

**An Examination of How Far Hillary Rodham Clinton Successfully
Redefined the Traditional Role of the First Lady During her Time
in Arkansas**

By

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Abstract

The 2016 presidential election has already made history with Hillary Rodham Clinton becoming the first woman to ever run for the presidency for either of the major political parties. However, Clinton has found her credibility and qualifications to serve as the next president questioned during the campaign. When thinking about Clinton's qualifications, her time serving as First Lady of Arkansas is often overlooked despite the fact that this is when she began to build a name for herself, independently of her husband. This thesis examines the time that Clinton served as First Lady of Arkansas and the way in which she used her ideology, grounded in liberal feminism, to redefine the traditional and symbolic role of the First Lady at state level. At a time when there was a backlash against women and feminism, Clinton was working to redefine the traditional role of the First Lady to make it reflective of modern women at the time. Whilst she was forced to abandon her efforts to redefine the more symbolic aspects of the First Lady due to the backlash, she was successful in creating a politicised role for herself as First Lady. Her success in politicising the role of the First Lady of Arkansas provided her with a wealth of political experience from which she successfully launched her own political career.

*For P,
Thank you.*

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Introduction:

The Woman who Redefined the First Lady

Although we weren't able to shatter that highest, hardest glass ceiling this time, thanks to you, it's got about 18 million cracks in it, and the light is shining through like never before, filling us all with the hope and the sure knowledge that the path will be a little easier next time.¹

- Hillary Rodham Clinton

This thesis examines Hillary Rodham Clinton's efforts to redefine the traditional role of the First Lady through the actions she undertook whilst serving as First Lady of Arkansas from 1979-1981 and 1983-1992. Clinton redefined the traditional role of the First Lady by embracing her feminist ideals to interpret the role to more closely reflect the modern women of the time.² Rejecting clothes and make-up, working full time, retaining her maiden name following her marriage and involving herself in politics, Hillary was able to redefine the traditional expectations of a state First Lady. Clinton was appointed by her husband, Governor Bill Clinton, as Chair of two different political committees looking at rural healthcare and education standards. In addition to these roles Clinton also took on the political cause of raising awareness of teenage pregnancy in Arkansas during her time as First

¹ Hillary Clinton, 'Yes, We Can: Hillary Clinton' *The Guardian*, 7 June 2008.

<<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/jun/07/hillaryclinton.uselections20081>>

² As Hillary Clinton is the main subject of this thesis, any use of the name 'Clinton' alone will be referring to her. Her husband will be referred to as 'Bill Clinton'.

Lady. This politicisation of the role of the First Lady at state level is something that Hillary took with her to the White House, after her husband was elected to the Presidency where they served as America's First Couple from 1993-2001. As First Lady of the United States, Clinton repeated the efforts she had made in Arkansas to redefine the role to one more in line with her feminist ideals and views of modern marriage as a partnership of equals. As America's First Lady, Clinton was appointed to the Health Care Task Force in 1993 and created her own office in the West Wing, making her the first First Lady of the United States to do so.³

This thesis comes at an important time. Hillary Clinton has made history becoming the first woman to ever be nominated for the Presidency by a major political party. Marking this historic moment, she stated 'we just put the biggest crack in that glass ceiling yet', reflecting the words she spoke (which can be seen in the opening quote for this introduction) following her previously unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 2008.⁴ Her 2016 presidential bid follows a successful attempt on Clinton's part to forge her own political career following her husband's presidency of the United States from January 1993 to January 2001. Clinton served as the Senator for New York from 2001 to 2009, a position she ran for to do everything she could to ensure that children had the 'same choices, opportunities, and dreams...now and for the future' as she had been so fortunate to have whilst growing up.⁵ This election was historic in itself as it marked the first time a First Lady of the United States had ever run for political

³ Professional Site: National First Ladies' Library, 'First Lady Biography: Hillary Rodham Clinton', 11 October 2014.

<<http://www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=43>>

⁴ Liz Kreutz, 'Hillary Clinton Makes Surprise Satellite Appearance at DNC: 'This Is Really Your Victory'', *ABC News*, 26 July 2016.

<<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/hillary-clinton-makes-surprise-satellite-appearance-dnc-victory/story?id=40908644>>

⁵ Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Living History* (USA: Simon & Schuster Inc., 2003), p. 532.

office, either before or after their tenure in the White House.⁶ During her time in the US Senate, Clinton gained a reputation for activism, sponsoring numerous pieces of legislation, including bills to help women and children such as the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 and the Ready to Learn Act, also created in 2009.⁷ Following a successful career as a Senator, Clinton ran to become the Democratic Party's presidential nominee in 2012. This marked the first time a former First Lady had ever attempted to win the White House in their own right and suggested a changing role of the women who have held the office of the First Lady of the United States. Following an unsuccessful bid for the presidency, Hillary went on to serve as Secretary of State for President Barack Obama, an appointment that he described as 'a sign to friend and foe of the seriousness of my commitment to renew American diplomacy.'⁸ Her appointment served as a testament to her political capabilities and experiences which she had spent over 30 years building. In a candid interview with BBC Radio 4's 'Woman's Hour', Clinton discussed the difficult decision of accepting this political position following a 'brutal campaign' against Barack Obama for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination.⁹ Her reluctance to accept the position of Secretary of State suggests that she was not willing to settle for this position when she had her eyes set on the White House, however as she discusses in her autobiography *Hard Choices* (2014) she accepted the position out of a sense of duty and service, reinforced by her Methodist faith, that you should 'do all the good you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.'¹⁰

⁶ Barbara C. Burrell, 'Hillary Rodham Clinton as First Lady: The People's Perspective', *The Social Science Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2000), p. 529.

⁷ Professional Site: Congress, 'Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton', 15 April 2016.
<<https://www.congress.gov/member/hillary-clinton/C001041>>

⁸ Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Hard Choices* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2014), p.19.

⁹ Woman's Hour, 'Hillary Clinton', 3 July 2014, 30 May 2016.
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b048033v>>

¹⁰ Clinton, *Hard Choices*, p. 18.

Despite not winning the nomination, when Hillary ran for the presidency in 2008 she created history as the first First Lady to run for the office. In the approach to the 2016 presidential primaries, there had been intense media scrutiny and much speculation as to whether Hillary had her eyes set on the Presidency. She has proved a polarising candidate so far in the political process. Her supporters seemed to see it as Hillary's 'destiny' to run for office and her announcement to run for the presidency was heralded with almost biblical approval. *The Guardian*, when discussing the possibility of Clinton running for the presidency, described the situation as the 'fairytale ending' stating that 'Hillary Clinton's life story remains unresolved...until the trinity is fulfilled: the president I married, the president I served, the president I became.'¹¹ However, others have been less enthusiastic and questioned Clinton's credentials and credibility to become the nation's first female President. One such example of the criticisms of Clinton came in the form of a political campaign advert from Senator Rand Paul (Republican). In the attack advert, Clinton is described as 'the worst of the Washington machine. The arrogance of power, corruption and coverup, conflicts of interest and failed leadership with tragic consequences.'¹² Despite receiving the Democratic Party's nomination for the presidency, these polarising views of Clinton's credibility have not waned and in many ways have been intensified by the reality that America could have its first female President. The prospect of the United States electing its first female president, who is a former First Lady, is one that has permeated popular culture with hit television shows *Scandal* (2012) and *House of Cards* (2013) both exploring the issue of the First Lady of the United States crossing the invisible boundary of their role and running for the Office of the

¹¹ Ed Pilkington, 'Hillary Clinton interview: will she or won't she run for president in 2016?', *The Guardian*, 22 June 2014, 31 July 2016.

<<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/22/-sp-hillary-clinton-interview-will-she-run-for-president-2016>>

¹² Katie Zezima, 'Rand Paul releases anti-Hillary Clinton ad', *The Washington Post*, 12 April 2015, 31 July 2016.

<<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/04/12/rand-paul-releases-anti-hillary-clinton-ad/>>

Presidency in their own right. However, this prospect is not confined to television with the possibility of this electoral first happening in real life in November 2016.

Many of the news stories covering Hillary, especially those looking at her credibility as a candidate, profiled her tenure as the nation's Secretary of State and First Lady or as New York's Senator. There has been little profiling of her time spent as First Lady of Arkansas, despite the fact that it was an important time in her life which helped her to begin to develop her credibility as a political candidate. The work that Hillary undertook during her 12 years as the First Lady of Arkansas is often overlooked when talking about her qualifications for the presidency. The time that she spent in Arkansas, provided a wealth of experience in a wide array of issues, as well as allowing her to reform a role that no longer reflected the status of women in America at the time. This thesis argues that Hillary's time in Arkansas proved a significant training ground, enabling her to develop political skills which would come to the fore in her subsequent career. Moreover, this thesis argues that Hillary's time as First Lady of Arkansas enabled her to attempt to redefine the traditional role and symbolic aspects of the First Lady in a way which was more in keeping with her feminist ideals and political independence and ambitions. This challenge to the role of First Lady was an important and often overlooked part of her preparation for her current position as a highly credible candidate for the most powerful elected position in the United States.

Hillary's Childhood

Hillary Clinton's feminist politics were a product of her generation, and indeed her mother's generation. Like many women of her age, Hillary struggled to reconcile her education and ambitions with the gendered expectations which had shaped her mother's life and, at times, threatened to dominate her own. Born on the 26th October 1947, Hillary Rodham grew up at a

time in which women were expected to stay at home and raise a family, whilst their husband went out to work to support them. Historians have recognised this period as one in which the pull of domestic ideology for women was strong.¹³ Following World War Two, a package of benefits was created for men under the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, which is more commonly known as the GI Bill of Rights.¹⁴ These benefits allowed veterans to access higher education, obtain medical insurance, gain a pension and borrow money to buy houses. The GI Bill provided support for 16 million men who had fought during the war and it worked to effectively secure the role of men as the family bread-winner and head of the household.¹⁵ The America into which Hillary was born presented limited opportunities for women, regardless of their economic background, with many women finding that gendered divisions existed in both their private and public worlds. Hillary Rodham's family was no different to the stereotype of the time. Her father owned a small business and her mother was a traditional homemaker who raised three children and took pride in her house.¹⁶ The lack of opportunities available to her mother made a strong impression on Hillary. Her mother was keen to ensure that Hillary was never put in a position wherein she only had the option of being a homemaker.¹⁷ During an interview with Gail Sheehy for the book *Hillary's Choice* (1999), Dorothy Rodham stated that she had chosen what she believed to be a man's name for her daughter. Rodham explained that she thought the name sounded 'exotic – the antithesis of her own limited life.'¹⁸ This shows that from the moment she was born, her parents, but particularly her mother, were determined that Hillary should have a life that was

¹³ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (USA: Basic Books, 2008).

¹⁴ Professional Site: US Department of Veterans Affairs, 'Education and Training', 30 May 2016.
<<http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/history.asp>>

¹⁵ Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (USA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 190-191.

¹⁶ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 2.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁸ Gail Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice* (UK: Simon & Shuster Ltd., 1999), p. 27.

different to their own – full of opportunity and different from what they considered to be the ‘norm’ in Park Ridge, Illinois.

Dorothy Howell Rodham, Hillary’s mother, was an archetype of the feminine mystique. In 1963 the release of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan finally gave a name to the feelings many American housewives were having regarding their limited role within society. As Friedan wrote, ‘The mystique would have women renounce themselves. Marriage and motherhood is the end.’¹⁹ This essentially sums up the attitude towards women and the experiences of American women at the time that Hillary Clinton was growing up. The research conducted by Friedan found that this feeling was a sentiment held by many of the women she interviewed,

Many of the mothers who love their daughters...did not want their daughters to grow up like them either. They knew we needed something more.²⁰

This mentality of some women at the time provides evidence that they were aware of the potential of which women were capable and wished for a better life for their daughters.

Hillary’s mother hoped that her daughter would become the first woman on the Supreme Court which is a clear indication of the political ambition within her family and belief that she could literally achieve anything she put her mind to.²¹ It can be argued that Hillary grew up with a feminist mother, longing for equal opportunities for her daughter and always encouraging her to believe she could do anything her peers could – male or female.

Despite the efforts of her parents to encourage her to believe she could achieve anything she wanted, Hillary herself could not hide from the fact that women simply did not have the same opportunities as men whilst she was growing up. Aged fourteen, Hillary wrote to NASA

¹⁹ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (USA: W.W. Norton, [1963] 1992), p. 309.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

²¹ Sheehy, *Hillary’s Choice*, p. 44.

following President Kennedy's vow to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. In her letter, she volunteered for astronaut training however she received a response stating that they were not accepting girls in the training program.²² This was Hillary's first experience of being unable to accomplish something due to her gender. The response outraged her as she could not believe that there was a barrier that she could not overcome with the hard work and determination that she displayed in all other aspects of her life.²³ For the first time in her life, she found that she was not viewed in equal terms as men and she was unsure of how to deal with this. Growing up at a time when women were still being excluded from society due to their gender, despite the gains they had made in recent decades, was most likely difficult for a headstrong girl such as Hillary Rodham. When her parents were raising her to believe that she could achieve anything she worked for, the shock of being refused something purely on the basis of her gender was a hard issue to deal with. However, for Hillary, there was a sense that 'growing up in the Fifties...we could redefine what women do.'²⁴ This attitude is something that she carried with her throughout her life and can be seen through much of the work that she has done in her personal and political life.

The Feminine Mystique – Changing Status of Women

By the time Hillary was serving as First Lady of Arkansas in the late 1970s, the feminist revolution which had been sparked by the *Feminine Mystique* was well underway. Historian Glenna Matthews has argued that the 'problem' which took generations to develop, was met with an 'explosive pace of change' once Friedan put a name to it.²⁵ This explosion of change that was taking place within American society provided young women with more freedom. In 1966 the National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded. At their first National

²² Clinton, *Living History*, p. 20.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 44.

²⁵ Glenna Matthews, "*Just a Housewife*" *The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 222.

Conference in Washington DC on 29th October 1966, they adopted a mission statement which called for a ‘new movement toward true equality for all women in America, and toward a fully equal partnership of the sexes, as part of the world-wide revolution of human rights’ that was currently taking place within and beyond the United States.²⁶ The statement which was written by Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* and founding member of NOW, highlighted the issues facing American women at the time, as well as stating NOW’s intention to work independently of political parties to ‘mobilize the political power of all women and men intent on our goals’, and also committed themselves to ensuring that,

no party, candidate, president, senator, governor, congressman, or any public official who betrays or ignores the principle of full equality between the sexes is elected or appointed to office.²⁷

The language used in the statement of purpose clearly sets the tone of the mission that NOW were about to embark upon; one in which women were to be ‘mobilized’ to claim their political rights and responsibilities and no longer allow themselves to be at the bottom rung of American society.

As well as the creation of NOW, changes were appearing on a national scale to reflect the evolving status of women in the United States during the feminist revolution that was taking place. In 1972, the Federal government passed a new law, the United States Education Amendments. Title IX came out of this wider provision which states that,

No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.²⁸

The law referred to all educational institutions that receive any federal funding and addressed 10 key areas including: Athletics, Access to Higher Education, Sexual Harassment,

²⁶ Professional Site: National Organization of Women, ‘Statement of Purpose’, 15 April 2016.
<<http://now.org/about/history/statement-of-purpose/>>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Professional Site: US Department of Education, ‘Title IX and Sex Discrimination’, April 2015, 15 April 2016.
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html>

Technology and Employment.²⁹ The passing of Title IX helped to make education an option for more women and alongside the other social changes that were taking place at the time in the United States, Title IX gave official endorsement to the idea of gender equality and the ambitions of American women to be more than just wives and mothers.

By 1975 the changes in the political and cultural landscape had had a demonstrable impact. Women were beginning to reject the feminine domestic ideals that had become so deeply ingrained in their lives and the lives of older generations of women. Rather than offering a haven for women to blossom and find themselves, the suburban home came to represent ‘a mausoleum, a place to bury a woman alive, granting her existence only vicariously through the lives of her husband and children and her new best friend, the TV’ for young women in the late 1960s and early 1970s.³⁰ As a result of this rejection of feminine domestic ideals, the number of women applying to law and medical school soared 500%, and those entering traditional women’s professions such as teaching and secretarial work plummeted from 31% to 10%.³¹ Women accounted for 60% of the total increase in the labour force during the 1970s, and many women were entering professional careers for the first time.³² The efforts of the second wave feminist movement resulted in women being integrated into the work force and improvements being implemented in educational opportunities at college and post-college. As well as women beginning to migrate out of the home, mass marketing of the birth control pill allowed women to take control of their own sexual health and helped forge a more liberal attitude towards sex and marriage amongst young men and women.³³ However

²⁹ Professional Site: Title IX Info, ‘History of Title IX’, 15 April 2016.

<<http://www.titleix.info/History/History-Overview.aspx>>

³⁰ Miriam Horn, *Rebels in White Gloves* (USA: Anchor Books, 2000), p. 53.

³¹ William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1992), p. 211.

³² Ibid.

³³ Cott, *Public Vows*, p. 202., Ethel Klein, *Gender Politics: From Consciousness to Mass Politics* (USA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 4,

while this evidence suggests a shift in American Society towards greater gender equality, there were, inevitably, those who disapproved of the changing role of women.

Backlash against Feminism

The backlash against feminism began in the 1980s in America. There have been many names for this movement – ‘Middle America’, the ‘New Right’ and even the ‘Silent Majority’³⁴ – however they all were working for the same purpose: to stop the feminist movement from attacking and destroying the nuclear family, monogamy, heterosexuality, the church and respect for authority.³⁵ The backlash against feminism became so powerful, that even the federal government began to promote its ideals under President Reagan. The Reagan White House had one of the worst track records in appointing women to federal office. New female judicial appointments fell from 15% under President Carter to 8% under President Reagan and the number of women appointed to the White House staff dropped from 123 in 1980 to 62 in 1981.³⁶ The nomination of Geraldine Ferraro on the 1984 Democratic presidential ticket caused uproar amongst the New Right in America. The New Right organised attacks against Ferraro as a woman, not a politician, questioned her sexuality and whether she had had an abortion. She was labelled a ‘radical left-wing feminist’, a title which was now associated with negative images with the changing face of American society.³⁷ This backlash against women in politics led to women feeling disheartened regarding the progress they could make within the political world. When asked in 1984 if a woman would be president by the year 2000, 53% of women believed it would happen. However, when the same survey was carried out in 1987, only 40% of women now thought it would happen.³⁸ This dramatic drop in numbers suggests that women no longer believed that they should be taking on an active role

³⁴ Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, p. 216.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women* (UK: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1992), p. 290

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 302-303

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 304-305.

within American politics and that society was no longer supportive of women in a leadership role. These statistics are quite shocking considering the progress that was made for women's rights only 10 years earlier.

As well as within the political world, 'feminists' were being attacked by the national media for their decision to delay marriage and children. Newspapers such as the *New York Times* and *Newsweek* began using terms such as 'biological clock', 'the man shortage' and 'the mommy track' when talking about women in professional careers.³⁹ Professional women found themselves being blamed for the dissatisfaction women were claiming to feel at the time and for the guilt women felt over not marrying until they were older and then being unable to conceive children. It seemed that American society was moving backwards, instead of forwards, as women began to find themselves being persecuted by the American media. The *New York Times* began writing articles about single women, describing them as suffering from 'a sickness almost' due to their decision to not marry and settle for a partner.⁴⁰ Due to the popularity of the newspapers that were reporting on single women, this backlash against American women weaved itself into popular culture and the 'anti-feminists' became the majority. As Susan Faludi has described,

the last decade [the 1980s] has seen a powerful counter-assault on women's rights, a backlash, an attempt to retract the handful of small and hard-won victories that the feminist movement did manage to win for women.⁴¹

This backlash was encountered by women in all aspects of American society. The media, fashion, movies, professional careers and politics all began to turn against women, despite the progress that had been made in the 1970s for women's rights. No longer were women viewed as victims of an unfair society that had prevented them from moving up in the world. Instead

³⁹ Faludi, *Backlash*, pp. 101-102.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 120.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 12.

they were being blamed for the problems that were beginning to surface in society and found themselves being forced back into the home by the New Right.

One of the leading voices of the New Right and the backlash against feminism in the United States came in the form of anti-feminist, Phyllis Schlafly. She was one of the earliest and most extreme examples of the female voices that the New Right relied on to support their anti-woman agenda.⁴² Schlafly led the battle in the late 1970s and early 1980s to oppose the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) by creating the political movement 'STOP' which stood for 'Stop Taking Our Privileges' as she believed that the passage of the ERA would remove key privileges granted to women on account of their gender that allowed them to stay at home and be housewives and mothers.⁴³ The ERA, in her words, would 'take away the marvellous legal rights of a woman to be a full-time wife and mother in the house supported by her husband.'⁴⁴ However, to many of the women involved in the 1970s second wave feminist movement, Schlafly's opposition to the ERA was somewhat of a paradox. She was a Harvard-educated lawyer, the author of nine books and she ran for Congress twice.⁴⁵ This paradoxical nature of Schlafly and her work is something that First Lady Betty Ford highlighted when she stated that,

She [Schlafly] contends that a woman's place in the home, yet she's out touring all over the United States in order to bring women that message. I wonder how often she's home to greet *her* husband when he comes in for dinner.⁴⁶

Schlafly was not the only anti-feminist voice at the time, however she was the most notable and she stood in stark contrast with the large majority of female voices on the national stage, with the author of *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan, stating that she would 'like to burn

⁴² Faludi, *Backlash*, pp. 270-271.

⁴³ Professional Site: National Women's History Museum, 'Phyllis Schlafly', 31 July 2016. <<https://www.nwhm.org/education-resources/biography/biographies/phyllis-schlafly/>>

⁴⁴ Faludi, *Backlash*, p. 271.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Betty Ford, *The Times of My Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), p. 212.

you [Schlafly] at the stake. I consider you a traitor to your sex.’⁴⁷ Schlafly serves as an example of the anti-feminist rhetoric that was so prevalent by the late 1970s and early 1980s and shows the public opinion that was gaining momentum at the time that Hillary Rodham was trying to redefine the traditional role of the First Lady in the conservative state of Arkansas.

The re-birth of the feminist movement in the mid-1960s suggested that progress would be made for women’s rights within American society. However, this progress and positivity was short-lived effectively coming to an end with the election of President Reagan and the dominance of the New Right Reaganites within the political world. Women from numerous backgrounds found themselves being attacked for the personal decisions they made in their lives. Women were no longer looked upon to progress and make gains in the political and professional world; they were expected to retreat home and raise families. The mainstream media suggested during the 1980s that women could not have it all and therefore they should choose their family over their career – women who did not make this decision were scorned by the national media. This backlash against American women was extremely detrimental to the position of women within society and in many ways is responsible for the slow progress women have made, in political and professional careers, since the 1990s.

This is the world that Hillary was working within during the time in which she was redefining the traditional role of the First Lady of a southern, conservative state. During Clinton’s time serving as the First Lady of Arkansas we can see both of these currents being in tension with each other. On the one hand Hillary was part of a generation of women who were inspired and empowered to claim their equal rights and follow their ambitions. On the other hand,

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Kolbert, ‘Firebrand: Phyllis Schlafly and the Conservative Revolution’, *The New Yorker*, 7 November 2005, 31 July 2016.
<<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/11/07/firebrand>>

they were forced to confront a hostile reaction to those ambitions as the rise of anti-feminism and the New Right created a difficult climate for feminism. This was the struggle Hillary was faced with in Arkansas. She felt empowered to redefine the traditional role of the First Lady and politicise it in line with the changing status of women in the United States, however due to the backlash against women there were people in Arkansas who viewed her as an outsider and believed that she did not fit their prescribed ideals of a Southern woman.⁴⁸

These changes in the role of women in society that had taken place by the 1970s explains the status of women in America at the time that Hillary was serving her first tenure as First Lady of Arkansas and the issues that women were still facing whilst trying to be accepted as equals to their male counterparts. During the time the Clintons spent as the First Couple of Arkansas, Hillary worked to redefine the role of the traditional first lady, bringing the prescribed role into the modern day and pushing for the position to mirror the changing status of American women. There were numerous decisions made by Hillary, all of which worked to begin reforming the traditional job description of the First Lady. Maintaining a full time profession, retaining her maiden name post-marriage, actively campaigning for her husband in the gubernatorial elections and spending little time worrying over her personal appearance were all steps which she took to redefine the role of the First Lady of Arkansas, allowing the position to reflect the status of modern day women within the United States. However, despite the second wave of feminism that was affecting life for American women, there was a strong resistance to this changing status of women, which could be felt by Hillary in Arkansas.

⁴⁸ In Focus, 'Interview with Hillary Rodham', 1979, 30 May 2016.
<<http://www.mediaite.com/online/1979-interview-with-hillary-rodham-foreshadows-her-long-battle-with-public-perception/>>

This thesis has two chapters which analyse the different ways in which Hillary attempted to redefine the traditional role of the state First Lady, working to make the role more reflective of the changing status of women in the United States at the time. They also look at the difficulties that she was faced with due to the emerging backlash against feminism and liberal ideas regarding the status of women in society. Chapter 1 will look at the importance of the role of the First Lady throughout history at both state and federal level and the traditional role that these women undertook. It will then assess the ways in which Hillary tried to redefine this traditional ideal by retaining her maiden name, casting aside expectations of her appearance and continuing to work outside the home despite her high profile marriage and subsequent motherhood. All of these decisions made by Hillary seemed to reflect the changing status of women across the country; however they were not all well received in a conservative southern state. The chapters will trace the way in which Hillary was forced to deal with this negative backlash, arguing that she was forced to make some compromises in the name of political expediency and necessity, while at the same time staying true to her ideals and ambitions.

