

THE WOMAN BEHIND THE EAGLE: IMPACT OF THE CHARACTER OF THE FIRST
LADY ON PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL RATINGS

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Brittany Marrs

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by

Brittany Marrs

APPROVED:

Heather Evans, PhD
Thesis Director

Eric Svensen, PhD
Committee Member

Tamara Waggener, PhD
Committee Member

Abbey Zink, PhD
Dean, College of Humanities and Social
Sciences

ABSTRACT

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Throughout the history of the Executive branch, there has always been a First Lady standing at the side of the President. Historically, that position was kept in the shadows behind the President. The First Lady's only public job was to play gracious hostess to those visiting the White House. However, now, the First Lady is expected to stand next to the President contributing in her own right and is expected to choose an issue that she will focus on throughout the duration of her husband's term. Her role in the White House is evolving into a more political role including meeting with foreign dignitaries and developing legislation of her own to advance a particular issue. The first question after the election regarding the First Lady recently has been on which issue she will choose as her platform during her tenure.

With the emerging focus on the First Lady, one must ask how that focus will affect the President and his political capital with the constituency. Using the foundation of an analysis of Presidential character by James David Barber, I will classify the First Lady into one of the four character types. I am interested in the effect that the First Lady's character has on presidential approval ratings. With an analysis of a selection of the most recent First Ladies, beginning with Nancy Reagan and ending with Laura Bush, I will place these First Ladies into the Barber categories based on an analysis of their lives. I will then examine their individual approval ratings to see if the Barber analysis of their character holds true and determine how they have affected their presidential husbands either positively or negatively. I hypothesize that the public approval rating of

the president will be affected by his wife. With a small sample size, I will seek to show that approval ratings will be higher for a President who is paired with a passive-positive First Lady. I hypothesize there will be an effect of the First Lady's character and subsequent approval ratings on Presidential approval ratings which the White House will then use to parley into positive political capital for the President.

KEY WORDS: First Lady, Public approval, Public opinion, President, Nancy Reagan, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Laura Bush, Character, James David Barber

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CHAPTER 1

The Power of Public Approval

A man does not seek the Office of the President to be just a temporary placeholder. Each President who has achieved this office has a goal or goals in mind on what they would accomplish during their term or the legacy that they would leave behind. The President does not have the exclusive power to command or rule, even in his authority as Commander-in-Chief; however, the President can attain a greater and more far-reaching power outside of the formal powers of his office. It is possible for Presidents to become more powerful in practice while maintaining their Constitutional parameters. In order to accomplish this, the President is able to expand their informal powers through the President's power to persuade the public to support his programs (Pika et al 2017, 99). If the President can convince the electorate to support his policies, the President can gain more political power which becomes necessary when dealing with other government bodies. President Wilson understood that presidential power could extend beyond the written words of "the Constitution, and he saw public opinion as an important source of that additional power" (Pika et al. 2017, 114). The President must inspire the people to follow his lead and his guidance in governmental matters in order to achieve this result. In the various methods that a President could use to achieve more political capital, the First Lady must be included. The popularity of the First Lady can be harnessed and generate political capital for the President.

It is a delicate balance for the President to cultivate a public mandate for his policies while maintaining his executive agenda. Because of this, presidential candidates will launch intense campaigns before and during their presidential term to appeal directly

to the voters. The number of people alone that the candidate must reach is daunting which causes the candidate to use all the resources available to him, which includes his wife. The “wife of” has been used in campaigns across party lines and throughout the stages of the campaigns to aid the potential president in gaining a greater portion of the popular vote. This is so much the norm that when a wife does not campaign with her husband, negative connotations about the candidate begin to form (Wright 2016, 78). The greater percentages by which the candidate will claim victory, “the more likely it becomes that a president will [become the] representative of the people’s will along with – or perhaps in place of—the Constitutional powers of the office” (Ceasar 1980, 16). This is evidence that the public is able to expand or contract the powers of the President based on what the public feels is necessary. If the public believes the President is in need of an expanded scope of power, they have the authority to allow him to take a wider latitude with his informal powers. The President must be able to “rouse the people [so] that it [will be] impossible for the Senate to stand against the popular demand” (Ellis 2015, 111). Presidents know the scope of their power will grow with public opinion behind them.

Word choices and delivery are the President’s main weapons when convincing the nation and Congress to follow his policy directives. The President assembles his staff and executive administration to assist him in achieving popular support for his executive agenda (Pika et al. 2017, 112). The staff works to achieve the optimum marketing package of the President’s programs to present to the public. For example, “Ronald Reagan’s administration used focus groups in 1987 and 1988 to help plan the president’s State of the Union address, his speech to Congress about the summit meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev, and his response to the Iran-Contra affair” (Pika et al. 2017, 107-108).

Throughout the campaign, the potential president harnesses the popularity of the potential First Lady to add to his public appeal. She represents the President to the public and acts like a “presidential surrogate...[who will] promote the president’s agenda through speaking tours, satellite interviews with local media outlets, and nationwide television appearances on the Sunday morning talk shows and cable outlets” (Pika et al 2017, 120). As shown in Figure 1, the First Lady’s public visibility exceeds that of the Vice President (Wright 2016, 37). This proves that she makes the ideal presidential representative.

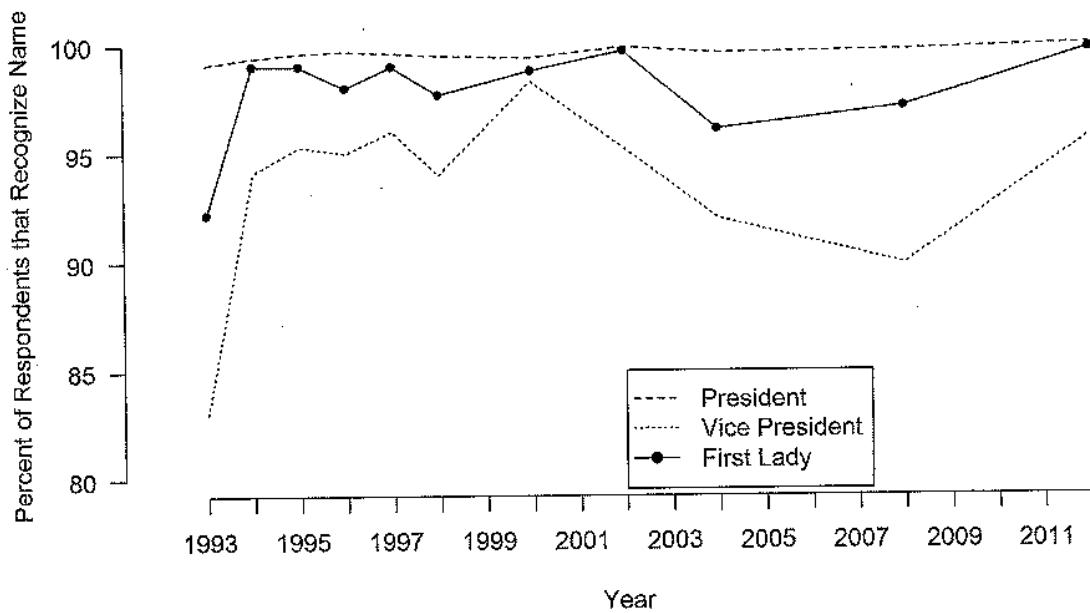


Figure 1. First Ladies Tend to Have Higher Rates of Name Recognition Than Vice Presidents.

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Source: Wright 2016, 37

Just as the First Lady’s popularity can benefit the President, floundering public opinion of the First Lady can diminish the power of the President gained through public approval

(Sulfaro 2007,488). It is in the best interest of the President and his agenda to use the First Lady as a political asset to gain and/or keep power.

