

the media supplies the public with the information tools necessary for policy assessment. When the media covers policy issues it legitimates Clinton as a serious policy maker and enables assessment of her on tangible facts.

Another article that reports on the conference itself accurately reflects the goals and accomplishments of the conference. John Broder's article, "Clinton Pledges \$300 Million Toward Improving Child Care," focuses on the President, not the First Lady in the headline. The article and its headline, like the conference itself, feature the President as the policy initiator. "Hillary Rodham Clinton invited the President to her conference on child care today, and he obliged by offering a few modest proposals to alleviate parents' concerns about the cost and quality of day care centers."¹²⁶ Broder credits Clinton with the initiation and organization of the conference (as she does in the conference's introduction) but aligns policy proposals with the President (as he does in outlining policy during the conference). While the article headlines the President, it focuses a substantial amount on the First Lady's involvement.

Although Mr. Clinton provided the day's policy proposals, the spotlight shone on the First Lady. The child care conference was her return to the domestic policy stage after three years of relative obscurity as controversy over her role in the Administration's failed health care initiative. . . swirled around her. But those dark days are past and Mrs. Clinton is riding a wave of popularity to draw notice to issues of concern to women and families that have animated her.

Broder reiterates the narrative of an absent Clinton, who retreated in the wake of harsh health care-related criticism. The depiction of Clinton returning to policy making to pursue issues which she is professionally and personally attached is the most common justification for her involvement given by her and media alike.

¹²⁶ Broder, John M. "Clinton Pledges \$300 Million Toward Improving Child Care." *New York Times*. October 24, 1997. P. A24.

After providing background to the conference, Broder continues on to report the Clintons' approach to child care policy as they presented it. Broder covers the two main assurances that the Clintons make in presenting child care reform. He notes that the Clintons maintain that the federal government has a role to play in child care, but that it must work in conjunction with various other contributors. Equally imperative to the Clinton's agenda is the notion of choice and the insistence that government intervention does not translate into reduced options. Broder accurately relays the two major disclaimers the Clintons make in guaranteeing the American public that child care is not another health care.

In general, Broder's depiction of the conference closely mirrors the text of the conference. "Despite hours of testimony about the crying need for more and better day care, the Administration's proposed response was quite restrained, in deference to political and fiscal realities. Both the President and the First Lady have adopted an incremental approach to social progress. . . ." Using Clinton's own language, Broder reports the conference to be more of a "conversation" than anything else. For the conference, the incremental approach translated into the more-talk-than-action approach. The incremental approach, as adopted by both the President and the First Lady, suggests that it was not only the First Lady who learned from the difficulties faced by health care reform. Broder resists presenting Clinton as a detached individual actor and places her in the context of her marriage partnership and as a member of a larger administration. Blame that once seemed to fall exclusively on Clinton now must also be shouldered by the President and his Administration.

Both Broder's article and the conference depict the Clintons' involvement as a mutual undertaking. While the conference was Clinton's initiative, it is their equal responsibility to insure that policy is realized and correctly implemented. Similarly, even though the main objective of the conference is to initiate a conversation to stimulate policy ideas, the responsibility to take the child care issue to the next level still remains, and that responsibility lies both with the First Lady and with the President. From Broder's report the President is keenly aware of his furthered responsibility to insure improved child care beyond the conversations started at the conference.

But the President also noted that such conferences pose a danger of substituting talk for real action and real resources from communities. What is needed, he said, are partnerships that 'add up to a system that serves everybody instead of just makes nice, touching stories they can all tell each other at seminars till kingdom come.'

Thus, while the conference provides a safe forum to begin a policy discussion, both the President and the First Lady are committed to taking the necessary step beyond the safe ground.

Moreover, the issue of child care itself can be interpreted as an issue comprised solely of "nice, touching stories," however, the President and the First Lady clearly intend to comprise constructive policy to improve on existing problems. Broder reports their commitment to an issue and a methodology which can be wrongly interpreted as soft. The Clintons vocally demonstrated their insistence that the issue of child care and the conference itself is not an easy approach to soft policy, but rather a pressing issue that must be dealt with delicately. That Broder reports on their confidence in the conference approach, and commitment to the child care issue, attests to the accuracy with which he reports what the President and the First Lady work to convey. Broder's coverage nicely

compliments the Clintons' own projected image, where she serves the purpose of introducing the issue onto the policy platform and he functions as the policy maker. Further, Broder's primary focus rests upon the issue and the policy proposals, not on Clinton's role in its formation. Indeed attention is exactly where it should be in coverage of a policy issue. Clinton's presence is noted but it does not over shadow the issue itself. In a ideal and rare form of journalism, Broder carries the Clintons' message virtually unfiltered to the public, enabling evaluation based on actual policy.

The final article that mentions Clinton's involvement in the child care conference celebrates Clinton's birthday and her re-entry into the public eye. Also written by John Broder, "For Hillary Clinton at 50, Yet Another Beginning," explores the proposed new leaf Clinton has turned. First and foremost on Clinton's re-emergence agenda is child care. Broder reports a meeting Clinton held with journalists and experts before the conference: "Wasting no time on formalities, she plunged into her subject, Thursday's conference on child care policy."¹²⁷ Clinton unambiguously establishes her concern with child care policy as paramount. "In the ensuing hour she stayed strictly on task, not letting the fact-filled discussion stray to other subjects." Not only is Clinton committed to child care policy, but Broder portrays her as approaching the issue in the manner of a business-like professional: committed, focused, and efficient.

Broder succinctly overviews Clinton re-emergence in the context of the past term's difficulties. He depicts who he refers to as the "reborn" Clinton as "... a policy diva in a baby-blue tailored suit and a frosted-blond pageboy." The metaphor Broader uses interestingly implies a death followed by a re-emergence in an altered form. While

Broder focuses primarily on Clinton's policy involvement, he does not avoid commentary on her appearance. Indeed part of the "reborn" Clinton includes her physical appearance. The mention of her appearance revisits coverage of Clinton's inaugural appearance and even her congressional testimony, where observations of her appearance abounded. Broder's is the only mention of Clinton's appearance in coverage of the child care conference, suggesting that concern with the First Lady's appearance has taken second seat her policy initiatives.