The second chapter of this thesis will look at the way in which Hillary Rodham Clinton tried to politicise the traditional role of the First Lady, taking on overtly political issues as talking points, as well as being appointed to political committees by her husband. This chapter will assess her political ideology, her time on the Rural Health Advisory Committee and the Education Standards Committee, as well as her work as an advocate for children and teen mothers. This thesis argues that Clinton successfully redefined the traditional role of the First Lady, as will be shown in the following chapters, by aligning it more closely to her liberal, feminist ideals and creating a politicised role out of the traditional position. Her largely successful attempt to redefine the traditional role of First Lady can be seen through the

positive legacy she has created for herself in Arkansas; this legacy is clear through the physical monuments to her, the Hillary Rodham Clinton Children's Library and the Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport, as well as Arkansans unwavering support for her in both the 2008 and 2016 Democratic presidential primaries.⁴⁹ The way in which she worked to redefine the role of the First Lady meant that she gained a wealth of political experience, legitimising her presidential bid, as well as rethinking the way in which a First Lady should conduct herself whilst holding the position.

⁴⁹ Professional Site: The New York Times, 'Arkansas Primary Results', 26 May 2016, 31 May 2016
<<http://www.nytimes.com/elections/results/arkansas>>

Chapter 1: Reinventing the First Lady

In the spring of 1971 I met a girl. The first time I saw her we were, appropriately enough, in a class on political and civil rights. She had big, blonde hair, big glasses, wore no make-up and she exuded this sense of strength and self-possession that I found magnetic.⁵⁰

- Bill Clinton

The role of the First Lady is in many ways a less than ideal platform from which to espouse feminist ideals. Despite its high profile and the media interests that the position generates, it is undeniably anachronistic, a position which celebrates women's achievements primarily in terms of her marrying well. During her time in Arkansas, Hillary seemed determined to challenge the traditional role of the First Lady, and to redefine the role. As well as a national context which was becoming increasingly hostile to public declarations of feminist ideology, Arkansas was also dealing with its own issues with regards to women's rights and the traditional role women were expected to fulfil. Despite this, Clinton was determined to challenge the traditional conceptions of the role that she found herself serving in. Inevitably

⁵⁰ Bill Clinton, Democratic National Convention Speech, *PBS News Hour* 27 July 2016, 31 July 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RchVnIn_-Y>

Clinton's attempts at a radical reinterpretation of the role of First Lady met with a wide range of difficulties.

Discussions of the successes of second-wave feminism often overlook the movements that took place in Southern states, choosing to instead focus on the women's movement in liberal, metropolitan areas in the North and on the East and West coasts of America.⁵¹ However, from the late 1960s to the early 1970s activism on the part of second-wave feminists began to grow in momentum in the state of Arkansas, reflecting the movement on a national scale.⁵² Historian Sara Evans has argued that the feminist movement in the South was born out of the Civil Rights Movement which offered women opportunities for political activism.⁵³ However, a study by Zajicek, Lord and Holyfield has shown that the historical context of the women's rights movement in Arkansas is not reflective of those in other Southern states as in fact many women involved in second-wave feminism from Arkansas had had little to do with the Civil Rights Movement.⁵⁴ Instead, many of the women that took part in the grassroots organisations for women's rights became engaged in the issue through 'back-to-the-land' and environmental movements which are telling of the types of issues that were important to women in Arkansas at that time.⁵⁵ The women's movement in Arkansas, reflecting the status of women on a national scale, gained momentum in the early 1970s, which was bolstered by political support of Governor Faubus and his creation of Arkansas' first Women's Commission.⁵⁶ Although there were different issues on the table for the Women's

⁵¹ Anna M. Zajicek, Allyn Lord and Lori Holyfield, 'The Emergence and First Years of a Grassroots Women's Movement in Northwest Arkansas, 1970-1980', *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (Summer, 2003), pp. 153-154.

⁵² Melanie K. Welch, 'Not Women's Rights: Birth Control as Poverty Control in Arkansas', *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (Autumn 2010), p. 223.

⁵³ Zajicek, Lord and Holyfield, 'The Emergence and First Years of a Grassroots Women's Movement in Northwest Arkansas, 1970-1980', p. 155.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155-156.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁵⁶ Janine A. Parry, "'What Women Wanted': Arkansas Women's Commissions and the ERA", *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Autumn 2000), p. 266.

Commission of Arkansas when compared to women's organisations on a national level, they found relative success until the backlash against feminism began to take hold across the country from the mid-1970s.

In Arkansas, the backlash against second-wave feminist ideals came in the form of the ERA in the mid-1970s. A contentious issue the ERA re-entered public and political discourse in the 1970s after failing to be added to the American Constitution following its original proposal in 1923.⁵⁷ The ERA was originally proposed by American Suffragist, Alice Paul, in 1923.⁵⁸ Section 1 of the ERA stated that 'equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex' and it was largely concerned with equal pay and employment opportunities for women in the United States.⁵⁹ Paul created the amendment as the next step to increase women's opportunities following the passage of the 19th Amendment (women's voting rights) ensuring that 'equal justice under law' was brought to all citizens.⁶⁰ The ERA failed to be passed every year by Congress until 1972 when, at the height of second-wave feminism, it won a majority vote and was sent to the states for ratification. Initially a number of states quickly ratified the constitutional amendment, however as the backlash against feminism began the ratification process slowed, forcing Congress to extend the original 7 year deadline for ratification to 10 years.⁶¹ By 1982, at the end of the 10 year ratification deadline, the ERA had been ratified by only 35 states, meaning it was 3 states short of the required number to become an amendment to the Constitution.⁶²

⁵⁷ Professional Site: Women's History, 'Alice Paul', 2009, 31 July 2016.

<<http://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/alice-paul>>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Professional Site: Roberta W. Francis, 'The History Behind the Equal Rights Amendment', 31 July 2016.

<<http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/history.htm>>

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

One of the biggest contributing factors to the lack of states ratifying the ERA by the late 1970s was the organised efforts of anti-ERA groups, often with solely female membership, that began to become the dominant voices surrounding the issue of women's rights. These groups were active in Arkansas and formed a large part of the anti-feminist rhetoric that was taking hold in the state. Using their Christian beliefs to argue their opinions, these anti-ERA groups were able to tap into deep-rooted fears of Arkansans to prevent women's rights groups from being successful. There were worries in Arkansas that passing the ERA would alter traditional gender relations between men and women.⁶³ Concerns began to surface that if Arkansas passed the ERA, couples would have problems in assigning a surname to their children and also that men would be forced to take their wives' surnames post-marriage.⁶⁴ Bob Lancaster, a reporter for the *Arkansas Gazette*, described the situation in the state as 'a war between women and women' which in many ways was reflective of the changing face of feminism on a national scale with the rise of figures such as Phyllis Schlafy (as discussed in the introduction).⁶⁵ In a historically conservative state, these fears of a break in traditional gender relations combined with organised attacks on feminist organisations led to a rejection of the ERA and marked the beginning of an anti-feminist era within Arkansas. This shows the attitudes that were simmering in Arkansas at the time that Hillary Rodham and her husband took the Governor's office in 1979 and explains why she found herself being persecuted for her liberal, feminist ideology.

This chapter will review the difficulties Hillary faced in Arkansas, such as attempting to remain true to her feminist ideals whilst convincing the people that although she was an outsider she was the right fit for Arkansas' First Lady. It will argue that while she at first was somewhat intransigent in her response, her husband's electoral defeat in 1980 forced her to

⁶³ Parry, "What Women Wanted": Arkansas Women's Commissions and the ERA', p. 281.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 282.

reconsider her ideals, resulting in a willingness to compromise over inessentials whilst remaining true to her core principles and ideology. Hillary was faced with a number of difficulties when she began serving as First Lady of Arkansas in 1979 with one of the biggest problems she faced being that she was born in the North; some more conservative Arkansans believed that she could not possibly understand the way in which their Southern branch of politics worked and were resistant to having a Northern, liberal, feminist living in the Governor's Mansion. Her liberal, feminist political ideologies were seen as on the fringes of politics of the time, on both a state and national level, despite the efforts of second-wave feminists to bring their issues to the forefront of American political discourse.

This chapter will be looking at two intertwined issues – the way in which Hillary tried to redefine the role of the First Lady to one which was more in keeping with her post-second wave feminism ideals, and also the way in which both Clintons tried to incorporate this new, modern conception of the role of the First Lady with an equally new and modern conception of what a marriage was and how a marriage based more on female equality could look.

Hillary tried to reimagine the traditional role of the First Lady in three ways: rejecting the conventional image of the First Lady, continuing to work a full time job whilst serving in her capacity as First Lady and retaining her maiden name post-marriage to Bill Clinton. This chapter argues that Hillary was forced to abandon her efforts to reform the more symbolic aspects of the Office of the First Lady but that she still remained true to her efforts in regards to her determination to play a substantial political role. The potential to carry out a substantial political role during her time as First Lady was only possible due to the way in which both Clintons viewed their marriage as a post-second wave feminism marriage, in which Hillary was Bill's equal in all matters.

The First Lady of the United States

Important on both a federal and state level, first ladies play a special role in American politics. The position of the First Lady has existed since the beginning of American democracy in 1789, and has taken on an increasingly important, albeit undefined, role within American society and politics.⁶⁶ As Robert P. Watson has stated, the First Lady of the United States ‘owes her power to the wedding band’.⁶⁷ This means that the First Lady (of the United States or any of the individual states) can be seen as gaining a significant amount of power for no reason other than being married to the President or Governor of a state. Unelected, unappointed and with no official duties, the women who hold this position across the country are extremely visible and wield a degree of political power without any direct electoral authority within their state or on a national basis. Germaine Greer has commented on the irony that ‘the country that pioneered democracy also invented its contradiction in the figure of the unelected First Lady.’⁶⁸ The first First Lady of the United States, Martha Washington, found herself thrust into the public eye, being cast as a head of state figure. Aware of her position as the first woman to hold the office, she took steps to begin to define the role and set a precedent for future women who would come to hold the position. She forged herself as a powerful player within the government, despite the fact that she wielded no real power other than being married to her husband who became the President of the United States.⁶⁹ At the time that Martha Washington served as the First Lady of the United States, there were very few women who appeared in print news. This meant that Martha became somewhat of a phenomenon with American newspapers placing her in a prominent position with a platform

⁶⁶ Germaine Greer, ‘Abolish Her: The Feminist Case Against First Ladies’, *The New Republic*, Vol 212, No. 26 (June 1995), p. 21.

⁶⁷ Robert P. Watson, ‘A Review Essay: Hillary’s Legacy? Recent Literature on the First Lady’, *The Social Science Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2000), p. 657.

⁶⁸ Greer, ‘Abolish Her’, p. 21.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

to speak from, should she wish to.⁷⁰ In 1789, President George Washington announced that his wife, Martha, would hold ‘drawing rooms’ for men and women to attend where they could discuss issues that were of importance to them with the First Couple. The ‘drawing room’ parties set a precedent for successive Presidents to include their wives in important presidential matters, thus marking the beginning of the public role of the First Lady.⁷¹ Whilst Martha Washington began to create a somewhat politicised role for the First Lady, she was doing so at a time where equal rights for women did not mean identical rights to men and therefore the idea of women being given the right to vote and take on an active role within politics was inconceivable.⁷² She was working at a time where it was seen as unfeminine for women to be active within the political sphere meaning she was unable to take on a highly politicised role, setting a precedent for an active but not necessarily politicised First Lady of the United States.

The role of First Lady has evolved over time since its conception. Historian Robert P. Watson has grouped together presidential spouses to mark the developments in the role: the first spouses, the absent spouses, the transitional spouses, the aspiring spouses, the supportive spouses and the modern spouses.⁷³ Despite these developments through history it is clear that the position of First Lady has always been complex with many varying skills and attributes required to fulfil the role, all of which the holder of the ‘office’ is expected to demonstrate. The ‘traditional’ role of First Ladies’ is that of hostess, manager, decorator and caretaker.⁷⁴ Although this concept of the role dates back to the times of Martha Washington and Abigail Adams, it is has remained an expectation of all modern First Ladies and can be seen to some

⁷⁰ Greer, ‘Abolish Her’, p. 22.

⁷¹ Betty Boyd Caroli, *First Ladies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 5.

⁷² Rosemarie Zagari, ‘Morals, Manners and the Republican Mother’, *American Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (June 1992), p. 208.

⁷³ Watson, ‘A Review Essay: Hillary’s Legacy? Recent Literature on the First Lady’, pp.809-814

⁷⁴ Professional Site: National First Ladies’ Library, ‘Articles about First Ladies’ Role’, 20 October 2014.
<<http://www.firstladies.org/FirstLadiesRole.aspx#RoleFirstLady>>

extent from every woman who has held the position. The fact that this aspect of the traditional role of First Lady is still expected of those women who hold the position regardless of the historical period and changing notions of what constitutes appropriate roles for women within marriage, shows that it is still seen as one of the most important aspects of being First Lady of the United States. Historian James Benze has argued that First Ladies today must still satisfy the expectations of so-called 'traditionalists' and are expected to be 'loyal to their husbands, raise a family, and be promoters of art and culture.'⁷⁵

This traditional role and expectation of First Ladies is a symbolic role which serves to affirm and reinforce the traditional marriage and gender stereotypes which cast women in a domestic role, where they support their husband and take care of the home and family. In many ways the traditional role of the First Lady harks back to the old idea of the 'Republican Mother'. Born out of the American Revolution, the 'Republican Mother' was the title women were given to affirm their position in society as wife, mother and housekeeper, raising children to be loyal citizens.⁷⁶ Historian Rosemarie Zagarri has argued that the concept of the Republican Mother was designed to preserve the traditional gender roles of women whilst still forging a new political role for women that required them to educate their sons and support their husbands as a way of contributing to the body politic.⁷⁷ Even in modern times, to some extent the idea of the Republican Mother is the expectation of First Ladies. They must support their husband and raise their children, whilst taking care of the home and carrying out their public work. Germaine Greer has argued the importance of this role in her article, *Abolish Her*,

Besides confirming the First Gentleman's sexual adequacy, the First Lady must also display his success as a provider not only by dressing well but by being

⁷⁵ James G. Benze Jr., 'Nancy Reagan: China Doll or Dragon Lady?', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Fall 1990), p. 778.

⁷⁶ R. H. Bloch, 'The Gendered Meaning of Virtue in Revolutionary America', *Signs*, 13, no. 1 (1987), p. 46.

⁷⁷ Zagarri, 'Morals, Manners and the Republican Mother', p. 192.

prepared to spend money wisely and well, showing herself to be expert in the housewife's most important role, that of conspicuous consumer.⁷⁸

This description of the traditional First Lady shows the demands upon the woman who holds the title. She is expected to live to the highest expectations, acting as a 'model' for marriages and gender relations across the nation. It is not surprising, given the complexities of the role, that First Lady Margaret Truman described it as the 'second hardest job in America.'⁷⁹

A second function of the First Lady that has evolved over time, reflecting the changing status of women in America, is the idea that the women serving in the role should take on public responsibilities that usually work to improve the welfare of others (particularly women and children). This second function has naturally occurred out from the traditional role of First Lady and sees the women that hold the office taking on more activist roles within American society. This activism first manifested itself through the role of 'first mother', with First Lady Dolley Madison playing an important role in the founding of the Washington City Orphan Asylum for children who were made homeless by the war of 1812.⁸⁰ This extension of the traditional role of the First Lady was deemed acceptable due to it being an extension of women's domestic and maternal roles rather than an intrusion into the public world of politics. In many ways, Dolley Madison was the embodiment of a social feminist as she began to branch outside of the home and give a wider role to the traditional First Lady without overstepping the prescribed boundaries that come with the office.

⁷⁸ Greer, *Abolish Her*, p. 23.

⁷⁹ Robert P. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives: Reassessing the Office of First Lady* (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2000), p. 32.

⁸⁰ 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*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (2002), p. 573.

Historically, social feminists are those who believe in women's rights but were much more 'conventionally womanly' and domestic.⁸¹ The term 'social feminist' was coined by historian William L. O'Neill to refer to the expansion of the appeal of the women's movement after 1900.⁸² The term was developed to differentiate between general supporters of the movement and what O'Neill described as 'hard-core feminists'. In his book *Feminism in America: A History* (2009) O'Neill describes social feminists as a group that were 'better balanced than hard-core suffragists' suggesting that the term refers to those women who were not as politicised as feminists who were pushing for equal voting rights.⁸³ Social feminism encompasses women who, according to O'Neill, put reform aims first and used the issue of voting rights for women as a way of meeting their aims.⁸⁴ Nancy Cott has also discussed the use of the term 'social feminists' and has argued that the general idea was extremely appealing to women at the time. The category of social feminism was applicable to all women who were engaged during the Progressive era and it allowed them to bring to the forefront of political discourse issues of the 'family and household, kin and church, and to put them on the political agenda, thus transforming them into secular, collective, public matters – matters of the state.'⁸⁵

This change to social feminism allowed for women, and First Ladies, to begin to extend themselves outside of the home. The growing popularity of the concept of 'social feminism' throughout the nineteenth century gave First Ladies increasing scope to extend their activities into the public sphere, provided they displayed their activism in terms which stressed their domestic, and maternal inspiration and responsibility. Madison extended her caring nature to

⁸¹ Nancy F. Cott, 'What's in a Name? The Limits of 'Social Feminism;' or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History', *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 76, No. 3 (Dec., 1989), p. 811.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 810.

⁸³ William L. O'Neill, *Feminism in America: A History*, 4th edn (USA: Transaction Publishers, 2009), p. 142.

⁸⁴ Cott, 'What's in a Name? The Limits of 'Social Feminism;' or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History', p. 810.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 815.

the children of Washington DC and importantly, was not directly involved in the political world. Over time this type of benevolent volunteer work evolved into more political causes as First Ladies became increasingly liberal and expansive in their interpretation of what exactly was encompassed in their maternal remit. This expansion of the role saw Ellen Wilson working to pass legislation proposed by the National Civic Federation to clear the slums in Washington DC and Eleanor Roosevelt attending the hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee to support the American Youth Congress.^{86 87}

The work of these women in the early 20th century, alongside the extension of the franchise and the emergence of female politicians in the 1920s, helped to give a new dimension to the expectations of the First Lady of the United States. Every First Lady since Jacqueline Kennedy (1961-1963) has had a specific cause that they have been champion of, all of which have been different and have required varying levels of political involvement.⁸⁸ It has become an expectation that First Ladies take on a cause that they can invest four years into whilst their husband serves as the President. Throughout the mid-to-late twentieth century, these causes have become more politicised, less traditional, less feminine and highly public. In a move away from so-called 'social housekeeping' roles, the First Lady began to take on more political roles which reflected their personal interests and political ideologies. Rosalynn Carter entered the White House with a long and clear agenda; mental health, the Equal Rights Amendment, the elderly and encouraging local level volunteerism were all priorities that she wanted to achieve during her time as First Lady of the United States.⁸⁹ Carter paved the way for the transformation of the traditional role of the First Lady by taking on the issues that

⁸⁶ Allida M. Black, 'The Modern First Lady and Public Policy: From Edith Wilson through Hillary Rodham Clinton', *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (2001), p. 15.

⁸⁷ Parry-Giles and Blair, 'The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady', p. 579.

⁸⁸ Professional Site: National First Ladies' Library, 'Articles about First Ladies' Role', 20 October 2014 <<http://www.firstladies.org/FirstLadiesRole.aspx#RoleFirstLady>>

⁸⁹ Caroli, *First Ladies*, pp. 265-266.

were of importance to her and hiring a staff of twenty-one, the largest East Wing staff at that point in history, to help her achieve her goals.⁹⁰

The women that have taken on more overtly political causes have often found themselves being attacked more viciously than their predecessors. By taking on a political cause that is not directly attached to the White House and their maternal role, the First Lady somewhat detaches herself from her husband's agenda, therefore turning herself into a potential political target. These criticisms of political First Ladies have come about for three reasons. In taking on more political causes a First Lady would be vulnerable to attacks from those who believed it was unfeminine for women to be directly involved in politics. Secondly, it has been argued that the First Lady should not be politicised because she is unelected and therefore unaccountable. And finally, the First Lady's political agenda can come under attack by those who oppose her on partisan grounds.

First Lady Betty Ford (1974-1977) serves as an example of a First Lady who found herself under attack for all of the above reasons.⁹¹ The fact that she was criticised for her role shows that these reproaches of First Ladies are not isolated to Democratic First Ladies who, historically, are seen as being more overtly political than their Republican counterparts. Betty Ford served as First Lady during the time that the issue of women's rights and the backlash against feminism were beginning to take a hold of the nation. The political stances that she took during her tenure as First Lady went against the Republican Party line, which was becoming staunchly more conservative with the emergence of the New Right in the 1970s. Historian Lewis L. Gould has argued that Betty Ford was the most feminist and outspoken First Lady to serve in the decades between Eleanor Roosevelt and Hillary Clinton, both of

⁹⁰ Caroli, *First Ladies*, p. 266.

⁹¹ Any use of the name 'Ford' alone will refer to First Lady Betty Ford, not her husband President Ford, as she is the subject of this section.

whom are widely regarded as political feminist icons that held the office of the First Lady.⁹² This is interesting because as a Republican First Lady, Ford's role should have reflected that of other Republican wives such as Patricia Nixon or Mamie Eisenhower, who both followed a more traditional role which saw them in the background and out of the public eye.⁹³ Ford went public with her support of the Equal Rights Amendment, as well as her belief in the legalisation of abortion. Her support of both issues found her being attacked by those who opposed her on partisan grounds, as well as those who believed she had overstepped the invisible boundaries of the role of the First Lady. Phyllis Schlafly, a leading opponent of the ERA, was a big critic of Ford and her feminist work. Schlafly began to question the legality of Ford's work of using her position in the White House, as well as taxpayers' dollars to try to push for the ratification of the ERA.⁹⁴ Ford made history by becoming the first First Lady to be picketed on Pennsylvania Avenue. This picketing, for her support of the ERA, was an organised effort by those who disagreed with her politics on partisan grounds, as well as those who believed she was abusing the office of First Lady and those who believed it was wrong for a woman to be so vocal on a political issue.⁹⁵ Picketers claimed that Ford was 'trying to press a second-rate manhood on American women' and therefore trying to change the traditional prescribed role of women.⁹⁶

As well as organised attacks against Ford's support of the ERA, she also found herself in receipt of over 28,000 letters following her admission that she supported the legalisation of abortion in a 1975 televised interview with Morley Shafer. Most of these letters were negative, criticising her political opinions and questioning her mandate to get involved in

⁹² Lewis L. Gould, *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Their Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 374.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

⁹⁴ Maurine H. Beasley, *First Ladies and the Press: The Unfinished Partnership of the Media Age* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005), p. 136.

⁹⁵ PBS News Hour, 'Betty Ford: The Real Deal', March 2009, June 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rc_KY9-5Qzs>

⁹⁶ Beasley, *First Ladies and the Press*, p. 136.

political discussions.⁹⁷ It is clear that Betty Ford was widely criticised for overstepping the boundaries of the role of First Lady however she made the most of the platform she was given for no reason other than being married to the President,

I'm sure they will remember me in recovery and perhaps with the Equal Rights Amendment, and certainly the breast cancer. Those were all big things for me but if I hadn't been married to my husband, I never would have had the voice that I did when those things arose, so being married to him was probably the biggest decision I made and the best decision I made.⁹⁸

Ford was astutely aware that her power and platform came from nothing other than her marriage to Gerald Ford and she used this opportunity to boost the changing status of women in America at the time, despite the personal attacks and criticisms that she was faced with for taking on an seemingly unfeminine, unaccountable and political position within the White House.

Another criticism of the First Lady and the position she holds is the undue influence which she has over her husband. This is related to the issue of being unelected and unaccountable and the power that she wields as a result of this position. However, the idea of undue influence has been widely discussed by scholars of First Ladies who have examined the power that the First Lady unavoidably holds over her husband due to being his partner in marriage. The First Lady is closer to the President than any other person and due to this relationship naturally, she is in a unique position to privately influence her husband through so-called 'pillow talk', meaning she can sway the opinions of her husband outside of committee rooms and meetings.⁹⁹ Historian Karrin Vasby Anderson has argued that pillow talk has come to be largely accepted by Americans over time due to the fact that it allows the

⁹⁷ PBS News Hour, 'Betty Ford: The Real Deal', March 2009, June 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rc_KY9-5Qzs>

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Karrin Vasby Anderson, 'The First Lady: A Site of "American Womanhood"' in Molly Meijer Wertheimer (ed.) *Inventing a Voice: The Rhetoric of American First Ladies of the Twentieth Century* (USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), p. 27.

First Lady to be involved in the lives of their husbands without publically participating in their political business. In a *McCall's* interview First Lady Ford addressed the issue of pillow talk stating that 'If he doesn't get it in the office during the day, he gets it in the ribs at night.'¹⁰⁰ Ford's acknowledgement of the undue influence she has over her husband and the decisions he made was not exclusive to their relationship. First Lady Nancy Reagan found herself being constantly attacked during her husband's tenure as President of the United States. She was seen as having too much influence over her husband and of dominating him when it came to making important political decisions, particularly regarding staffing.¹⁰¹ William Safire argued that President Reagan 'is being weakened and made to appear wimpish and helpless by the political interference of his wife.'¹⁰² These words are similar to those spoken by President Nixon some years later when discussing Hillary Rodham Clinton's role in her husband's presidential campaign in February 1992 where he said,

If the wife comes through as being too strong and too intelligent it makes the husband look like a wimp. Intellect in a woman is un-becoming.¹⁰³

This shows that the way in which the First Lady is perceived has changed very little, particularly during the tumultuous period of the backlash against second-wave feminism. These reproaches of First Ladies have not gone unnoticed however, and in her autobiography, *My Turn* (1989), Nancy Reagan addressed these criticisms of her influential position within the White House by stating that, 'For eight years I was sleeping with the President, and if that doesn't give you special access, I don't know what does.'¹⁰⁴ Reagan's comments show the paradoxical position that the First Lady finds herself in. Traditionally she is expected to stay out of politics and just stand by and support her husband, the President. However, for many of the women that hold the Office of the First Lady, this is almost impossible as they are the

¹⁰⁰ Beasley, *First Ladies and the Press*, p. 136.