The power of the government rests on the governed and the President can guide the people in the direction that he sees fit so long as he is able to convince the public to support his action. A powerful president is one who is best able to bargain and persuade the country to support his ideals and as a result “presidential prestige [becomes] an indicator of constituency preferences” (Edwards 1976, 105). The scope and limits of the power of the executive branch has come to be determined by the constituency and historical circumstances. “The [office of the] presidency was a product of bargaining and compromise”, so it makes sense that the President must also bargain and compromise in his appeals to Congress and the voters (Ellis 2015, 4). The informal power of the President lies in the hands of the people. In the system of checks and balances, none is more powerful than the check the constituency has on the government as a whole in particular the presidency. As times change, the people will make their choices known about the direction of the government. The President’s power has grown instead through custom, circumstances, and interpretation rather than from the wording of the Constitution. Richard Neustadt agrees that the President is at his strongest when the public is behind him. An essential characteristic of this type of action would be a unilateral action that is “taken in the interest of the public” (Ellis 2015, 301).

Due to the exceptional focus of the public on the presidency, the President more than any other branch is under tremendous pressure to please his constituents. He must balance a course of action that will benefit the nation and earn public trust and approval. The public will demand “the President to set a clear policy agenda, to articulate a

vision..., to keep campaign promises... and to put country above party" (Ellis 2015, 605). As a result, the President's "office has become the focal point of politics and policy in our political system" (Neustadt 1991, 3). According to Madison, "a constitutional road to the decision of the people ought to be marked out and kept open for great and extraordinary occasions" (Tulis 2014, 7). The public is therefore able to expand Presidential power or limit it as they feel is necessary for that time and set of circumstances. A President who is concerned about expanding their presidential power will be concerned with every political tool at their disposal to ensure they achieve this positive political capital.

A built-in way for the President to achieve this is to ensure the First Lady garners favorable approval ratings which the President would then be able to channel into support for his programs. Lowi summarizes this sentiment when he states, "no President would be effective unless he constantly concerned himself with how each decision he made advanced his power over the administration, the Washington community, Congress, and the people" (1985, 9). If the President was able to get all of those actors to support him, specifically the constituents, then his executive power would increase dramatically because "a President depends upon [those] whom he would persuade; he has to reckon with his need or fear of them" (Neustadt 1991, 31). This expresses why cultivating high public approval ratings is crucial to the President which include the ability to harness the favorable public opinion of the First Lady.

It is the President's goal to remain in power and a representative can only stay in power with the popular consent of the constituency. George Edwards has observed, "scholars have argued that presidential popularity is a major source of presidential

influence in Congress" (1976, 101). The public make their preferences known with their votes, and so it is in the President's best interest to govern according to the will of the people. Congress will respond by increasing their support of the presidential agenda in a direct relationship and proportional to the public's approval of the President (Edwards 1976, 104). The more positive results confirm that the President has more congressional support as his popularity increases. This is especially evident in the areas of foreign policy. If the President loses support with his constituents, then he will lose his momentum and power when dealing with Congress. Congress would not feel the public pressure to deal with the President favorably and will look out more for the member's own political agenda. An example of this was when "the House mov[ed] for the first time to cut off funds for the war in Indochina as Richard Nixon's popularity dropped to the lowest levels in his tenure in office" (Edwards 1976, 106).

When the President loses his political capital, he has no alternative but to act unilaterally to achieve his goals. Kenneth Mayer has found that "as presidents become less popular they tend to issue more [executive] orders...[and] each 10-point drop in a president's 6-month moving average popularity rating results in approximately one additional order every three months" (1999, 460). The President would have a public mandate on their executive decisions while the public is behind him causing Congress to make more of an effort to work with the President (Pika et al. 2017, 115) (Edwards 1976, 104). On the flip side, if the public lost confidence in the President and withdrew support, the President would be left severely handicapped when dealing with Congress. It is in the best interests of the President to be attentive to his approval ratings as well as the First Lady approval ratings to increase his influence in the government. This will indirectly

influence congressmen by increasing his prestige with the public (Edwards 1976, 113). When President H.W. Bush traveled around the country advocating public support for his tax cut program and he encouraged the public to “e-mail some of the good folks from the United States Senate...if you like what you hear, why don’t you just give’ em a call and write’ em a letter” (Pika et al. 2017, 116).

The modern presidency has evolved in such a way that the President will seek public approval to attempt to force Congress to entertain presidential policy suggestions. Kernell argues this point when he states, “the president’s effectiveness in rallying public support has become a primary consideration for those who do business with him” (2006, 2). No government official would back an ineffectual president. “Modern presidents frequently resort to ‘going public’ ...in order to put pressure on members of Congress” because the representatives are sensitive to pressure placed on them from their constituents. (Ellis 2015, 95). The best way for the President to frequently “go public” is to use the First Lady as a presidential surrogate who will enable the President’s message to reach more of the public and achieve a more personal meaning to the constituents.

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of informal messages from the President. This demonstrates presidents will actively seek presidential power through increased public approval by increasing their appeals to the public. It is apparent that there is an increasing trend of public appearances by the executive (Pika 1976, 118). This reinforces the need for Presidents to appeal to the public. Presidents engage in numerous public appearances while campaigning for re-election to gain as much face to face time with their constituents. It is impossible for the President to achieve this, so he uses his presidential surrogates such as the Vice President or the First Lady to get his message out

to the voters. The end goal for a President is to increase their political capital stock with the public to pursue his own policy agenda. Neustadt would argue the purpose of these public appearances was to gain political capital to then ensure that with public pressure suggested presidential legislation would successfully pass through Congress. However; when public opinion of the President falls, then executive power is contracted as a result.

The President cannot risk alienating those that put him in office. He will lose delicate relations with Congress, which would be especially damaging if he is working on advocating for his legislative programs. This could explain the attempts by the Reagan and Clinton administrations to rebrand the First Lady. Nancy Reagan went from the public perception of socialite and elitist to the country's moral guardian. This occurred after her self-deprecating skit at the Gridiron Press Dinner and the passion she demonstrated in attempting to solve her chosen social issue. Hillary Rodham Clinton's approval ratings plummeted with the public sentiment that she was overstepping her role as the First Lady and involving herself too much in policy formation. The West Wing staff was not pleased when she set up her offices there as opposed to maintaining her offices in the East Wing. The Clinton administration sought to distance Hillary Rodham Clinton from the policy-making process and tried re-packing her image as a caring mother looking out for the best interests of mothers and children.

This attempt to connect with the voting public to expand presidential power has been a practice since the presidency of George Washington. Washington held a weekly public meeting while President to encourage public accessibility to the President. He would also tour the country “to acquire knowledge and to make himself more accessible to [those] who might give him useful information and advice...an opportunity [to] ‘see

and be seen”” (Ellis 2015, 87). President Wilson regarding the impact of public opinion on the power of the presidency correctly stated that once the president “win[s] the admiration and confidence of the country... no other single force can stop him, no combination of forces will easily overpower him” (Ellis 2015, 111). President Theodore Roosevelt was the first president to effectively harness the media to attempt to gain public support where “the power of the presidency... [lies] in the power of publicity” (Ellis 2015, 108). He was an example of such President who would “appeal ‘over the heads of the Senate and House leaders to the people, who were masters over both [branches]’ by using the media he had available to him at that time (Ellis 2015, 110). Roosevelt acknowledged that in order push forward with his legislation the trump card he needed was the American public. If he received the public support he was after, Congress could not stand in his way. Roosevelt understood that a favorable portrayal of himself and his policies was the best way to gain public support to mobilize public opinion in favor of [his policies]” (Ellis 2015, 110).

Authority over the governed comes from the governed. As Hamilton states, “the people are the only legitimate fountain of power, and it is from them that the constitutional charter, under which the several branches of government hold their power” (Hamilton 1788, Federalist #49). The President must prove the action “is used to some extent for and not obviously against the good of the people” (Locke 1689, 53). This is further proof that the President must be responsive to the public who will then determine if the presidential action will stand. For presidents to accomplish this feat, they must ensure to remain in their constituents’ good graces and a potential way to achieve this is to support a popular First Lady. A mandate from the public could bend Congress to their

will and if that mandate is in support of the President, then Congress is under pressure to cooperate with the President. President Wilson also believed in the effect of the public mandate for presidential action when he said, “if Congress be overborne by him, it will be...because the President has the nation behind him and Congress has not” (Ellis 2015, 112). The people, by voting for the President, show support for the presidential platform and expect to see those policies implemented. Neustadt agrees that the President is at his strongest when the public is behind him. This gives him the upper hand in negotiations with Congress, his party, and his bureaucracy. Because of the effect of public opinion on presidential power, it is in the President’s best interest to ensure that his agenda will fit with what the public wants or convince the public that his agenda is for the benefit of the public.