Her appearance is not the only change Broder notes:

The White House years have left her a bit chastened, perhaps, and her tactics have changed-- she will no longer direct a gigantic policy-making enterprise like the failed health care task force of the first term. But her starring role in the child care conference this week demonstrated that she will continue to be a central policy voice in the Administration.

Broder suggests that the difficulties Clinton encountered with health care reform caused her to change her tactics, but not her calling as a policy maker. The conference proves that Clinton did not retreat entirely in the face of adversity, but rather has applied the learned tools to her new endeavor. That new endeavor unmistakably invokes policy influencing. Broder refers to the child care conference "as an unofficial coming out party for the second-term First Lady." And he further observes, "and it is no accident that the birthday is being celebrated with a policy making forum. This was how Mrs. Clinton wanted it. . ." The visibility of her birthday provided an ideal opportunity to attract media attention to her "rebirth" and to the issue of child care.

In addition to the visibility, public approval is imperative to successful policy efforts. To a large degree, Clinton must rely on favorable public opinion to approve of

¹²⁷ Broder, John M. "For Hillary Clinton at 50, yet Another Beginning." *New York Times*. October 26,

her increased role in her husband's administration. "She is enjoying record approval ratings and hopes to translate her current public esteem into concrete accomplishments across a canvas of policy interests." Broder points out that Clinton is not an autonomous agent, but rather one depended on popularity to fulfill her goals of policy-making, much like any other political actor. Thus, the conditions of the time proved an opportune moment for Clinton's rebirth: visibility and public approval. Implicit in this is another less obvious lesson learned through the health care experience: policy cannot be successfully constructed without advantageous timing and public opinion.

Throughout his article, Broder suggests that Clinton has negotiated her role such that it balances her policy desires with her position as First Lady. Using the health care reform as a point of departure, Broder depicts an evolving First Lady who has come to understand and maximize her role. Quoting a White House aide, Broder observes the difference in public persona between the first-term Clinton and the second. "'No longer is she the co-President and the co-Vice President of 1993,' this official said. 'but she's not Barbara Bush, tea and cookies, either.'" Broder's reference implies that Clinton has navigated appropriate middle ground between an aggressive professional policy maker reformatting the health care system and an acquiescent and unobtrusive care giver. Through this balance both traditional and policy demands are met.

This balance is so completely achieved that Broder unintentionally illustrates it in his description of her post-Presidency plans.

Her thoughts have turned to the best platform from which to address her lifelong concerns, whether a political office, a foundation or a university chair, friends say. But she is also consumed by such mundane matters as finding and furnishing a home, after having spent almost all of her married life in public housing.

Clinton is consumed both by her professional desires and by more "mundane" matters of keeping house. Without having to make direct reference to the balance Clinton is maintaining, Broder highlights an obvious balance between public and private spaces, between the home and the work place. While she is consumed with professional concerns, Clinton does not neglect her responsibilities as wife and mother. The reborn Clinton so completely integrates her dual role into a balanced act that the balance does not call attention to itself, fading naturally into her complete character. The Clinton that Broder depicts has learned from her tribulations around health care reform and applied those lessons to her attempts at child care policy. During her husband's time in office Clinton has learned to successfully negotiate a balanced role between policy inclinations and her role as First Lady. This balance is what constitutes the successfully "reborn" Clinton.

IV) CONCLUSION

Clinton's re-entrance into the policy making arena marks a new role for her. She has negotiated a space between an overt, aggressive policy maker and a silently supportive First Lady. In order to incorporate her policy pursuits into her role as First Lady, Clinton discovers that she must prioritize her role of First Lady while more subtly advancing policy. Clinton appropriates policy influencing into the role of the First Lady, rather than trying to include the First Lady's role in that of a policy maker, as she did with health care reform. Her role in the child care conference is as First Lady, first and foremost, but as First Lady with an agenda. Her agenda is to identify issues and influence

policy, while relegating policy making responsibilities to the President. Thus, policy is the President's formed with the First Lady's contribution.

The conference methodology that Clinton adopts to pursue her policy endeavor is particularly conducive to her role as a policy influencer, as opposed to a policy maker. In so far as the objective of the conference is to begin a conversation about the issue, it is a relatively non-threatening approach to policy. She relinquishes any claims to having answers or ready-made policy solutions. She enters the discussion with questions she plans to pursue and ideas she wants to develop with communal contribution. The conference proposes policy as a collective effort, intended to include people at all different levels. As opposed to the health care reform, child care efforts are framed as a bottom up development, not imposed from above.

In addition, the format of the conference enables Clinton to play the role of the White House hostess inviting guests into her home, playing both the role of policy-initiator and First Lady hosting an official White House event. Clinton gathers together a diverse group of people, from parents to experts, to stimulate discussion, a discussion made public through extensive media coverage. This approach to policy is far more accessible than what the formation of health care reform generated in a secluded office of experts, where only the final product was made available to the public. Clinton's focus has shifted from exclusivity to inclusivity, from answers to questions, from experts to everyone.

Furthermore, Clinton's policy issue of choice bypasses a major social and economic issue that she has little experience with (i.e. health care) in favor of a more modest one, consistent with her past professional and personal interests. Clinton does not

have to become an expert in order to pursue child care policy. Her past involvements combine with the less-complex nature of the issue to provide a far more conducive issue for her to champion instigating minimal controversy.

The issue of child care is an ideal one for Clinton to adopt on multiple levels: it is relatively politically safe, implementation is practically feasible, and the focus compliments the traditional role of the First Lady. With the rare exception, quality child care is a valued good across the board, as most can agree that dependable quality care is something to strive for. Indeed only people with very fiscally conservative and traditional democratic views object to government efforts to improve child care. People whose views oppose government intervention and funding of child care are most probably people unlikely to be won over by Clinton in any given situation. The ideologically and fiscally conservative are not likely to be strong Clinton supporters under any circumstance. Thus, while the child care issue mobilizes some opposition, that opposition is likely to come from those already opposed to the Clinton Administration. Child care, unlike health care, divides almost exclusively along party lines at extreme ends. Among liberals and moderates, child care invokes a shared consensus that improvement is a value to espouse and to pursue at least to some degree.

