21 August 1992, A12.
71. Williams, "Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore," 11.
72. Frank Bruni, "Quiet Strength: For Laura Bush, a Direction She Never Wished to Go In," *New York Times*, 31 July 2000, A1.

73. Lois Romano, "First Lady Puts Privacy First; Reluctant Star Likely to Set Her Own Terms," *Washington Post*, 20 January 2001, A16.

74. Williams, "Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore," 11.

75. Winfield defines "traditional roles" as that of escort, hostess, and noblesse oblige, and positions of policy maker and political advisor as "nontraditional roles" (Winfield, "The Making of an Image: Hillary Rodham Clinton and American Journalists," 243). As discussed in the last chapter, Myra Gutin considers "independent advocate" to be a nontraditional role as well [Myra G. Gutin, *The President's Partner: The First Lady in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988)].

76. Maureen Dowd, "First Lady Celebrated on 'a Great Day,'" *New York Times*, 23 August 1984, A24.

77. John Corry, "Special Looks at Nancy Reagan and Her Power," *New York Times*, 24 June 1985, C14.

78. Beth Weinhouse, "Nancy Reagan: Traditional First Lady," *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1985, 138.

79. Charlotte Curtis, "A Private Talk With Nancy Reagan," *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1981, 132.

80. Bernard Weinraub, "A Down-to-Earth Tenant for an Exclusive Address," *New York Times*, 15 January 1989, 1.

81. Donnie Radcliffe, "Vintage Barbara," *Washington Post*, 20 January 1989, 34.

82. Ann Gerhart, "Learning to Read Laura Bush: The First Lady's Quietude Masks a Passionate Interest in Ideas," *Washington Post*, 22 March 2001, C1.

83. Alison Mitchell, "The Governor's Wife: A Political Wallflower Has Full Dance Card," *New York Times*, 21 September 2000, A25.

84. Bruni, "Quiet Strength," A1. Another article noted that Laura Bush was recognized for being "one of the few people able to temper her sometimes brash husband" (Romano, "First Lady Puts Privacy First," A16).

85. Lois Romano, "Bushes Planning to Hit Campaign Trail Together," *Washington Post*, 4 August 2000, A16.

86. Steven R. Weisman, "Nancy Reagan's Role Grows," *New York Times*, 11 November 1984, 2. See also: Maureen Dowd, "A More Relaxed Nancy Reagan Tours the South," *New York Times*, 14 October 1984, 28; Donnie Radcliffe, "'There Aren't Any Secrets Between Us,'" *Washington Post*, 22 August 1984, B1; Bernard Weinraub, "The Washingtonization of Nancy Reagan," *New York Times*, 26 March 1985, A20.

87. Donnie Radcliffe, "Nancy Reagan: 'Vicious and Cruel' Carter Tactics Prompt Rare Outburst of Anger," *Washington Post*, 23 October 1980, D1.

88. Bernard Weinraub, "Mrs. Reagan, in Campaign Ad, Assails Statements by Carter on Her Husband," *New York Times*, 26 October 1980, 41. See also Dudley Clendinen, "What a Woman Endures For Her Candidate," *New York Times*, 23 October 1980, B12.

89. Weisman, "Nancy Reagan's Role Grows," 2.

90. Maureen Dowd, "Washington Talk; Politics," *New York Times*, 19 June 1989, B8.

91. Alison Cook, "At Home With Barbara Bush," *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1990, 230.

92. For more on Eisenhower as protector, see Chapter Three and the following articles: Laurie Johnston, "'Policeman for Ike' is Wife's Idea of Her Principal Role in Public Life," *New York Times*, 3 September 1952, 23; "Mrs. Eisenhower a Mystery Fan," *New York Times*, 9 November 1952, 64.

93. Fears regarding the "hidden power" of first emerged in press criticism of the political activists of the prior period, but stories using such framing increased during this period. Both Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kati Marton discuss the fears surrounding the "hidden power" of first ladies. See Campbell, "The Rhetorical Presidency: A Two-Person Career," in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 181-88; and Marton, *Hidden Power: Presidential Marriages That Shaped Our Recent History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001), 3-11.

94. Radcliffe, "'There Aren't Any Secrets Between Us,'" B1; Donnie Radcliffe, "The Influential Nancy Reagan; Time Looks at Her Impact, Image, and the Great Birth-Date Issue," *Washington Post*, 7 January 1985, D1.