As research will later show, the opinion of the First Lady does have an impact of presidential approval and should be considered in assessing presidential power. She is a part of ““machinery of the White House [which] functions to make the president look good”” (Wright 2016, 16). During the Democratic National Convention of 2012, Michelle Obama’s “speech... drove unprecedeted levels of social media activity, generating an average of 28,003 tweets per minute” (Wright 2016, xi). The impact of the First Lady does affect voter perception of the President. The popularity of Obama’s speech and the widespread publicity that it received confirms this. According to Lewis L. Gould, “the way in which a president uses or manages the political and cultural assets that a first lady provides say a great deal about the style and impact of an administration” to its citizenry (O’Conner et al 1996, 836). Modern presidents have learned to harness the popularity of their spouses to achieve their political goals, “enhance the president’s public image and

expand public support for the administration’s policy agenda”, as well as attempt to run damage control after a political disaster (Wright 2016, xii.). This ability can affect a presidential campaign by greater numbers than with the vice president or any other member of the president’s team as the First Lady can attest to the President’s character on a more personal level than any other presidential surrogates (Wright 2016, xi).

Little scholarship has been devoted to the study and impact of the First Ladies on the President, the public, and policy (Watson 2003, Watson 1997, Wright 2016). As President Truman stated, “I hope some day someone will take the time to evaluate the true role of the wife of a president, and to assess the many burdens she has to bear and the contributions she makes” (O’Connor et al 1996, Watson 2003). As early as “the 1950s[,] many corporations began interviewing wives before hiring executives” which further confirms even on a small scale the impact the “wife of” can have on the success of the man in charge (Troy 2000, 3). According to Gil Troy, “the First Lady now has a central role in shaping the presidential identity and thus a central part to play in American history” (Troy 2000, xii). The White House staff uses the First Lady’s public sway in an effort to increase presidential approval ratings and those efforts have resulted in “a positive effect on individual evaluations of the president and certain administration-sponsored policies” (Wright 2006, xv). A senator from Wyoming, Alan Simpson, has stated, “Only a damn fool would suggest that the wife of the president of the United States has no role whatever in the governing of our country” (Troy 2000, 306). These sentiments demonstrate the crucial nature in which the First Lady affects and influences public opinion of the President. It is because of this feeling that further study of the First Lady role in shaping the presidency and public opinion is necessary.

In what follows, I will examine whether public opinion of the First Ladies affects public approval of the President. Chapter 2 will review the history and evolution of the Office of the First Lady. I will review the impact of public opinion on the activeness of the First Lady in the President's administration. I will attempt to correct the incorrect stereotype regarding the lack of influence of the First Lady in her husband's administration and the appearance of the First Lady as simply window dressing for the President's administration in the White House. In Chapter 3, I will review James David Barber's presidential character evaluation and placement. I will explore the application of the framework he created to the First Ladies. I believe the character matrix can be applied to the First Ladies due to the informal role she plays in the government. In Chapter 4, I will look to the background and history of Nancy Reagan and justify her placement as an active-positive in the Barber matrix. In Chapter 5, I will review the background and behavior of Hillary Rodham Clinton in order to justify her placement in the Barber matrix as an active-negative. In Chapter 6, I will confirm the placement of Laura Bush as a passive-positive in the character matrix. In Chapter 7, I will explore the approval ratings of the First Ladies and the impact on their presidential husbands. I believe that public opinion of the First Ladies can have an impact on presidential approval. I will conclude my findings in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 2

A Hidden History

The impact of the First Lady is difficult to determine due to the behind the scenes work and influence the First Lady wields. This influence is not brought to light usually until a biography is written over the First Lady's life after she has left the White House and relinquished her first ladyship title. Previous research has shown that most if not all, First Ladies have exercised influence over presidential decision-making (Wright 2016, 12). Most of the public is completely unaware of this fact, thinking instead that the First Lady was simply a glorified hostess. This is patently untrue. There is considerable evidence the First Ladies will exercise their influence "intrinsic to their post within the White House Office" (Borrelli 2011, 2). In the very early stages of the nation, George Washington established the importance of the role of First Lady when he had "Martha arrive in New York on the presidential barge, [he] signaled that 'the presidential spouse had a public role in the ritual and ceremonial aspects of the presidency'" (O'Connor et al 1996, 842).

As a result of interactions between the East Wing and the West Wing, the President and the First Lady work together to achieve the presidential agenda. Lady Bird Johnson once stated, "you and your husband suddenly look at each other and say: 'It's you and me'...[and] in the end it's the two of us who are going to succeed- or fail" (O'Connor et al 1996, 836). The public now views the First Lady as an extension of her husband and the side effect of this relationship has an impact on presidential approval ratings. Through the increased visibility of the First Lady position, her political

performance is now a factor used by the public in gauging presidential approval. (Benzel 1990, Borrelli 2011, Brower 2016, Watson 2000).

The President and the First Lady have formed a partnership over the course of their marriage long before their election to the White House and will continue that partnership long after their time in the White House is over (Watson and Eksterowicz 2006, 9). She will assume a role along with the White House staff to give advice to the President, “but as presidential spouse she assumes a role perhaps more central to the president’s career and White House success than any formal advisor” (Watson 1997, 806). The First Lady is more trusted advisor due to the close familial relationship she shares with the President in their marriage. They were a partnership before the beginning of the President’s political career and they will be together after that career is over. The President has a built-in advisor regarding the First Lady, more trusted than those chosen to assist him in running his administration (Borrelli 2011, Watson and Eksterowicz 2006, Brower 2016, Watson 2000, O’Connor et al 1996, Wright 2016).

The President has the ability to incorporate his wife in the running of his administration and the presidency becomes more of a partnership rather than one man acting alone (Watson 2000, 29) and “this proximity to power has afforded many first ladies the ability to wield direct and indirect influence” (O’Conner et al 1996, 836). The potential of this influence is great because the First Lady “often see[s] the president upon arising for the day and retiring at night [and] no other presidential advisor or lobbyist can hope to match this arrangement” (Watson and Eksterowicz 2006, 363). In 1960, “the *Ladies’ Home Journal* proclaimed, ‘politics today is a husband-wife partnership’... [because] both partners now build one political image” (Troy 2000, 3). Due to this

closeness, if the First Lady “wanted to influence policy, she is in the best position to [do just] that” (Wright 2016, 45). As the role of women in society and in politics have changed, so also has the degree of visibility the role the First Lady has played in her husband’s administration.

As it has become more socially acceptable for the First Lady to be seen as a political partner, she has allowed some of the behind the curtain work to be more visible to the public (Watson 2000, 30). With modern era First Ladies from Nancy Reagan to present, it has become more socially acceptable for the First Lady to accept a larger and more public responsibility in the political sphere. For example, it has become expected for the First Ladies to develop legislation in support of their social platform. In 1987-1988, “*U.S. News and World Report* noted that the public was increasingly aware that in electing a president they were choosing a team” (Krickrehm and Teske 2006, 242). First Ladies have been giving their husbands advice for decades, but that advice traditionally was kept quiet (Wright 2006, 13).