Child care is also particularly conducive to Clinton's policy involvement because policy can be practically implemented in incremental changes. Finally, the issue of child care is ideal for Clinton's proposes because concern for the nation's children functions as an extension of her role as First Lady. Thus, when Clinton's visits child care cites she comes as the First Lady invested in providing the best possible care for children, not a distanced expert imposing policy. Her maternal, rather than political or fiscal, concerns

motive her to initiate the child care discussion. Because concern for child care compliments her role as First Lady, her involvement in its policy formation is more natural, and far less disruptive to tradition than pursuing an issue entirely divorced from her obligations within the First Lady realm.

Clinton's policy making role, the second time around, is thinly veiled in terms of her role as First Lady. It is abundantly clear that Clinton plays an important role in the formation of child care policy, however, because this role is projected as an extended fulfillment of her duties as First Lady it goes unchallenged. The controversy that surrounded a First Lady's entrance into the policy making arena with the health care reform is entirely absent from the child care issue discussion. While she has not entirely lived down her past, demonstrated by the multiple references to the controversy she ensued with health care, her role in child care policy is largely accepted. Media coverage refrains from passing judgment on or even questioning Clinton's involvement in policy formation.

Given her past difficulties with media coverage, and substantial discrepancies between her self-presentation and that which the media reports, media's compliance with Clinton's self-presentation in the child care conference is of particular interest. A number of factors contribute to the compatibility of presentations. First, via health care, Clinton has already established herself as someone involved in policy, thus the initial shock of a policy-making First Lady has long subsided. Given the tenacity with which she approached health care policy, it is not surprising to find her re-entering the sphere where her passion for social contribution can be most productive. Certainly, that the issue of child care is a relatively safe one politically and does not require a major overhaul eases

the responsibility Clinton assumes, and by extension the degree to which she strays from the traditional and expected role of the First Lady. Thus, the First Lady assuming the partial responsibility for child care policy is far less threatening than her orchestrating health policy reform. In addition, the strategy by which Clinton approaches child care policy, in a gradual, collective process is a far more user friendly approach to social policy. She makes it explicitly clear that this policy is generated from collective efforts and will be implemented incrementally. The format of the conference is ideal in that its only objective is to initiate a discussion, not to provide answers to challenging questions. As a facilitator of dialogue, Clinton acts more of moderator than an all-knowing expert. In fact, the conference makes it clear that the policy making role remains with the President.

All of these factors contribute to what is, arguably, the reason behind Clinton's positive reception back into the policy making arena: her ability to incorporate policy in her role as First Lady. The balance that Clinton maintains prioritizes her role of First Lady over that of policy maker. Her policy making has been compromised, and her policy power curtailed, in order to accommodate the expectations of a First Lady's involvement. Her primary effort in terms of child care is to start a discussion leaving the official role of policy-implementer to the President. As one element of policy-making partnership, Clinton's policy authority and power is clipped, but is sacrificed to achieve the greater end of public acceptance and even endorsement.

When Clinton accommodates traditional expectations, and functions in the existing framework of a First Lady, the media better responds to her. Reporting a First Lady at a child care facility is a relatively straight forward endeavor. Similarly, a First

Lady hosting a conference aimed to excite discussion about improving the condition of the nation's children, is something the media can easily report using existing tools. Clinton's incorporation of policy influencing under the umbrella of First Lady pursuits, rather than overt defiance of tradition, makes it somehow more acceptable. The media complies with Clinton's self-presentation when Clinton complies with the expectations of a traditional First Lady. If Clinton aims to make change in the role of the First Lady, she learns that it must be gradual change. An incremental extension of the First Lady's role, like incremental implementation of child care policy, while perhaps a more time consuming endeavor, proves far more successful. The media responds to gradual change, as long as it does not neglect the fulfillment of existing expectations. Clinton is best able to present herself and to pursue her policy goals if she prioritizes her role as First Lady. Even if the fervor with which she approaches policy is compromised, such a compromise is necessary in order for her to be positively and accurately portrayed. Recognizing this, Clinton negotiates a balance between her two roles which the media responds favorably to, officially acknowledging her successful "rebirth."

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION:

NEGOTIATING TRADITION

I) THE IDEAL

"Well, what I said in response to her comment [that I've worked hard to change the traditional role of the First Lady] is that I think every person, man and woman, is an individual. And what I have worked for all my life, is the opportunity for individuals to choose what is best for them and to make the decisions that are going to give them the most satisfaction and fulfillment. And I don't think that we should be saying that there's a certain way to fill any kind of role. In your position as a commentator you should be judged as who you are, not because there is another who had that role before you. And I feel the same about the role that I am in now, that would argue strongly for the opportunity for any woman, or someday and man, in this position to be able to do what is best for that person, for the President, for the family, for the country. So I'm not really supporting the idea that there is one way to do the role or a way to change the role that is very different. I'm really trying very hard to get across the idea that each individual should be given the opportunity to make the choices that are best for that person."

-Hillary Rodham Clinton¹²⁸

In July of 1996, nearing the end of her husband's first term in office, Hillary Rodham Clinton shared her vision of how the role of the First Lady should be filled. As demonstrated by her own experiences as First Lady, Clinton's vision, emphasizing the importance of individual choice, remains a vision. The notion of unrestrained individuality in an institutionalized role proves an ideal that fails to translate into reality, as institutional realities impede upon its realization. Contrary to her vision, Clinton's

¹²⁸ Clinton, Hillary Rodham. Press Conference. Hotel Kalastajatorppa, Helsinki. July 10, 1996.

experience as First Lady proves that, in many ways, there is "a certain way to fill" the role. In the role of the First Lady, certain requirements must be met that limit an individual from being "given the opportunity to make the choice that are best for that person." In a role with great historical and institutional importance, such as the First Ladyship, traditional requirements cannot be simply replaced by individual interpretation. Clinton muses the assessment of individual achievement void of historical context: "you should be judged as who you are, not because there is another who had that role before you." Such assessment, while perhaps appropriate in other roles (a journalist for example), is not realistic in application to the First Lady. Clinton's own experience of constant comparison to her own predecessors affirms that this type of assessment is clearly only a vision. The status of the First Ladyship as a position defined not by codified responsibilities, but rather by historical precedent and subsequent cultural expectations, deems it impossible to divorce it from such expectations.