95. Weymouth, "The Biggest Role of Nancy's Life," 45. See also: Radcliffe, "'There Aren't Any Secrets Between Us,'" B1.

96. Weinraub, "The Washingtonization of Nancy Reagan," A20.

97. While on vacation in August of 1984, Reagan was asked by reporters about the collapse of "Star Wars" talks with the Soviets. According to the *New York Times* account, "At his side, murmuring through the fixed smile that seems required of American political spouses, Mrs. Reagan was overheard prompting him: 'We're doing everything we can.' Instantly, he echoed: 'We're doing everything we can'" (Francis X. Clines, "Avoiding Discouraging Words at the Ranch," *New York Times*, 5 August 1984,

E3). Reagan claimed that she “did not prompt” her husband’s response but was “simply talking to herself.” She told reporters, “I was so surprised that Ronnie heard me. I was really talking low. I must have been on his good side or he had that gizmo turned up or whatever. But I wasn’t prompting him” (“Nancy Reagan Denies Giving President Cue,” *New York Times*, 19 August 1984, 29). See also Radcliffe, ““There Aren’t Any Secrets Between Us,”” B1.

98. Weymouth, “The Biggest Role of Nancy’s Life,” 45. See also “Nancy Reagan Criticizes Aides to President,” *New York Times*, 13 November 1988, 1; Michael Wines, “First Lady Hopes for Unglamorous Legacy,” *New York Times*, 15 January 1989, 20.

99. Radcliffe, ““There Aren’t Any Secrets Between Us,”” B1.

100. Radcliffe, “The Influential Nancy Reagan,” D1.

101. “Nancy Reagan Criticizes Aides to President,” 30.

102. The notion of “two-for-one” was mentioned in all of these stories: Gwen Ifill, “Clinton Wants Wife at Cabinet Table,” *New York Times*, 19 December 1992, 8; Karen Lehrman, “Beware the Cookie Monster,” *New York Times*, 18 July 1992, 23; Robert Pear, “Settling in: First Lady Hillary Clinton Gets Policy Job and New Office,” *New York Times*, 22 January 1993, A1; Alessandra Stanley, “A Softer Image for Hillary Clinton,” *New York Times*, 13 July 1992, B1; Quinn, “Is America Ready for Hillary Clinton?,” C1.

103. The following stories bring up the “co-president” issue: Peter Baker, “First Lady Remains Vital Force in White House; Recognizing the Power of Her Voice and the Contours of Her Limitations,” *Washington Post*, 20 January 1997, A20; Kurtz, “Portraits

of a First Lady: Media Strive to Define Hillary Clinton,” A1; Judy Mann, “Hillary Horton?,” *Washington Post*, 21 August 1992, E3; Mary McGrory, “A Worthy Mission for Hillary,” *Washington Post*, 26 November 1992, A2; Quinn, “Is America Ready for Hillary Clinton?,” C1.

104. Ifill, “Clinton Wants Wife at Cabinet Table,” 8. Another *New York Times* story noted in 1992 that “neither she nor her husband is hiding her role as policy advocate” (Richard L. Berke, “The Transition: The Other Clinton Helps Shape the Administration,” *New York Times*, 14 December 1992, B6).

105. Gail Collins, “The Age of the Smart Woman,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1993, 146.

106. Mary McGrory, “A Worthy Mission for Hillary,” *Washington Post*, 26 November, A2.

107. Ifill, “Clinton Wants Wife at Cabinet Table,” 8.

108. Stanley, “A Softer Image for Hillary Clinton,” B1.

109. Williams, “Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore,” 11.

110. Barringer, “Hillary Clinton’s New Role: The Description is Wide Open,” A1.

111. Grove, “The Woman With a Ticket to Ride; Hillary Clinton’s New Image: Fresh From the Oven,” C1.

112. Thomas L. Friedman, “Hillary Clinton to Head Panel on Health Care,” *New York Times*, 26 January 1993, A1.

113. Pear, "Settling in: First Lady Hillary Clinton Gets Policy Job and New Office," A1.
114. Michael Kelly, "Hillary Clinton Visits Capitol in Vivid Display of Her Clout," *New York Times*, 5 February 1993, A1. A later article, also by the *Times*, called another private briefing of Senate Democrats and Republicans "remarkable" (Robin Toner, "Hillary Clinton's Bipartisan Pitch for Health Care," *New York Times*, 1 May 1993, A8).
115. Blaine Harden, "Finely Tailored Roles; Candidates' Wives Display Distinct Campaign Styles," *Washington Post*, 1 October 1996, A1; David Maraniss, "First Lady in Prime Time; Target For Criticism Recaptures Spotlight," *Washington Post*, 27 August 1996, A1.
116. Baker, "First Lady Remains Vital Force in White House," A20.
117. Diana McLellan, "Barbara Bush," *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1992, 192.
118. Radcliffe, "Barbara Bush: Unassuming, Underestimated, Stumping for the Veep," F1.
119. Romano, "First Lady Puts Privacy First," A16.
120. Bruni, "Quiet Strength," A1.
121. Marian Burros, "Making the White House a Home," *New York Times*, 23 February 2001, A11.
122. McLellan, "Barbara Bush," 192.
123. Radcliffe, "Granny Get Your Gun," B1.