¹⁰¹ Benze, 'Nancy Reagan: China Doll or Dragon Lady?', p. 783.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 784.

¹⁰³ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 106.

¹⁰⁴ Beasley, *First Ladies and the Press*, p. 184.

President's most trusted advisor due to the fact that their relationship is beyond the remit of party politics.

It is clear that the reactions towards First Ladies from the public and media seem to reflect the status, expectations and feelings towards women throughout American history.¹⁰⁵

Because of this changing relationship it is difficult to know the full extent of the expectations of a modern First Lady beyond the traditional prescribed role which harks back to the late 1700s. Many First Ladies have faced criticism for their attempts to extend the role, whilst others have been accepted and encouraged throughout history. It is clear that with the evolution of the role of the First Lady over 200 years there is still no clear answer as to what a First Lady should be doing with her time. She is expected to be a hostess, a wife, a mother to the nation, an activist, a champion of a cause, as well as many other roles, and she is expected to do all without overstepping an invisible boundary that makes her seem untraditional and as if she is breaking precedent. It is a very complex job to take on and one which the women who hold it have little choice to fulfil or not due to the expectations of the American public. However, in the modern world, it is understandable why so many women may be dubious about taking on the role, especially if they want to continue pursuing their own careers once their husband has finished serving as President. Benze has discussed the complexities and hardships that come with the role of First Lady,

She is expected to demonstrate a physical strength that will stand up to the requirements of a presidential campaign and an inner strength that allows her to withstand the scrutiny of the sometimes nosey press and public, survive political attacks against her husband, her family, and herself, and, in the event of an attack on her husband's life, bear her sorrow with dignity and grace.¹⁰⁶

This shows just how complicated the role of the First Lady is and the pressures she must deal with when trying to serve to the best of her capacity. The woman who holds the position of

¹⁰⁵ Watson, 'The First Lady Reconsidered', p. 808.

¹⁰⁶ Benze, 'Nancy Reagan: China Doll or Dragon Lady?', p. 783.

the First Lady is always on the public stage and must learn how to deal with this publicity whilst trying to forge her own identity as the First Lady of the United States.

As the First Lady of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton struggled to deal with all of the issues that have posed a problem for previous First Ladies. Her difficulties as First Lady have been well documented, none more so than in her own autobiography *Living History* (1999). Many of the issues which Hillary was faced with on the national stage were however issues she had previously rehearsed during her time as the First Lady of Arkansas. Clinton's time in Arkansas is extremely important as in many ways it acted as a microcosm for the experiences and pressures to come in the White House and during the Clinton's tenure as the First Couple of the United States. Serving as First Lady of Arkansas provided Hillary with her first experience of politics and allowed her to begin to push the boundaries of the traditional role of the First Lady and see just how far she could develop the role before being faced with a backlash from the voters. It provided an opportunity to 'test the waters' with regards to her liberalisation of the role of the First Lady and to see just how far America had come since the birth of second-wave feminism in the 1960s, especially in regards to some of the more symbolic aspects of the role.

The State First Lady

The tensions of the role of the First Lady at national level are also evident at state level. The First Lady of Arkansas is expected to be a supportive spouse to the Governor, a perfect hostess, a social activist and a speech maker.¹⁰⁷ Due to the fact that the position has no official duties attached has meant that the women serving in this role have had some freedom in terms of shaping the position and allowing it to develop and evolve over time. There is an

¹⁰⁷ Professional Site: The Encyclopaedia of Arkansas History & Culture, First Ladies, Kaye Lundgren, 9 August 2014, 11 May 2015.
<<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=7828>>

expectation from voters, which has developed into an ideal image of their First Lady, that she will be highly visible and take on her own projects that run alongside but independently of her husband's work. Even at the state level, the First Lady is still there to reinforce and act as a role model for the traditional marriage.

In addition to the traditional expectations of First Ladies, state First Ladies are responsible for representing their state – advocating and advertising the particular characteristics and social mores of their specific state. This poses the issues of geographical expectations of the state First Lady as what may be acceptable as the First Lady of New York may not be acceptable in a southern, conservative state. In the state of Arkansas, the contradictory expectations of the First Lady came about post-World War II, with an increase in media scrutiny.¹⁰⁸ In Arkansas, there is a history of First Ladies being politically active which started as early as 1889 when First Lady Mary Kavanaugh Oldham Eagle took on an overtly political role by involving herself in her husband's political campaigns and gubernatorial parties.¹⁰⁹ Subsequent first ladies of Arkansas have also been politically active, championing issues such as education, state prison reform and the Red Cross.¹¹⁰

Despite being subjected to high levels of criticism from Arkansas voters and the local media, Hillary Clinton was effective in her attempt to redefine the traditional role of the First Lady of Arkansas and in many ways became the 'Anti-First Lady' showing the people of Arkansas that she was extremely capable in her own right and did not have to sacrifice her own personal career for the sake of tradition surrounding the office of the Governor and the position of First Lady. In many ways it seemed that she literally could have it all, a 'power

¹⁰⁸ Professional Site: The Encyclopaedia of Arkansas History & Culture, First Ladies, Kaye Lundgren, 9 August 2014, 11 May 2015.

<<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=7828>>

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

woman', with a career, an involvement in politics, being a wife, mother and a First Lady. As this chapter demonstrates, Hillary learnt through her time in Arkansas that she needed to accept compromise over many of the symbolic aspects of the traditional role of First Lady in order to achieve the more significant redefinitions of the role. She was willing to make these compromises due to her determination to forge her own political identity and to continue the idea of the marriage of equals, which she and Bill were striving to achieve. Unlike any other First Lady of Arkansas that had served before her, Hillary was trying to pave a new road for future First Ladies, showing that they did not have to sacrifice their own individualism in order to fully support their husband's career. This was an astute reflection of the changing world for women in the mid-1970s and early 1980s.

The Changing Face of Feminism

By the 1980s, the status of women in the United States had changed dramatically; many more women were entering the labour force and professional careers as opposed to the 'feminine' jobs they had previously occupied.¹¹¹ Because of the efforts of the feminist movement in the 1960s, women found themselves being integrated into the work force, there were improvements in educational opportunities at college and post-college and a wider availability and range of contraception which allowed women to take control of their own sexual health.¹¹² However, despite the advancements that were made for women's rights in the 1970s, women found themselves still facing numerous problems. Women were still being discriminated against in terms of the pay gap. One example of the pay gap that existed is that in 1984 only 4% of all working women earned more than \$28,000 per year while 26% of white men did.¹¹³ This is a huge difference in pay, suggesting that most women were not able to break into professional jobs that had been historically associated with white men and that

¹¹¹ Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, p. 221.

¹¹² Klein, *Gender Politics*, p. 4

¹¹³ Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, p. 223.

even those who did enter professional careers were not being paid on an equal basis to their male colleagues. Even in the more traditional women's service areas men were earning more – saleswomen in shops made only 50% of what salesmen made for the same work.¹¹⁴ These figures suggest that there were still some major issues to be resolved before women's rights could be advanced.

These changes in the status of women came alongside the second wave of feminism, which Hillary was swept up in during her youth. In 1965, Hillary Rodham officially became a member of the Wellesley Class of '69, which has been dubbed 'Hillary's Class' by a PBS documentary looking into the journey these women took through a time of change and general upheaval for women.¹¹⁵ At the time, Hillary herself could not predict the effect attending Wellesley College would have on her future. 'Wellesley was a girls' school when we started and a woman's college when we left.'¹¹⁶ This sentiment felt by some of Hillary Rodham's peers in the Wellesley Class of 1969 could not be truer than when looking at the four years Hillary experienced at college. Hillary joined Wellesley as a member of the Republican Party, with very little worldly experience compared to other girls and unsure of her academic abilities. She took her place at Wellesley College at a time when the country was on the brink of a women's revolution, and Hillary's class were petitioning to take control of their own identities by making demands on the college leadership. Although small, the victories of the class of '69 were important in changing Wellesley from what was effectively a ladies finishing school to an academic university, wherein graduates had the opportunities to forge careers.

¹¹⁴ Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, pp. 223-224.

¹¹⁵ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 27.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

When Hillary began Wellesley College in 1965, the university still operated *in loco parentis*, acting as a surrogate parent to the girls who attended.¹¹⁷ The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s instilled a belief within many of the girls at Wellesley that change could be affected by a grassroots mechanism.¹¹⁸ This grassroots movement, started by the girls of Wellesley against the college administration, effectively broke down the parental role Wellesley played in their lives, giving the girls more freedom and allowing them to forge their own identities. Hillary took a leading role in working with other students to change the policies of the college through her position as College Government President. Through her work, she managed to overturn rules that prevented girls staying out after 11pm on weeknight dates, stopped male visitors from walking girls back to their front doors for a good-night kiss, banned girls from having a car on campus and enforced mandatory prayer in the dining hall.¹¹⁹ By overturning these rules the class of '69 found they had much more freedom and control and were capable of building their own, independent identity. These gains for the Wellesley girls gave many a taste of 'freedom' and showed many that they could take command of their lives and become more than just a housewife after their graduation. Hillary Rodham was no exception to this. She graduated in 1969 as a Democrat, being offered a place at both Harvard and Yale Law Schools and with a whole wealth of experience under her belt due to the experiences she had at Wellesley. She made history as the first student at Wellesley College to deliver the commencement speech at her graduation.¹²⁰ Historian Miriam Horn has argued that Hillary's speech was 'unimaginably liberating' for the Wellesley graduates that watched due to the fact that so many of them were still so 'deeply ingrained with the feminine habits of silence and docility.'¹²¹ In her speech, Hillary addressed

¹¹⁷ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 30.

¹¹⁸ Horn, *Rebels in White Gloves*, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 60.

¹²⁰ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 39.

¹²¹ Horn, *Rebels in White Gloves*, p. 44.

the gender gap that had been so obvious when her class had begun their education four years previously saying,

We arrived not knowing what was possible. Consequently, we expected a lot. Our attitudes are easily understood having grown up, having come to consciousness in the first five years of this decade – years dominated by men with dreams, men in the civil rights movement, the Peace Corps, the space program – so we arrived at Wellesley and we found, as all of us have found, that there was a gap between expectation and realities...It just inspired us to do something about that gap.¹²²

Hillary's commencement speech spoke to the lack of opportunities for young women at the time she began her college education as well as the changes that had begun to take hold with regards to women's rights by the end of the 1960s. Hillary, and the class of '69, left Wellesley to enter a changing status quo for women's opportunities. During her time at college, Hillary proved that she was a strong woman in her own right and could, in fact, achieve anything she put her mind to. This is something she took with her as she began her life post-Wellesley.

The experiences she had during her youth, deeply engrained the principles of feminism into Hillary. She did not want to be just a wife and mother, as her mother had been, which is evident from the fact that she rejected multiple marriage proposals from Bill Clinton before finally agreeing to be his wife.¹²³ She had aspirations and wanted to be able to pursue them without being constrained to the stereotypical gender norms which she had experienced throughout her early life. The changing face of feminism spread across America and Hillary tried to live her life by abiding to the principles of the new wave of feminism. Her feminist ideals can be seen throughout the decisions she made to reject three of the traditional aspects of the role of First Lady. Firstly, Hillary, just like many other women at this time, wanted to retain her maiden name, regardless of her position within the world of politics. Secondly, she

¹²² Professional Site: Wellesley College 'Hillary Rodham Commencement Speech', 1969, 4 May 2016. <<http://www.wellesley.edu/events/commencement/archives/1969commencement/studentspeech>>

¹²³ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 61.

was not interested in her appearance and saw little relevance of the way she looked with regards to her capabilities as First Lady of Arkansas. The final issue of importance was the ability for her to forge her own career, be it in the legal or political world. She did not want to have to give up her own career for her husband's ambitions. These three crucial rejections of the traditional role of the First Lady were symbolic of Hillary's feminist principles and the kind of First Lady she wanted to be.

The First Term

After finishing work on the President Nixon impeachment case and receiving the news that she had failed the bar exam in Washington, D.C. but passed in Arkansas, Hillary Rodham decided to follow her heart and move to Arkansas to be with Bill Clinton in 1974.¹²⁴ Hillary took a teaching position at the University of Arkansas' School of Law, where she became one of only two female members of the faculty. She was given responsibility for teaching criminal law and trial advocacy and was also placed in charge of running the legal aid clinic and prison projects for poor and incarcerated people in the local area.¹²⁵ As well as her responsibilities at the University of Arkansas, Hillary also dedicated a large proportion of her time to Bill's congressional campaign.¹²⁶ This move to Arkansas marked the beginning of Hillary's commitment to Bill Clinton and to his/their future political careers. A friend of Hillary, Sara Ehrman, strongly questioned her choice to move to Arkansas for Bill Clinton. In an interview with Gail Sheehy she stated,

I worked hard as a woman to help her get the opportunities she was entitled to. I thought she was throwing that opportunity away...she was so gifted and promising, I thought her life should be on a bigger stage.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 64.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 70.

¹²⁶ Carl Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge: The Life of Hillary Rodham Clinton* (USA: Hutchinson, 2007), p. 106.

¹²⁷ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, pp. 133-134.

In her autobiography, *Living History*, Clinton also discusses the reaction of Ehrman, which was reflective of other friends she had on the East Coast, who described her decision to move to Arkansas to be with Bill as ‘throwing away her future’.¹²⁸

However, Hillary clearly expressed her reasoning for the move to her boss and mentor on the Watergate Committee, Bernard Nussbaum, ‘Bernie, my boyfriend is going to be President of the United States.’¹²⁹ Her love for and unfaltering belief in Bill Clinton’s abilities go far in explaining her eagerness to move to Arkansas once her work in Washington, D.C. was complete. Clinton admits in *Living History* that she made the decision to follow her heart instead of her head.¹³⁰ It is clear that her decision to support Bill’s political efforts rather than pursue her own career did not mean that she was accepting a secondary or decorative role. Instead she determined to be an equal partner in what she saw as a shared mission to help effect change within Arkansas. In a televised interview in 1979, Hillary discussed the mission of herself and Bill in Arkansas, saying ‘the work we’re trying to do in the state...I want to do everything I can to help that [negative impression of Arkansas] go as fast as we can make it disappear.’¹³¹ The language she used to discuss the work of her husband in Arkansas suggests that they were working together, in a partnership, and that her role would be more than that of the traditional First Lady. The decision Hillary made to follow Bill to Arkansas, eventually led to her being recognised as one of the most influential women in Arkansas for her own work in the state, being awarded Arkansas Woman of the Year in 1983 and Arkansas Mother of the Year in 1984, the latter showing the traditional values that were prevalent in the

¹²⁸ Clinton, *Living History*, p.69.

¹²⁹ Sheehy, *Hillary’s Choice*, p. 110.

¹³⁰ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 69.

¹³¹ In Focus, ‘Interview with Hillary Rodham’, 1979, 30 May 2016.

<<http://www.mediaite.com/online/1979-interview-with-hillary-rodham-foreshadows-her-long-battle-with-public-perception/>>

conservative state at the time.¹³² However, Hillary found that local Arkansans were not as quick to accept her into their hearts as she was to make Arkansas her home, describing the first two years she spent serving as their First Lady as ‘among the most difficult, exhilarating, glorious and heartbreaking in my life.’¹³³

When Hillary arrived in Arkansas Bill Clinton was already running for Congress. From the moment she arrived in the state she made an impression on Bill’s campaign team, taking over the congressional campaign and creating more of a business-like feeling within the campaign headquarters.¹³⁴ Despite not being married to Bill Clinton during his Congressional campaign, the role that Hillary assumed on the campaign surpassed that of many political spouses. This role that she formed for herself was not one which all members of Bill Clinton’s team were comfortable with. Whether because he was hostile to a rival for Bill Clinton’s political attention, uneasy with an outsider from the state of Illinois attempting to direct an Arkansas campaign, or uneasy with the idea of the spouse with quite so much political influence, campaign manager Paul Fray sought to block Hillary’s efforts to involve herself in the campaign.¹³⁵ This came to a hiatus when members of the campaign team did not reserve a room for Hillary at the state convention in Hot Springs.¹³⁶ Bill Clinton’s congressional campaign had been crumbling around the team in 1974 and Hillary wanted to take over to try to guarantee Bill a seat in Washington DC. Paul Fray eventually offered Hillary an ultimatum stating ‘I will step down if you want to rework this whole campaign.’¹³⁷ Ultimately, Hillary was successful in asserting her position within the campaign team, and

¹³² Amanda Galiano, ‘Hillary Rodham Clinton – Her Time as Arkansas’ First Lady’, *About*, 27 March 2016, 31 May 2016., James Merriweather, ‘Hillary Clinton forges own passage forward’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 22 July 1990.

¹³³ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, p. 144.

¹³⁴ Sheehy, *Hillary’s Choice*, p. 135.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Sheehy, *Hillary’s Choice*, p. 137.

alongside Bill as his unmarried partner, which resulted in Paul Fray leaving his position as campaign manager two weeks before Election Day.¹³⁸ Hillary's time on Bill's congressional campaign provided an insight as to the kind of First Lady she would be – hands on, working on the frontlines. It is clear that she was attempting to redefine the traditional role of a politician's wife before they were married or had even started their political careers.

A year after arriving in Arkansas, Hillary decided to accept Bill's third marriage proposal.¹³⁹ Taking the decision to marry Bill did not change the attitudes of Hillary's friends and work colleagues towards their partnership, particularly as Hillary had begun to build a name for herself within her profession independently of Bill. Betsey Wright, a key member of Clinton's staff, did not want Bill and Hillary to marry after getting to know Hillary through Bill's political campaigns. Echoing the words of Hillary's friend, Sara Ehrman, Wright pleaded with Bill to reconsider marrying Hillary as 'we'd [the women's movement] never find anybody like her.'¹⁴⁰ Wright was acutely aware that once Bill and Hillary married, Hillary would be lost from the political sphere in her own right, becoming Mrs Bill Clinton. This seemed to be a worry for many of Hillary's friends; they feared losing her to marriage and her giving up her career to become a politician's wife. Although in some ways this may have been true as Hillary sacrificed a career in a powerful law firm in New York or Washington DC but she was very involved in Bill Clinton's political career, working hard to set the direction of his future to suit her own political goals and aspirations.

¹³⁸ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 137.

¹³⁹ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 75.

¹⁴⁰ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, p. 121.

The Maiden Name Issue

On 11th October 1975, following an unsuccessful bid for Congress, Bill and Hillary married in an intimate ceremony that took place in the living room of their home in Fayetteville, AR. During the next week, the *Arkansas Gazette* reported that Miss Hillary Rodham would be retaining her maiden name after marrying Bill Clinton.¹⁴¹ This news was shocking to the more conservative people of Arkansas. At this time only 2% of American women retained their maiden name, showing that Hillary was in the minority.¹⁴² The reasoning behind Hillary's decision to retain her maiden name was twofold. Firstly, Hillary believed that keeping her maiden name was a small personal gesture to acknowledge that she was still herself, despite being in a committed union.¹⁴³ Secondly, she believed the decision was practical. In her autobiography, *Living History*, she has stated,

Because I knew I had my own professional interests and did not want to create any confusion or conflict of interest with my husband's public career, it made perfect sense to me to continue using my own name.¹⁴⁴

This reasoning was similar to many other women of the time who were continuing to use their maiden name for professional reasons. However, what was unusual about Hillary's situation is that she chose to not use the name Clinton at all. Usually at this time when women wanted to keep their maiden names post-marriage they would use it as a middle name, such as U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.¹⁴⁵ However, Hillary's reasons for keeping her maiden name were more than professional, they were ideological. The retention of her maiden name suggests a deeper sentiment, one which had been expressed over 100 years before by Lucy Stone. Hillary's feminist ideals, and the changing status of women within the United States, are strong reasons as to why she would keep her

¹⁴¹ Gazette State News Service, 'Bill Clinton, Miss Rodham Are Married', *Arkansas Gazette*, 17 October 1975.

¹⁴² Claudia Goldin and Maria Shim, 'Making a Name: Women's Surnames at Marriage and Beyond', *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Spring, 2004), p. 148.

¹⁴³ Clinton, *Living History*, pp. 91-92.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁴⁵ Goldin and Shim, 'Making a Name', p. 148.

maiden name and is an indicator of the post-feminist marriage, and partnership, into which Bill Clinton and Hillary Rodham were entering.

In July 1856, Lucy Stone decided she would no longer use her husband's surname and be known once again by her maiden name.¹⁴⁶ She was the first known American woman to keep her maiden name after her marriage. This decision, which was taken in consultation with Salmon P. Chase, a friend who would later go on to become the 6th Chief Justice of the United States, was deemed to be completely legal.¹⁴⁷ During the 1800s, a woman became the legal property of her husband after marriage meaning she was prohibited from owning property, keeping her own wages or entering into a contract.¹⁴⁸ However, the tradition of women taking their husband's name after marriage came from English Common Law and was in fact little more than a social custom.¹⁴⁹ Despite this, after Stone's public announcement that she would retain her maiden name people began to question the legality of her decision and she found herself being persecuted by the law for not using her husband's name, Blackwell. She was rarely allowed to sign her own name and was even banned from voting for members of the Massachusetts school committee in 1879 unless she used the name of her husband.¹⁵⁰ This is the first known report of a woman being denied the right to vote on account of her surname and effectively set a precedent for other institutions to bar women from their lawful rights due to the use of their maiden name.

¹⁴⁶ Una Stannard, 'Manners Make Laws: Married Women's Names in the United States', *Names*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (June 1984), p. 114

¹⁴⁷ Joelle Million, *Woman's Voice, Woman's Place: Lucy Stone and the Birth of the Women's Rights Movement* (USA: Praeger Publishers, 2003), p. 202.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

¹⁴⁹ Deborah J. Anthony, 'A Spouse by Any Other Name', *William & Mary Journal of Women and the Law*, Vol. 17, No. 187 (2010), p. 190.

¹⁵⁰ Stannard, 'Manners Make Laws', p. 115.

By the early twentieth century, the law surrounding the retention of maiden names had not been clarified which meant that many women who did not take their husband's surname were still finding themselves being persecuted by the law. In 1918 in New York, married women who were trying to register to vote using their maiden name found that 'registrations were refused and a few women even arrested for attempting to vote in their own names.'¹⁵¹ Because of this, Ruth Hale, a freelance journalist and staunch feminist, founded the Lucy Stone League in 1921 with the purpose of educating the public and bureaucratic administrations of a wife's legal right to use her maiden name.¹⁵² The Lucy Stone League had some great successes in the early 1920s including managing to get the State Department to rule that women who retained their maiden name post-marriage could be issued passports in their own name.¹⁵³ However, despite the progress that had been made, a legal backlash arose around 1924 which began, once again, to persecute wives who retained their maiden name. No states passed laws forcing women to take their husband's surname following marriage; however other efforts were made to ensure women conformed to the traditional practice of changing their names such as subtly tweaking laws around divorce, licenses for purchasing and owning cars and voter registration.¹⁵⁴ Using this backlash against women's rights in the mid-1920s to support their decisions, law makers across the United States were effectively able to turn English Common Law into a legal precedent by following the belief that,

At marriage the wife takes the husband's surname and the surname of the husband, so taken at marriage, becomes her legal name. Her maiden name is absolutely lost, and she ceases to be known thereby.¹⁵⁵

This attitude towards women who retained their maiden name following marriage came about with a reversal in the minds of people about the role of women in society. Many members of

¹⁵¹ Stannard, 'Manners Make Laws', p. 117.

¹⁵² Professional Site: Spartacus Educational, Ruth Hale, John Simkin, August 2014, 10 September 2015. <http://spartacus-educational.com/USAruth_hale.htm>

¹⁵³ Stannard, 'Manners Make Laws', p. 118.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 121.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

the Lucy Stone League were being influenced to return home to take on the traditional role of wife and mother; some so-called 'Lucy Stoners' even began to use their husband's surname such as Esther Sayles Root.¹⁵⁶ Ms Root was a member of the Lucy Stone League and one of the first women to get a passport in her own name, however by 1934 she was going by her husband's name, Mrs Franklin P. Adams, showing the extent of the influence of the backlash against women's rights at the time.¹⁵⁷ The dissolution of the Lucy Stone League by the early 1930s meant that there was no organisation to support and protect women who retained their maiden name, the so-called 'Lucy Stoners', however this did not prevent women from continuing to keep their maiden names after marriage despite the fact that it would probably lead them to face numerous legal challenges throughout their lifetime such as being unable to register their own car and register to vote using their maiden name.¹⁵⁸

Studies looking into the retention of maiden names within the United States have shown that people have fixed stereotypes regarding women who retain their maiden name after marriage. In a study conducted by Deborah J. Anthony (2010) it was found that women who retain their maiden name after marriage are viewed as assertive, well-educated, feminist and unattractive by a large proportion of people.¹⁵⁹ This is extremely important when thinking about the numbers of women who retain their maiden name, which in 2010 when the study was conducted, was somewhere between 5-25% of women.¹⁶⁰ It is suggestive of the fact that the expectations and social pressures from others seem to still impact a couple's decision when it comes to choosing their surnames.¹⁶¹ The research by Anthony also found that there is somewhat of a psychological importance of surnames, with men tending to assume that their

¹⁵⁶ Stannard, 'Manners Make Laws', p. 118.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁵⁸ Anthony, 'A Spouse by Any Other Name', p. 198.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 194.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 209-210.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 211.

wife retaining their maiden name post-marriage suggests a lack of love.¹⁶² The feelings of others towards a woman's surname have changed over time in accordance to society's general feelings towards a woman's role. When women are being encouraged to leave the home and build a career then it is more likely that people will view them choosing to keep their maiden name in a more positive light. However, Anthony has argued that there are still strong social pressures and expectations that affect the decisions of women when it comes to their surname and there is still a tendency for a negative reaction towards non-traditional surname choices.¹⁶³

The late 1970s to early 1980s saw a change in the rate of women keeping their maiden names after marriage. It began to be seen as more acceptable by American society, which coincided with changing attitudes towards the role of women in the United States. The age at first marriage rose, more women were continuing their education after their first college degree and due to the increased availability of the pill, the age at which women were having their first child rose.¹⁶⁴ Many women were pursuing their independence before marriage and children, which resulted in many making a professional name for themselves before their marriage. This concept of 'making a name' is one of the main reasons as to why there was an increase in women retaining their maiden name after marriage. However, for most of these women it was not a simple decision as to whether or not they would keep their maiden name for the rest of their life, as often social pressures would cause many women to take their husband's surname. Hillary Rodham Clinton is a clear example of how societal pressure can cause numerous name changes throughout her life.