The vision Clinton has of a First Lady interpreting her role based on individual preferences is problematic for a traditional, ceremonial role, not conducive to individualism. The "choices that are best for that person" may not necessarily reflect the interest of the greater good. Moreover, negotiating a position that serves "what is best for that person, for the President, for the family, for the country" is no easy feat. The health care reform effort taught Clinton that working towards her goals of policy did not necessarily coincide with the goals of the nation. Her efforts stirred great upset around the country and scandal in the White House. In Clinton's ideal vision of the First Lady's role, personal and collective goals would be synonymous. Under this vision, a First Lady would not have to be concerned about reflecting poorly on the presidency by exercising

the autonomy that enables her to pursue higher objectives. Similarly, this vision sets up a scenario where what an individual wants to do and what she can do coincide, rather than collide.

The vision that Clinton presents is both a liberal individualist and a strand of contemporary feminist ideal, grounded in the privileging of individual choice. Ideally, an individual should not be constrained by external forces in exercising life choices. While certainly a respectable ideal to strive for, Clinton's own experience proves that her vision is unlikely to be achieved in the near future. The implications of the First Ladyship resonate beyond the individual that occupies it. As part of a larger historical, political, and social structure, the First Ladyship demands that certain requirements be met. Both institutional structures and popular opinion insure the fulfillment of such requirements and the limitations placed on individual interpretation.

Clinton enters the role of the First Lady assuming that her vision could be a reality achieved with relative ease. She approaches the role as an individual working to her strengths and is quickly met with strong resistance. Any deviation from tradition proved disruptive to the status quo and incited the power of cultural norms to maintain the integrity of tradition. Expanding the role of the First Lady beyond its traditional application proved an exceedingly difficult task. Attachment to tradition proved the most powerful force working against Clinton, and easily thwart her vision of individual choice. Contrary to her vision, Clinton's experience reveals that what is "best for that person, for the President, for the family, for the country" is defined not by the individual actor, but by the tradition of social norms.

II) THE IMAGE

The collision between Clinton's ideal and the resistance that it meets is best examined through Clinton's image. The changes in Clinton's image, and the extremes in which it is cast, reveal the difficulties she faced in attempting to apply the notion of individual choice to the interpretation of the First Ladyship. Moreover, the changing state of Clinton's image reflects how she negotiates the resistance posed to challenging tradition. Examination of Clinton's image occurs at two levels: one through her own self-presentation and another through the media's presentation of her. Clinton's self-presentation reflects her attempt to expand tradition, as she tries to incorporate policy making into the role of the First Lady. The media's portrayal of Clinton, by and large, represents resistance to or encouragement of Clinton's actions.

The media has the ability not only to portray Clinton in keeping with her own self-presentation or to deviate from it, but also to cast her in a positive or negative light. One major goal of a public figure is to incite the media to work with them. The salience of the media's message makes it imperative for the success of a public figure that media's portrayal coincides with self-presentation. In his analysis of the news media, Lance Bennett stresses this point: "Failure to control the news is often equated with political failure."¹²⁹ If Clinton fails to incite the media to work in conjunction with her, the media can become a powerful obstacle of resistance to her efforts. As most vividly illustrated through the health care reform, when compatibility is not achieved, Clinton suffers the consequence. Ideally, the two images (Clinton's and the media's) compliment one another and form a cohesive image. If, on the other hand, the two diverge both Clinton's and the

media's role must be examined to locate why the discrepancy occurred. As demonstrated by the fluctuation in her image, Clinton assumes different roles in an attempt to negotiate a space where she can accommodate her own policy objectives and be met with the least resistance.

III) THE REALITY

Clinton's approach to her role as First Lady reveals a changing identity, one seeking to create an image that accommodates both her and the media. That she struggles to create such an image proves just how idealistic her vision of fulfilling the role was. The reality of cultural norms and attachment to tradition impede upon Clinton's ideal. With successful negotiation, however, a mutually-pleasing middle ground can be derived, whereby Clinton can participate in the policy arena with minimal offense to tradition. Throughout her husband's time in office, Clinton tests multiple approaches to her role, both moderate and extreme. Ultimately she discovers that she must accommodate tradition before she can expand the role beyond it.

During the 1993 inauguration, the largely symbolic event that the tone for the upcoming term, Clinton played the role of the traditional First Lady, silently supportive by her husband's side. While she assumed the expected role of the First Lady, institutionalized by her predecessors, Clinton's self-presentation seemed suspiciously out of character when juxtaposed to her exceptionally non-traditional outspoken role in her husband's campaign. Clinton began her husband's term by accommodating tradition, perhaps to avoid the scandal that plagued her during the campaign. The sudden

¹²⁹ Bennett. P. 73.

adherence to traditional norms, however, appeared somewhat forced after her campaign declarations of her intentions to play an active role in a Clinton administration. Rather than casting herself as a traditional First Lady, Clinton seemed to create a confused image, fluctuating between the extremes of the traditional and the redefined.

The media's portrayal of Clinton's participation in the inauguration similarly presented a disjointed image of her. On the one hand, the media reported Clinton's past involvement as a an active contributor to her husband's political position and projected potential disruption to the established tradition of the First Ladyship. Such reporting conveyed an anxiety about a defiant First Lady, destined to cause upset. On the other hand, the media reported Clinton's involvement in the inauguration within the framework of a traditional First Lady, prioritizing her appearance as all-important. While reports of her appearance coincided with her self-presentation as supportive ornamentation, it did so in a way that questioned Clinton's credibility as a First Lady. Underlying coverage of Clinton's appearance was the implication that she failed to adequately present herself in a fashionable manner. By stimulating anxiety around her role as a power-wielding First Lady and undermining her ability to play the traditional role, the media implied Clinton's handicap in fulfilling either role. Without explicit statements, the media sent a message to Clinton that she cannot haphazardly alternate between the outspoken and the traditional First Lady without resistance.

After retreating into the traditional role for the inauguration, Clinton emerged soon after as a full-fledged policy maker testifying before congress on health care reform. This unequivocal break from tradition was met with much criticism as the traditional role of the First Lady was destabilized. Clinton's testimony divided into two fractions: in the

first, she introduced the importance of health care reform and her involvement in the process and the second, she fielded specific questions from representatives. Her two-tiered testimony attempted to couch policy making in the role of the First Lady. In her introduction, Clinton distanced herself from the actual policy making aspects and justified her involvement by appealing to her concerns as a woman. During the question period, Clinton's role metamorphosed from the feminized First Lady to the authoritative policy expert. She fielded questions with the expertise of a professional policy maker, wowing members with her comprehensive understanding. Clinton initially established herself as a concerned First Lady invested in the health of the nation, presuming to have freed herself from the obligations of her position, then proceeded to tackle the true issue of importance.