As more research has been performed on the dynamics of the President and the First Lady, it has been found that “Helen Taft often attended House and Senate debates and discussed them with [her] husband, ...Mary Todd Lincoln and Ida McKinley advised their spouses on presidential appointments” (Campbell and McCluskie 2006, 171). It has been thought for years that Bess Truman was disinterested in politics and begrudgingly performed some of the traditional roles of the First Lady. Despite that perception, President Truman acknowledges that he “consult[ed] her on every major decision he ever made including ‘whether to fight in Korea, whether to use the atom bomb, [and] whether to initiate the Marshall Plan to rebuild a shattered Europe’” (O’Connor et al 1996, 837)

(Hastedt 2006, 193). Due to the fact that even Bess Truman influenced her husband on policy decisions though she had a distaste for political life, it can be imagined that First Ladies who take an active interest in the office would have more influence in the president's administration and with the President himself. As James MacGregor Burns once said, "all leaders are actual or pretend power holders, but not all power holders are leaders" which could be construed as a reference to the influence of the First Ladies (O'Connor et al 1996, 848).

In the evolution of the position of the First Lady, one paramount duty is representation. A First Lady must become a master of public outreach and public relations, have "an entrepreneur's skill in communicating and in relationship building...interpreting... [clarifying the President's message to the public]" (Borreli 2011, 1). She provides the emotional link from the President to the public by "projecting a voice... of confidence, reason, and balance" (Borreli 2011, 1). She is expected to have knowledge of her husband's policies and campaign platform. The First Lady becomes a more approachable figure attached to the President in which the constituents feel more comfortable communicating their views. As presidential character is the focus of modern campaigns, the potential First Lady is uniquely qualified to advocate for her husband because of the closeness they share in their marriage (Wright 2016, 74). This also has the effect of the public believing the character assessment of the President given by the First Lady because who best to humanize the candidate than his wife. Historically, this has enabled the First Lady to "re-present the president, the public, and the presidency to one another" (Borreli 2011, 3).

The First Lady has become a position of political power and “it could be argued that she is the second most powerful person in the world” (Watson 1997, 805). She is able “to advance a partisan agenda or cement political alliances” by performing the duties of the Office of the First Lady (Sulfaro 2007, 488). After giving an interview regarding Republican Oliver North, Nancy Reagan received a letter from Lady Bird Johnson. In the letter, Johnson reminds Reagan of the political impact of the words of the First Lady, “my reaction would be to feel like striking back...the ‘fall-out’ of your interview was the most wonderful surprise and help for me and mine” (Brower 2016, 234). Johnson’s son-in-law, a Democrat, defeated Republican Oliver North in the Virginia senatorial race. The First Lady has the ability to give the President advice on policy, staffing concerns, campaign priorities. Because of their close partnership, the President will consider her counsel. (Brower 2016, 234-5).

The public expects the First Lady to be an “every woman” but one who is held to the highest standard (Brower 2016, 8). In a letter to former First Lady Betty Ford, a woman wrote, “you are constitutionally required to be perfect” (Brower 2016, 4). First Ladies have been criticized for appearing too outspoken, but they have also received negative press for appearing too disinterested in politics (Watson 2003, Sulfaro 2007, Knickrehm and Teske 2006). For example, if the First Lady does not take careful consideration of her appearance, she is dismissed by the press and the public as appearing not to respect the importance of the position she holds and is viewed as a poor reflection on her husband. The same is true in reverse. If a First Lady takes great interest in fashion and wears designer brands, she is dismissed by the press and the public (Knickrehm and Teske 2006, 235).

According to former First Lady Lady Bird Johnson, the position requires the skills of a “showman and a salesman, a clotheshorse and a publicity sounding board, with a good heart, and a real interest in the folks from all over the country, rich and poor” (Brower 2016, 4). Former First Lady Nancy Reagan discovered this during her husband’s first term in office. Nancy Reagan suffered through unfavorable press coverage and low public opinion polling until she performed a self-mocking skit about her devotion to fashion, which appealed to the public and the media alike. This skit was intentionally planned to improve her public approval. This is further evidence that the public opinion of the First Lady has an effect on the public approval of the President.

The First Lady must be cautious of how her actions and words are perceived by the public and the media. “[T]hey cannot do a thing without considering how it will affect the presidency” because their public opinion also affects the public opinion of the presidency. (Brower 2016, 143). Charles Pinckney was famously quoted after his defeat in the 1808 presidential election as getting “‘beaten by Mr. *and* Mrs. Madison’ and that he ‘might have had a better chance if I faced Mr. Madison alone’” (Watson 2000, 97). By this statement, Pinckney acknowledged the power of the public opinion of the First Lady. In his opinion, it was the popularity of the First Lady that gave President Madison the superior edge in his victory. This further demonstrates the impact of the First Lady on the public and on the success of the President. In Table 1 below, Dr. Robert Watson has found examples of political activity among the First Ladies. This data has been used to demonstrate the political influence held by the First Ladies. As one moves down the list, the activities become more visible and public in nature. In recent times, the public has become tolerant of a more politically involved First Lady.

Table 1. Political Activities of First Ladies

Political Activities of First Ladies	
Activity	Number
Participating	
Discuss politics with president	31
Political confidante/advisor to president	26
Have an identifiable political issue	17
Lobby president	17
Make policy preferences known to president	15
Influence appointments	14
Travel officially with the president	12
Travel alone on behalf of president	9
Publicly state policy views	8
Attend White House meetings	7
Influence policy decisions	5
Lobby congress	3
<i>Recopied with permission from: Robert P. Watson</i>	

This results in more First Ladies taking on a more visible and political role in her husband's administration (Wright 2016, 123). First Ladies have a place in politics. Nancy Reagan once called the platform of the First Lady's political influence ““white glove pulpit’- ‘more refined, more restricted, more ceremonial’ than the president’s ‘bully pulpit... but it’s a pulpit all the same”” (Troy 2000, 305). Table 1 illustrates the most common activities undertaken by the First Ladies while in office. The last four activities

(publicly state policy views, attend White House meetings, influence policy decisions, and lobby Congress) have become more publicly normalized for the more recent First Ladies. The most recent First Ladies are more likely to be “engaged in more ‘inside’ lobbying, channeling their efforts through formal decision-making processes within Congress... testifying before committees or subcommittees to place their positions on the record” (Campbell and McCluskie 2006, 169).

A few former First Ladies have tried to take a more prominent and public role in their husbands’ administration; Hillary Rodham Clinton and Rosalyn Carter are such examples. Rosalyn Carter was more of a partner and advisor to the President than simply a hostess as a more traditional First Lady. Carter would sit “in on Cabinet meetings and was a crucial player in the Camp David Accords” and campaigned intensely working as the eyes and ears of the soon-to-be President Carter throughout the crowd (Brower 2016, 14). These First Ladies have also testified before Congress as expert witnesses on behalf of their policy initiatives (Watson and Eksterowicz 2006, 8). According to Rosalyn Carter, “you’re going to be criticized no matter what you do, so be criticized for what you think is best and right for the country” (Knickrehm and Teske 2006, 235). This demonstrates that First Ladies have the ability to use their office to influence policy makers and they are also subject to the same degree of scrutiny as another public official. The effect of this statement is that the position of the First Lady has power and that power could potentially affect the decisions of the President.

The First Lady must always be cognizant of public opinion as it “plays a role in setting the parameters of what activities are deemed acceptable or tolerable” (Watson 2000, 122). The Office of the First Lady is typically in the East Wing. While President

Clinton was in office, Hillary Rodham Clinton set up her offices also in the West Wing. This display of the importance of the First Lady's council to the President was illustrated by the proximity to her offices to his. The public; however, was not ready for the First Lady to engage in politics beyond the traditional public hostess role. There was a public backlash against both First Ladies, Carter and Clinton, when the public believed they overstepped the traditional roles of the First Lady and "function[ed] more as an 'associate president'" (Watson 1997, 814). Clinton's poll numbers steadily dropped from 56% in April 1994 to the lowest public approval ever for a First Lady at 43% in January of 1996. The public perception was that Clinton influenced her husband too much on policy matters with 52% of Americans of that opinion (Moore 1997, 1). It is recognized that the First Lady has a certain amount of influence on the President and the public becomes concerned when this influence becomes recognized and is viewed as excessive (Watson 2000, O'Connor et al 1996, Campbell and McCluskie 2006).