¹⁶² Anthony, 'A Spouse by Any Other Name', p. 197.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 211.

¹⁶⁴ Goldin and Shim, 'Making a Name', pp. 145-146.

This issue of judgement by others due to the retention of her maiden name is something Hillary Rodham was faced with during her time as First Lady of Arkansas. Hillary had spent much of her time around like-minded, feminist peers during her studies at Wellesley College and at Yale. Moving to Arkansas placed Hillary in an unknown environment, where people tended to be more conservative in their views. This conservatism of the people of Arkansas can be clearly seen through the backlash Hillary faced which came as a direct result of her retaining her maiden name post-marriage. Hillary's friend, Ann Henry, has stated regarding the maiden name issue that,

People took it to mean 'He's not man enough for her to take his name', she was getting all this flak: all the men were thinking she's becoming a problem, and some of the women did too.¹⁶⁵

There was clearly a lot of negativity within Arkansas towards Hillary and the decision she took to keep her maiden name following her marriage to Bill. The concept of Bill Clinton not being 'man enough' for Hillary to take his name was a difficult position for the Clintons to work around as the conservative state of Arkansas highly valued the idea of men being strong and powerful, and women being quiet homemakers. Her decision to retain her maiden name was a clear show that she was trying to redefine the symbolic role of the First Lady, as well as the traditional concept of womanhood to an extent. It was a direct and explicit challenge to the social changes of the time, suggesting a more liberal era that embraces women's rights. She was effectively showing the people of Arkansas that she could be a new type of First Lady, one that supported her husband as Governor but still maintained a career and her own independence.

Hillary was not prepared for the backlash she faced as a result of her decision (which reflected the backlash against feminism that was slowly brewing across the country). The

¹⁶⁵ Ed Pilkington, 'Hillary Clinton: Running to Win – But on her own terms' *The Guardian*, 14 March 2015.

reaction of Hillary's southern mother-in-law should have been an indicator of the conservative views still prevalent in Arkansas at the time, particularly with the older generation. Bill's mother was reportedly distraught over Hillary's decision to defy what she felt to be the most basic marital tradition of taking her husband's surname; she believed Hillary's decision had to be 'some fad imported from Chicago.'¹⁶⁶ Bill Clinton's mother's belief in this martial tradition can be clearly seen when looking at her own name, Virginia Cassidy Blythe Clinton Dwire Kelley, as she retained the surnames of four husbands despite them dying and her remarrying.¹⁶⁷ An article in the *Arkansas Gazette* spoke to this break against tradition and the way in which it was received by Arkansans, which was reflective of Clinton's mother-in-law, 'Not all Arkansans can swallow new trends [retention of maiden name]...when one goes against tradition, one is always in for an uphill fight, especially in politics.'¹⁶⁸ This acutely speaks to the battle Hillary was faced with during her time in Arkansas as a direct result of the way in which she tried to redefine the role of the traditional First Lady.

In 1979, just months after Bill won the Governor's Mansion Hillary went on *In Focus*, a local interview show, where she discussed a number of issues, with her maiden name being one of them. She faced numerous questions regarding her decision to retain her maiden name following her marriage to the Governor which shows just how much of a pressing topic it was to the people of Arkansas at the time. Hillary stated that

I didn't want anyone to think I was taking advantage of his position, somehow riding on it...I thought it was essential that I try to keep as much of a distinction between my legal career and my obligations as Bill's wife as I possibly could. Keeping my name was a part of that.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, pp. 148-149.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ In Focus, 'Interview with Hillary Rodham', 1979, 30 May 2016.

<<http://www.mediaite.com/online/1979-interview-with-hillary-rodham-foreshadows-her-long-battle-with-public-perception/>>

Hillary clearly believed that her decision to continue using the name 'Rodham' was the right thing to do, particularly due to the intense scrutiny they would be under as the First Couple of Arkansas. Although there were personal reasons to keep her maiden name, a large motivator seems to be the fact that she wanted to continue to be independent and progress in her law career and her maiden name would prevent a blurring of the lines between her private duties and public duties as the First Lady.

On the 27th February 1980, Hillary Rodham gave birth to the couple's first (and only) child. As the first baby born to a sitting Governor and First Lady of Arkansas since October 1949, the birth of Chelsea Clinton was a joyous occasion for the couple and the people of Arkansas.¹⁷⁰ However, the birth announcement that followed two days later in the *Arkansas Gazette* had a momentous effect on public opinion towards the First Lady. The announcement stated that,

Governor Clinton, and his wife, Hillary Rodham, became the parents of a 6 pound, 1 ¼ ounce baby girl late Wednesday.¹⁷¹

This one line in a newspaper article drew people's attention to the issue of Hillary Rodham's continued use of her maiden name. Although she had not been using the name 'Clinton' when her husband was elected in 1978, the fact that she was still not using his name by the time she gave birth to their child did not sit well with the people of the conservative American South. Whilst Clinton had originally believed Arkansas was ready for a steady re-invention of the role of their First Lady and believed that they were accepting of her liberal, feminist ideology, the issue of the maiden name would not go away for her. Voters were seemingly 'outraged at the blatant feminism of their First Lady who was *still* going by her maiden name.'¹⁷² In one letter to the editor of the *Arkansas Gazette*, a local Arkansan man described

¹⁷⁰ 'Girl Born To Clinton And Wife', *Arkansas Gazette*, 27th February 1980.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 163.

the Clintons and their liberal politics as ‘out of touch’, with another suggesting that due to their political choices they should take some time ‘to mature themselves and gain a more common touch.’¹⁷³ Although the opinion pieces did not specifically relate to the issue of Hillary’s maiden name, the fact that they discuss the Clintons as a political couple, as opposed to just referring to Bill Clinton suggests that for some people in Arkansas, Hillary was as much an issue as her husband for her ‘out of touch’, liberal, feminist ideology.

Regarding the issue of her maiden name, Hillary has said in her autobiography,

The pressures on me to conform had increased dramatically when Bill was elected Governor in 1978. I could get away with being considered a little unconventional as the wife of the Attorney General, but as First Lady of Arkansas, I was thrown into an unblinking spotlight. For the first time, I came to realize how my personal choices could impact my husband’s political future.¹⁷⁴

Although Hillary had not been using the surname Clinton throughout the campaign and when her husband was first elected to the Governorship in 1978, it had not been something that voters took notice of. However, with the rise of newspaper articles featuring Hillary as Ms. Rodham, particularly during her time as chair of the Rural Health Advisory Committee, and the birth of their daughter, combined with the rise of the backlash against feminism, the public’s attention began to be drawn to the issue of the maiden name. Public opinions began to change rapidly regarding the First Couple once they had their first child and Hillary’s maiden name was being widely publicised in the print media. The traditional voters in Arkansas were outraged that there was a feminist First Lady living in the Governor’s mansion who still refused to use the Governor’s last name.¹⁷⁵ In a C-SPAN documentary looking at the life of Hillary, journalist and Bill Clinton biographer David Maraniss discussed the maiden name issue in the 1980 gubernatorial election arguing that ‘part of the campaign against Bill was this woman who wouldn’t even take her husband’s last name and that was so

¹⁷³ ‘From the People: The Election’s Message to Liberals’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 7 November 1980.

¹⁷⁴ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 91.

¹⁷⁵ Sheehy, *Hillary’s Choice*, p. 163.

un-Arkansan.¹⁷⁶ Hillary's decision to retain her maiden name became a campaign issue due to the fact that it seemed to contradict the traditional values of the state and voters began to resent her liberal, feminist views. This growing resentment towards the First Lady was used by Frank White, Governor Clinton's opponent in the 1980 election. He created a persona of Hillary that he used in his campaign to show he was against 'meddlin' Yankees who don't take their husband's last name.'¹⁷⁷ This was damaging to the Clintons and the 'maiden name issue' is believed to have turned off as much as 15% of the population of Arkansas from voting for Bill Clinton in the 1980 gubernatorial election.¹⁷⁸

The Working First Lady

During her time in Arkansas, Hillary took a position with the largest law firm in Little Rock, the Rose Law Firm. Considered to be the oldest law firm west of the Mississippi River, they made history when they hired their first ever female associate, Hillary Rodham.¹⁷⁹ When she accepted the position in 1977, Bill Clinton was serving as Attorney General for Arkansas.¹⁸⁰ At this time, people cared little about the fact that the Attorney General's wife was working as a lawyer for a top firm. However, after Bill's election to the Governor's Mansion in 1978, Hillary made an unprecedented move when she decided to continue working full time as well as serving as the First Lady of Arkansas. Her hard work did not go unnoticed during her time at the Rose Law Firm, as she found herself being made full partner in 1979, the same year that she served at the request of her husband as chairman of the Rural Health Advisory Committee.

¹⁷⁶ David Maraniss, 'First Ladies: Influence and Image', *C-SPAN*, 11 February 2014, 5 May 2016.
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WjDYRxEzyM>>

¹⁷⁷ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 171.

¹⁷⁸ Times News McGehee/Dermott, "'Hillary Question' Still Matters in Politics', *Arkansas Gazette*, 7 March 1982.

¹⁷⁹ Clinton, *Living History*, pp. 78-79.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Due to being the First Lady, there were issues raised as to whether working at a large legal firm would be a conflict of interests for Hillary. To prevent herself from being caught up in any problems later in their careers, Hillary asked the Rose Firm to calculate her share of profits excluding any money made by other lawyers who had completed work for the state or any associated agency.¹⁸¹ She had herself cut off from any work and also any fees that came from state work.¹⁸² Hillary worked hard to separate her work life from her political life, stating in an article in the *Arkansas Democrat*, ‘I’ve turned away people who came to me only because I’m the governor’s wife.’¹⁸³ However, in the same article, she admits to having been naïve regarding the life of a politician’s wife, ‘I really felt being a public official was a job like any other...he would do his job and I would do mine and we would have our private life.’¹⁸⁴ This shows that despite her initial belief that she could continue to work full time in her own private life, and still carry out the expected duties of First Lady, she was not fully prepared for the cross-over of the two worlds. This is an issue that David Brock discusses in his book, *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham* (1996), wherein he describes Hillary’s law career as ‘spotty’, citing that her commitment to politics and the Clintons’ idea of a co-candidacy as early as the 1980s as the reason for her law career never fully taking off.¹⁸⁵ Due to the fact that Hillary wanted to redefine the role of the First Lady, she continued to work full time, however as she became more involved in Arkansas politics from Bill Clinton’s second term in office, she began taking fewer legal cases and putting more time into chairing committees and working on various boards across the country.¹⁸⁶ One lawyer that she worked with, Thomas Mars has stated that at the time of the 1992 presidential campaign, ‘I never talked

¹⁸¹ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 108.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Linda Gibson, ‘Mrs Clinton – what she is depends upon where she is’, *Arkansas Democrat*, 11 January 1983.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ David Brock, *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham* (USA: Free Press Paperbacks, 1996), p. 188.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 91.

about how she was juggling lots of balls, political and personal. She wasn't in the office a whole lot.¹⁸⁷

Although it can be argued that Hillary took the position at the Rose Law Firm as way of redefining the traditional role of First Lady, and proving that she could be a full time working, politician's wife, she has suggested that financial obligations were a large motivator behind working at the Rose Law Firm. By the mid-1970s Hillary was earning \$50,000 to \$70,000 a year depending on the cases she took on.¹⁸⁸ This was a huge figure compared to the rate of pay for the Governor of Arkansas which was just \$35,000 at the time.¹⁸⁹ It is clear that Hillary was the breadwinner of the family, and through her earnings she was able to ensure that the Clintons were saving money for the future, building a 'nest egg' due to a fear of the instability of professional politics.¹⁹⁰ In her autobiography, Hillary states, 'Money means almost nothing to Bill Clinton. He is not opposed to making money or owning property; it has simply never been a priority.'¹⁹¹ It is interesting that Hillary was the one who, from early on in their relationship, took control of the family's finances. This is a role that is stereotypically associated with the husband and it stands as a testament to the post-feminist marriage, founded on equality, into which the Clintons had entered in 1975.

Working full time whilst serving as the First Lady of Arkansas offered Hillary a unique platform from which to begin to develop an interest in and work as an advocate for women through the issue of maternity leave. Although the Clintons did not make maternity leave a priority during their time in Arkansas, Hillary's experiences as a professional, working, pregnant woman during her tenure as First Lady highlighted the fact that there was no system

¹⁸⁷ Brock, *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham*, p. 91.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁸⁹ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 86.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 85.

in place to support working women who were pregnant. As the first female partner at the Rose Law Firm, when pregnant Clinton found herself in a situation that was new not just for her but for the other partners at the firm. Speaking at an event for the National Work-Life and Family Month in 2012, Hillary discussed what it was like to be the first female, pregnant partner at a high-powered law firm in a conservative state. She said,

I was the only female partner, and they'd never had a female partner and certainly not a pregnant female partner. And they literally just were not sure what to do with me. I would walk down the corridor getting more and more pregnant, and the men in the firm would like look away, never say a word.¹⁹²

This quote highlights the issues that Hillary was faced with as the first female partner. The people she was working with were unsure of how to deal with a pregnant woman due to the fact that they were not used to working with women in a professional capacity. The fact that her colleagues did not address her during her pregnancy goes far in explaining why it was so easy for Hillary to set up her own maternity policy, as she was the first person at the Rose Law Firm to ever need one, and nobody working at the firm seemed to know how to deal with this new situation of a pregnant partner. Although Hillary was unsuccessful in creating a formal parental leave plan at the Rose Law Firm, she was in a position whereby she could take four months off from full time work to stay at home with Chelsea, her daughter.¹⁹³ These four months of maternity leave came with a reduced income but Hillary realised 'how much more fortunate I was than many women to be given this time with my child', highlighting the need for a parental leave plan to be put in place to support all working women in America.¹⁹⁴ The issue of maternity leave, following their experiences in Arkansas, was of the utmost importance to the Clintons which is confirmed by the fact that the first bill signed into law by President Bill Clinton was the Family and Medical Leave Act in February 1993, providing

¹⁹² Melanie Hunter, 'Hillary on When she was Pregnant: 'Men in the Firm would like Look Away'', *CNS News*, 29 October 2012, 12 June 2016.

<<http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/hillary-when-she-was-pregnant-men-firm-would-look-away>>

¹⁹³ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 85.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

three months off for workers when either they have a child or a family member becomes ill.¹⁹⁵ It can be argued that without Hillary's decision to continue to make a professional name for herself, by working alongside serving as First Lady in an attempt to redefine the traditional expectations of her position, the issue of paid family leave may not have become one of such importance to the Clintons.

The Image Problem

The image of Hillary Rodham Clinton was difficult for many Arkansans to deal with. She was the very opposite of the traditional First Lady archetype. Gone was the decorative First Lady. Instead, Arkansas had a new era of First Lady – the anti-First Lady. Unlike the traditional First Lady of Arkansas, Hillary had no interest in clothes, hair or make-up. Instead she was keen to be involved in policy; she attended strategy meetings and had her own political agenda which she used her position to address, helping to reform the state of education and rural health care within Arkansas. She was portrayed to the public as an intellectual equal; however for many living in the conservative state of Arkansas, this is not what they expected nor necessarily wanted from their First Lady, as well as contradicting their idea of traditional gender roles within a marriage. In her article in the *Arkansas Gazette*, Deborah Mathis explained that Arkansans wanted their First Lady to 'have a pleasant appearance and a soft, well-modulated, speaking voice, rarely heard.'¹⁹⁶ They wanted a First Lady who was, in the words of Gail Sheehy, 'content with curling their eyelashes and selecting china patterns'.¹⁹⁷ However, in many ways Hillary was the opposite of this traditional expectation of Arkansas' First Lady. She needed more than to sit quietly by the side of her husband and host tea parties. She was an outsider and so far away from Arkansans expectations of a First Lady that she found herself on the end of attacks against the Clintons.

¹⁹⁵ Bill Clinton, *My Life* (United Kingdom: Arrow Books, 2005), p. 273

¹⁹⁶ Deborah Mathis, 'Hillary the Hun Invades Politics', *Arkansas Gazette*, 18 May 1990.

¹⁹⁷ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 153.

Hillary's lack of interest in hair, make-up and clothes show how she was moving away from the stereotypical view of what a woman and First Lady should care about. Descriptions by old friends from high school and college always portray Hillary as uncaring of her appearance.¹⁹⁸ Her lack of interest can be confirmed by the fact that she did not purchase a wedding dress until the evening before her wedding, and she only did so because her mother told her that she had to wear a wedding dress. In her book *Rebels in White Gloves* (2000), Miriam Horn talks about a growing mentality amongst Hillary's classmates at Wellesley College which was to reject the traditional aspects of marriage, particularly the white wedding dress which is a symbolic representation of female virginity.¹⁹⁹ Hillary's dis-interest in wedding planning, wearing a traditional wedding dress and retaining her maiden name were all symbolic of her rejection of the traditional institution of marriage and show the feminist sentiments she held at the time.²⁰⁰

Hillary pushed aside the idea of the 'decorative spouse', ensuring she was seen as a First Lady with substance. She made no attempts to look like the traditional first lady during Governor Clinton's first term in office. As Germaine Greer has described, 'the First Lady is the archetypal lipstick-skirt-high-heels beside the archetypal suit.'²⁰¹ This was not Hillary. She feigned no interest in hair, make-up and fashion which was not typical of the First Lady. It was a clear indication that she was more interested in politics than being the stereotypical First Lady that the people of Arkansas were used to and expected. Breaking away from the traditional concept of the first lady as a 'decorative spouse', Hillary worked to ensure she would not just be a wife who would look attractive on the arm of her political husband.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 33.

¹⁹⁹ Horn, *Rebels in White Gloves*, p. 93.

²⁰⁰ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 148.

²⁰¹ Greer, 'Abolish Her', p. 21.

²⁰² Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p.153.

This idea of a decorative spouse is something that Bill Clinton was also trying to move away from in the new post-feminist marriage of equals, stating that,

I am going to be involved all my life in hard work in politics and public service, and I need someone who is really ready to roll up her sleeves and work for me.²⁰³

For Bill Clinton, it was Hillary or nobody when it came to finding the perfect partner who was well-educated and as dedicated to public service as himself.²⁰⁴ Despite the well-publicised extra-marital affairs, which to some extent contradict the marriage of equals that the Clintons have seemed to live by since entering into their marriage union in 1975, Bill Clinton was clear that he wanted his spouse to be someone he could count on politically to work with him and Hillary was the perfect choice. Bill's mother, a stereotypical Arkansas woman, could not understand Hillary's disinterest in her appearance and is quoted as wishing she 'could sit Hillary on the edge of my tub and give her some makeup lessons...show her how to bring out all the natural beauty she was covering up by going natural.'²⁰⁵ Bill Clinton was encouraged by those close to him to choose another political wife, a woman who would be more for show than an equal partner, however he knew what he wanted from his wife and believed that Hillary was the perfect partner due to the fact that he needed someone who would support his goals and she was completely committed to making a life in public service. Therefore Bill knew from early on that he did not 'need to be married to a beauty queen or sex goddess' as Hillary would provide him with everything he needed to be successful.²⁰⁶ Bill Clinton was very aware that he needed a strong partner who could be his equal to help bolster his political career. However, this type of political partnership was not the norm. Politicians were expected to take wives who were there for show. Caroli has argued that historically Presidents have 'married up', selecting a partner who was from a significantly superior social

²⁰³ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 145.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

and economic background to themselves.²⁰⁷ In many respects this was true of Hillary, who was deemed to be much more intellectual and from a more stable, middle-class background compared to Bill. However in the American south, the idea of the decorative spouse was deeply ingrained and Hillary, as the perfect political partner, did not live up to this concept of the decorative spouse. This resentment towards Hillary for not fulfilling the ideal of the decorative spouse is something that was summed up by the interviewer in a 1979 interview with Hillary for the Arkansas programme, *In Focus*. He states that,

you [Hillary Rodham] don't really fit the image that we have created for the Governor's wife in Arkansas. You're not a native, you've been educated in liberal, eastern universities, you're less than 40, you don't use your husband's name, you practice law...people feel that you don't fit the image.²⁰⁸

As a result of not fitting 'the image' she became a source of resentment during Bill Clinton's first term in office as she was unsettling to people who could not consolidate the idea of a liberal, working, feminist as their First Lady.

The importance of appearance can be seen throughout her time as the First Lady of Arkansas. When Governor Clinton was inaugurated in January 1979 there were feature articles published in Arkansas' two largest newspapers, the *Arkansas Gazette* and the *Arkansas Democrat*, regarding Hillary Rodham's inaugural dress. This is important as it reflected the kinds of stories the Arkansas media outlets were used to publishing about their First Lady; stories about so-called 'women's issues' – hair, make-up, baking, clothes etc. At this time, news reports seemed to have little interest in Hillary's role as a working First Lady and were more focused on what she would wear and how she would present herself at Bill's inauguration and in the following weeks. An article in the *Arkansas Gazette* following Bill's inauguration in January 1979 focused solely on Hillary's dress, showing the importance of

²⁰⁷ Caroli, *First Ladies*, p. xiii.

²⁰⁸ In Focus, 'Interview with Hillary Rodham', 1979, 30 May 2016.

<<http://www.mediaite.com/online/1979-interview-with-hillary-rodham-foreshadows-her-long-battle-with-public-perception/>>

the image of the First Lady. The importance of the dress is stated by the author, Julia Jones, when she writes that ‘It is right that his [Bill Clinton] wife should wear a new gown for that sort of event and it also ought to be a special sort of gown, one that would stand out in a crowd.’²⁰⁹ This focus on the appearance of Hillary goes far in explaining the expectation of the First Lady of Arkansas and shows that her job does not stretch much further than using her appearance to promote the values of the state by wearing a dress which is ‘Arkansas made and Arkansas related.’²¹⁰

During Bill Clinton’s first term in office, a negative image of Hillary Rodham was built up in the media. She was not living up to the expectations of Arkansans regarding what their First Lady should be like. She rejected marital norms, retained her maiden name and opposed the traditional image of the First Lady in an attempt to cast off the traditional role of the First Lady to pursue her law and political career, stating that she “institutionalized the running of the mansion”²¹¹ in order to dedicate herself to public service, thus stepping back from the traditional role as hostess. She stood in stark contrast to First Ladies of Arkansas who had served before her and this did not go unnoticed in the public eye. In a 1979 interview, Hillary found herself being questioned on the image she portrayed, with the interviewer stating that ‘one gets the impression that you’re really not all that interested in state dinners, teas and garden parties, all the things we tend to associate with Governor’s wives.’²¹² Hillary’s attempts to redefine the traditional role of the First Lady conflicted with the image that

²⁰⁹ Julia Jones, ‘Inaugural Gown ‘Something Arkansas Made, Arkansas Related’’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 10 January 1979.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Professional Site: The Encyclopaedia of Arkansas History & Culture, First Ladies, Kaye Lundgren, 9 August 2014, 11 May 2015.

<<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=7828>>

²¹² In Focus, ‘Interview with Hillary Rodham’, 1979, 30 May 2016.

<<http://www.mediaite.com/online/1979-interview-with-hillary-rodham-foreshadows-her-long-battle-with-public-perception/>>

Arkansans had of their ideal First Lady and is seen as one of the contributing factors for Bill Clinton's downfall in the 1980 gubernatorial election.

Post-1982 in the Governor's Mansion

Governor Bill Clinton lost the 1980 gubernatorial election to his Republican opponent, Frank White. There were many factors contributing to Clinton's failed attempt at regaining the Governor's Mansion. The issue of Cuban refugees in Arkansas, which White used to his political advantage by creating anti-Cuban refugee political advertisements for television, and the vehicle license fees that had been implemented during Clinton's first term, were both seen as factors affecting voters in the 1980 election.²¹³ However, the 'Hillary Factor' also played a large part in Bill Clinton's loss of the Governorship. The resentment towards Hillary Rodham for still not using her husband's surname had grown amongst people in Arkansas and in 1982 the *Arkansas Gazette* stated that 'her retention of her own last name has been cited by political observers as a factor in Clinton's downfall in 1980.'²¹⁴ Hillary had made no effort to retreat from the use of her maiden name, campaigning for Bill in 1980 as 'Hillary – Governor Clinton's wife'.²¹⁵ The fact that she was not campaigning as Mrs. Clinton after Chelsea had been born was a major issue in the South and Bill Clinton's campaign team made no effort to deal with the issue. As early as 1979 the issue of her maiden name costing votes in the election came up. During Hillary's interview with *In Focus*, this issue came to affront when the interviewer suggested that 'it cost him a few votes that your name was not the same as his.'²¹⁶ Hillary responded that she regretted that but that there were multiple reasons as to why people would vote against the Clintons and that people should judge the First Couple on

²¹³ Doug Smith, 'Election '80 Pollsters Emerge From Shelters to Check the Ruins', *Arkansas Gazette*, 22 February 1981.