Overlooking the policy issues entirely, media coverage focused exclusively on Clinton's role. Much like with the inauguration, the media reported Clinton's role in extremes: she was either the deviant First Lady bypassing tradition to satisfy her own professional desire or the First Lady venturing out to Capitol Hill in a pink suit. Across the board, media coverage revealed a fascination with Clinton as a novelty First Lady. Her decidedly different interpretation of the First Lady's role proved far more engaging than any policy discussion. The media's coverage worked within its own framework to determine what was and was not important; Clinton's self-presentation barely finds its way into coverage. That the media avoided her policy presentation denied the public the opportunity to evaluate Clinton on her policy making capabilities, and in its place offers her as a novel, and indeed defiant, figure. Resistance to the notion of a policy making First Lady is demonstrated by the media's inability to report Clinton as a qualified policy maker. Clinton clearly does not have control over the media's coverage and it hurts her

ability to court respect as a policy maker. The only element that Clinton's and the media's portrayal of her share is that of the divided figure, portrayed in extremes.

Following a turbulent experience with health care reform, where Clinton's efforts to broaden the role of the First Lady were met with great resistance, she reacted by assuming a role at the other extreme of the spectrum. Almost as if she were responding directly to the attachment to tradition voiced in reaction to her health care reform involvement, Clinton adopted the traditional role of the quietly supportive wife in response to the welfare reform bill. Despite her past professional and personal involvements, suggesting that she would be a vocal opposition to the bill, Clinton remained silent. When questioned directly about the legislation, Clinton responded defensively, unable to justify the bill on its own merits. Clinton's virtual silence in the face of such drastic legislation cast her unequivocally in the role of the traditional First Lady.

Assuming the position of the traditional, silently supportive First Lady, Clinton provided a straight-forward role for the media to report, or not to report. Media coverage accurately reflected Clinton's silence with its own silence. The few mentions of Clinton's uncharacteristic silence, however, delicately suggested that Clinton did not adequately negotiate her position. More than in any other case, the welfare reform bill illustrates the closest correlation between Clinton's and the media's portrayal. When Clinton assumes the straight-forward role of the silently-supportive traditional First Lady she has more control over media coverage. Control is gained, however, at the expense of pursuing her own policy goals and role expansion. That she is rewarded for accommodating tradition attests to the power of cultural norms and attachment to tradition.

Finally, after exhausting the possible combinations of her two roles, Clinton negotiates her role such that, while compromised, she can accommodate both her policy goals and existing traditional demands. Clinton has abandoned overt official policy making in favor of a less formal policy-influencing role, more conducive to the traditional First Lady's role. The child care conference provided Clinton with an ideal format to address an issue that compliments her role as First Lady, and opportune timing to officially reenter the policy arena. The initiation and realization of the conference was all her own. During the conference itself, Clinton delivered the introduction and remained as active participant throughout. While she was actively involved, Clinton acted unquestionably as the First Lady, not as policy maker. She established quite clearly that the policy was the President's and she refrained entirely from assuming the position of expert. Remnants of health care reform scars surfaced throughout Clinton's approach to child care, as she cautiously avoided falling into the same pitfalls. Clinton accommodates, and even prioritizes, her role as First Lady enabling her to expand the role to include policy influencing. A careful balance is achieved within the framework of the traditional First Lady, whereby Clinton acts first and foremost as First Lady concerned with the state of the nation's children.

The degree to which Clinton successfully balances her role is revealed in the media's coverage of the conference which accurately compliments Clinton's self-presentation. As with the welfare reform bill, the media rewards compliance with tradition. The plentiful coverage of the child care conference offered a review of both Clinton's role and the policy itself. The media depicted Clinton's re-entry into the policy arena through her involvement in the conference as a "rebirth," suggesting that after a

time of reflection Clinton was better able to approach her role in a more refined manner. Furthermore, that the media reports on elements of actual policy publicly legitimates Clinton's position as policy-influencer. The presentation of policy information enables the public to evaluate Clinton on substantive policy, further the image of a "reborn" First Lady implies an improved and hopeful beginning. One year into her husband's second term in office, Clinton is able to negotiate a space where she fulfills the traditional role of the First Lady while simultaneously expanding the role, without threatening it. Her successful accommodation of tradition and her integrated, gradual approach to policy meets with minimal resistance by media coverage.

Clinton's experiences clearly demonstrate that her vision of individual choice, unaffected by external restrictions, in interpreting the First Lady's role is far from a reality. Her initial attempt to obey her personal preference, that casts her in the role of an official policy maker, met with scrutinizing resistance. A challenge posed to tradition proved disruptive and a stalwart resistance mobilized in protection of established norms. The power of cultural norms, explicitly articulating America's attachment to tradition, prevented Clinton from realizing her vision. In reaction to the welfare reform bill, Clinton assumed the position on the other end of the spectrum: the silently supportive First Lady. Neither extreme proved lucrative for Clinton, suggesting that only a balance of each of her roles could accommodate at least a part of her vision and adhere to tradition.

IV) THE TURNING POINT

Clinton's image fluctuates between the extremes of policy maker and traditional First Lady before she is able to negotiate an image that accommodates both roles. At the

beginning, exemplified by her role in the inauguration, Clinton presented a confused identity, alternating between two extremes without any overlap or transition. Clinton enters the First Ladyship vastly underestimating the culturally-pervasive attachment to tradition and the resistance deviation would incite. The resistance to her official involvement in policy making made explicitly clear the power of cultural norms and the reluctance to alter a traditional role. In the face of powerful resistance, Clinton retreated to the traditional role of First Lady in reaction to the welfare reform bill. Such retreat, however, failed to solve Clinton's dilemma in determining her role, as it was neither believable nor true to her own objectives of positive contribution. After exploring possibilities of her role from both extremes, Clinton manages to create a space for herself that accommodates her two roles by cohesively integrating them. In the child care conference, Clinton fulfills the role of the First Lady and contributes to policy.