124. Donnie Radcliffe, "Barbara Bush's Vow of Silence; Decision to Be Mum on Controversial Issues Announced in Tokyo," *Washington Post*, 24 February 1989, C1.

125. Stanley, "First Lady on Abortion: Not a Platform Issue," A1.

126. Stanley, "Barbara Bush, the un-Secret Weapon," A15. Bush told reporters, "I'm through with abortion. I'm not running for President. George Bush is."

127. Campbell, "The Rhetorical Presidency: A Two-Person Career," 181. Emphasis in original.

128. Williams, "Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore," 11.

129. Adams, "Talking With the Next First Lady," 154; Sarah Booth Conroy, "The Benefit of Borrowing a Name," *Washington Post*, 13 December 1992, F1. Winfield notes that noblesse oblige "represents a natural extension of women's volunteer work in the community" (Winfield, "The First Lady, Political Power, and the Media," 167).

130. David S. Broder, "The Special Strengths of Barbara Bush," *Washington Post*, 22 January 1989, D7.

131. Sarah Booth Conroy, "For Iona House, Mrs. Bush's Name Means Magic," *Washington Post*, 7 May 1989, F1. She regularly visited D.C. soup kitchens, shelters, and hospitals, earning her the title of "First Volunteer" (see Donnie Radcliffe, "The Volunteer First Lady: At Martha's Table, Barbara Bush Sets an Example," *Washington Post*, 1 February 1989, D1; Donnie Radcliffe, "Fitting Gifts From Mrs. Bush," *Washington Post*, 4 February 1989, G1; Lois Romano, "Barbara Bush's Healing Touch: Mrs. Bush at the Ronald McDonald House," *Washington Post*, 13 May 1989, C2).

132. Conroy, "The Benefit of Borrowing a Name," F1.

133. Lois Romano, "The Hug that Says it All; Barbara Bush Visits AIDS Infants," *Washington Post*, 23 March 1989, D2.

134. Barbara Gamarekian, "Barbara Bush Announces Formation of Literacy Foundation," *New York Times*, 7 March 1989, A16; William Raspberry, "Barbara Bush's Pet Project," *Washington Post*, 11 March 1989, A23. She became involved with literacy because of her own experiences with her son, Neil, who was dyslexic.

135. Ann Gerhart, "The First Lady's School Cheer; Mrs. Bush Stresses Need for Teachers," *Washington Post*, 27 February 2001, C1. The following articles also deal with Bush's advocacy efforts: Darragh Johnson and Justin Blum, "Living 'a Librarian's Dream': Laura Bush Spends Day Extolling Writers, Touting Reading," *Washington Post*, 20 January 2001, B1; Elaine Sciolino, "Transition in Washington: The New First Lady; Laura Bush Honors Writers as the Audience Honors Her," *New York Times*, 20 January, 2001, A15; Linton Weeks, "Laura Bush to Host National Books Festival," *Washington Post*, 14 June 2001, C2.

136. Radcliffe, "Washington Wire," C2.

137. Chuck Conconi, "Personalities," *Washington Post*, 18 March 1985, D3.

138. Sally Koslow, "Hillary Rodham Clinton," *McCall's*, November 1996, 199.

139. Victoria Falls, "The Woman Behind the Mask; Away From Washington, Hillary Clinton Shows a Different Face," *Washington Post*, 27 March 1997, B1.

140. Falls, "The Woman Behind the Mask; Away From Washington, Hillary Clinton Shows a Different Face," B1.

141. Koslow, "Hillary Rodham Clinton," 148. Clinton addressed the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. She also visited several countries

where she met with female leaders to discuss women's issues. For examples, see Jane Perlez, "Hillary Clinton Visits Romanian Children," *New York Times*, 2 July 1996, A6; Jane Perlez, "Hillary Clinton Encourages Polish Women to Push for Wider Rights," *New York Times*, 4 July 1996, A3.