Even though the historical appearance of the First Lady was publicly viewed simply the spouse of the President, the reality was quite different. Whether the First Lady was active in the President's administration or not, she took great care to be seen as a satellite orbiting around the President (Borrelli 2011, Watson 2000). Powerful First Ladies must be so behind the closed doors of the East Wing. After the woman's liberation movement in the 1960's and women began to be seen as equal to men around the country, this transition was also reflected in the White House (Borrelli 2011, Knickrehm and Teske 2006). The General Social Survey asked, "Do you approve or disprove of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her?" Between the years of 1972-1998, the public's disapproval rating

dropped from 34.6% to 17.5% (Knickrehm and Teske 2006, 241). This demonstrates the willingness of the public to accept more political activity from the First Lady. The public now comes to expect a First Lady to campaign with her husband, to make speeches supporting her husband's position, and champion her own causes (Borrelli 2011, Watson and Eksterowicz 2006). Some of the duties performed by the First Ladies include

trusted confidante, key supporter [of the President],... counselor in times of crisis...presid[ing] over state dinners and a variety of social affairs...renovating and preserving the White House...edit[ing] presidential speeches, hit[ting] the campaign trail, testified before Congress, lobb[ying] on behalf of legislation, chair[ing] task forces, travel[ing] internationally as unofficial envoys, and champion[ing] important social causes (Watson 2003, 423)

She is expected to be a demure hostess at a tea party one day and in the next, a warrior battling for social justice.

Lady Bird Johnson was the first to successfully make this transition and forge a new role for the First Lady on the campaign trail as well as continuing that trend during her husband's administration. Johnson took seventy-four trips during her husband's term of office and 88% of those trips were on her own (Borrelli 2011, 111). These trips were designed to popularize the President's agenda and ensure that Johnson while serving as an extension of the President was also readily available to the media (Borrelli 2011, 111). Nancy Reagan was the first First Lady to publicly choose and champion a cause which also developed a platform that served her husband's policy initiatives. The focus of the "Just Say No" campaign stressed personal strength as the primary counter to drug addiction"; the underlying message was to limit government involvement in a citizen's

private life (Borrelli 2011, 174). This aligned with President Reagan’s campaign platform to cut back on government spending.

Every First Lady since, most recently with Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move!” campaign, has followed this precedent. This project was an extension of President Obama’s health care initiative the “Affordable Health Care Act”. While universal health care is a controversial, partisan topic, children’s nutrition and decreasing childhood obesity by increasing activity level is not. The “Let’s Move!” campaign enabled the health care reform to become more approachable to voters and their representatives. “As the public relations aspect of the presidency has increased, presidents have turned to their spouses to augment their effectiveness” with the voters because the President’s advisors have acknowledged the First Lady’s role and influence on public approval of the President (Campbell and McCluskie 2006, 170). As a result, the First Ladies typically have higher approval ratings than the President or Vice President as seen in Figure 2 below (Wright 2016, 36).

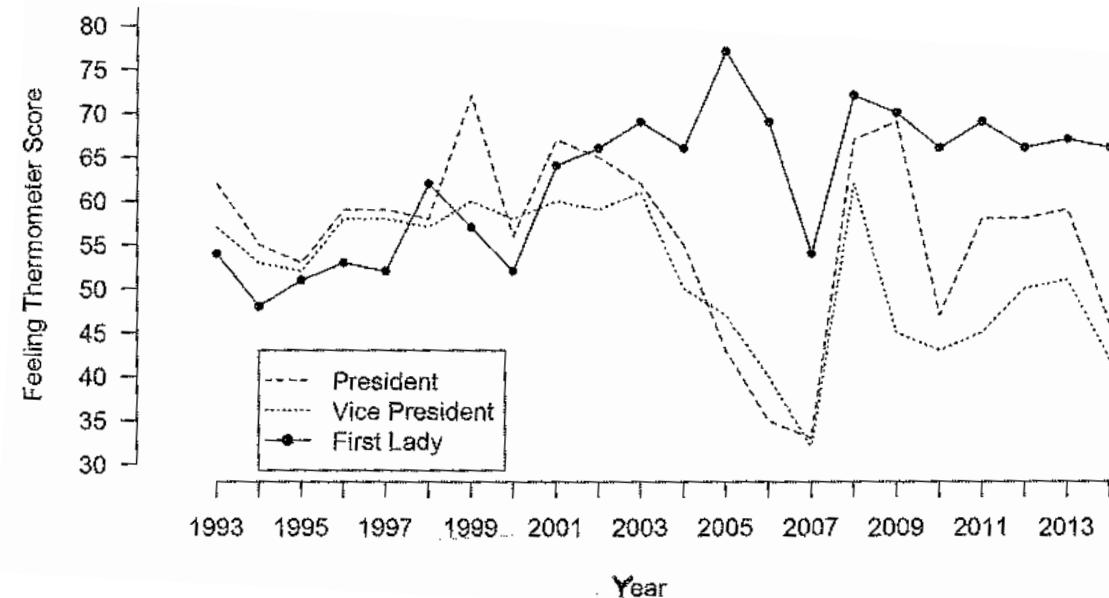


Figure 2. First Ladies Tend to be More Favorable Than Presidents and Vice Presidents

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Source: Wright 2016, 36

Even with the expanded role of the First Lady in modern times, the First Lady must still make an appeal to more traditional roles. In the Presidential Bake-Off by Family Circle Magazine, the candidate's wives must submit their best cookie recipe to be judged by the magazine's circulation and online followers. The contest began in 1992 due to a backlash from Hillary Rodham Clinton's comment, "I suppose I could have stayed at home and baked cookies and had teas, but what I decided to do was fulfill my profession" (Borrelli 2011, 146). It seems that there are still certain expectations from the public regarding the duties of the potential First Lady.

When reviewing the Office of the First Lady, one observes a conundrum. This is an office in which the occupant is neither elected or appointed, but whose sole qualification is a relationship with the President of the United States. Her "power is based solely through the wedding band and not the electorate" (Watson and Eksterowicz 2006,

13). The First Lady is not mentioned in the Constitution and on paper has no official duties. Her duties and functions are defined by custom and tradition as developed over time rather than by legislation or official pronouncements (Watson 2000, Troy 2006). Her position was formally authorized and federally financed by Congress in accordance with Public Law 95-570 which was passed in 1978 (Watson 2000, 109) (Campbell and McCluskie 2006, 178). Her position as a public official was also determined by a federal appellate court in regard to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Borrelli 196).

The Office of the First Lady is located in the East Wing and has grown considerably in staff size since Eleanor Roosevelt hired the first federally funded Social Secretary. The First Lady is viewed as an extension of the Oval Office but removed from the constraints of the bureaucracy. The First Lady's staff and budget are now larger than some of the President's key advisors (Watson 2000, 39). As the public becomes more cognizant of the First Lady and the potential power that she wields, there has been an exponential increase in correspondence and engagements. The First Lady needs a team to be able to manage the demands due to her position. Because there is a lack of formal guidelines, it is up to the First Lady to define her role as she sees fit. The First Lady's personality plays a significant factor in the way she defines her role. She can choose the size and members of her staff, how prominent a role she would like to take in the public eye, even to how she would like the White House décor organized. However, the First Lady must also consider current societal expectations, customs and traditions set by her predecessors, and democratic constraints on her authority.

The First Lady has no choice but to accept her role in politics due to the role her husband has been elected to by the people of the United States. A politician's spouse does

not gain the immediate responsibility of the office, but indirectly gains the burdens and pressures of becoming associated with that office. The Office of the First Lady has become a political position used to further the President's agenda (Borrelli 2011, Watson 2000). The First Lady's words and actions are linked to the President as if he were speaking through his wife. The role of the First Lady has developed into a linkage institution between the President and the public (Borrelli 2011, 202). Rosalyn Carter affirms this belief when she stated, "a first lady can influence officials, the public, or issues simply by discussing them or devoting her attention to them, such is the power and visibility of the office" (Watson 2000, 29). This was further demonstrated after Carter's trip to Thailand. She experienced the living conditions and extreme poverty first hand and when she returned to the United States, she had a conversation with President Carter. After that conversation, the foreign aid sent to Thailand increased (Wright 2016, 85). It is expected that the First Lady meets with these community leaders and there is an understanding that by simply meeting with the First Lady, she will then be able to bring their problems to the attention of the President. As the public prominence of the First Lady has risen, so has her more behind the scenes work will become the source of public scrutiny. Because the public is more aware of the influence of the First Lady, then a connection begins to be made between the success of the First Lady and the success of the President.