Clinton's experiences with health care reform made abundantly clear that a First Lady cannot exist exclusively as a policy maker in an unelected position. Even quality policy cannot overcome cultural attachment to tradition. To some degree, Clinton is aware of this before she testifies before Congress. Her introductory remarks prove that she is conscious of her role as First Lady, and rather than setting it temporarily aside, she attempts to use her position to her advantage. Clinton's appeals, however, to her role as First Lady are made tangential to, and not incorporated in, her policy testimony. The health care experience affirms Clinton's instinctual suspicion that in order to succeed in policy making she must simultaneously fulfill her role as First Lady. Moreover, the resistance posed to her efforts insists that, not only must Clinton accommodate tradition, but that she must prioritize her role as First Lady and integrate policy making it.

Expansion of the First Lady's role must be done through integration, not defiance. The failure of health care reform taught Clinton a harsh, but powerful, lesson: that tradition is not easily challenged. Having a policy maker in the role of the First Lady does not suffice in fulfilling traditional obligations, for policy making must be presented as an extended function of the First Lady, not a disconnected tangent. Thus, the experience of the health care reform affirms a insurmountable connection with tradition, and the need to integrate fulfillment of tradition with policy efforts to succeed in the policy arena. It is through health care reform that Clinton realizes the vast discrepancy between what she wants to do and what she can do. Inevitably, compromises will have to be made.

V) THE IMPLICATIONS

The change in Clinton's image reveals how she attempted to expand the role of the First Lady and the resistance that she faced, which forcefully illustrated the power of cultural norms and attachment to tradition. Ultimately, Clinton's image reveals her success in expanding the domain of the First Ladyship by prioritizing fulfillment of tradition while integrating policy influencing into the role. Clearly, as demonstrated by health care efforts, Clinton cannot exclusively play the policy-making role. Similarly, as demonstrated by the welfare reform bill, Clinton cannot exclusively play the role of the traditional silent First Lady, for that betrays her professional and personal goals. Conclusively, Clinton must negotiate her role to accommodate both her policy interests and traditional requirements. Thus, in order to expand the role of the First Lady, Clinton must accommodate tradition while gradually integrating policy responsibilities into the realm of the First Ladyship.

The possible realization of Clinton's vision, that interprets the First Lady's role as an accommodation to the individual occupying the position, is negated by her own experiences. In order to expand the role of the First Lady, Clinton must make some concessions. From the health care testimony to the child care conference, Clinton's policy-making position is clearly compromised. While she demonstrably exercises policy influencing power through her role in the child care conference, it is a far cry from an official appointment to head a presidential task force. Clinton's experience suggests that during her husband's time in office, her policy involvements must be relegated to the influencing, and not making, domain. Such relegation, however, should not necessarily be equated with defeat. Given that her overt policy making position was met with great resistance and ultimately failed, a more subtle policy role increases Clinton's ability to successfully contribute. Thus, while her ideal vision cannot be realized, a potential still remains for Clinton to contribute to the formation of valuable policy. In this instance, where at least some of Clinton's objectives can be realized, compromise is not defeat.

Still, an unyielding cultural commitment to tradition seems to forbid the possibility, at least at present, of a First Lady filling an official policy position. As tradition stands, such an exercise of power would contradict the function of a First Lady to support her husband and to symbolize the stability of the nuclear family as a pillar of the nation. Such support and stability hinge upon a respected power hierarchy, where policy decisions are the President's alone. As a position rooted in historical and symbolic significance the First Ladyship is not surprisingly hostile to change. Clinton's experience illustrates the degree to which the First Ladyship relies upon and functions within a traditional framework. The success Clinton achieves with the child care conference,

however, suggests that an incremental expansion of tradition is not an impossibility. When Clinton approaches expansion in a non-threatening, gradual manner that abides by tradition, resistance diminishes. This less defiant approach to expanding the role of the First Lady proves that attachment to tradition is strong, but that it does not abhor the possibility of gradual change, as long as tradition is respected.

Attachment to tradition and adherence to cultural norms is not limited to the integrity of the First Ladyship, but also to the larger issue of women's changing role in society. As the first professional to hold the position of First Lady, Clinton chartered new terrain. The nation's First Lady was no longer devoted exclusively to her role as wife and mother, but she also tended to professional commitments. The traditional role of the First Lady adheres exclusively to responsibilities associated with the private feminine sphere, prohibiting the incorporation of aspects from the public sphere. Symbolically, the First Lady represents the idealized feminine figure of the private sphere, prioritizing her role as mother and wife as paramount. Clinton upset this symbolism by trying to extend the possibilities of the First Ladyship to include aspects traditionally associated with masculine, public power. At the national level, woman's role in society in the 1990's has significantly blurred the line between public and private spheres of power, suggesting that Clinton's attempt to similarly blur distinctions as they apply to the First Lady should not have instigated great disturbance. Clinton's actions attempt to navigate the First Ladyship into the contemporary era of gender politics. An institution grounded in traditional gender roles, however, resists such modernization.

The resistance to Clinton's expansion of the First Lady's role does not necessarily reflect a resistance to women's general entrance into the public sphere, but rather an

attachment to the symbol of traditional feminine power. Such resistance represents a nostalgic attachment to gendered order, where masculine and feminine power assume their respective positions. That the First Lady is so closely associated with the feminine domain of the private makes an extension of her powers, to include that of the masculine domain, highly disruptive. For a change in power allocation inevitably destabilizes a naturalized gendered order, whereby necessitating a new set of gender relations independent of existing assumptions of feminine and masculine traits. The resistance to an expansion in the First Lady's role reveals the difficulty with accepting a power-wielding woman who is primarily, if not exclusively, associated with the private sphere. Under the umbrella of attachment to tradition lies a fundamental respect for divisive gender spheres, where extremes cannot meet. A power-wielding woman, like Madeline Albright, for example is culturally accepted because she is primarily associated with her position as a diplomat, not as a wife or mother. Hillary Clinton, on the other hand, is principally associated with her role as wife to the President, and her official position is to maintain the private sphere of the White House. Thus, when a figure is symbolically, and more formally, associated with a gender sphere is it difficult to access the other sphere's power without encountering conflict.