142. James Bennet, "Abortion-Rights Backers Win High-Level Support," *New York Times*, 23 January 1997, A14; Peter Baker, "Addressing a Conflict Raised by Families, Women's Careers; Hillary Clinton Hosts Conference on Early Childhood Education," *Washington Post*, 17 April 1997, A3; Peter Barker, "Saying Her Views Haven't Changed, First Lady Takes on 'Micro' Agenda," *Washington Post*, 31 January 1997, A6; James Bennet, "First Lady Re-Emerges With an Aid Plan for Tiny Businesses," *New York Times*, 31 January 1997, A19.

143. James Bennet, "The First Lady: Hillary Clinton, an Evolutionary Tale," *New York Times*, 20 January 1997, A14. See also: Bennet, "First Lady Re-Emerges With an Aid Plan for Tiny Businesses," A19; Thomas W. Lippman, "Hillary Clinton Urges Public to Support Foreign Aid," *Washington Post*, 17 June 1997, A13.

144. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Diane M. Blair, "The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women's Voice, 1789-2002," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 582.

145. Linda Witt, Karen M. Paget, and Glenna Matthews, *Running as a Woman: Gender and Power in American Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 182.

146. Ifill, "Clinton Wants Wife at Cabinet Table," 8.

147. Weymouth, "The Biggest Role of Nancy's Life," 45.

148. Dowd, "A More Relaxed Nancy Reagan Tours the South," 28.

149. Stanley, "A Softer Image for Hillary," B1. Similarly, a *New York Times* article claimed that Reagan "lobbied energetically with her passive husband about key appointments; her influence ended Donald Regan's tenure as chief of staff. Far more curious was Mrs. Reagan's reliance on Joan Quigley, an astrologer, whose readings appear to have influenced the timing of the Geneva and Reykjavik summit meetings and the President's changing views about the Soviet Union (all to the sometimes baffled consternation of the President's other handlers)" (Karl E. Meyer, "The President's Other Running Mate," *New York Times*, 27 January 1993, A22).

150. Grove, "Hillary's New Image: Fresh From the Oven," C1. Other stories that referenced Reagan and Carter together include Quinn, "Is America Ready for Hillary Clinton?," C1; Stanley, "A Softer Image for Hillary Clinton," B1.

151. Koslow, "Hillary Rodham Clinton," 43.

152. Kurtz, "Portraits of a First Lady," A1.

153. Berke, "The Transition: The Other Clinton Helps Shape the Administration," B6; Quinn, "Is America Ready for Hillary Clinton?," C1; Kevin Sack, "Mrs. Clinton Invokes Memories of Famed and Faulted," *New York Times*, 27 August 1996, A11; Quindlen, "Public and Private; The (New) Hillary Problem," 4:17.

154. Francis X. Clines, "Mrs. Clinton Calls Sessions Intellectual, Not Spiritual," *New York Times*, 25 June 1996, A13; Mary McGrory, "Not Messianic, Maybe, But Messy," *Washington Post*, 25 June 1996, A2. However, Clinton denied actually "communing" with Roosevelt's spirit in séances, as reported in a series of stories. After this story was first reported, Clinton frequently joked about her "conversations" with Roosevelt.

155. Broder, "The Special Strengths of Barbara Bush," D7.
156. Brown, "The First Lady-Elect: What She Is and Isn't," 42.
157. Elaine Sciolino, "Laura Bush Sees Everything in Its Place, Including Herself," *New York Times*, 15 January 2001, A1.
158. Cook, "At Home With Barbara Bush," 159.
159. Brown, "The First Lady-Elect: What She Is and Isn't," 42.
160. Stanley, "Barbara Bush, the un-Secret Weapon," A15.
161. Weinraub, "A Down-to-Earth Tenant For an Exclusive Address," 1.
162. Sciolino, "Laura Bush Sees Everything in Its Place, Including Herself," A1.
163. Anne-Marie Schiro, "It Began With Dolley Madison," *New York Times*, 18 October 1988, A26.
164. Donnie Radcliffe, "The First Lady Reshapes Her Royal Image," *Washington Post*, 21 January 1985, G7.
165. Curtis, "A Private Talk With Nancy Reagan," 134.
166. Collins, "The Age of the Smart Woman," 146.
167. Radcliffe, "The First Lady Reshapes Her Royal Image," G7.
168. Leslie Bennetts, "With a New First Lady, a New Style," *New York Times*, 21 January 1981, B6.
169. Reagan was criticized for her \$25,000 inaugural wardrobes, borrowing millions worth of designer clothing and jewels, raising \$800,000 to redecorate the private quarters of the White House, and purchasing a \$209,000 set of presidential china. See Bennetts, "With a New First Lady, a New Style," B6; Mary McGrory, "A Long Way

From Robert Frost,” *Washington Post*, 17 January 1985, A2; Radcliffe, “The First Lady Reshapes Her Royal Image,” G7.