Through her traditional job as the nation's hostess, she is able to highlight the President's programs by determining who will receive the much sought-after invitations to the White House. Those receiving invitations are a signal to the public and other groups to where the President's focus resides and those who are considered politically

relevant (Borrelli 2011, Watson 2000). This is a way of “capitalizing more fully on the potential of symbolic representation to facilitate relationship building with [the] influential publics” (Borrelli 2011, 83). The modern First Ladies used this method quite decisively with each Lady since Nancy Reagan holding more than 650 events each term of office. The hiring of the first press secretary to the East Wing by Lady Bird Johnson was another sign of the increasing importance of the position of the First Lady (Borrelli 2001, 96). The flexibility of the office of the First Lady allows these women to form the office to best suit their goals and priorities as individuals. In sum, the modern First Lady must

“facilitate communications and relationship among the public and their husband’s administration. They are gender role models [who must win] the support of the moderates, while [maintaining] the loyalty of their party’s own base. They are critiqued as policy and political entrepreneurs [and] expected to facilitate change in social norms and government priorities” (Borrelli 2011, 194).

If the First Lady is able to walk this fine line, then she will be able to add prestige and public support to her husband’s positions. However, if she is unable to do so whether by withdrawing too much from the public eye or by establishing too dominant a presence within her husband’s advisors, she will become a political liability, draining the President of his public support.

It is widely acknowledged by “presidents and presidential advisors… that the first lady affects public perceptions and public opinion about the president, and [the] value [of] her role as a leading campaigner and spokesperson of the president” (Watson 2000, 114). The First Lady is another tool in the President’s arsenal in order to curry favor with

the public. Nancy Reagan strategized with her staff to determine which approach would enable the President to successfully seek a second term (Borrelli 2011, 169). In modern times, the “media coverage of the first lady is assisted by a White House that is concerned with public approval ratings... a popular first lady can bring to the presidency” (Watson 2011, 151). The advisors take their cues from the public and the public has shown an interest in the role of the First Lady and her effect on the Office of the Executive. The new First Lady is always somewhat of a mystery to the nation as a whole. She draws much attention during the campaign. According to a 1995 poll by R.P. Watson “Women in Public Life”, the public voted 90% in agreeance with the statement “The First Lady is important to the success of a president” and 91% in agreeance with the statement “Candidate’s wives play an important role in campaigning” (Watson 2011, 158).

The opinion of the First Lady is tied to the opinion and ultimately the success of the President. Because of the “gradual evolution from ceremonial hostess to...political advisor[, this] reflects the impact of... the changing role of women in society...and the increased public and press attention focused on the presidency’s politics and personalities” (Campbell and McCluskie 2006, 172). The personality of the First Lady is crucial in her ability to take control of the role presented to her as a result of her husband’s election. Due to the ambiguity of the office, each First Lady has been able to adapt this government role to suit her personality and her comfort level. Nancy Reagan agrees, “nobody really knows exactly what the first lady is supposed to do. The Constitution doesn’t mention the president’s wife, and she has no official duties. As a result, each incoming first lady has had to define the job for herself” (Reagan and Novak

1989, 57) (Watson 2000, 71). This flexibility of the First Lady's position in the Executive branch showcases these women's personalities which permits an analysis of their character to determine their placement categories developed by James David Barber. The placement of the First Lady into the Barber categories will further explore the idea of the presidential partnership as "first ladies, due to the nature of their relationship with partisan officeholder, are evaluated in the same manner as other political candidates" (Sulfaro 2007, 487). This will lead to the determination of whether the public opinion of the First Lady has an impact on the public opinion of the President (Watson 2000, 134). I will now turn to Chapter 3 to review the character matrix of James David Barber and its applicability to the First Ladies.

CHAPTER 3

A Review of the Presidential Categorization

In James David Barber's book Predicting Performance in the White House; he separates past Presidents into four groups according to their personality types to provide the public tools which will enable them to better choose their national representative. He uses these categories to estimate a President's effectiveness and popularity while in office. Barber argues this analysis is important to the American electorate because the "President's personality is an important shaper of his Presidential behavior...his character, world view, and style" will affect his decision-making while in office (Barber 2016, 4). His purpose is to provide another method of analysis to educate voters on the potential behavior of the President they could elect using a regression analysis of prior Presidents.

Once patterns of behavior and categories are established, a voter can plug in the history of the candidates placed before them into Barber's matrix to determine which category of personality type the potential President would fall. The voter can then make a more informed decision on whether that type of president would be preferred for that particular election and select their choice accordingly. Barber will review a President's life, background, and rise in the political arena to determine the factors that developed their political socialization beginning with a President's early life and ending with their behavior while in the White House. A President's emotional investment in his position will powerfully influence how he views his Office and affect the degree of effort placed into his Office. Barber determines presidential pattern by analyzing three categories: character, worldview, and style of the President.

In my analysis of the First Ladies, I will seek to place these women into the Barber categories using those three elements as well. Due to their unique position on the country's central political stage, these ladies are also subject to public interest and their backgrounds explored with gusto. The country is interested in the character of the woman who sits next to the single, most powerful man who will be running the county. With this interest comes intense scrutiny and criticism. For example, there will be comments made on which events were attended or not, what was worn to the event, was it too extravagant or too casual, who did she speak to or not speak to, were her actions a purposeful snub or careless? After the "cultural change concerning the expectations of women[,]... the role of the first lady [has become] even more ambiguous" (Knickrehm and Teske 2006, 236). The ambiguousness of the role of the First Lady will allow for an analysis of patterns of behavior that are unique to each woman holding that role. Her activities while in that position will also differ according to her personality type, "unique experience[s], interests and talents...[and she] must figure out where [she] can make a contribution" (Wright 2016, 78). Because of the careful scrutinization by the public, these patterns of behavior will be made plain and will fully allow for a character analysis.

In the lack of formalization of the duties of the First Lady, each woman has the opportunity to refashion the management of East Wing and the manner in which she performs her duties to suit her personality, her comfort level in politics, and her ability to handle the effect of public and media scrutiny. There are very "few constitutional or legal guidelines exist governing what the first ladies may or may not do... and they have a range of options available to them as they contemplated the nature of their approaches to the office" (Watson and Eksterowicz 2006, 4-5). This allows for a clear Barber character

analysis due to the differentiation between each First Lady and how she interprets the role of the office. Within the presidential partnership, her actions will affect the presidency. The President is judged by the company he keeps from his White House staff to his cabinet of advisors and his wife is the longest serving of those advisors. O’Conner, Nye, and van Assendelft confirm this premise when they state, “just as the presidency is widely acknowledged to be affected by the personality of its occupant, it follows that first ladies, too, may have the potential power to exercise tremendous influence” (1996, 836). The media and the public analyze those chosen by the President, their resumes and policy preferences, to fill those important positions. The President’s choices are inspected by the public and by the media for weeks. It would follow logically that the First Ladies actions would affect the public approval of the President.

According to Barber, style is measured by “the President’s habitual way of performing his three political roles: rhetoric, personal relations, and homework...[cumulating] in his mode in coping with and adapting to these Presidential demands” (Barber 2016, 5). He measures style by evaluating how the President interacts with others while in his presidential capacity. The President must discourse with his own staff, members of Congress, foreign heads of state, and most importantly the public. The President is also expected to draft bills to present to Congress and although not a traditional role of the executive branch, this has become an important one. Presidential style could also be measured according to how the President approaches and handles the pressures of the office. This could comprise of the method in which he selects his cabinet and staff to the way he chooses to organize his staff. Some Presidents prefer the hierarchical approach while others depend on the wheel method of organization. Methods

of expressing style could vary from President to President. One could focus more on rhetoric like FDR in his fireside chats while another could place most of their focus on research and study like the presidential scholar Woodrow Wilson. All Presidents must address the elements of style while in office but not all will be addressed in the same frequency or magnitude. By an examination of past President's method in which he expresses his style, voters will be able to determine how future Presidents would be able to handle the stresses of the job and how to anticipate the President's behavior while in office.