Clinton's tradition-defying interpretation of her role as First Lady forced the nation to confront its assumptions and expectations of what a First Lady, an emblem of American womanhood, should be. The nation clearly demonstrated that it was not ready for a woman, primarily associated with her position as wife, whose powers equaled that of her husband. Ultimately, the notion of an equal partnership runs contrary to assumptions of gender roles deeply rooted in history and, evidently, firmly planted in the

present. Clinton's challenge to such assumptions reflects women's changing role at the end of the twentieth century, as more and more women enter the public sphere at all levels, and her opponents (particularly the most vocal from the far right) similarly reflect the resistance to and fear of that change. Beyond reflection, however, Clinton also sets an example for challenging the assumptions that relegate women to the private sphere, furthering her belief that, "each individual should be given the opportunity to make the choices that are best for that person," implicitly, without the restraints of social stereotypes. Clinton's experience proves that the pursuit of such autonomy is an arduous task. Her experience is not singular, for attachment to tradition extends far beyond the institution of the First Ladyship, as it is well ingrained in a general social structure where gender roles provide stability and order. Challenge to such order is not limited to, but rather reflected and perhaps even furthered, by the Clinton White House.

As the tide of the country moves away from such rigid gendered order, the First Ladyship remains loyal to it serving traditional and symbolic purposes. Initially, Clinton underestimated such loyalties and attempted to only halfheartedly fulfill traditional obligations, but through a trial and error process, she was better able negotiate expansion. Given the elaborate interconnection of the First Ladyship and traditional gender roles, the progress Clinton made in extending the role beyond its traditional interpretation cannot be underestimated. While she was unable to realize her own ideal vision, her accomplishment of extending the role to include the possibility of more substantive contribution marked a great achievement.

As Clinton worked to expand the role of the First Lady, the media constructed obstacles of resistance to her efforts. Flexing its impressive muscles, the media

determined when its coverage complimented Clinton's self-presentation and when it defied it. The image perpetuated by the media is of great importance because of the credibility it yields, regardless of its accuracy. W. Lance Bennett poignantly asserts that contrary to common sense, "Media logic, on the other hand, tells us that reality "is" the image applied to it."¹³⁰ The image the media portrays is uncritically digested as reality. This carries that much more relevance in the case of a public figure whose own self-presentation is delivered only to limited audiences, mere fractions of the media audience. The media's ability to translate a given image into reality grants it an enormous amount of power.

The interaction between Clinton's self-presentation and media's portrayal demonstrates the degree to which media occupies a privileged space in the political public arena. This privilege enables the media to apply resistance to efforts it deems undesirable. Both subtly and overtly, the media resists Clinton's attempts to challenge the traditional role of the First Lady. As exemplified with the inauguration, even when the media accurately reports Clinton's self-presentation it is no guarantee that it will do so in a positive light. Coverage of the inauguration largely featured Clinton's appearance (as that was all she made available for reporting on), yet it did so by demeaning Clinton's fashion sense, subsequently implying her difficulty in fulfilling the traditional role. At other times, including health care reform, media coverage more obviously dismissed Clinton's capabilities. The media is able to oppose Clinton's action through both subtle and overt resistance. During the health care reform testimony, for example, the media ignored policy issues entirely in favor of speculation and evaluation of Clinton's role.

¹³⁰ Ibid. P. 72.

The media's decision to omit policy review from coverage denied the public the option of evaluating Clinton on her policy making abilities, affirming the presumption that Clinton was unqualified for her position. The media's failure to present all available information to the public for assessment combined with its dismissive attitude about her role proved a most lethal combination for Clinton's policy success.

Throughout much of Clinton's experience, the media maintains a good deal of power over her. The media creates barriers of resistance that impede upon Clinton's ability to negotiate her role in a manner consistent with her vision. In many instances, the media places Clinton in the position of the reactor, subject to its imposed restrictions. The resistance posed by the media reflects a deep-seated attachment to cultural norms. As demonstrated by coverage of the welfare reform bill, the media accurately reflects Clinton's self-presentation when she fills the role of the traditional First Lady. When Clinton functions within an established framework of tradition the media can more easily report her. When tradition is defied, however, as it was with the health care reform, the media faces a greater challenge. Uncertain whether to report her as a policy maker or as a First Lady, the media tends to report a confused identity that ultimately undermines Clinton's ability to fulfill both her role as policy maker and as First Lady. That the media lacks the tools to report a policy making First Lady explains, in part, the discrepancy between her own presentation and that of the media.

The attitude that the media conveys towards Clinton's involvement in policy making, however, reveals more than an unfamiliarity with such a role, but a disapproval of it. Through its coverage of her, the media is able to impose resistance on her actions it deems inappropriate. Departure from tradition upsets an established order of which the

media is part. Defiance of cultural norms is subject to opposition by cultural mechanisms. In Clinton's experience, the media plays the role of the cultural norms enforcer, applying resistance when tradition is threatened. The media challenges the First Lady's overt entrance into the policy making domain. Throughout her involvement with health care policy the media undermined Clinton's capabilities by reporting on difficulties encountered, her role, and her appearance, with no reference to the policy itself. The media, thus, denied the public the possibility of evaluating Clinton's policy on its merits, implying that Clinton's role as policy maker was not taken seriously. Even when Clinton assumed the role of the traditional First Lady, as she did during the inauguration and in reaction to the welfare bill, the media repeatedly suggested that her policy making tendencies, whether exercised or not, infringed upon her ability to fulfill the role of the traditional First Lady.

The power that the media exercises over the success of Clinton's role fulfillment is demonstrably great. The excessive power of the media combined with its attachment to tradition creates a hostile resistance to Clinton's efforts. The media's self-appointed role as status quo enforcer works to restrict the possibility of change. As a cultural (and arguably political) mechanism, the media's function is to provide information to the people, creating an educated citizenry. In the case of Hillary Clinton, the media plays a much more active role than mere information provider: it becomes an essential variable in the determination of that which it is only supposed to report. Rather than simply reporting Clinton's image, the media contributes to its construction via the resistance it applies. The media did not fairly report Clinton from a distanced perspective, rather it actively restricted her abilities to negotiate her role. By repeatedly calling attention to her

mistakes and her past troubles, while neglecting her improvements and success, the media would not let Clinton live down her past. Similarly, coverage never gave Clinton a fair chance at demonstrating her policy making abilities, by failing to report her substantive policy efforts. Throughout her time as First Lady, the media has been more intent on portraying Clinton as a spectacle than on reporting her from a substantive, objective stance. Getting the media to work in conjunction with her has proved one of Clinton's more challenging tasks.