170. Bennetts, “With a New First Lady, a New Style,” B6. See also Radcliffe, “The First Lady Reshapes Her Royal Image,” G7.

171. Schiro, “It Began With Dolley Madison,” A26.

172. Winfield, “The First Lady, Political Power, and the Media,” 166.

173. Judy Mann, “Homemakers on Parade,” *Washington Post*, 12 August 1992, E15. See also Manegold, “Women Get Into Political Football—as the Ball,” 4:1.

174. Williams, “Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore,” 11. An article in the *Washington Post* said that “Hillary Clinton, who has been tirelessly slammed as too feminist or contrasted with ‘good’ family women” like Bush and Quayle (Schwartz, “‘Good Girls, Bad Girls’; Pitting Women Against Each Other in a Family Values Farce,” A29).

175. Lewin, “Legal Scholars See Distortion in Attacks on Hillary Clinton,” A1. Bill Clinton defended his wife. According to a *New York Times* article, “Mr. Clinton said that by attacking his wife the Republicans were seeking to portray all working women negatively. By doing so, he said, the Republicans were trying to turn Mrs. Clinton into a caricature of a woman who would choose a career over her family” (Gwen Ifill, “Clinton Assails G.O.P. Attacks Aimed at Wife,” *New York Times*, 20 August 1992, A22).

176. Mann, “Homemakers on Parade,” E15.

177. “Barbara Bush...Her Lifestyle,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, June 1989, 119; Strum, “Barbara Bush; Bush’s ‘Secret Weapon’ Enters New Jersey Battle,” A21.

178. Stanley, “Barbara Bush, the un-Secret Weapon,” A15.

179. Stanley, "Barbara Bush, the un-Secret Weapon," A15.
180. Radcliffe, "Granny Get Your Gun," B1.
181. Toner, "Backlash for Hillary Clinton," A1.
182. Anna Quindlen, "Public and Private: Wives for Wives' Sake," *New York Times*, 9 August 1992, 4:17. Similarly, Mann opened her article by saying, "Just think what the Republicans would have done if Hillary Clinton had addressed the Democratic National Convention" (Mann, "Homemakers on Parade," E15).
183. Manegold, "Women Get Into Political Football—as the Ball," 4:1.
184. Mann, "Homemakers on Parade," E15. See also Quindlen, "Public and Private," 4:17.
185. Manegold, "Women Get Into Political Football—as the Ball," 4:1.
186. Lehrman, "Beware the Cookie Monster," 23.
187. Manegold, "Women Get Into Political Football—as the Ball," 4:1.
188. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 243.
189. Schwartz, "'Good Girls, Bad Girls'; Pitting Women Against Each Other in a Family Values Farce," A29.
190. Williams, "Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore," 11.
191. Gerhart, "Learning to Read Laura Bush," C1.
192. Gerhart, "Learning to Read Laura Bush," C1.
193. Radcliffe, "Granny Get Your Gun," B1.
194. Quinn, "Is America Ready for Hillary Clinton," C1.
195. Quinn, "Is America Ready for Hillary Clinton?," C1.

196. Purnick, "Let Hillary Be Hillary," A20.

197. Quindlen, "Public and Private; The Two Faces of Eve," A21. Quindlen also said the "job description is a stereotype that no real woman has ever fit except perhaps June Cleaver on her good days."

198. Williams, "Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore," 11.

199. Williams, "Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore," 11.

200. Breslin, "Hillary Clinton," 189. Emphasis in original.

201. Kurtz, "Portraits of a First Lady: Media Strive to Define Hillary Clinton," A1.

202. Kurtz, "Portraits of a First Lady," A1.

203. Martha Sherrill, "The First Lady or the Tiger; Can Hillary Clinton Be Everything to Everybody?," *Washington Post*, 18 November 1992, C1.

204. Anna Quindlen, "Public and Private; The Two Faces of Eve," *New York Times*, 15 July 1992, A21. See also Toner, "Backlash for Hillary Clinton," A1; and Dan Balz, "It Takes a Family; At Convention Hall, It's Hillary's Night," *Washington Post*, 28 August 1996, A27.