First Ladies due to their unique position in the White House would also be able to be evaluated using Barber's style measurement. One aspect of style is simply interpersonal skills. As the President must interact with large or small groups, the First Lady is also at his side equally engaged in discussion. She is the Nation's hostess and as such is expected to entertain multiple and various guests to the White House. She must address Congress on occasion as well as local PTA groups around the country. Her behavior is also carefully scrutinized while attending other events both in the country and abroad. On the campaign trail, it is no longer taboo for the First Lady to campaign separately from her husband. During the mid-term elections of 2014, First Lady Michelle Obama blazed the campaign trail solo in effort to nudge voters back to the Democratic Party.

The First Lady also has a staff that she must assemble and manage. Her leadership style over the East Wing staff as well as number of staffers chosen to be a part of the East Wing are subject to public and media scrutiny. She is now expected to choose a social issue and develop a plan to solve it. The First Lady is not just expected to develop a

charity to benefit the issue chosen, but she must present a carefully tailored plan to solve that particular issue. This plan usually involves a significant amount of research, developing legislation and/or testifying in front of Congress. In all of the analyses of the behaviors on style chosen by Barber, I believe the First Ladies could also be measured in such a manner. The First Lady must also present herself and her style to the public in various ways, through hosting events, public speaking, and the decision made about her social issue platform.

The second measurement in categorizing Presidential character would be the way the President metaphorically sees the world from his window in the Oval Office. Barber calls this measurement the “world view [which] consists of his primary, politically relevant beliefs, particularly his conceptions of social causality, human nature, and the central moral conflicts of the time” (Barber 2016, 5). This particular measurement takes stock of how the President views the Office and the conditions surrounding his responsibilities at the time he becomes President. This can be assessed by the voter during the campaign. The potential President will take the vague outline of his party platform and will choose a few of those planks to highlight during his campaign. He will choose those issues according to what he is most passionate about. This passion would be developed throughout his experiences, which would mold his concept of reality. Barber’s ideas on the development of a President’s worldview stem from the potential President’s “thoughts about the way the world works and how [he] might work in it, about what people are like... the values people share” (Barber 2016, 7). This will determine which issues he feels the voters must pay specific attention to. As a presidential candidate, he will convince the voters of the justness of his platform and the importance of the issues

that he chooses to highlight. Throughout his campaign, he will attract voters' allegiance and attention by his passion and persuasion. Once he attains the presidency, there will be an inordinate number of demands on him. The president will sort through this chaos using his worldview by choosing those projects about which he is most passionate. These will typically coincide with his campaign promises. Barber determines that voters will be able to determine which projects will garner the most presidential attention by evaluating the potential president's background. With this knowledge, the voters will be able to choose the direction in which they would like the country to move.

It would be a straightforward task to take the modern First Ladies and measure them according to this method. A key component of assessing a First Lady's world view would be to assess the social cause that she would take up during her time as First Lady. Barber states that "a man's world view affects what he pays attention to, and a great deal of politics is paying attention" (Barber 2016, 5). The First Lady would choose a cause very important to her. This choice would be determined by how she views the world and her potential to create an impact through her choice. As with the President, there are numerous demands on the First Lady's time and schedule. Her office is lined with invitations to social functions each focusing on a social issue important to the lives of Americans. The First Lady and her staff must sort through all these attempts on behalf of organizations seeking to attach the First Lady's name to their cause. It widely acknowledged that once a First Lady chooses to champion a social issue, it becomes the forefront of the national discussion. Therefore, once in office her name and attention are highly sought after. She will search until she is able to find the social cause that she personally finds most important. Similar to the President's actions, once the First Lady

makes her decision on the social cause that she will focus on during her term, she will campaign for this issue with a passion that will cause her to create a great impact throughout the country. This impact would not have been achieved if not for the First Lady's passion. This decision will be influenced by her world view and the various factors that will develop this view.

The last measurement in determining Presidential behavior while in office is character. This measurement refers to the upbringing and the development of political socialization of future Presidents. This includes the way the President forms opinions over various situations and his reactions to political stimuli he will encounter while in office. At this point, the childhood and development of the President comes into play as these experiences will shape the political views of the President and the actions taken as a result of those views. Barber will analyze the interactions between the President's parents and the President, the social climate the President grew up in, the adolescent pressures faced by the President, and how the President behaved towards his teachers and peers. Each of these experiences is treated like a puzzle piece and the full picture of the President's character is revealed once each piece has been considered.

According to Barber, character "is what life has marked into being" (2016, 5). Barber will look at the important events in the President's life and analyze his reaction to those events and his social development because of those events. The President's self-worth also plays a crucial part of his character evaluation. It is acknowledged that every President will be somewhere on the spectrum between total self-doubt and complete self-confidence. A President's confidence plays a significant role in his ability to follow through with his presidential duties. This self-evaluation affects his dealings with

Congress, his own staff, and foreign dignitaries. A President who is sure of himself and his course of action will be plagued little by the loss of approval points or public affection. This President might not seek outside counsel or necessarily have his finger on the pulse of the nation in his decision-making process. While on the other hand, a President who is less confident will frequently second guess his decisions and seek to attain the public's esteem. Public opinion will have a more significant impact on policy decisions. The confident President will forge ahead in the task despite the potential unpopularity of the course. In this analysis of a President, the formation of political opinions is easily measured based on political action. This is where worldview and style can be observed in action.

As with the President, it is also possible to evaluate the First Lady using the character measurement. The First Lady also goes through various experiences throughout her childhood and adolescence which shape her social development and allow for a character evaluation. Her reaction to her life experiences, as those of the President, are reviewable to determine her placement into one Barber's four types of Presidential character, which will be reviewed later. The various experiences the First Lady endures through her early years will shape her reactions to issues presented to her in the White House. The First Lady also has measurable reactions to political stimuli due the position she holds because of her marriage. In the typical course of the President's political career, he will have held multiple elected offices prior to the White House. The First Lady will also experience similar political situations as the "wife of". Her method of handling those situations will also lead to a more precise analysis of her character. As character defines the political socialization of the President, the choice of the social issue of the First Lady

as well as the method in which she chooses to approach the issue allows for an evaluation of her character development.

The First Lady will choose a social issue that is important to her due to her experiences throughout her life and her husband's early political career. The method in which she goes about to solve her chosen issue will also belie her character development. She will choose a method that she is familiar with and one she is confident that will make a difference. This choice would also come as a result of her character development. As with the President, a First Lady's self-image also plays a significant role into how she approaches her role as the President's spouse and the leader of the East Wing. The First Lady's self-image however, could extend in greater extremes than a Presidential self-image. It takes a certain type of personality to want to run for elected office and place oneself in the spotlight of the nation. The First Ladies do not necessarily seek to be in the spotlight in the same manner as the President would; therefore, their self-evaluation could be more various and differentiated. The First Ladies would present more angles of analysis of their character development than a President would.

Based on the above criteria, Barber has identified four types of Presidential character based on his analysis of past Presidents. An analysis of Presidential character will sort the Presidents in the grouping of the following character types: Active Positive, Active Negative, Passive Positive, or Passive Negative. In Table 2 below places the Barber character types into the character matrix in which the Presidents and the First Ladies are able to be placed based on the above analysis of their style, world view, and character evaluations.