²¹⁴ 'Rodham Takes Leave to Join Campaign as 'Mrs. Bill Clinton'', *Arkansas Gazette*, 28 February 1982.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ *In Focus*, 'Interview with Hillary Rodham', 1979, 30 May 2016.

<<http://www.mediaite.com/online/1979-interview-with-hillary-rodham-foreshadows-her-long-battle-with-public-perception/>>

the basis of ‘an honest disagreement with the issues’ as opposed to the personal issue of her name.²¹⁷ When the Clintons tried to reclaim the Governor’s Mansion in 1982, it is apparent that the issue of the maiden name had not disappeared, hence why Hillary moved away from using the name ‘Rodham’ exclusively. In a *Time* article it states that Hillary gave up her maiden name for the sake of the people of Arkansas as her name ‘meant more to them than it did to me.’²¹⁸ It is clear that Hillary’s attempt to stay true to her liberal, feminist ideology and begin to refine the way in which people view the traditional First Lady went too far for some of the conservatives in Arkansas. Following the loss of the Governorship, there was a silent admission from Hillary that she could no longer keep pushing against the traditional stereotypes and expectations of the office if they were to pursue their political ambitions. This admission, which led to her taking Bill’s surname, also resulted in a series of ‘personality’ changes on the part of Hillary to help make ‘the Clintons’ more electable.

On their daughter’s second birthday, Bill announced he would be seeking the Governorship once more and Hillary announced that she would be taking a leave of absence from the Rose Law Firm, giving up her career albeit temporarily, to campaign full time as ‘Mrs Bill Clinton’.²¹⁹ This announcement marked a clear change from their first term, and suggests a slight pull-back from the aim of re-inventing some of the more symbolic aspects of the role of the First Lady. Clinton was making herself more comparable and relatable to the typical Arkansas political wife and the announcement of her name-change for the 1982 campaign made her stand out less when being compared with Governor Frank White’s wife, who was often referred to as Mrs Frank White in the media.²²⁰ Despite making the change to the name

²¹⁷ In Focus, ‘Interview with Hillary Rodham’, 1979, 30 May 2016.

<<http://www.mediaite.com/online/1979-interview-with-hillary-rodham-foreshadows-her-long-battle-with-public-perception/>>

²¹⁸ Margaret Carlson, ‘Hillary Clinton: Partner as Much as Wife’, *Time*, 27 January 1992.

²¹⁹ ‘Rodham Takes Leave to Join Campaign as ‘Mrs. Bill Clinton’’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 28 February 1982.

²²⁰ ‘Wives Show Differing Styles on the Stump in Governor’s Campaign’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 24 October 1982.

Clinton, the maiden name issue continued to be a long-standing issue that Hillary has had to deal with ever since the 1970s. This is clearly demonstrated when she ordered stationery to answer campaign mail during Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential election. She selected cream paper with 'Hillary Rodham Clinton' printed across the top in blue letters. However, when the writing paper arrived her name had been changed, without consultation, to 'Hillary Clinton'.²²¹ It was clear that somebody on Bill Clinton's campaign team decided that the use of *Rodham* was having a negative effect on campaigning, and essentially took the identity away from Hillary without any consultation. Hillary returned the stationery and re-ordered it to include her maiden name again, showing her defiance of the way in which politics tried to control women and force them into the traditional ideal of the First Lady.

With the announcement of Hillary becoming 'Mrs Bill Clinton' it seemed that she was moulding herself into the stereotypical First Lady that Arkansas was used to. However, the announcement was soon met with disdain as members of the Arkansas general public discovered that, although she would be using the name Clinton for campaign work, Hillary was still registered to vote using the name Rodham and had signed her most recent legal briefing with her maiden name.²²² The fact that Hillary was registered to vote and still working using her maiden name suggested that she was still trying to retain a part of her independence and a part of the person she had become before marrying Bill. However, it once again showed her naivety regarding the cross-over between her personal and public life, and acts as a stark reminder that they were one-and-the-same when dealing with political office. An article in the *Arkansas Gazette* which highlighted the 'Hillary Question' described the issue of Hillary's maiden name by saying,

²²¹ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 111.

²²² 'Rodham Takes Leave to Join Campaign as 'Mrs. Bill Clinton'', *Arkansas Gazette*, 28 February 1982.

Having a different last name than your husband in political circles is perhaps deadly as one of those ancient old political no-nos in Arkansas – dipping snuff.²²³

This explanation of different marital surnames as an old taboo in Arkansas politics goes far in explaining why the issues would not disappear for the Clintons during their time in Arkansas, despite many attempts to rectify the issue in the minds of the public.

Following the loss of the 1980 gubernatorial election Hillary understood that she could not fully redefine the role to reflect the changing status of women in America without giving way to some of the more traditional and symbolic aspects of the First Lady. With her announcement to take the name Clinton, Hillary also changed her image to reflect a more traditional First Lady, whom Arkansans could relate to. Hillary dyed her hair lighter, started wearing contact lenses and paid more attention to fashion.²²⁴ Her changed image marked an important stage in Hillary's redefinition of the role of First Lady. It allowed her to move away from an entrenched position on personal representations, that clearly alienated Arkansas voters and provided her with an opportunity to focus on redefining other, more important, aspects of the traditional role of the First Lady, such as carrying out more overtly political work.

Hillary Rodham Clinton went far in her attempt to redefine the traditional role of the First Lady of Arkansas. However, she had to take a step back from her efforts to redefine some of the more symbolic aspects of the traditional role of the First Lady in order for her husband to be able to reclaim his political career following his defeat in 1980. Bill's electoral loss led to Hillary having to give up her maiden name, which was regarded as a symbol of her independence, albeit on a public level (as she continued to work and vote under the name

²²³ Times News McGehee/Dermott, '“Hillary Question” Still Matters in Politics', *Arkansas Gazette*, 7 March 1982.

²²⁴ Howard Kurtz, 'The Hillary Factor: Wonder Woman or the wicked witch?', *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, 23 November 1992.

Hillary Rodham for some time before becoming Hillary Rodham Clinton). In an attempt to more closely reflect the expectations of Arkansans, Hillary found herself having to pay more attention to her image in order to be accepted by the people of Arkansas and to help her husband's re-election bid. Despite having to 'give some ground' on some of the issues that were of importance to her, Hillary still managed to begin to redefine the traditional expectations of the role of the First Lady to some extent. Becoming Mrs Bill Clinton, and feigning an interest in appearance, allowed the Clintons to take back the Governor's office and led to her being more accepted by the people of Arkansas. Although she had to relinquish some of her feminist ideology in order to continue in her role as First Lady, this allowed Hillary to push forward with the politicisation of the role, which she had begun somewhat in Bill's first term. By appearing in public to have become a more traditional First Lady, which was expected by the people in Arkansas, she provided herself with an opportunity to reform the role in another way – by becoming the first First Lady to serve on political committees at the request of her husband, allowing her to effect real change that went much deeper than the issue of a name and cosmetics.

Chapter 2: Politicising the First Lady

*I knew that despite my disillusionment with politics, it was the only route in a democracy for peaceful and lasting change. I did not imagine then that I would ever run for office, but I knew I wanted to participate as both a citizen and an activist.*²²⁵

- Hillary Rodham Clinton

The time that the Clintons spent in Arkansas was a significant period that allowed Hillary to redefine the traditional role of the state First Lady. Hillary has attempted to transform the traditional ideal and symbolic aspects of the role of the First Lady to be relevant to the modern day status of women in America. She did so through working full time alongside the position, retaining her maiden name post-marriage and her lack of interest in appearance. However, Hillary Rodham Clinton also embarked on an effort, in association with her husband, to construct a legitimate political role for the First Lady. Efforts to politicise the role of the First Lady were a central part of the work that Hillary undertook to redefine the traditional role. Due to the fact that her husband was Governor of Arkansas, he was in a position through which he could provide his wife with political opportunities and provide her

²²⁵ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 37.

with the required experience to be able to call herself a First Lady with a genuine and legitimate political mandate and role. Speaking on the night of his election to the Governor's Office in 1978, Bill Clinton discussed the nature of the relationship between him and Hillary, hinting at the political relationship that they shared and how the Office belonged to them both, saying 'our vote was a vindication of what my wife and I have done and what we hope to do for the state.'²²⁶ By sharing the fact that the Clintons had a shared vision for the future of Arkansas, it is not surprising that Bill appointed Hillary to political committees focusing on rural health care reform and an overhaul of education standards within Arkansas, both of which provided testing experiences and an opportunity for Hillary to prove herself as a skilled politician. As well as these political appointments, Hillary was able to forge a role for herself as a political activist within Arkansas, working to protect the rights of women, young people and children. As with her efforts to challenge the symbolic expectations of the public role of the First Lady, Hillary's attempts to create a legitimate political role as First Lady were met with a mixed reception, and some fierce criticism.

This criticism which came alongside the national backlash against women in politics, discussed in the introduction and first chapter of this thesis, led to women feeling disheartened regarding the progress they could make within the political world. In 1984 NBC asked voters if they were ready to elect a woman to the presidency considering the fact that Geraldine Ferraro was the Democratic vice presidential candidate. Only 17% of voters said that they would vote for a woman for the presidency.²²⁷ This surprisingly low level of support shows that many Americans believed women should not be taking on an active role within American politics, at least not at such a high level, and that they were not supportive of

²²⁶ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, p. 143.

²²⁷ Kathleen Weldon, 'Madame President: Changing Public Attitudes About a Woman President', *Huffington Post*, 18 March 2016, 8 August 2016.
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathleen-weldon/madame-president-changing_b_9496962.html>

women in a leadership role. These statistics are quite shocking considering the progress that was made for women's rights only 10 years earlier and clearly show the backlash against women in America that was taking hold in the 1980s.

Organised attacks against women who deemed themselves to be feminists were taking place across the nation, and Hillary was also a victim of these regressive attitudes towards women. Trying to redefine the role of the First Lady, alongside fighting the backlash against feminism, meant that Hillary was often criticised for her actions and beliefs. However, she did not let the backlash hold her back in terms of her personal aspirations and those which she held for the future of the office of a First Lady. The political issues that she worked on were seemingly 'women's issues' and she went about the issues in a liberal, feminist fashion. However, being astutely aware of the conservative state in which she lived, as well as of the backlash against feminism taking hold across the nation, Hillary worked sympathetically to the politics of Arkansas to create effective change; making an effort to work alongside the political grain of the area she lived in. Despite these efforts on the part of Hillary, the Clintons still experienced high levels of criticism following her appointment to the political committees, which were largely born out of the traditionalist values held by many in the state.

The opposition and hostility that the Clintons experienced with regards to the appointment of the First Lady to a political role were motivated by three factors. Firstly, there was a fear held by Arkansans that the First Lady should not be so influential, especially as they are wholly unaccountable. Secondly, they were faced with the criticism that the First Lady should be a feminine and non-political figure, and therefore any attempt to politicise the role was a breaking down of traditional gender norms. And finally, they were faced with criticism from some purely because Hillary was seen by many as a controversial figure and people did not

like her politics and what she represented: liberal, interventionist, feminism. This chapter will assess the way in which these three differing types of criticism against the politicisation of the First Lady were expressed and handled by the Clintons throughout the political career of Hillary Rodham Clinton in Arkansas. Looking at the Rural Health Advisory Committee, the Education Standards Committee and the issue of teen pregnancy in Arkansas, this chapter will assess the extent to which the First Lady was effectively politicised and looks at the motivations behind the politicisation of the First Lady of Arkansas.

The Politics of Appointments

Bill Clinton broke against tradition by appointing his wife to two different political committees whilst serving as Governor of Arkansas. No First Lady in Arkansas had ever served in this capacity before, demonstrating that the Clintons were embracing a new kind of marriage in the 1970s and 1980s: one which encouraged equality and was viewed in terms of an equal partnership in all matters. Although the Clintons were not alone in their efforts to change the traditional set-up of marriage at this time in the United States, the change in gender roles which they were supporting was still not accepted by many in the conservative state of Arkansas. In an article in the *Arkansas Democrat*, journalist Bill Husted talked about the negative attitudes of many Arkansans towards this new kind of marriage based on an equal partnership. He described how, in the state of Arkansas, men who allowed their wives to go out to work and make a name for themselves were called ‘Arkansas Go-getters.’²²⁸ Seen as a derogatory term, an Arkansas Go-getter was a man who let his wife out to work whilst he stayed home with his position now resigned to ‘go and get her.’²²⁹ The Clintons seemingly embodied this new style of marriage in Arkansas, particularly through the political role which Hillary took on as a result of her husband appointing her to political committees in the state.

²²⁸ Bill Husted, ‘A Woman’s Place is...Behind the Mower’, *Arkansas Democrat*, 26 February 1980.

²²⁹ Ibid.

By appointing his wife to the political committees of the Rural Health Advisory Committee (1979) and the Education Standards Committee (1983), the Clintons were working together to reinvent the traditional role of the First Lady, in keeping with the changes in women's rights across America at the time, as well as providing Hillary with the much-needed political experience required for her own future career. The opening quote to this chapter comes from Hillary's autobiography, *Living History*, where she discusses the fact that she had felt disillusioned by politics and although she did not foresee herself ever running for political office, she knew that she 'wanted to participate as both a citizen and an activist.'²³⁰ Her time in Arkansas provided her with the opportunity to fully participate in society as both a citizen and an activist, without having to run for election, giving her a wealth of political experience to focus her future career around should she so choose to enter the political field following their time in Arkansas.

The real reasoning behind Bill Clinton's decision to appoint his wife to political committees during their tenure as Arkansas' First Couple is unknown. However, several reasons have been touted to explain this redefinition of the idea of what a First Lady should be. Bill Clinton's actions bring to question the reason as to why he would want to appoint his wife to a political committee. The most obvious explanation is one which Bill Clinton has used on numerous occasions to justify his political appointments of his wife – the importance of the issue. Arguing that an issue was so important to him, there was only one person he could trust and rely on to ensure it was worked out and created effective change, was the reasoning used by Bill Clinton for the appointment of Hillary to the Education Standards Committee. When he announced Hillary's appointment to the Education Standards Committee he stated, 'This

²³⁰ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 37.

guarantees that I will have a person who is closer to me than anyone else overseeing a project that is more important to me than anything else.’²³¹

Journalist David Maraniss has argued that the Clintons used the issue of education reform in Arkansas as a ‘precursor to healthcare in the White House.’²³² The 1983 announcement regarding the Education Standards Committee foreshadowed Bill’s reasoning later when he appointed Hillary as chair of the Presidential Health Care Task Force in 1993, once again breaking precedent as no other First Lady of the United States had ever been appointed to a political task force or committee.²³³ His words in 1993, almost mirrored those of 10 years earlier, when he justified his unusual decision by stating that Hillary’s appointment to the Health Care Task Force showed his, ‘high levels of commitment and personal identification with health care reform.’²³⁴ This argument of importance of issue suggests that Bill Clinton was appointing his wife as chair of political committees because he wanted someone to head these key issues who was close to him, ensuring he retained control over the issue without actually having to be present at the meetings himself. It suggests that this formulation used Hillary as ‘Bill by proxy’ rather than speaking to the Governor’s faith in his wife as a politician in her own right.

The importance of the issue has been noted by Hillary Clinton biographer, Carl Bernstein, in his discussions of the Rural Health Advisory Committee. The issue of rural health care reform had run into trouble during Bill Clinton’s first term as Governor due to his appointment of a health commissioner from out of state who proposed that nurse practitioners

²³¹ ‘Clinton Names His Wife As Head of Commission On New School Standards’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 23 April 1983.

²³² David Maraniss, ‘First Ladies: Influence and Image’, *C-SPAN*, 11 February 2014, 5 May 2016.
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WjDYRXEzyM>>

²³³ Peta Smith, ‘The Limitations of Leadership: Presidents, Policy Making and Policy Husbandry’, *Australian Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (July 2003), p. 18.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

should be allowed to serve as doctors in many rural areas across Arkansas where physicians were scarce.²³⁵ There were huge levels of outrage and controversy across the state due to the proposed changes to rural health care. This outrage came largely in the form of licensed doctors from the State Medical Society, who disagreed with Governor Clinton's proposal to allow nurse-practitioners to serve as doctors in poor, rural areas in Arkansas, believing that these nurses were not sufficiently qualified to practice medicine in this capacity.²³⁶ To calm the storm that developed as a result of this proposal, Bill Clinton decided to appoint his wife to chair the Rural Health Advisory Committee to solve the problem of expanding health care into the poorest areas without affecting the Medicaid fees doctors received. Bernstein has argued that this appointment made Governor Clinton's life easier by, 'bypassing the bureaucracy so he would be able to reach a decision at home in the governor's mansion.'²³⁷ Following Bernstein's line of argument, it can be argued that the Governor appointed his wife for reasons no more complicated than allowing himself to avoid the bureaucracy of the Arkansas state legislature, to ensure the final policy was one he would approve of and to allow himself maximum input without having to attend meetings or deal with the intricate details of the policy program.

However, the reasons behind Hillary's appointments could also have been an opportunity for her to gain political experience, to begin to make an independent name for herself in the political world and to prove herself as someone who knew what she was doing and could get the job done, as she eventually went on to demonstrate during her time on the committees in Arkansas. This argument, which has been suggested by David Brock in his book *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham* (1996), suggests that the Clintons were planning the future of

²³⁵ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, p. 147.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

both of their political careers during their time in Arkansas. This line of argument has subsequently been proven following discussions of her running for Governor of Arkansas, her successful run for the U.S. Senate and two attempts for the Presidency. Her appointments to the committees provided Hillary with legitimate political experience that she was able to transfer to a much grander scale as First Lady of the United States, as well as pursuing her own independent political career. This argument behind the reasoning for Hillary's appointment suggests that the reason she was appointed was that she was simply one of the best people available for the job based on her skills and qualities, and that she would be able to use these skills to begin to develop herself as a politician. It suggests that rather than her closeness to the Governor being the reason she was appointed, she was in fact highly qualified but needed an opportunity to build up her portfolio of work within the political sphere. Her experiences on the Rural Health Advisory Committee and the Education Standards Committee have both been referenced during her 2016 presidential bid and were discussed by Bill Clinton in his 2016 Democratic National Convention speech when providing reasons as to why his wife was the most qualified candidate both to receive the Democratic Party's nomination for the Presidency and to be elected to the Presidency itself come November 2016. In reference to her work on the Rural Health Advisory Committee, Bill Clinton said,

I got the feeling that what she did for the rest of her life she was doing there [in Arkansas]. She just went out and figured out what needed to be done and what made the most sense and what would help the most people. And then, if it was controversial, she just tried to persuade people it was the right thing to do.²³⁸

This quote seems reflective of the way in which the Clintons went about their political marriage. They made decisions, such as appointing Hillary to political committees as they believed it was the right thing to do and she was the best person for the job, then they dealt

²³⁸ Bill Clinton, Democratic National Convention Speech, *PBS News Hour*, 27 July 2016, 31 July 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RchVnIn_-Y>

with the mixed response as an after-thought, convincing people that the decision they had made was the right one. However, it seems that the Clintons were trying to have it both ways with the politicisation of the role of the First Lady. Hillary's appointment to the political committees in Arkansas provided her with experience required for when she would eventually make her own bid for political office, and it seems that the reasoning behind Bill Clinton's decision to appoint his wife was more to assist her in gaining political experience than his confidence in her relatively unproven abilities.

The appointment of Hillary to two political committees in Arkansas was not met with universal approval by Arkansans. Heading two committees provided Hillary Clinton with a large amount of political clout and gave her the power to make important decisions that could have a huge impact on the state of Arkansas. It once again, brings to the forefront the issue of an unelected, unaccountable First Lady, the considerable sway that she has over her husband and the closeness of their relationship. The closeness of the relationship between the First Couple raises the issue of accountability when the First Lady is placed in a considerable position such as a leader of a political committee on behalf of her husband. An insider of the 1993 Health Care Task Force, which Hillary Clinton chaired in her capacity as First Lady of the United States, stated that 'the person who's in charge shouldn't sleep with the President, because if you sleep with the President, nobody is going to tell you the truth.'²³⁹ This argument is also true of Hillary Clinton's position in Arkansas; being the Governor's wife meant that people would be less willing to discuss and argue points which could result in policies that have had very little input from outsiders, leading to an unquestioned and unaccountable agenda.

²³⁹ Gary D. Wekkin, 'The 'Blame Game': What went wrong with Health Care Reform', *White House Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2005), p. 54.

Hillary faced lots of negativity following her political appointments which had more to do with the fact that this overtly political role she had forged for herself countered the traditional view of a First Lady. This new role being formed by the Clintons directly challenged traditional gender roles, which, for many Arkansans, was more of an issue than the power these appointments provided to Hillary as an unelected official.²⁴⁰ The First Lady of a state or of the United States is viewed as the ‘embodiment of domestic femininity’ and trying to recast a First Lady into the role of a politician undermines the way in which American womanhood has been defined throughout history.²⁴¹ This argument holds particular ground in a state such as Arkansas, which remained conservative and traditional despite the fact that the role of women in American society was rapidly changing in the 1970s and early 1980s. Many Arkansans were unwilling to accept their First Lady in an overtly political position, due to the move against the traditional role of women that it took.²⁴² In an article in the *Arkansas Gazette*, journalist Deborah Mathis discussed the traditional values of Arkansans and the attitudes towards their First Lady when she stated that ‘we want politicians’ wives to be gracious, delicate and detached. Political trenches are no place for a lady.’²⁴³ This quote clearly shows the general attitudes towards the role of women in Arkansas and harks to the tradition that the political arena is not suitable for women.

Hillary was viewed as inexperienced by many Arkansans, as well as members of Bill Clinton’s own staff, worried about the loss of accountability that would come with Governor Clinton appointing his wife to the political committees for Education Standards and Rural Health Care.²⁴⁴ The Governor’s office was inundated with mail from people within Arkansas,

²⁴⁰ Wekkin, ‘The ‘Blame Game’: What went wrong with Health Care Reform’, p. 27

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Times News – McGehee/Dermott, ‘‘Hillary Question’ Still Matters in Politics’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 7 March 1982.

²⁴³ Deborah Mathis, ‘Hillary the Hun Invades Politics’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 18 May 1990.

²⁴⁴ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 94.

as well as other states, expressing their displeasure at the decision to appoint the Governor's wife to such important issues. One criticism of Hillary came in the form of a poem entitled 'Will & Hill From Hill to Hell.' The poem discussed a wide range of issues surrounding the issue of education reform; however it placed much of the criticism with Hillary. The closing stanza to the poem reads,

I hope Heaven's gate ain't guarded by Bill,
Cause he'll tell all teachers to go to Hill.
She'll kick our bottom,
And say, first you gotta see Rodham.
She'll give us a test,
Then there'll be no more rest.²⁴⁵

This poem speaks to the fact that Bill Clinton placed much of the responsibility for serious issues with his wife, and also it questions the change that Hillary had presented to the people of Arkansas, in taking her husband's surname, suggesting that her work on the committee had shown that she was still a liberal feminist at heart which was clearly shown by the way she continued to pursue an independent, some-what politicised career. There were numerous reasons for the displeasure at Hillary's appointments which varied across the letters received at the Governor's office: people were unhappy with her lack of experience; they believed it removed accountability from the committee; they felt that she wielded too much influence for someone who was unelected and many people simply did not like Hillary and the liberal, feminist politics that she stood for. One such letter from an Arkansas American History teacher, Coy Glover, questioned the appointment of Hillary, due to her complete lack of experience, to the Education Standards Committee stating,

One other point I would like to make is the unfairness you have shown in selecting a committee with your wife as chairman. A committee without any representation for the secondary or elementary teacher. Has your wife ever taught school? Is she qualified to judge and set up standards when she has never been in a classroom situation?²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Unknown, 'Will & Hill from Hill to Hell', Correspondence, Dec 1-10, 1983, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series XXIII, Box 29, Folder 19.

²⁴⁶ Coy Glover, 'Correspondence, Nov 20-23, 1983' The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series XXIII, Box 29, Folder 16.

This letter questioned the appointment of Hillary with regards to her personal experience within the education sector. Although Hillary had built a portfolio of children's advocacy work, she had no experience within the education sector and this led to people questioning why she had been appointed to the committee. The letter quoted above is representative of the feelings of many Arkansans, particularly those who worked within education. Up to this point, Hillary had already made a negative impact on many people within Arkansas and her appointment to both the Rural Health Advisory Committee and Education Standards Committee angered some people, especially once details of the work of the committees began to be released.

This negative reaction of local Arkansans towards the political appointments of Clinton was highlighted by Arkansas political cartoonist George Fisher (figure 1). The cartoon, although being critical of Bill Clinton and his handling of education in Arkansas, directly addresses the power and influence of Hillary in the political decision making process. It highlights Bill Clinton's reliance on his wife to be able to move forward with political decisions, and it emasculates him in the sense that he is portrayed as a young boy running to his wife Hillary, or even his daughter, Chelsea. Hillary was credited with being the more decisive partner in the relationship, and towards the end of their time in Arkansas, many believed that Hillary could have served as Governor for the state, in part due to the influence that she supposedly had over many of the important decisions Bill made during his tenure as Governor of Arkansas.²⁴⁷ The cartoon acts as a direct commentary on the relationship of the Clintons and the way in which Hillary was viewed at the time as the one who was in control due to the 'marriage of equals' which the Clintons were trying to live by.