205. Rich, "Whose Hillary?," 70.

206. Anna Quindlen, "The (New) Hillary Problem," *New York Times*, 8 November 1992, 4:1.

207. Meredith Berkman, "Hillary Now," *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 2000, 199, 146. Similarly, a *Washington Post* article referred to "a hard-edged career woman and

lightening rod for Republican criticism” (Carla Hall, “Hillary the Homemaker? Candidate’s Wife Brings Cookies, Advice to Weekday TV Audience,” *Washington Post*, 17 September 1992, C1). See also Berke, “Democrats Lay Claim to Family Values,” A1; Stanley, “A Softer Image for Hillary Clinton,” B1.

208. Breslin, “Hillary Clinton,” 190. For other stories critiquing her ambition, see Grove, “Hillary Clinton’s New Image,” C1; Kurtz, “Portraits of a First Lady,” A1; Purnick, “Let Hillary Be Hillary,” A20; Quindlen, “Public and Private; The Two Faces of Eve,” A21; Quinn, “Is America Ready for Hillary Clinton?,” C1; Stanley, “A Softer Image for Hillary,” B1; Williams, “Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore,” 11.

209. Williams, “Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore,” 11.

210. Quinn, “Is America Ready for Hillary Clinton?,” C1. The sexualized descriptors continued to follow Clinton throughout her tenure. A 1996 campaign article asked, “Will she be able to convince skeptics that she is not cold, manipulative, dogmatic, radical, overly programmatic, domineering, inauthentic, or any of the other characterizations or stereotypes that her enemies have drawn of her over the past four years?” (Maraniss, “First Lady in Prime Time,” A1).

211. Witt, Paget, and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 194.

212. Kurtz, “Portraits of a First Lady,” A1. Kurtz noted that an article in the conservative magazine *American Spectator* was the first to use this series of epitaphs together. However, they were then repeated in numerous articles. One of more of these descriptions can also be found in the following articles: Hall, “Hillary the Homemaker?,”

C1; Grove, "Hillary Clinton's New Image," C1; Rich, "Whose Hillary?," 70; Stanley, "A Softer Image for Hillary Clinton," B1; Williams, "Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore," 11.

213. Toner, "Backlash for Hillary Clinton," A1.

214. Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman: Woman's Power and Woman's Place in the United States, 1630-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.

215. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 4.

216. Faludi, "The Power Laugh," 4:13. Emphasis in original.

217. Bennet, "The First Lady: Hillary Clinton, an Evolutionary Tale," A14.

218. Faludi, "The Power Laugh," 4:13.

219. Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 4.

220. Robin Toner, "Backlash for Hillary Clinton Puts Negative Image to Rout," *New York Times*, 24 September 1992, A1.

221. Pear, "Settling In: First Lady Gets Policy Job and New Office," A1.

222. Lehrman, "Beware the Cookie Monster," 23. See also Stanley, "A Softer Image for Hillary," B1.

223. Frank Bruni, "On the Trail, She's First Mom and Wife," *New York Times*, 13 October 1996, 20. See also Weisman, "St. Hillary's Homecoming," A18.

224. Bruni, "On the Trail, She's First Mom and Wife," 20. However, the article also pointed out that some voters were "saddened by Mrs. Clinton's relative reticence."

225. Edward Walsh, "Democrats Stress Family Themes; First Lady Receives Thunderous Reception, Takes Jab at Dole Criticism," *Washington Post*, 28 August 1996,

A1. See also R.W. Apple, Jr., “Teacher, Not a Celebrity,” *New York Times*, 28 August 1996, A1.

226. Harden, “Finely Tailored Roles; Candidates’ Wives Display Distinct Campaign Styles,” A1.

227. Bennet, “Hillary Clinton, An Evolutionary Tale,” A14.

228. Peter Baker, “Saying Her Views Haven’t Changed, First Lady Takes on ‘Micro-Agenda,’” *Washington Post*, 31 January 1997, A6. Another story noted that Clinton’s press conference was her first “in more than two years” (Bennet, “Hillary Clinton, An Evolutionary Tale,” A14).

229. Russell, “Not Queen, Not Prisoner—Just the President’s Wife,” A23.

230. Russell, “Not Queen, Not Prisoner—Just the President’s Wife,” A23.

231. Christine Reinhardt, “Personal Pleasures,” *McCall’s*, October 1992, 40.

232. Quinn, “Is America Ready for Hillary Clinton?,” C1.

Afterword Notes

1. Mark Leibovich, “On the Campaign Trail, Laura Bush is 180 Degrees from Teresa Kerry,” *Washington Post*, 11 August 2004, C1.