The most powerful testament to Clinton's success with the child care conference was the media coverage, for she negotiated her role such that the media worked for her, and not resistant to her. Clinton's successful negotiation of traditional expectations for a First Lady and subtle policy influencing respected cultural norms while gently expanding them. Because her involvement accommodated tradition, child care conference coverage not only accurately reflected Clinton's self-presentation, but also seemed to encourage her involvement, as opposed to undermining it. The media's power to apply resistance when cultural norms are threatened effected the way that Clinton interpreted her role. Given the prevalence of media's power to shape her public image, Clinton must strive to accommodate the media such that it will work with her. After experimenting with various roles, Clinton is able to negotiate a role that both accommodates tradition, and by extension the media, and her own policy influencing objectives.

VI) THE FUTURE

The mistakes Clinton made and the lessons she learned in interpreting her role will provide invaluable guidelines for future First Ladies. Navigating new terrain,

Clinton's role in the health care reform effort established her as a trailblazing First Lady. Certainly, her expansion of the First Lady's role fosters the possibility of increased expansion in the future. Moreover, future expansion can avoid many of the pitfalls that Clinton encountered in her initiatory position. Without doubt, other pitfalls will be discovered, yet through that discovery process, progress will be made. Clinton has established a precedent that tradition can be challenged, and that to a limited degree the role of the First Lady is negotiable.

The most essential lesson Clinton learned was that a culturally-pervasive attachment to tradition cannot be underestimated. At the beginning of her husband's term in office, Clinton vastly underestimated the power of cultural norms. Her outright defiance of tradition, via her official policy making position, was met with great upset. The media's coverage of Clinton vividly illustrated a reluctance to change, by actively resisting her efforts. Despite such resistance, by accommodating a demonstrated attachment to tradition, Clinton proved that it is possible to expand, but not to revolutionize, the First Ladyship. A non-obtrusive violation of cultural norms hinges upon the First Lady's ability to seamlessly integrate expansion into the traditional role. As a historical institution, the proper function of the First Ladyship is contingent upon the respect of tradition. Any First Lady wishing to broaden the possible applications of her role must adhere to traditional expectations as a prerequisite to expanding them.

Through her challenge posed to the status quo, and her successes and failures in expanding the role of the First Lady, Clinton has opened a door of possibilities for the future of the institution. Leaving her signature mark on the institution, Clinton's legacy is the proof that to some degree role of the First Lady is open to individual interpretation.

Such interpretation, however invariably has its limitations. While the First Ladyship may be negotiable on some level, it is by no means malleable. The most significant contribution to future of the First Ladyship was the definitive proof that expansion depends upon the fulfillment of traditional expectations. Traditional obligations cannot be discarded or temporarily suspended (as they were at points during the congressional testimony) in an effort to fulfill other obligations. Indeed, the child care conference most vividly illustrated that success can only be met when the traditional role is prioritized and other objectives are incorporated into that role. Thus, while the role of the First Lady is somewhat expandable, it cannot expand to incorporate responsibilities that are not in some way compatible with tradition.

Responsibilities must allow for the fulfillment of the First Lady's paramount position as wife and mother and commander of the private sphere. The highest executive office is firmly grounded in traditional gender roles, where the President attends to the public matters of politics and decision-making, while the First Lady manages the private sphere. Her responsibilities, in part, entail not infringing on her husband's power sphere. As the wife of the elected official, the First Lady must remain on the side line, complimenting, not sharing, her husband's power. The notion of an equal partnership marriage in White House, as the Clinton's haphazardly proposed in the 1992 bid for the Presidency, could never succeed. The institution's strict adherence to gender roles combined with American culture's attachment to tradition makes the notion of a partnership presidency unfathomable. Moreover, that the President is elected, and not his wife, makes the American public that much more resistant to a power-wielding First Lady. That is not to state, however, the impossibility of an equal partnership marriage in

the White House, only that such equality cannot be applied to presidential powers.

Marriage can be a partnership, the presidency cannot. Within these limitations lies a large degree of negotiating space. Discovering this negotiating space, Clinton challenged the boundaries of the First Ladyship. In doing so, she opened up a new realm of possibilities for future First Ladies. Clinton's mistakes and the lessons learned have paved the way for future expansion of the First Ladyship.

While Clinton's own attempt to expand the role of the First Lady to include policy making did not meet with immediate success, her role as trailblazer greatly furthered the possibility for expansion in the future. Often, the first person to pose a challenge to the status quo faces the greatest difficulty, but paves the way for future success. The next time that a First Lady tries to expand the role it will be less destabilizing, if nothing else but because of its familiarity. Clinton has begun to build the bridge to the conception of a new type of First Lady unharnessed by tradition, and its completion is for future First Ladies to work towards, each pushing a bit further than the one before her. Indeed, historical change, particularly institutional, is more often than not a gradual, incremental change, and Clinton has taken the hardest step: the first one.

Given the proven necessity of adherence to tradition, it is unlikely that the First Ladyship will see a radical reconceptualization of its role any time in the near future. Reliance on tradition insures that the institution will be recognized well into the twenty-first century as something quite similar to that of the eighteenth century. The future, however, holds one real possibility for a revolutionary modification of the First Ladyship: the election of a woman president. Under America's system of cultural norms, the title First Gentleman is as nonsensical as a man exclusively assuming the responsibilities of

the First Lady. The structure of gender powers suggest that a man would not be held to the same expectations in the role of First Partner as a woman relegated to the private sphere. That the powers associated with the private sphere are relegated to the feminine domain suggest that traditional expectations could be suspended, relinquishing a man from having to prioritize his role as husband and father as paramount. While Clinton surely made great leeway in broadening the role of the First Lady beyond its traditional conception, only the first man to hold the position can truly complete the reconfiguration. But until that point comes, Clinton's legacy has substantially increased the possibilities for future First Ladies, creating unprecedented opportunity for the First Lady of the twenty-first century. While her lessons were hard learned, Clinton's experience introduced an expanse of possibilities under the applied theme of renegotiation, not negation, in expanding the role of the First Lady.

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