²⁴⁷ Gazette Staff, 'Hillary Clinton has influence', *Arkansas Gazette*, 3 October 1991.

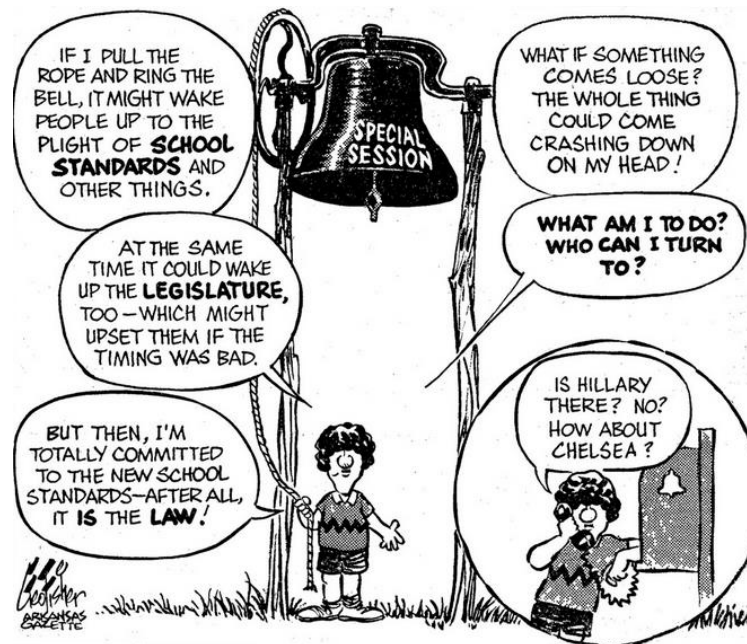


Figure 1

The cartoon speaks to the sentiments of the time, wherein people were questioning the undue influence of Clinton over her husband and his abilities to govern independently, without consulting his wife or daughter over every issue. It made light of the seriousness of the decisions that were coming out of the Education Standards Committee and shows that Bill Clinton seemed to have little knowledge or control over what was happening with the state of education in Arkansas at the time.

As well as the reams of negative mail that was received by the Governor's office, there were also many vocal supporters of Hillary Clinton and the political role she was now playing. Large amounts of mail that was supportive of Hillary's chairmanships was received, showing that opinions were divided across the state which was a strong reflection of the divided opinions regarding the changing status of women in America at the time. One example of the

²⁴⁸ George Fisher, 'Special Session', *Arkansas Gazette*, c. 1983.
[Accessed at the Arkansas Arts Center Library Collection of George Fisher Cartoons, April 2015].

positive comments received regarding Hillary's political work was a letter received from educators in the Smackover Public School District which stated,

Your wife, along with the members of the Education Standards Committee, should also be commended. I'm sure they've been under fire almost as much as you, yet they have persevered, and by doing so, they have presented a set of standards which, over-all, are necessary for a well-rounded education.²⁴⁹

This letter praised the work of the whole Education Standards Committee, however the specific mention of Hillary shows that the writer approved of the appointment of Hillary to a political committee. For many supporters of the education standards, the work carried out by the committee and the resulting changes for education in Arkansas outweighed the fact that the Clintons broke away from tradition by allowing the First Lady to chair a political committee.

Regardless of the motivations behind her appointments, the opportunities Bill Clinton provided for his wife gave her the chance to prove herself politically to the people of Arkansas and gain some much needed political experience which would be invaluable if she were ever to pursue a political career in her own right. It provided an opportunity for her to develop her political style and create lasting change within Arkansas following the personal political ideologies of both herself and her husband. Despite the negativity that she was faced with, Hillary began to transform the traditional role of the First Lady and started to open the eyes of people to how a First Lady could and should look in the modern world.

Style v. Ideology

Hillary Rodham Clinton's appointment to the Rural Health Advisory Committee and the Education Standards Committee provided her with an opportunity to gain experience of

²⁴⁹ Judy Carpenter, 'Correspondence, Nov 20-23, 1983', The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series XXIII, Box 29, Folder 16.

policy work within the political world. In 1982 the *Arkansas Gazette* described Hillary as ‘trained for advocacy’, using her educational and professional background as evidence of her abilities in advocating for those she believed to be in need.²⁵⁰ Despite her work as an advocate for women and children during her time at Yale University and the Child Defense Fund, Hillary had little experience of working within the political sphere to effect change, meaning that although she had a strong political ideology in place, she had little knowledge of the type of politician she wanted to be or even could be. Her appointment to the political committees in Arkansas gave Hillary a chance to develop her political style and test the most effective methods for achieving political progress. Born in Illinois, Hillary was seen as different from the political norm within Arkansas. The politics of Arkansas, a state that was synonymous with conservatism, Christianity and small government, were seemingly at opposites of Hillary’s political ideology. Hillary Clinton was a liberal, feminist who believed in big government and interventionist policies to create real and lasting change within Arkansas. Because of her political ideology, Hillary found herself under attack in Arkansas, with people not understanding her political beliefs, and mistrusting her capabilities following her appointment to both the Rural Health Advisory Committee and the Education Standards Committee. However, Hillary proved that her political ideologies could be good for the state in terms of progressing their outdated education and health care services. During her time on the political committees that her husband appointed her to, Hillary had a chance to put in practice and develop her political style, allowing her to become more confident in her skills and prove herself as a skilled politician. Ensuring her work was carried out in an open and consultative manner, Hillary showed herself to be someone who cared about the opinions of the people she was trying to help, and proved that she really wanted to create successful changes within Arkansas. She established herself as an activist reformer and tried to refine

²⁵⁰ Doug Smith, ‘Candidates’ Wives Campaign With Fervor of the Truly Committed’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 24 October 1982.

this into a political style that she created for herself for all of her political work in Arkansas. The opportunities Bill Clinton provided her with, gave her the required experience to prove herself politically and helped her gain national recognition for her work, as well as allowing her to transform the prescribed role of the First Lady to develop it so that it suited her own personal needs, as well as allowing it to transform alongside the changing status of women within the United States at the time.

Madam Chairman

On Friday 19th October 1979, Governor Bill Clinton made a history-changing announcement; his wife, Hillary Rodham, was to chair the newly created, 44-member state Rural Health Advisory Committee.²⁵¹ His announcement marked Rodham as the first First Lady to serve as the chairwoman of a political panel. The issue of rural health in Arkansas had run into ‘controversy and opposition’, which resulted in Governor Clinton setting up the Rural Health Advisory Committee and naming his wife as head to ensure a program was developed to improve the status of rural healthcare within the state.²⁵² The problems in Arkansas’ rural areas were deep-rooted and of alarming concern, which is why the Clintons decided to tackle the issue together, to try to effect a positive change within their state, and stop Arkansas from dominating the national statistics for negative health reasons.

The reasons for such low levels of health in rural Arkansas were complex and largely related to the socio-economic status of the areas. Arkansas was a very poor state, with the median family income totalling \$5000 in 1970, which was 33% less than the national median income. For African-American Arkansans, the situation was even worse, with a household median

²⁵¹ ‘Clinton Selects His Wife to Head Rural Health Panel’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 20 October 1979.

²⁵² Ibid.

income of 55% less than the national median income.²⁵³ While poverty was an issue across the state, rural poverty was a particular issue of concern. It was estimated that more than half of the 2.2 million residents of Arkansas lived in rural areas with less than 2500 inhabitants, compared to only a quarter of the population of the United States.²⁵⁴ Studies carried out by the Governor's office at the time showed that individuals who lived and worked in poor, rural environments were more subject to health hazards, more likely to develop health problems and were more likely to have a slow recovery from illness when compared to people living in more urban, affluent areas.²⁵⁵ At the time the Rural Health Advisory Committee was set up, health care in Arkansas was predominantly urban and specialty-oriented, which led to 24 counties and 11 other areas designated as medical manpower shortage areas.²⁵⁶ Health services in rural areas were under-staffed, suffered from inadequate consumer purchasing power, isolation and various other economic and environmental constraints.²⁵⁷ This meant that many people in Arkansas were unable to get the necessary medical treatment they required, which led to a wide range of illnesses, as well as early deaths amongst many Arkansans. Arkansas had the second highest percentage of aged population among the 50 states; however it also had the sixth highest infant mortality rate in the nation in 1978.²⁵⁸ As well as being faced with those issues, Arkansas also had the fourth highest rate of disability in the nation, meaning there was yet another complex and expensive group of people to provide health care for.²⁵⁹ The state of Arkansas also ranked in the top eight states for incidences of tuberculosis, due to the high rates of poverty within the state.²⁶⁰ It is clear that Arkansas was faced with vast and complex socio-economic problems that were consequently

²⁵³ 'Rural Health Advisory Committee Report to the Governor', *Executive Summary of the Committee*, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Unprocessed, CP-1127, Box 1 of 2.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

affecting the health of its citizens. Governor Clinton wanted to create a program that would turn the tables on the health status of Arkansans, and he decided that his wife would be the one tasked with this large responsibility.

The State Health Department had received a federal grant of \$910,000 to hire staff, develop primary health care in rural areas and to establish some clinics in rural areas.²⁶¹ The grant had been applied for by the State Health Department; however the application process and award were fraught with opposition and controversy due to regional health system agencies believing they had not been sufficiently consulted regarding the program and application and local physicians worrying that newly funded clinics would strive to meet only federal minimum guidelines.²⁶² The purpose of the Rural Health Advisory Committee was to develop recommendations for the Governor regarding how the federal grant should be spent and where the money should be invested. Following meetings, and members going back into their local communities to discuss the matter with communities, three problems with rural healthcare were highlighted by Clinton's committee. The first problem was the issue of manpower in the rural communities; where to get doctors from, how to get them into rural areas, how to encourage doctors to stay at rural clinics and where to find the support services required to run a clinic were all important issues to be solved by the committee.²⁶³ The second problem was the issue of financing a rural health program in areas that were very poverty stricken compared to urban Arkansas.²⁶⁴ And finally the committee addressed the issue of exactly which communities in the state needed health care reform, who was living in

²⁶¹ 'Clinton Selects His Wife to Head Rural Health Panel', *Arkansas Gazette*, 20 October 1979.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ 'Rural Health Advisory Committee Report to the Governor', *Speech by Hillary Rodham at the Rural Health Advisory Committee November 1979*, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Unprocessed, CP-1127, Box 1 of 2.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

these areas and how they would be best served, considering all communities are different regardless of their similarities in terms of lack of healthcare.²⁶⁵

Hillary's appointment to the Rural Health Advisory Committee saw her named as the head of a 44-member Committee that was created to develop a program that would overhaul the current state of health care in rural Arkansas. In the first meeting of the Rural Health Advisory Committee she explained that,

It is to provide an opportunity for the Governor to hear from each of you, from your individual perspectives and experiences as to what kind of services and needs we have and what kind we don't have, what our lacks and absence of services are, because as we begin this effort in the rural health area, we are very anxious to have the benefit of the advice and wisdom of people who have been out there and who have been working in the field for quite a long time.²⁶⁶

This suggests that the process was to be open, and that she and the Governor expected people on the committee to voice their opinions and draw on their personal experiences to help shape a new rural health program that would create real change in Arkansas, and pull the state out of the bottom of the national figures on health and poverty. The 44 members of the committee were all selected due to their knowledge on healthcare in Arkansas, and were all much more qualified in the area than the First Lady, with her only real experiences relating to healthcare coming in the form of her position as a director of a state childhood immunisation effort.²⁶⁷ Her lack of experience with regards to the area of healthcare is something she did not try to hide through the process. 'There is a wide number of needs...many of you know far more about than I certainly do,' stated Hillary in November 1979.²⁶⁸ She made no effort to hide her lack of experience in the area, or in heading a committee, which is why she led the

²⁶⁵ 'Rural Health Advisory Committee Report to the Governor', *Speech by Hillary Rodham at the Rural Health Advisory Committee November 1979*, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Unprocessed, CP-1127, Box 1 of 2.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ 'Clinton Selects His Wife to Head Rural Health Panel', *Arkansas Gazette*, 20 October 1979.

²⁶⁸ 'Rural Health Advisory Committee Report to the Governor', *Speech by Hillary Rodham at the Rural Health Advisory Committee November 1979*, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Unprocessed, CP-1127, Box 1 of 2.

discussion of the first meeting, framing it as an opportunity for the 44 members to inform and educate themselves on the issues before coming up with specific recommendations for Governor Clinton.²⁶⁹ To assist in the process of education, the meetings of the Rural Health Advisory Committee were also attended by numerous health officials from hospitals and the state government, who were on hand to answer any questions committee members may have thought of during the process.²⁷⁰

Hillary used her appointment to the Rural Health Advisory Committee as a way to develop her political skills and consolidate her personal ideas as to how an efficient politician should work to effect change. Hillary quickly learnt during her time as the chairman of the committee that ‘openness’ was the key to the process in achieving a rural health care plan for Arkansas. She encouraged the members of the committee to go home into their communities to talk with people about the issues at hand, to try to gain as many opinions and ideas as possible to form the best plan that would really help the most people. In the first meeting of the Rural Health Advisory Committee she stated,

You will bring the benefit of the ideas and concerns expressed in your areas or within your professions to the committee as well, because we want very much to get as much as we can out on the table.²⁷¹

Asking the 44 members of the committee to go into their communities and workplaces to speak with local Arkansans who were being deeply affected by the issues of health care and poverty meant that the program born out of the committee would hopefully be as representative as possible, and be formed using opinions and information from those that it would eventually be helping. This is extremely important as it shows that from the very beginning of her political career, Hillary Rodham wanted to work in an open manner which

²⁶⁹ ‘Rural Health Advisory Committee Report to the Governor’, *Speech by Hillary Rodham at the Rural Health Advisory Committee November 1979*, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Unprocessed, CP-1127, Box 1 of 2.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

consulted and listened to the people she was trying to help. It is suggestive of a liberal, more grass-roots approach towards politics than the traditional conservative politics of the Southern state she had begun to call home.

As previously discussed, the reasoning behind Hillary's appointment to both the Rural Health Advisory Committee and Education Standards Committee is unknown, however Hillary herself has suggested that she was appointed as chairwoman of the Rural Health Committee due to her academic interests in and commitment to children and children's health problems,

I am very interested, as some of you may know, in children and children's health problems, and in the concerns that go along with children's health problems which are very often maternal health problems. I suppose that the main reason my husband asked me to chair this committee is because of my concerns in those areas.²⁷²

This reasoning behind her appointment has been, to some extent, confirmed by her husband, when he spoke about her commitment to children's issues in his 2016 Democratic Convention speech stating that she was,

So involved in children's issues that she actually took an extra year in law school...to learn what more could be done to improve the lives and futures of poor children. She was already determined to figure out how to make things better.²⁷³

Despite her deep interest in and commitment to the issue of children and children's health problems, Hillary was still faced with many problems when it came to proving her legitimacy in chairing the Rural Health Advisory Committee. The fact that she had this negativity working against her during her time on the Rural Health Advisory Committee stands as a testimony to her achievements, and shows how she was unwavering in her attempt to redefine

²⁷² 'Rural Health Advisory Committee Report to the Governor', *Speech by Hillary Rodham at the Rural Health Advisory Committee November 1979*, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Unprocessed, CP-1127, Box 1 of 2.

²⁷³ Bill Clinton, Democratic National Convention Speech, *PBS News Hour* 27 July 2016, 31 July 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RchVnIn_-Y>

and politicise the role of the traditional First Lady to make it more reflective of modern expectations of a woman's role.

The success of Hillary Rodham as chairman of the Rural Health Advisory Committee is undeniable. Her work on the panel was highly successful and she managed to effect change within the state that had a lasting impact and provided her with solid political experiences that allowed her to continue political work in the public eye. Due to her work as chairwoman of the Rural Health Advisory Committee, four rural clinics were opened very early on in the process, and construction was started on three more rural clinics.²⁷⁴ Staying true to her interest in children's health issues and related maternal issues, she also effectively increased the use of midwives and nurse-practitioners across the state to help reduce the high rate of infant mortality in the state.²⁷⁵ She proved herself to be successful in the political world; she worked in an open, liberal manner and attacked an issue that was literally crippling the people of Arkansas, making a clear and marked improvement in the lives of those living in rural, poverty stricken counties.

Her work in Arkansas on the issue of rural health care was so successful that it drew the attention of President Jimmy Carter, who became a friend and supporter of Bill Clinton during his tenure as Governor of Arkansas. Outside of Arkansas, people were beginning to see her as a hard-working and open activist who could create real change on issues that were of great importance to the people. Following her work on the Rural Health Advisory Committee, President Carter appointed her to the independent Legal Services Corporation board in 1979.²⁷⁶ The Legal Services Corporation was a group of politically connected

²⁷⁴ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, p. 147.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 160.

lawyers who distributed money to local programs across the nation. Her work with rural health care, which served poor local communities in Arkansas, gave her excellent experience of distributing money to local causes and taught her the importance of getting out into communities and talking to people to ensure that money was being invested in the right areas. Her work on the Legal Services Corporation was so successful that within months of being appointed she was elected as chair of the board, giving her another ‘first’, as she became the first woman to chair the board in its history.²⁷⁷ The position saw her directing 5000 lawyers across 335 legal services offices across the nation and handling one million legal cases a year.²⁷⁸ Although as chair of the Legal Services Corporation she was using the skills she had gained through her original profession in law, the opportunity provided her with experience of political issues across the nation, allowed her to build a network of activist links and provided experience that would prove invaluable for her second term as First Lady of Arkansas.

Despite the issue of rural health care being of crucial importance for the people of Arkansas, the success of her work and the attention she received on a national level, Hillary Rodham did not gain the deserved recognition as a sound politician following her work on the Rural Health Advisory Committee. It is arguable that the timing was wrong for her work to be recognised by the general public of Arkansas due to other issues that were beginning to surface around the same time, such as the maiden name issue as discussed in chapter 1. When thinking about her subsequent political career, Hillary’s work on the Rural Health Advisory Committee is not seen as a defining moment for her political career, largely due to the surrounding circumstances and the fact that Governor Clinton failed to be re-elected in the

²⁷⁷ Sheehy, *Hillary’s Choice*, p. 160.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

1980 gubernatorial election. This has led to her time on the committee somewhat being forgotten by many, with the focus being placed on her work following Bill Clinton's second term as Governor of Arkansas. Despite not marking the beginning of her political career, Hillary's work on the committee was important in another way. The success of the Rural Health Advisory Committee led the people of Arkansas to begin to trust her more and marked the beginning of her transformation into a widely respected First Lady of Arkansas which began to come into full force in Bill Clinton's second term as Governor from 1982.

"Thank God for Mississippi": The History of Education within Arkansas

When Bill Clinton first took the Governor's office in 1978, Arkansas was one of the lowest ranked states in a number of social issues including teen-pregnancy and educational standards. Arkansans were so used to ranking near the bottom that they coined the saying, 'Thank God for Mississippi.'²⁷⁹ This negative view of the state is something that Hillary addressed in a 1979 interview when she said that,

The time for feeling that Arkansas was in anyway second to anybody or the 'Thank God for Mississippi' image that we've had for too long, it's beginning to disappear and I want to do everything I can to help that go as fast as we can make it disappear.²⁸⁰

This quote shows that she and Bill were committed from the beginning of their time as the First Couple of Arkansas to work together to change the attitudes of people towards their state and help improve the status of people to make them feel proud of where they come from. This attempt to improve the status quo within Arkansas took the form of the issue of education standards in Arkansas during Bill Clinton's second term of Governor, when he set up the Education Standards Committee to find solutions to the issues within the education system in the state. The problems surrounding education were deep-rooted in Arkansas, with

²⁷⁹ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 187.

²⁸⁰ In Focus, 'Interview with Hillary Rodham', 1979, 30 May 2016.

<<http://www.mediaite.com/online/1979-interview-with-hillary-rodham-foreshadows-her-long-battle-with-public-perception/>>

many of the issues dating back to the 1950s when the state was trying to deal with the end of segregated schooling.

Arkansas had a troubled history when it came to education, with Central High School, in Little Rock, becoming infamous across the country following the enrolment of the Little Rock Nine in 1957. On 17th May 1954, the Supreme Court announced its landmark decision in the major case *Oliver Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka*.²⁸¹ The case brought an end to segregated education within the United States, ending almost 60 years of unequal schooling in America. Discussing the deep impact that segregated schools had on black citizens, Chief Justice Earl Warren stated,

To separate them [black children in grade and high schools] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.²⁸²

Brown v. Board of Education ended the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ that had dominated, particularly in the American South, and highlighted the fact that many of the facilities available in schools for African American children were by no means equal to those available for white children. The ruling by the Supreme Court meant that segregated schools could no longer exist and schools had to begin accepting all children, regardless of race. However, in 1957 Arkansas gained nationwide publicity when nine African American students were refused entry to the historically all-white Central High School following their enrolment. Governor Orval Faubus, who was the sitting Governor at the time, posted the National Guard around Central High School with the motive of preventing African American students from entering the premises.²⁸³ With the support of federal troops, who were sent by President

²⁸¹ James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 65.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

²⁸³ Karen Anderson, *Little Rock: Race and Resistance at Central High School* (USA: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 58.

Eisenhower to ‘protect the legitimacy of federal authority’ in Little Rock, the integration of schools in Arkansas took place in line with the *Brown v. Board* decision.²⁸⁴ However, little had changed in the Arkansas education system since the end of segregation, and many of the issues that had been around in the 1950s with regards to unequal education were still prevalent in Arkansas schools when Bill Clinton took the office of the Governor.

The Standard of Education

Hillary Clinton served as chair of the Education Standards Committee in 1983 which provided her with the perfect opportunity to develop her skills and allowed her to form the political persona she wanted for her future political career. She carried out her work for the Education Standards Committee in an open manner, learning from her successes as chairwoman of the Rural Health Advisory Committee. The open nature in which the work of the Education Standards Committee was conducted involved consultations with people across the state of Arkansas to ensure that the policy that came out of the committee would be of the utmost benefit to as many people as possible. Despite the positive way in which she conducted the business of the committee, Hillary was faced with large amounts of criticism from people in Arkansas, who disagreed with her taking charge of the Education Standards Committee, hinting at the negative attitudes of people surrounding the issue of appointing your wife to political positions. However, her work on the committee was extremely successful and allowed Hillary to make a national name for herself as a capable politician in the area of education. She proved to critics that just because she was First Lady of Arkansas, it did not mean that she could not get ‘stuck-in’ to political issues that were affecting many people across the state and produce real change, despite her relative inexperience.

²⁸⁴ Anderson, *Little Rock: Race and Resistance at Central High School*, p. 79.

In 1983, the Quality Education Act established an Education Standards Committee with the responsibility to,

make a study and recommend to the State Board of Education proposed regulations, criteria and minimum standards for evaluating schools for compliance with minimum standards for accreditation of public schools to be followed by the State Department of Education in evaluating schools for compliance.²⁸⁵

The work of the Education Standards Committee was to lead to an overhaul of education in Arkansas, and to bring up the standards of education to allow the state to compete nationally for the first time with the top ranking states for education. The issue was of extreme importance, and is the reason Bill Clinton has suggested as to why he named his wife, Hillary Clinton, as the chairwoman.

The work of the Education Standards Committee was focused primarily on the education standards required of school children in the state, particularly in terms of academic record, and to ensure students were being provided with a sound education before progressing to the next level of schooling. A letter that was sent to the Office of the Governor by a ninth grade student highlights the issue and importance of changing education standards in Arkansas as she says,

They [Arkansas schools] are way behind in standards. Like all we have to have to graduate from Bentonville schools is a 1.5 average. To get into college we must have a 2.5 average...After we graduate and try to get into college we are going to have a hard time, because of our schools low standards.²⁸⁶

This observation from a 14 year old shows just how far Arkansas schools were going in failing the children living in the state. The school system was jeopardising the futures of young people by not fully preparing them academically for the world after school, with many children being set up to fail due to the differing academic standards set by the state at the

²⁸⁵ 'Scope of Study of Education Standards Committee', *Packet: Education Standards Committee Information*, 1983, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series VI, Box 7, Folder 21.

²⁸⁶ Denise Warren, 'Correspondence, Oct 4-Dec 16, 1983', The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series VI, Box 7, Folder 5.

time. It was clear when the Education Standards Committee was formed, that the educational system was failing the people of Arkansas.

To meet the required recommendations of the Quality Education Act, the Education Standards Committee, at Hillary's directive, decided to look into the minimum and recommended education standards and course requirements for all levels of school. They also resolved to find a way in which the high quality of course content and acquisition of skills by students from these courses could be met and maintained.²⁸⁷ The primary focus of the Education Standards Committee was to improve the general standards of education within Arkansas, particularly in mathematics and science. In May 1983, the committee adopted a scope statement to address concerns common to elementary, junior high/middle and high school. The major concerns that were seen as relevant for all ages of schooling in the statement included: high expectations, staff development, pupil-teacher interaction, parent/community involvement, discipline, assessment, a core curriculum, sufficient support services and access to technology.²⁸⁸ It is clear that there were numerous issues facing schools in Arkansas during the 1980s.

With little focus on academic subjects, children were not meeting the education standards required to go to college. During her time as Chairwoman of the Education Standards Committee, Hillary Clinton stated, 'I think it's time we started getting a little fanatic about math and science, not just athletics'.²⁸⁹ This came after research conducted by the panel showed that many schools were pushing athletics and other extra-curricular activities over the

²⁸⁷ 'Scope of Study of Education Standards Committee', *Packet: Education Standards Committee Information*, 1983, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series VI, Box 7, Folder 21.