2. I am referring to the article featured at the beginning of Chapter Two (“Mrs. McKinley, Mrs. Bryan: A Comparison,” *Harper’s Bazaar*, 11 August 1900, 955-6).

3. The articles on Kerry and Bush were drawn from issues of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* published between June 1 and September 1, 2004, and were selected using the same criteria applied throughout this study.

4. Ginia Bellafante, “It Didn’t Start With Jackie: First Lady Style Makes Waves,” *New York Times*, 3 August 2004, B10.

5. Alessandra Stanley, "The First Lady's Influence is Starting to Reveal Itself," *New York Times*, 1 September 2004, P9.
6. Stanley, "The First Lady's Influence is Starting to Reveal Itself," P9.
7. "Political Family Rules," *New York Times*, 1 August, 2004, 4:10.
8. Howard Kurtz, "Giving 'Em What They Want: In Heinz Kerry's Speech, Commentators Find Plenty to Talk About," *Washington Post*, 29 July 2004, A26. Kurtz offers a summary of both print and broadcast news coverage of Kerry's DNC speech, highlighting the various descriptions of Kerry offered by journalists.
9. "Outspoken" and "unscripted," the most frequent descriptors applied to Kerry, appear in the following articles: David S. Broder, "Democrats Focus on Healing Divisions; Addressing Convention, Newcomers Set Themes," *Washington Post*, 28 July 2004, A1; Damien Cave, "Now, She's 'Organic' (That's a Plus)," *New York Times*, 1 August 2004, 4:5; Maureen Dowd, "Breck Girl Takes on Dr. No," *New York Times*, 8 July 2004, A21; Maureen Dowd, "Out of Africa," *New York Times*, 18 July 2004, 4:13; Kurtz, "Giving 'Em What They Want: In Heinz Kerry's Speech, Commentators Find Plenty to Talk About," A26; Leibovich, "On the Campaign Trail, Laura Bush is 180 Degrees from Teresa Kerry," C1; Evelyn Nieves, "Women Voice Support for Heinz Kerry," *Washington Post*, 27 July 2004, A15; Evelyn Nieves, "Would-Be First Lady Speaks Out; In Address, She Lauds Husband's Qualities and Pays Homage to Women," *Washington Post*, 28 July 2004, A23; Joyce Purnick, "To Become First Lady, Just Stand By," *New York Times*, 29 July 2004, B1; Jim Rutenberg, "Heinz Kerry Comment Gains Long-Dreaded Attention," *New York Times*, 27 July 2004, P2; Robin Toner and Todd S. Purdim, "On 2nd Night, Unity is Theme for Democrats," *New York Times*, 28 July 2004,

A1; Jodi Wilgoren, "Teresa Heinz Kerry's Specialty is Straight Talk," *New York Times*, 15 July 2004, A16.

10. Dowd, "Breck Girl Takes on Dr. No," A21. The "Breck Girl" referred to in the headline is not Teresa Heinz Kerry, but John Edwards, who "has been nicknamed the Breck Girl by Bush officials."

11. Wilgoren, "Teresa Heinz Kerry's Specialty is Straight Talk," A16.

12. Nieves, "Would-Be First Lady Speaks Out," A23. See also Purnick, "To Become First Lady, Just Stand By," B1.

13. Purnick, "To Become First Lady, Just Stand By," B1.

14. Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki, "Framing as Strategic Action in Public Deliberation," in *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, eds. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar Gandy, Jr., and August E. Grant (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001), 41.

15. Stephen D. Reese, "Prologue—Framing Public Life: A Bridging Model for Media Research," in *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, eds. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar Gandy, Jr., and August E. Grant (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001), 19.

16. Stanley, "The First Lady's Influence is Starting to Reveal Itself," P9.

17. Randy Kennedy, "The Not-So-Reluctant Campaigner," *New York Times*, 12 August 2004, A23.

18. Leibovich, "On the Campaign Trail, Laura Bush is 180 Degrees from Teresa Kerry," C1.

19. Kennedy, "The Not-So-Reluctant Campaigner," A23.

20. Leibovich, "On the Campaign Trail, Laura Bush is 180 Degrees from Teresa Kerry," C1.

21. Randy Kennedy, "First Lady Defends Limits on Stem Cell Research," *New York Times*, 10 August 2004, A16.

22. Richard Cohen, "Stem Cell Muddle," *The Washington Post*, 12 August 2004, A23. Another story viewed Bush's comments as evidence that she was "taking a larger and more assertive role" in the campaign (Kennedy, "First Lady Defends Limits on Stem Cell Research," A16).

23. Rutenberg, "Heinz Kerry Comment Gains Long Dreaded Attention," P2.

24. Leibovich, "On the Campaign Trail, Laura Bush is 180 Degrees from Teresa Kerry," C1. See also Michael Cooper, "Swing-State Delegates Confident in Bush and Don't Much Like Kerry," *New York Times*, 31 August 2004, P2.

25. Purnick, "To Become First Lady, Just Stand By," B1. The quote originally appeared in Rutenberg, "Heinz Kerry Comment Gains Long Dreaded Attention," P2.

26. The following stories mention the "shove it" incident: "'Shove It,' Heinz Kerry Says to Journalist," *Washington Post*, 26 July 2004, A12; "Heinz Kerry Has Retort for Bush Fans," *Washington Post*, 3 August 2004, A3; Art Buchwald, "Armchair Conventioneers," *Washington Post*, 3 August 2004, C3; Kurtz, "Giving 'Em What They Want: In Heinz Kerry's Speech, Commentators Find Plenty to Talk About," A26; Rick Lyman, "Two Undecided on Voting for Kerry, or Even Anyone," *New York Times*, 30 July 2004, P7; Nieves, "Women Voice Support for Heinz Kerry," A15; Rutenberg, "Heinz Kerry Comment Gains Long Dreaded Attention," P2; Alessandra Stanley, "As Heinz Kerry Speaks Out, Networks Listen Selectively," *New York Times*, 28 July 2004,

P8; Sheryl Gay Stolberg and John Tierney, "Unifying the Party: Political Points," *New York Times*, 28 July 2004, P2; Toner and Purdim, "On 2nd Night, Unity is Theme for Democrats," A1.

27. Rutenberg, "Heinz Kerry Comment Gains Long Dreaded Attention," P2.

28. Kurtz, "Giving 'Em What They Want: In Heinz Kerry's Speech, Commentators Find Plenty to Talk About," A26. See also Stanley, "As Heinz Kerry Speaks Out, Networks Listen Selectively," P8.

29. "Heinz Kerry Has Retort for Bush Fans," A3.

30. Rutenberg, "Heinz Kerry Comment Gains Long Dreaded Attention," P2. Similar comments regarding Kerry as a campaign "liability" appear in the following articles: Ann Gerhart, "A City's Good Fortune: With Money and Vision, Teresa Heinz Kerry Renewed Pittsburgh—and Herself," *Washington Post*, 25 July 2004, D1; Wilgoren, "Teresa Heinz Kerry's Specialty is Straight Talk," A16.

31. Rutenberg, "Heinz Kerry Comment Gains Long Dreaded Attention," P2.

32. Wilgoren, "Teresa Heinz Kerry's Specialty is Straight Talk," A16.

33. Cave, "Now, She's 'Organic' (That's a Plus)," 4:5.

34. Kurtz, "Giving 'Em What They Want: In Heinz Kerry's Speech, Commentators Find Plenty to Talk About," A26.

35. Barbie Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 10 (1993): 224.

36. Michael Schudson, *Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget, and Reconstruct the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 205.

37. Kurtz, “Giving ‘Em What They Want: In Heinz Kerry’s Speech, Commentators Find Plenty to Talk About,” A26.

38. Purnick, “To Become First Lady, Just Stand By,” B1. Purnick also claimed that Clinton “envisioned a co-presidency,” and mentioned her failed efforts to reform health care, both of which were common frames in Clinton’s coverage that were used to contain her political influence.

39. Michael Kinsley, “Dance of the Stem Cells,” *Washington Post* , 15 August 2004, B7.

40. Bellafante, “It Didn’t Start With Jackie: First Lady Makes Style Waves,” B10.

41. Linda Witt, Karen M. Paget, and Glenna Matthews, *Running as a Woman: Gender and Power in American Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 181-208. Witt, Paget, and Matthews make this point in their chapter, “Decoding the Press.” They note that “as late as 1989, according to the editor in chief of the *New York Times*, the all-male-is-normal paradigm—except at tea parties of course—was the *Times* editorial philosophy, and the only women who might be news would be those wives who inappropriately exercised their husband’s authority (p. 193-4).

42. Based on the criteria used in the study, forty-four articles about Kerry have been published in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* compared to twenty stories about Bush.

43. Kennedy, “The Not-So-Reluctant Campaigner,” A23.

44. Purnick, “To Become First Lady, Just Stand By,” B1.

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