²⁸⁸ 'Standards Committee Education Update', *Packet: Education Standards Committee Information*, August 1983, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series VI, Box 7, Folder 21.

²⁸⁹ AP and Gazette Staff, 'Panel Urged to Emphasize Math, Science in Schools', *Arkansas Gazette*, 24 June 1983.

education standards of their students in core subject areas, meaning many were failing academically when high school ended, as they had little to show for it other than participation in sports.²⁹⁰ As she stated during her work on the Education Standards Committee regarding the over-emphasis on extra-curricular activities at the expense of academia,

We've confused our students. When you play, you should play hard. And when you work, you should work hard. But you shouldn't confuse the two.²⁹¹

This quote shows just how deep-rooted the issues within the Arkansas school system ran. There was a complete overhaul of the educational system required to re-train schools into once again appreciating and pushing the academic side of a student's educational experience, and encouraging students into further education. As head of the committee, Clinton had a huge task ahead of her to improve education in Arkansas. This was one of the first major opportunities that she was given to prove to herself and the people of Arkansas that the First Lady could be more than 'the Governor's wife', as well as allowing her to begin to mould herself into the type of politician she wanted to become.

Her decision to accept the position as Chair of the Education Standards Committee, despite the fact that she did not believe it to be a good idea at the time, demonstrates her commitment to her husband and the issues they both believed were of importance to Arkansans. In her autobiography, *Living History* (2004), Clinton states that 'Nobody, including me, thought it was a good idea. But Bill wouldn't take no for an answer.'²⁹² The fact that she did agree to take on the role despite believing she should not be in that position hints at her efforts to redefine the role of the First Lady and to begin to establish a political career in her own right. However, it also speaks to her general belief in and commitment to providing a good

²⁹⁰ AP and Gazette Staff, 'Panel Urged to Emphasize Math, Science in Schools', *Arkansas Gazette*, 24 June 1983.

²⁹¹ John Brummett, 'Plan Presented To Legislators By Mrs. Clinton', *Arkansas Gazette*, 29 July 1983.

²⁹² Clinton, *Living History*, p. 94.

education to all children. Speaking in 1983 in the capacity of chairwoman of the Education Standards Committee, Hillary discussed her views on education saying that,

the road to being somebody in this society starts with education and we intend to be sure that...every child in this state is somebody because we're going to give them every chance we can to develop their minds so that they can play a role in this state and this country.²⁹³

Her commitment to providing children with an education and improving the standards within Arkansas can clearly be seen through this statement. However, her acceptance of her appointment to the Education Standards Committee was a clear signal to the people of Arkansas that she was more interested in policy than sitting on the side-lines supporting her husband as a traditional First Lady. This is confirmed in a note that Hillary wrote to her best friend, Diane Blair, saying that 'what I really love is policy, making policies, seeing them put into practice, making things work.'²⁹⁴

As with her work on the Rural Health Advisory Committee, the way in which the Education Standards Committee carried out their meetings and went about writing their policy recommendations, demonstrates that Hillary was trying to create an openness around her work, suggesting that she wanted to be a politician who worked in consultation with the general public. This is especially clear when looking at the public hearings she hosted across all 75 counties of Arkansas which had more than 7500 attendees interested in the state of education in Arkansas.²⁹⁵ This is extremely important as it is a clear indicator as to how she was different from other politicians of the time. Her work revealed her to be a capable politician who operated with an open-door and consulted those that would be affected by her policies, ensuring that her work was effecting real, positive change within the state. Her 'open-door' strategy, helped create an openness surrounding the Education Standards

²⁹³ Hillary Rodham Clinton, 'Speech on Education', 6 September 1983, 31 July 2016.
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3zpCLvdcSA>>

²⁹⁴ Michael Kruse, 'The Long Hot Summer Hillary Became a Politician', *Politico*, 14 April 2015.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

Committee which meant that Arkansans felt they had an opportunity to voice their opinions on education and were listened to through her public hearings. Due to the openness in which the work was conducted, the final recommendations of the committee were met with little opposition.

The Education Standards Committee formulated a policy that stated that all local school districts had to adopt uniform, state-imposed standards for curriculum and classroom sizes; all of which would be decided by educational experts who were committee consultants, showing once again that Hillary did not claim to be an expert in the area in which she was working.²⁹⁶ Her ideas for education in Arkansas were met with a very positive response. The Governor's office was over-flowing with mail from Arkansans, as well as people from other states, voicing their opinions on educational issues. It was clear that there were many people in the state who were pleased with Hillary's efforts and were embracing this new style of liberal, feminist First Lady who effected positive change in their home state. One of these positive letters to the Governor's office began,

Appointing your wife as Chairperson of the Education Standards Committee was one of the smartest moves you've made as Governor. She and her committee have done a super job.²⁹⁷

This is an example of how attitudes within the state were changing towards Hillary. She was beginning to receive praise for her liberal politics, after she proved herself capable of being more in the political world than just a First Lady who stands beside her husband. The changing opinion of her and general positivity surrounding her work and her overall reception into Arkansas' politics reached a hiatus whilst she was presenting the recommendations of the Education Standards Committee to the Arkansas State House.

²⁹⁶ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, p. 172

²⁹⁷ Lynn and Jay Heflin, 'Correspondence Oct 4-Dec 16, 1983', The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series VI, Box 7, Folder 5.

In July 1983, Clinton addressed a joint Senate-House Legislative Committee at the Arkansas State Capitol.²⁹⁸ She outlined some of the recommendations of the Education Standards Committee including: mandatory full-day kindergarten, a 20-to-1 pupil-teacher ratio in early elementary grades and more units in maths and science.²⁹⁹ This was the first time Hillary had faced a legislative committee and she handled it ‘with ease and grace’, despite her husband, Governor Bill Clinton, listening in from the corridor to ensure she was capable of fielding the questions posed to her alone.³⁰⁰ Representative Lloyd George of Danville exclaimed to the Senate-House Legislative Committee, ‘I think we’ve elected the wrong Clinton!’³⁰¹ Albeit embarrassing for Hillary and a prime example of what she calls ‘talking dog syndrome’ when people (particularly men) are amazed that any woman is capable of holding her own under pressure and being articulate and knowledgeable, this comment displays just how accepted into the world of Arkansas politics she had become given that some believed she could be an effective Governor based off of her political record on the Education Standards Committee.³⁰² It was clear to the legislative committee that she knew what she was doing and they were extremely impressed with her proposals to improve the standard of education in Arkansas. Her ability as a politician meant that opinions began to change regarding her political ideologies, as people came to understand that she could create real change in their state, offering somewhat of a fresh outlook due to the fact that she was an Arkansas outsider.

After Clinton’s work on the Education Standards Committee her husband, Bill Clinton, largely took over the issue of education to begin implementing her ideas. In order to pay for the required changes, he asked for a one cent tax increase.³⁰³ Although people were resentful

²⁹⁸ Sheehy, *Hillary’s Choice*, p. 188.

²⁹⁹ Brummett, ‘Plan Presented To Legislators By Mrs. Clinton’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 29 July 1983.

³⁰⁰ Sheehy, *Hillary’s Choice*, p. 188.

³⁰¹ Brummett, ‘Plan Presented To Legislators By Mrs. Clinton’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 29 July 1983.

³⁰² Clinton, *Living History*, p. 95.

³⁰³ Kruse, ‘The Long Hot Summer Hillary Became a Politician’, *Politico*, 14 April 2015.

of paying higher taxes, they had been informed early on in the reform process that they would be faced with a tax hike. However, what was not expected was a policy that mandated competency tests for all teachers, regardless of their experience.³⁰⁴ The issue of teacher testing was one which drew a huge amount of negativity and resentment from the people of Arkansas. Once again, the Governor's office found itself swamped with letters from the people of Arkansas who disagreed with the policy of teacher testing, as it became known. One such example was a letter sent from a 'fed-up, competent, Black teacher' who wrote to Governor Clinton with the message, 'Boy, do you have a lot of nerve! First you promise one thing to teachers, and I personally hear you make those promises, then you turn around and knife us in the back.'³⁰⁵ Teacher testing was a highly contentious issue that came out following the recommendations of the Education Standards Committee. People were offended by the fact that their abilities as a teacher, regardless of how long they had been in the profession, were being called into question by their Governor. It was viewed by many residents of Arkansas as an attack on the teaching profession and on individual teachers, who had only been doing their job as mandated by the state government in terms of the curriculum and standards they had been working towards. One letter sent to the Governor's office regarding teacher testing shows how the test was seen as a personal attack on the people that have given their lives to the profession of teaching,

I am not angry - - I am hostile... You are saying my high school in Missouri didn't know what it was doing, that the University of Missouri allowed me to enter without the public's opinion, that Arkansas State University's ability to award me a BSE and a MSE is questionable.³⁰⁶

It is clear to see the fervent passion behind this woman's resentment and hostility towards the policy of teacher testing, as requiring a fully qualified teacher to take a test to prove their

³⁰⁴ Kruse, 'The Long Hot Summer Hillary Became a Politician', *Politico*, 14 April 2015.

³⁰⁵ Carolyn Jones, 'Correspondence, Sep-Oct 1983', The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series XXIII, Box 29, Folder 14.

³⁰⁶ Wanda Wainscott, 'Correspondence, Jan 1985', The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series XXIII, Box 29, Folder 36.

competency could be viewed as questioning all of the training and qualifications they have received in their lifetime.

The Office of the Governor received reams of correspondence during the time they were trying to push their educational reforms through the Arkansas legislature. Although there was lots of positive mail supporting the Clintons and their work on education, the issue of teacher testing saw a huge quantity of negative correspondence from people of all different ages and backgrounds and was not just limited to teachers who would be forced to take the tests if the legislation passed. One example of the negative correspondence received regarding the issue of teacher testing was a letter from a group of fifth graders (10-11 year olds) from an Arkansas Middle School that stated, ‘if this law passes you will be disliked by 82 fifth graders – how do you like those apples?’³⁰⁷ The fact that this letter is from 10 year olds shows just how wide-spread the resentment towards the issue of teacher testing actually was. It was a highly politicised issue that was encouraging people of all ages to form an opinion on education reform in Arkansas.

Although the idea of teacher testing was born out of the reforms of Hillary’s Education Standards Committee, it was reportedly never discussed in the committee. One member, Mrs. Cora McHenry of the Arkansas Education Association, has argued that ‘It was *never* discussed in our meetings.’³⁰⁸ The way in which the Clintons went about the issue of teacher testing stood in stark contrast to Hillary’s work on the Education Standards Committee and brings into question the true nature of her political style whilst handling the difficult and contentious issues regarding education in Arkansas. The issue of teacher testing was in fact a precursor of the way in which she would go on to conduct herself as chair of the Health Care

³⁰⁷ Letter from Walnut Ridge Middle School’, *Correspondence Feb1-21, 1985*, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series XXIII, Box 29, Folder 37.

³⁰⁸ Kruse, ‘The Long Hot Summer Hillary Became a Politician’, *Politico*, 14 April 2015.

Task Force in the early 1990s, opting for a policy style that worked behind closed doors and rarely consulted those that could be of help when making important decisions.³⁰⁹ Because of the fact that there is no record of discussion of teacher testing in the Education Standards Committee, Hillary Clinton has managed to escape the blame and resentment regarding the issue with Bill Clinton effectively becoming the face of teacher testing in Arkansas.

However, evidence points to the fact that teacher testing was *their* idea, not just Governor Clinton's. In her autobiography, Hillary has described the policy of teacher testing as the 'cornerstone of the proposed reform plan' suggesting that in fact she had more to do with the idea of mandatory competency tests than the people of Arkansas were led to believe.³¹⁰

Whilst discussing the issue of teacher testing, Hillary uses language such as 'we felt' and 'how could we'.³¹¹ This again shows that teacher testing was not an issue that Hillary was separate from. She was involved in the educational reforms of Arkansas from beginning to end, regardless of the fact that the recommendations of her Education Standards Committee were made in the summer of 1983. It is difficult to believe that she would have stepped back from the issue of education following the work of the Education Standards Committee, due to the fact that she was using this issue to establish herself as a competent politician. Also, due to the fact that she had been given the position of chairwoman of the Education Standards Committee because of her closeness to Governor Clinton and the importance of the issue to him, it is highly unlikely that they did not discuss teacher testing and that she did not have any influence over the policy.

An organised effort by Arkansas Teachers' Unions, particularly the Arkansas Education Association (AEA), to halt the passage of teacher testing meant that the Clintons faced an up-

³⁰⁹ Philip J. Funigiello, *Chronic Politics: Health Care Security from FDR to George W. Bush* (USA: University of Kansas, 2005), p. 232.

³¹⁰ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 94.

³¹¹ Ibid.

hill battle to ensure their education reforms were voted into law at all, despite the initial positive reaction to Hillary's reforms. The AEA was encouraging teachers to boycott the tests for numerous reasons. Fear of failing the test was the main issue that was played upon with propaganda stating, 'What have you proven if you take the test and pass it? NOTHING! But if you fail, you will forever be marked as a "failure" and suffer the resulting humiliation.'³¹² Using evocative language to garner support, which particularly preyed upon the fears of older teachers, these efforts of teacher unions are somewhat responsible for the large quantities of mail that the Governor's office received around the subject. Following a field test that had been conducted, various groups against teacher testing believed that a quarter of all Arkansas teachers would fail the test and that the score they received would be a permanent mark on their teaching record thus affecting future teaching opportunities in their careers.³¹³ However, despite the efforts of groups to organise a boycott and scare people about the consequences of failing the competency tests, in June 1985, 90 percent of the 28,276 teachers who took the first tests passed and those 10 percent who did not, were able to re-take the test at a later date.³¹⁴

Hillary's time on the Education Standards Committee was one of the most important positions she took on in terms of giving her the first taste of a career in politics. It was the first chance she had to prove herself to the people of Arkansas and show that she was more than just their First Lady as they knew the role to be; she could be a successful politician, capable of effecting positive change, unafraid of tackling controversy and able to take on difficult decisions. As Michael Kruse has argued regarding her work on the committee, 'it was a singular, pivotal window of time, between who she had been and who she hoped she

³¹² 'The Decision is Yours', *Flyer, Teacher Boycott Committee*, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series XXIII, Box 30, Folder 38.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ 'Bill Clinton Press Release', *Press Releases, Governor's Office, June 26, 1985*, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Series XXIII, Box 31, Folder 32.

would be.³¹⁵ Her work completely reinvented schooling in Arkansas and drastically improved the state's national placement in terms of school system. The work of the committee led to Arkansas being one of the two most improved states for education standards by 1992.³¹⁶ Hillary demonstrated her ability to work as the chair of a committee to bring about positive change. She proved that she could be a successful politician and did not need to be resigned to hosting teas in the Governor's mansion, a reflection of the traditional role of the First Lady. Although it was a difficult issue to navigate, teacher testing went ahead, along with the recommendations of the Education Standards Committee. The efforts of Hillary Rodham Clinton meant that Arkansas had,

a plan in place to raise school standards, tens of thousands of children had a better chance to realize their learning potentials and teachers got a desperately needed raise in pay.³¹⁷

Her work was suggestive of the type of politician she strived to be: one who was open, fair, liberal and democratic. Biographer Carl Bernstein has described Hillary's work on the Education Standards Committee as 'her greatest achievement in public life until she was elected to the U.S. Senate.'³¹⁸ This observation is astute as her work on the Education Standards Committee was the only large-scale political undertaking that she successfully achieved prior to her election to the U.S. Senate, largely due to her inability to pass through Congress a federal healthcare overhaul that she was the chair of in the 1990s. The success of her political work in Arkansas is an indicator that she had managed to win over public opinion with regards to her reinvention of the traditional role of First Lady.

³¹⁵ Kruse, 'The Long Hot Summer Hillary Became a Politician', *Politico*, 14 April 2015.

³¹⁶ Bill Clinton, Democratic National Convention Speech, *PBS News Hour* 27 July 2016, 31 July 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RchVnIn_-Y>

³¹⁷ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 95.

³¹⁸ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, p. 172.

Hillary the Advocate

Hillary Rodham Clinton had always had an interest in the rights of children and young people. This interest sparked from a young age after learning about her mother's tough past. Her mother, Dorothy Howell Rodham, was abandoned by her parents as a young child and forced to live with her grandparents who cared little for her. She left home when she was fourteen years old and worked as a mother's helper for room, board and \$3 a week.³¹⁹ In her autobiography, Hillary Clinton has expressed her astonishment at how her mother 'emerged from her lonely early life as such an affectionate and levelheaded woman.'³²⁰ Discovering her mother's past led to a fascination in children's rights and to her wanting to provide a voice for disadvantaged children and young people. This dedication and interest in the rights of children can be clearly seen through her thesis at Yale Law School which was published in 1974. Entitled, '*Children Under the Law*', her work looked at developments in the law that were resulting in changes to the legal status of children within the United States.³²¹ Her thesis discusses the rights of children and makes the claim that American children's law assumes that 'a child's interests are identical to those of his parents' and that 'children usually do not know what is best for themselves.'³²² As a result of this assumption, the law must always presume that 'parents or the state as parent do know what is best' for children, something which Hillary did not agree with.³²³ Although her work was described as 'pioneering' by one of her law professors, her article later became a source from which the Republican base would attack Hillary as 'anti-family' particularly during Bill Clinton's presidential bid in 1992.³²⁴

³¹⁹ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 3.

³²⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

³²¹ Hillary Rodham, 'Children Under the Law', *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (November 1973), p. 487.

³²² Ibid., 492.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 104-105.

During her time studying at Yale Law School, Hillary developed her interest in child advocacy by working for Marian Wright Edelman at the Child Defence Fund in Washington, DC. She spent the summer of 1970 working for Edelman, researching and developing information for a Senate investigation into the living and working conditions of migrant farm labourers and their families.³²⁵ Her research focused on issues in the American South and looked at the health and education difficulties that migrant children were faced with.³²⁶ Her experiences with child advocacy throughout her early life led to a realisation that what she wanted to do with the law ‘was to give voice to children who were not being heard.’³²⁷ The decision to pursue the issue of child advocacy in her career shows an early indicator into the type of politician Clinton was hoping to become should she later choose to go down that path. Clearly portraying herself as a social activist, she strongly believed that the system (and particularly the courts) could be used to effect change on behalf of children.³²⁸ Hillary viewed Marian Wright Edelman as her hero, and their similar values of self-reliance, family, hard work and equal justice show the kind of politician she was trying to become in the late 1960s.³²⁹ Hillary decided she wanted to work within the judicial system to effect change for children and families across the United States and the Children’s Defense Fund provided her with this opportunity.

Clinton gained her first professional experience of working as a child advocate after accepting a paid position at the Children’s Defense Fund. Founded in 1973, the Children’s Defense Fund is a private, non-profit organisation that works to provide a ‘strong, effective and independent voice for *all* the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for

³²⁵ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, p. 73

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 50.

³²⁸ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, p. 71

³²⁹ Ibid.

themselves', effectively working as child advocates.³³⁰ They particularly work to help poor children, children of colour and those with disabilities. Their mission to 'Leave No Child Behind' works to ensure that every child has a healthy start, a head start, a fair start, a safe start and a moral start in life and successful passage to adulthood.³³¹ Working with families and communities, the Children's Defense Fund has been effectively educating the nation about the needs of vulnerable children and helped to encourage preventative investments in areas to reduce the risk of children getting ill, dropping out of schools or being the victims of family breakdown.³³² Hillary began working for the Children's Defense Fund at the beginning of its creation, travelling across the country working with juveniles incarcerated in adult jails, as well as looking into the reasons behind the low numbers of school-aged children actually enrolled in educational facilities.³³³ Her research into the issue of children's enrolment in schools found that many children were being kept out of public schooling due to physical disabilities or staying home as babysitters for younger siblings. The report that the Children's Defense Fund compiled on the issue of education enrolment helped lead to Congress passing the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975.³³⁴ However, despite the positive work of the Children's Defense Fund advocating for young people across the United States, the organisation was, and still is, seen as controversial by some conservative groups. Hillary's commitment to the Children's Defense Fund (which lasted until 1992) combined with the controversial subject of her Yale thesis, *Children Under the Law*, found her being branded as anti-family by Republicans. This idea of Hillary as anti-family was particularly played upon during Bill Clinton's bid for the presidency in 1992. An example of this is when Republican Party Chairman, Rich Bond, stated that,

³³⁰ Professional Site: Children's Defense Fund, 'Our Mission', 5 August 2015.

<<http://www.childrensdefense.org/about/>>

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 64.

³³⁴ Ibid.

Hillary Clinton believes that kids should be able to sue their parents rather than helping them with the chores as they were asked to do. She has likened marriage and family to slavery. She has referred to the family as a dependency relationship that deprives people of their rights.³³⁵

These attacks on Hillary were all made using her work as an advocate for children as a reference. As David Brock has argued, the attacks on Hillary act as a tribute to the way in which she was viewed as an ideological force to be reckoned with in the Clinton partnership.³³⁶ The hard-line Republican Party viewed her as a real threat to conservatism and the backlash against women that had been taking form throughout the 1980s; the attacks were a testament to the work she had accomplished in reinventing the traditional role of a First Lady. However, they also reflected the views of many conservatives in Arkansas who were unwilling to accept change within their state when Hillary first began taking steps to reinvent the role of the First Lady both by transforming the expectations of the symbolic aspects of the role and by politicising the position.

Hillary's work and commitment to child advocacy also took place on a state level when in 1977 she helped found the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF).³³⁷ When approached by Dr Bettye Caldwell, a professor in child development at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock, to start an advocacy group in Arkansas Hillary quickly agreed as the time she had spent working in Arkansas to that date confirmed in her mind that the state needed an organisation that was devoted to advocating for children's rights and interests.³³⁸ The group, which still exists today, was created with the mission statement 'to ensure that all children and their families have the resources and opportunities to lead healthy and

³³⁵ Brock, *The Seduction of Hillary Clinton*, pp. 269-270.

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 270.

³³⁷ Professional Site: Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, 'About Us', 31 July 2016.

<<http://www.aradvocates.org/about-us/>>

³³⁸ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 81.

productive lives and to realize their full potential.³³⁹ The group has led in reforms in the child welfare system since its creation. In 1979, which was the International Year of the Child, the AACF successfully pushed for a number of advances for children in the state of Arkansas whilst under the chairmanship of Hillary Rodham.³⁴⁰ During this year, with the help of the AACF, Arkansas passed a Uniform Child Custody Act which aimed to eliminate custody issues for families moving in and out of the state; they reduced the average daily population in youth detention centres in Arkansas by 25%; they improved inpatient and community-based treatment for children with mental health problems and they managed to place more than 35% of children with special needs into adoptive homes.³⁴¹ Hillary was working with the AACF at the same time as serving as First Lady of Arkansas and working full time at the Rose Law Firm. Her commitment to child advocacy on both a state and national level, show that despite her other roles, she did not stop working for her political agenda and trying to effect change by forging an acceptable political role for the First Lady. When looking at Hillary's background in child advocacy, it seems a logical step to choose to tackle the issue of teen pregnancy in the state of Arkansas during her time as First Lady. Historically, the First Lady of Arkansas would take on an issue, for which they would campaign and try to create change within the state. There have been a wide range of issues tackled by Arkansas' First Ladies, including education and prison reform within the state.³⁴² As well as taking on the political positions on the Education Standards Committee and the Rural Health Committee as First Lady of Arkansas, Hillary Clinton also championed a program to reduce the rates of teen pregnancy and teen births in Arkansas. Appointed as the

³³⁹ Professional Site: Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, 'Mission and Annual Report', 31 July 2016.

<<http://www.aradvocates.org/about-us/mission-annual-report/>>

³⁴⁰ Clinton, *My Life*, p. 271.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Professional Site: The Encyclopaedia of Arkansas History & Culture, First Ladies, Kaye Lundgren, 9 August 2014, 11 May 2015.

<<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=7828>>

Honorary Chairman of the Adolescent Pregnancy Child Watch in June 1986, Hillary Clinton headed a research program into teen-aged pregnancy in the state.³⁴³ Although it was not an overtly political role, in that she was working for a group outside of the state government, it was an issue that she took on and worked on closely, that helped her develop her skills and become the kind of politician she wanted to be. She made the issue of teen pregnancy in Arkansas the focus of her social activism work within Arkansas. The way in which she worked to highlight the issue of teen pregnancy was extremely liberal and activist, yet showed her views as different but sympathetic to the reigning views regarding the issue of teen-aged pregnancy in a Southern, conservative state.

In 1974, Arkansas had the highest rate of white teenage pregnancy in the United States and was ranked second in overall teenage pregnancy.³⁴⁴ When combined with the fact that Arkansas also had the sixth highest infant mortality rate in the nation in 1978, these issues were of the utmost importance to try to improve within the state. These statistics regarding the rate of teen pregnancy and infant mortality in Arkansas are also an indicator as to the complexity of the issue of rural health care reform. In 1986, more than 19% of the births in Arkansas were by teens, and more than 40% of the teen births were also illegitimate.³⁴⁵ The rates of teen pregnancy within the United States had been described as ‘a problem of epidemic proportion’, and Arkansas was effectively leading this epidemic.³⁴⁶ It was clear that there was a deep-rooted problem within the state; however few people were paying attention to it or were willing to talk about it which meant the issue had been allowed to spiral out of

³⁴³ James Scudder, ‘Mrs. Clinton gives group backing; teen-aged pregnancies are focus’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 12 June 1986.

³⁴⁴ ‘Rural Health Advisory Committee Report to the Governor’, *Executive Summary of the Committee*, The Don Ernst Collection at The Butler Center, Unprocessed, CP-1127, Box 1 of 2.

³⁴⁵ William Green, ‘Mrs. Clinton soft-spoken but blunt in discussing teen-aged pregnancy’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 13 July 1986.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

control. Children were not being adequately educated in sex education which meant that many were falling pregnant, without really understanding why or how it had happened.

The Adolescent Pregnancy Child Watch, which was chaired by Hillary, was a project set up to help local communities to take ‘informed action about the problem of adolescent pregnancy.’³⁴⁷ The project was taking on the issue of teen pregnancy within the state of Arkansas to help decrease the rates and educate young people with regards to sex and sexually transmitted diseases. The high rates of teen pregnancy were of particular concern within the state due to the high rates of children in poverty and infant mortality. Numerous agencies within Arkansas sponsored the project, which sent volunteers into communities to find out why teen pregnancy rates were so high.³⁴⁸ The project involved approximately 500 community organisations, who all worked together to try to find a solution to the problem which Hillary Clinton described as ‘astronomical’ for Arkansas.³⁴⁹

When Hillary took on the position as Honorary Chairman of the Adolescent Pregnancy Child Watch, the Arkansas Family Planning Council had control over providing sex education within Arkansas schools. Members of the Council had delivered sex education to approximately 40% of all the junior high and high schools in Arkansas. However, the education was only provided to schools on request, which meant many children did not receive adequate sex education at school or at home.³⁵⁰ In a speech she gave at the annual Women’s Day activities at the Bethel AME Church, Hillary stated her shock following discussions with local physicians who treated pregnant teenagers, after they told her that ‘a

³⁴⁷ Scudder, ‘Mrs. Clinton gives group backing; teen-aged pregnancies are focus’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 12 June 1986.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Green, ‘Mrs. Clinton soft-spoken but blunt in discussing teen-aged pregnancy’, *Arkansas Gazette*, 13 July 1986.

lot of these girls don't even know how they got pregnant.'³⁵¹ Not knowing how they managed to get pregnant suggests that one of the main reasons teen pregnancy rates were so high at the time was largely due to a lack of education and older people viewing sex as a taboo subject. It became clear that education was the key to resolving the high rates of teenage pregnancy in Arkansas, and this is how Hillary Clinton went about tackling the problem.

The state of Arkansas still does not require schools to teach sex education, and leaves it to individual school boards to make the decision as to whether or not they will teach it.

However, if a local school board does decide to teach sex education, then they must stress abstinence as the only 100% proven method of preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.³⁵² Conservative states, such as Arkansas, usually follow the idea that abstinence is the key when dealing with teenagers and their relationship with sex. However, preaching abstinence alone was not working in Arkansas and as Hillary Clinton stated during her time as the Chairman of the Adolescent Pregnancy Child Watch,

if children don't learn from their parents about sex, they'll eventually learn about sex on the street or from the media.³⁵³

The problem in Arkansas was that children were learning about sex on the streets or from the media, as opposed to their parents and schools teaching them, which was leading to high rates of teen pregnancy as young people were not fully aware of the consequences of what they were doing and large numbers of girls were unsure of how they even got pregnant in the first place. Hillary tackled this issue in an activist manner, reflecting the way in which she had previously handled the issues of Education Standards and Rural Health Care. Although she knew that action needed to be taken, she took care to work for change in a manner that was

³⁵¹ Scudder, 'Mrs. Clinton gives group backing; teen-aged pregnancies are focus', *Arkansas Gazette*, 12 June 1986.

³⁵² Professional Site: Sex Etc., Sex in the States, Arkansas, 20 July 2015.

<<http://sexetc.org/states/arkansas/>>

³⁵³ 'Teen-aged mothers seek attention, Mrs Clinton says', *Arkansas Gazette*, 22 September 1986.

sympathetic to the conservative politics of the state. An example of this was her belief that the churches could play a role in teaching children about sex education,

Churches provide a great service when they offer programs that give parents and children the opportunity to talk about sex education.³⁵⁴

Hillary worked hard to make the issue of teen pregnancy and sex education synonymous with the issue of teaching children values and responsibility, as if children are taught to value their body, other people and to take responsibility for their own lives, they are more likely to be able to understand the importance of postponing sex when they may be tempted as a 13 or 14 year old.³⁵⁵

As well as promoting discussion about sex education within local communities, via schools, parents and churches, Hillary also took on a more liberal activist stance to combat the levels of teen pregnancy in Arkansas, which was seen as more controversial in a southern, conservative state. She worked closely with Governor Bill Clinton's state director of health, Jocelyn Elders, to make access to contraception easier for young people in Arkansas.³⁵⁶ The Guttmacher Institute has stated that teen pregnancy rates go down for two reasons: teenagers have less sex, and/or teenagers become more effective contraception users.³⁵⁷ In the case of Arkansas, it seems that access to contraception via newly formed school-based clinics, combined with initiatives to encourage people to discuss sex education, meant that teen pregnancy rates in the state declined. It is easy to see the success of Hillary Clinton's work in the capacity of Chairman of the Adolescent Pregnancy Child Watch – pregnancy rates amongst 15-19 year olds reduced from 115 pregnancies per 1000 women in 1988 to 80

³⁵⁴ 'Teen-aged mothers seek attention, Mrs Clinton says', *Arkansas Gazette*, 22 September 1986.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Brock, *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham*, p. 166.

³⁵⁷ Professional Site: Guttmacher Institute, Guttmacher Policy Review, What is Behind the Declines in Teen Pregnancy Rates?, Heather D. Boonstra, Summer 2014, 20 July 2015.
<<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/gpr/17/3/gpr170315.html>>

pregnancies per 1000 women in 2005.³⁵⁸ This decline can be largely credited to the work of Hillary Clinton, and shows her to be a skilled politician, who is capable of effecting change on a large scale. Her experiences as a political advocate for children, women and families in Arkansas can all be credited with introducing her to the problems average Americans had to deal with regarding health care and sexual education, and these experiences helped her form her own ideas and develop the type of politician she wanted to become in preparation for the work she carried out on a much bigger scale as First Lady of the United States, Senator of New York and Secretary of State.³⁵⁹

During her tenure as First Lady of Arkansas, Clinton went far in redefining the traditional role of the state First Lady. By taking on overtly political positions during her time in Arkansas, Hillary created a legitimate political role for the First Lady. Becoming the first First Lady to serve as the chairperson of political committees set a precedent for the type of First Lady she wanted to be and foreshadowed the way in which she would go on to attempt to redefine the traditional role of the First Lady on a national level. The choices she made to create a more overtly political role as the First Lady of Arkansas set her apart from the traditional First Lady that the state had known and helped her to begin to forge her own political identity alongside that of her husband. She clearly defined herself as an advocate for women, children and young people, as well as taking a keen interest in improving the welfare of all those in Arkansas who needed it most. The negative reactions of people in Arkansas that were aimed at Hillary's blatant attempt to politicise the role of First Lady and to bring it to reflect the modern status of women in the United States did not stop her from pushing forward with her work and proving that she is a 'change maker', living up to one of the

³⁵⁸ Professional Site: Guttmacher Institute, U.S. Teenage Pregnancies, Births and Abortions: National and State Trends and Trends by Race and Ethnicity, January 2010, 20 July 2015.

<<https://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/USTPTrends.pdf>>

³⁵⁹ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 147.

claims she makes through a campaign slogan in the 2016 presidential election. The negativity that the Clintons faced against their joint political agenda did not stop them from working tirelessly within the political sphere in Arkansas to help reform the state of education and health care. The successes that Hillary had whilst serving as First Lady of Arkansas provided her with a wealth of credible, political experience to take with her to both the White House in 1992, as well as when she decided to embark upon her own independent political career following 8 years in the White House as the First Couple of the United States of America.

Conclusion:

The Legacy of the Redefined First Lady

After years as a political spouse, I had no idea whether I could step from the sidelines into the arena, but I began to think that I might enjoy an independent role in politics. All over the United States and in scores of countries, I had spoken out about the importance of women participating in politics and government, seeking elective office and using the power of their own voices to shape public policy and chart their nations' futures. How could I pass up an opportunity to do the same?³⁶⁰

- Hillary Rodham Clinton

Hillary Rodham Clinton effectively used her time as First Lady of Arkansas, redefining the traditional role of the office by reforming some of the symbolic aspects of the position so that it reflected the changing status of modern women in America, as well as giving the role a political mandate. She worked hard to live by her liberal, feminist ideals proving that women really could have it all during the 1980s. The decisions that she took whilst serving as the First Lady of Arkansas helped to build a profile of credible political, professional and advocacy work in Arkansas which provided her with a long and detailed *curriculum vitae* by the time she entered the White House as First Lady of the United States and began her own political career in 2001 as the Senator for New York. However, despite the work that she had completed during her time in Arkansas, much of the media portrayal of Hillary's career and

³⁶⁰ Clinton, *Living History*, pp. 501-502.

political qualifications during the 2016 primary elections has focused on her time before and after Arkansas. A BBC profile written about Clinton in February 2016 disregarded her time spent in Arkansas, simply stating ‘she remained politically active after Mr Clinton became governor of Arkansas in 1978.’³⁶¹ This is as far as the discussion goes regarding her political achievements between 1978 and 1992, which are a real testament to the way in which she successfully redefined the traditional expectations of the First Lady. Without her time in Arkansas, Hillary would not have gained the relevant political experience that she needed to begin her own independent political career.

From First Lady of Arkansas to Professional Politician

Hillary was one of the most educated and accomplished wives of any presidential candidate before, suggesting that she would become a ‘new’ kind of First Lady if Bill Clinton was elected as President in November 1992. This was also apparent through the way in which she had gained name recognition for herself as an individual in Arkansas. Throughout the 1992 presidential campaign it was apparent that Hillary Clinton already had a larger role than previous partners and was seen to be ‘an activist spouse with a passion for policy issues.’³⁶² The active role that Hillary took on within the campaign was unlike anything ever seen before. Understandably, she attracted attention from both the mainstream media and the American public who were interested in what she was doing and how far her role would extend. However, Hillary found that much of the reaction to this ‘new’ approach was negative, not unlike the attention she received when beginning to make a name for herself in Arkansas in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Throughout the presidential election, she was attacked by the mainstream media, for various issues, which became very tabloid-like in their

³⁶¹ ‘Profile: Hillary Clinton’ *BBC News*, 16 February 2016, 20 March 2016.
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-20874451>>

³⁶² Robert P. Watson, ‘A Review Essay: Hillary’s Legacy? Recent Literature on the First Lady’, *The Social Science Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2000), p. 654.

reporting of events.³⁶³ Hillary found herself being branded with names such as ‘The Lady Macbeth of Arkansas’ and the ‘Yuppie Wife from Hell’ which worked to make her look like a controlling wife and essentially turned her into a liability for the Clinton campaign.³⁶⁴ Attempting to transform the role of the First Lady of Arkansas was challenging due to the conservative nature of the state, however taking on the transformation of the role of the traditional First Lady of the United States, attempting to turn it into a more powerful, policy-influencing position was extremely difficult and not wholly welcomed on the national stage following the backlash against women that had taken place across the country in the 1980s under President Reagan. Although the negative reception of Hillary on the national stage proved difficult for the Clintons, the reaction mirrored that of the attitudes towards her during their time as the First Couple of Arkansas meaning that this time they were more prepared with how to deal with the wave of negativity that they faced.

The negative reaction from the media that Hillary met whilst Bill was running for the presidency was not unlike that which she had experienced in Arkansas. She had attempted to reject an interest in clothes and make-up and the traditional norms that were expected of the First Lady; however just like in Arkansas, she had to relinquish some of her ideals to appease the media and voters on a national level. There was a backlash against the Clintons in the presidential election which came as a reaction to Bill Clinton’s comment that his campaign offered voters a ‘Buy one, get one free’ package, referring to the active part he expected Hillary to play in his administration, which was not unlike the role she played in his work as Governor.³⁶⁵ Fears began to arise amongst voters over the position of influence that their future First Lady, Hillary Clinton, could have if they elected her husband to the White House following a comment by Bill in which he stated that Hillary could be given a cabinet position

³⁶³ Watson, ‘A Review Essay: Hillary’s Legacy? Recent Literature on the First Lady’, p. 653.

³⁶⁴ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, p. 207.

³⁶⁵ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 105.

or even become his chief of staff.³⁶⁶ In a poll conducted by *U.S. News and World*, 60% of respondents opposed the idea of giving Hillary Clinton a senior position in the White House.³⁶⁷ To reverse the idea implanted in voters' minds that Hillary would have a position of undue influence within the White House, much was done to relate the Clintons to the Kennedys – the young, attractive power couple who could change the nation for the better together, but with the President running the country and the First Lady standing in the background, supporting her husband. Even through the hair accessories chosen for Hillary, the Clinton campaign team were thinking of the Kennedys – with Hillary's headbands being synonymous with Jacqueline Kennedy's pill-box hats.³⁶⁸ Gil Troy has supported this idea by saying, 'presidential couples are meant to work together on joint image-making, not power sharing.'³⁶⁹ This suggests that the campaign were focusing on creating the perfect image of the Clintons to remove the focus from the political role Hillary could play in the White House, hinting at a more traditional First Lady that Americans were used to. The campaign team invested time into trying to mould Hillary into the expected image of a traditional First Lady, pushing back from the progress that she had made in Arkansas to revitalise the out-dated concept of the role of the First Lady. As she spent more time with Vice Presidential candidate Al Gore's wife, Tipper Gore, Hillary was taught to blend into the background, wear dresses and be the perfect blonde supportive wife – essentially becoming 'Tipperized'.³⁷⁰ The issue of Hillary's image, which became somewhat of a political issue, is something that did not go away during her 8 years in the White House as First Lady or even after this when she was serving as Senator for New York and Secretary of State. It has become something that she now makes light of claiming that 'if I want to knock a story off the front page, I just

³⁶⁶ Matthew Cooper and Ted Gest, 'The Hillary Factor', *US News and World Report*, 27 April 1992, 11 October 2014.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Sheehy, *Hillary's Choice*, p. 266.

³⁶⁹ Troy, 'Mr and Mrs President?', p. 592.

³⁷⁰ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, p. 207.

change my hairstyle' and also that she should have named her most recent autobiography *Hard Choices* (2014) 'The Scrunchie Chronicles: 112 Countries And It's Still All About the Hair' due to the fact that her hair is still such a major talking point in the media despite the political work she has accomplished in her career.³⁷¹

Regardless of the negative reaction towards Hillary in the 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton was elected and went on to serve as President of the United States for 8 years. Hillary continued her agenda of redefining the traditional role of the First Lady; however at national level she effectively abandoned her attempts to reform the symbolic aspects of the role, focusing solely on the politicisation of the role which was made possible through her appointment to the Health Care Task Force in January 1993.³⁷² Although she was unsuccessful in her attempt to reform health care in the United States, it once again provided her with political experience, adding to her credentials for when she eventually would go on to begin a political career in her own right. Her political career began immediately after Bill's ended, with her being elected to the Senate for the state of New York on 7th November 2000. Elected with 55% to 43% of the vote, Hillary had a clear mandate of her own to begin her independent political career, no longer having to worry about the expected duties of a First Lady alongside the political work she conducted.³⁷³ Her election marked the beginning of her exciting political career; following her election to the Senate Bill Clinton reportedly told her, 'For 26 years you have made a lot of sacrifices for my public life. So I'll give you the next 26 years and if I'm still around we will fight about what we are going to do after that.'³⁷⁴ The

³⁷¹ Jess Cartner-Morley, 'Hillary Clinton's Scrunchie: The Truth', *The Guardian*, 10 June 2014, 4 August 2016. <<https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2014/jun/10/hillary-clinton-scrunchie-hairstyle-accessory>>, Annie Karni, 'Hillary's Hair: She's in on the joke', *Politico*, 28 May 2015, 31 July 2016. <<http://www.politico.com/story/2015/05/hillary-clinton-hair-118381>>

³⁷² David McKay, David Houghton and Andrew Wroe (eds), *Controversies in American Politics and Society* (USA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2002), p. 132.

³⁷³ Clinton, *Living History*, p. 523.

³⁷⁴ Dan Mercia, 'Bill Clinton: If she runs, Hillary Clinton needs time to craft her message', *CNN*, 21 July 2014, 31 July 2016.

Clintons are over halfway through the 26 years that Bill 'owes' Hillary and so far she has used her time to work for the people of the state of New York as their Senator, ran an unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 2008, served as Secretary of State under President Obama from 2008 to 2013 and recently became the first ever female nominee for a major political party for the presidency. All of these achievements have been possible partly due to the role she undertook and the experiences she had whilst serving as First Lady of Arkansas.

Hillary's Legacy

Hillary's attempts to successfully redefine the traditional role of the First Lady whilst serving in Arkansas are looked at much more favourably now than they were at the time, particularly by Arkansans. She has built herself a successful legacy in the state whereby many think of her as an Arkansas native, along with her husband.³⁷⁵ Before discussing the physical monuments that have been created to mark her legacy in Arkansas, it is clear to see the way in which Arkansans support Hillary - hinting at the lasting legacy she has built in the state - through the fact that she won a majority in both the 2008 and 2016 presidential primaries in the state she called home for almost 20 years. In the 2008 primary, Hillary won with almost 70% of the vote showing the support that she has gained from the people of Arkansas. This state-wide support was also confirmed by the fact that she was endorsed by all of the leading Democrats in the state including Governor Beebe and Senator Pryor.³⁷⁶ This strong level of support was upheld in the 2016 presidential primaries where once again Hillary won in Arkansas, this time taking 66% of the vote.³⁷⁷ It seems likely, given the high level of support

<<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/07/21/politics/bill-clinton-interview-hillary-clinton/>>

³⁷⁵ Gazette Staff, 'Hillary Clinton has Influence', *Arkansas Gazette*, 3 October 1991.

³⁷⁶ Professional Site: The New York Times, 'Election 2008, Arkansas Primary Results', 4 August 2016.

<<http://politics.nytimes.com/election-guide/2008/results/states/AR.html>>

³⁷⁷ Professional Site: Arkansas Online, 'Elections: Arkansas Presidential Primary', 3 March 2016, 4 August 2016.

<<http://www.arkansasonline.com/news/news/elections/>>

that she has received in the presidential primaries that Arkansas will continue to support their First Lady who many remember fondly by voting for her in the 2016 presidential election.

Within Arkansas, there are two physical landmarks which act as a reminder of Hillary's legacy within the state. The state's national airport, which bears both her and Bill's name, and her own children's library are lasting monuments to the work that she carried out whilst serving as the First Lady of Arkansas. However, just like during her time as First Lady, the decisions to create these landmarks were met with difficulty and negativity from some local Arkansans. This is particularly clear with the decision to rename the airport to honour the Clintons' service to Arkansas. The idea to rename the Arkansas airport in Little Rock to create a lasting legacy to their First Lady was initially suggested in 1992 following Bill Clinton's election to the presidency. The discussion was opened by the Little Rock Airport Commission, with one member of the commission believing that the renaming of the state's airport would be 'a great honor to Hillary'.³⁷⁸ However, the same commissioner went on to say that 'I don't think now is the proper time to talk about it'.³⁷⁹ This belief that the timing was wrong was due to the fact that not all members of the Little Rock Airport Commission agreed with the decision, owing to personal dislike of Hillary and the way in which she had conducted herself as First Lady, once again highlighting the negativity that Hillary faced in the state which she had dedicated so many years of her life to. One member that disagreed with the renaming of the airport argued that Hillary was not owed the honour due to their belief that 'she hasn't done anything out there [as First Lady] she hasn't got paid for'.³⁸⁰ This comment disregards all of the political and advocacy work that Hillary had conducted whilst serving as First Lady and spoke to the sentiments of some in the state who still did not

³⁷⁸ Joe Stumpe and Linda Satter, 'Hillary Clinton's name may land on LR airport', *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, 18 November 1992.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Joe Stumpe and Linda Satter, 'Hillary Clinton's name may land on LR airport', *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, 18 November 1992.

approve of the way in which she tried to redefine their traditional First Lady whilst working full time alongside her official state role. The Little Rock airport was eventually named for Hillary, however this did not happen until 20 years after the idea was initially touted and the official renaming also included her husband's name despite the fact that it was Hillary who served as legal counsel to the airport for some of her time at the Rose Law Firm.³⁸¹ Whilst serving as a physical legacy to her achievements in Arkansas, naming the airport the 'Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport', makes it a monument to both the Clintons, rather than just recognising Hillary's accomplishments suggesting that there are still some in the state who do not look favourably at their former First Lady and believe she overstepped the boundaries of her role.

The opening of 'The Hillary Rodham Clinton Children's Library and Learning Center' in Little Rock, Arkansas marked the beginning of a lasting legacy of Hillary's work and commitment to children in the state. As well as providing a collection of more than 21,000 books, DVDs and CDs to children in the community, the library and its surrounding grounds also contains a theatre, teaching kitchen, computer lab, greenhouse, teaching garden, arboretum and activity area.³⁸² The provisions at the library site provide the opportunity for staff to reach out to the local community to provide education not just in reading but also in technology, nutrition and gardening. The concept of the library is to use hands-on education to teach 'life skills needed to become responsible adults.'³⁸³ The life skills being taught from the library's facilities are helping to improve the local, neglected neighbourhood to renew the

³⁸¹ Arkansas News Bureau, 'Little Rock Airport to be Renamed for Clintons' *Times Record Online Edition*, 21 March 2012, 8 August 2016.

<<http://swtimes.com/sections/news/state-news/little-rock-airport-be-renamed-clintons.html>>

³⁸² Professional Site: Central Arkansas Library System, 'Hillary Rodham Clinton Children's Library', 11 August 2016.

<<https://www.cals.org/about/locations/childrens-library.aspx>>

³⁸³ Professional Site: The American Institute of Architects, '205 Recipient: AIA/ALA Library Building Awards', 11 August 2016.

<<http://www.aia.org/practicing/awards/2015/library-awards/hillary-rodham-clinton-childrens-library/>>

area and improve the general education of the community.³⁸⁴ The library serves as Hillary's greatest physical legacy in Arkansas, with the ethos of the library reflecting her work as an advocate for children and the disadvantaged within the state whilst she was redefining the traditional role of the First Lady.

The Modern First Lady

With Hillary taking on a more politicised and active role within Bill's campaigns than the traditional politician's wife, in many ways she changed the way in which elections work on both a state and national level. Whilst the wives of Governors and Presidents have always been important, and are often used to stump for their husband, Hillary's active role in the running of the campaign and policy-making decisions of her husband has led to increased media scrutiny of candidates' wives. In the modern political era politicians' wives are often entering their political duties with a professional name in their own right, therefore what they say and do is of as much importance as their husband. However, Hillary marked herself as a political wife, advocating her own stances on policy. As has been seen throughout this thesis, this politicisation of the role brought her much criticism in the media at all levels. She paved the way for the women who serve as First Lady to take on a more overtly political role but whilst doing so, she also opened an intense level of media scrutiny of political wives, which had not been previously known. Although, often described by many as the 'Hillary Standard', this response from the media has not been exclusive to Hillary, with many women involved in American politics being subjected to harsh criticism by the media for their political stances but more importantly for their appearance and the way in which they seem to emasculate their husbands', regardless of whether he is involved in politics or not.

³⁸⁴ Professional Site: The American Institute of Architects, '205 Recipient: AIA/ALA Library Building Awards', 11 August 2016.
<<http://www.aia.org/practicing/awards/2015/library-awards/hillary-rodham-clinton-childrens-library/>>

Whether Hillary rewrote the expectations of the state First Lady is somewhat arguable given the fact that she still remains one of the most politically active First Ladies that Arkansas has ever had and that she had to relinquish some of her efforts to redefine the more symbolic aspects of the traditional role. However, it is unquestionable that during her time as First Lady of Arkansas, Hillary successfully managed to redefine the prescribed role of the First Lady and evolve the role into something that more closely mirrored her personal beliefs of what a woman's role should be in the modern world. She worked hard to prove to her critics that she could have it all working as a full time lawyer, as well as being a wife, a mother and an advocate for those who did not have a platform from which to speak. Her actions in Arkansas clearly showed that she expected more from life than to be 'just' a wife and mother but also that she wanted more than to serve in the office of the First Lady. The efforts she undertook to redefine the role of the traditional First Lady proved that the woman who held the position could do more than just fulfil the traditional expectations such as hosting teas and speaking at events in pretty dresses; she set a precedent for future First Ladies to take on an active political stance during their tenure, should they so choose. These efforts to redefine the role, which she took with her to the national stage as First Lady of the United States, have paved the way for future women who hold the office. With the increase in women who are educated and accomplished (as well as the possibility of the First Gentleman serving if Hillary Clinton is elected to the presidency) it is probable that Hillary will be looked at more favourably by the national media as more women take on the role of the First Lady who are more politically involved, educated and engaged. However, with the possibility of Hillary becoming the first female president of the United States in November 2016, it is highly likely that she will be seen as truly reinventing the role of the First Lady. The way in which Hillary used her position as First Lady to build a strong portfolio of political advocacy work from which to launch her own political career will likely overshadow the symbolic stances that she

took in Arkansas. Despite the fact that retaining her maiden name, caring little about her image and working full time whilst serving as First Lady caused such controversy in Arkansas, it is likely that these attempts to redefine the traditional role of the First Lady will be forgotten if Hillary is elected to the presidency. Although her attempts to redefine the symbolic aspects of the role were significant, the way in which she successfully politicised the role of the First Lady, transforming it to allow her to move onto her own political career, will likely be her strongest legacy. Starting her political career as a somewhat controversial First Lady of Arkansas, Hillary Rodham Clinton is now running to become the next President of the United States and is set to shatter the highest glass ceiling of all showing just how successfully she has redefined the anachronistic role and expectations of all women, not just the traditional First Lady.

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