Table 2. The Barber Character Matrix

Active-Positive	Passive-Positive
Active-Negative	Passive-Negative

The active or passive character distinction is determined by the energy level of the President while he is in office. A President who works all day with few breaks, few vacations would be characterized as active. A President who takes longer vacations or perhaps naps during the day like President Coolidge would be on the more passive side of the spectrum. An active President would choose to take a more involved role in regard to the other branches, especially with Congress. Other characteristics that would denote the active or passive baseline include “dominance-submission, extraversion-introversion, aggression-timidity, attack-defense, fight-flight, engagement-withdrawal, [and] approach-avoidance” (Barber 2016, 9). According to Former Secretary of War under President Franklin Roosevelt, Henry Stimson, the distinction between an active or passive President is “whether he is moved by other people and outer forces or moves them” (Barber 2016, 8). A President who is described as a mover would be an active. This President will embrace the typical roles of the President and perform with gusto.

The tone and manner in which the President executes his duties will then determine if he will be grouped into the positive or negative baseline. The positive-negative category distinction is determined by how the President views his responsibilities in elected office. Does he approach his office as a burden that he must carry, or does he enjoy the power that the office provides? If the President appears to be weighed down by the office or does not appear to feel satisfaction for the job he has been

elected to, then he would be categorized as negative. A positive President would be described as “optimistic...hopeful...[or] happy” (Barber 2016, 8). The positive President appears to be grateful to be in the elected position that he holds.

The active-positive President would approach the duties of the Oval Office with enthusiasm and relish. This character type has a high self-worth and could be characterized as likeable by the electorate. An active-positive would fulfill all the Presidential roles with gusto and excitement. This type of President would be confident in their decision-making and that their choices are what is right for the country. They seem to enjoy their life in politics as well as the work load that comes along with it, especially at the presidential level. The active-positive President admires productivity and is able to use his talents as the situation warrants it. This character type will analyze the situation at hand and perform in a manner designed to achieve a prechosen result. Barber uses the term “rational mastery” to describe the President’s ability to achieve this (Barber 2016, 9). The potential failing of an active-positive would be the inability to understand why not everyone views the problem and the solution in the same way as he does. This failing could manifest due to the high self-esteem of the active-positive. An active-positive might not listen to policy advisors when he believes his chosen course of action is the correct one.

An active-positive First Lady would primarily be placed due to her enthusiasm for her position. This First Lady appears to be fulfilled with her position in the government and her duties performed in her role. She has a prominent unofficial position in the bureaucracy and with the public. She has developed a strong packet of legislation to combat her chosen social issue. This First Lady will be working behind the scenes and on

center stage. These First Ladies “are the ones who are not only aware of the potential influence of their position, but who use that influence effectively to produce change” (O’Connor et al 1996, 848). She is viewed by the public and the media as the ideal American woman; however, her potential failings are the same as the President. It is difficult for her to understand other points of view when it comes to criticisms of her performance as First Lady due to her conviction and self-confidence. Once this character type loses public support, it can be difficult for her regain favor unless she is able to make some concessions and compromises in how she approaches the office and the manner in which she executes her responsibilities.

The active-negative category results in an intensely, laborious President but one who does not seem to enjoy the position. This type of President seeks power and is aggressive at maintaining it. The active-negative views challenges within the elected office as if they were constantly in battle. They are not able to enjoy the victories, but instead looks grimly to the next conflict. This President while working long hours does not seem to enjoy the fruits of their labor. He is not satisfied with the influence in the office that he holds and seeks to attain greater stature. An active-negative does not always channel their quest for power in the most desirous manner and as a result, is carefully watched and scrutinized by the public and the media. Their aggressiveness might be misunderstood by others in government and the public. This character type has a “perfectionist conscience” which drives the active part of their Presidential personality (Barber 2016, 9). The active-negative consistently puts forth much effort to try to achieve perfection internally. This effort will invariably fall short and the perfectionist is unable to achieve perfection, causing the negative view of the elected office.

This character type in First Lady can be described as a woman who is incredibly driven. She will “have [an identity] in the public eye that [is] substantially independent of [her] husband” (Burrell et al 2011, 159). She seeks power within and outside of the traditional roles of the First Lady position. This character type will aggressively challenge the public and media perception of the duties of the First Lady. An active-negative First Lady will develop her own projects and involve herself in the President’s projects as well. She will seek to control as much as she is able to in and around the White House. This character type will attempt to stand side by side with the President or on occasions act in his stead. She will seek to prove herself in the West Wing as more than just a First Lady, but also a publicly trusted advisor (as opposed to offering advice from behind the scenes). Due to her ambitious nature, she will be subject to public and media scrutiny for stepping beyond the bounds of her office.

The passive-positive character type seeks affection and admiration from the electorate as opposed to having a high level of inner confidence. This type of President will listen to policy advisors and will take their guidance when presented with problems during his term of office. He will allow himself to be directed by his staff and cabinet when making decisions for the country. This President seeks public approval as a self-affirmation tool due to his poor self-image. A passive-positive does not have the inner self-confidence to make decisions independently. He can be described as “receptive, compliant, agreeable, and cooperative” during his term as President (Barber 2016, 10). The passive-positive because of his low self-worth seeks validation from the public, which he will receive due to his election. The mid-term public opinion lows affect this type of President more than others because of his fragile self-opinion. This President can

feign a sense of optimism, but he will become more dependent on his staff and advisors to attempt to regain public affection. Although this character type will choose elected office to fill the void of self-worth with public affection, his experience in office will be tougher due to this very same need if public affection is lost.

A First Lady exhibiting this character type can potentially fade into the background especially next to a dynamic President. This First Lady will excel in the traditional roles of her office as the nation's hostess but will not lay claim to the center stage as would a more active character type. She will be seen more as a support to the President rather than an equal partner. She will enjoy the more traditional role of the Office of the First Lady and will not seek to push the informal boundaries of the capability of the Office. A positive-passive will not likely take potential legislation to Congress or seek attention in general. This First Lady will most likely choose a non-controversial, non-polarizing social issue. She will choose an issue that will ensure a positive response from the public and the media. Her method to solve her chosen issue will also find widespread if unenthusiastic approval. It is possible for this character type to be criticized by the public and the media for not taking a more active role in government or on her chosen social platform. On the flip side, this type of First Lady could also receive approval from the public and the media for her non-polarizing and more traditional role as a First Lady.

The final character type, the passive-negative, is characterized by the need to fulfill one's duty to their country. This President does not seek political office, but instead is engaged on the political stage "because they think they ought to be" (Barber 2016, 10). The passive-negative character type attempts to make himself useful to the community

because he has a low self-esteem. This President will avail himself to the position to find a sense of purpose in his life. Once, the position has been achieved; however, the President will find himself unprepared for the demands of the office. Due to his “lack of experience and flexibility”, this character type will fall back to maintaining the status quo. This President will achieve this with vague pronouncements, focusing on legislation with the intent to manage behavior of citizens and attain the principles “of the right and proper way” (Barber 2016, 10). He will feel out of his element in the West Wing and in order to achieve some measure of success in the White House, he will seek to enforce the civic responsibility that he feels among the citizenry. This type of President will not assert himself in conflict and will withdraw from the political stage leaving actual governance to his cabinet and staff.

A passive-negative First Lady will attempt to remove herself from the political stage. She will resist the spotlight and only appear to fulfill the most basic of her duties and roles. This is due to the fact that she did not choose her life in politics, but this life was chosen for her because of the vocational path of her husband. This character type will appear to the public and the media to be a reluctant politician’s wife. She will attempt to play her role as a good political wife, but she will retreat from the public and the media. Her unpreparedness for her role and her lack of self-confidence will cause this withdrawal from the spotlight of the White House. She will feel uneasy with the position due to her feelings of inadequacy. Her personal experiences and background have not prepared her for the demands of this prominent position, nor allowed her to develop the confidence in herself to attempt to fulfill the basic duties of the East Wing. This First Lady has found herself unprepared to serve the public in this capacity. Similar to the

passive-negative President, the First Lady will rely on her East Wing staff to ensure that she is able to meet her obligations. Once these obligations have been fulfilled, she will retreat into private life.

James Barber states that “if we can see that process of development, we can understand the product...[with] features to note are those bearing on Presidential performance” (Barber 2016, 7). His influential work on Presidential character has been referenced in and has been the focus of several works since its publication. Using Barber’s method of analysis, I review the lives and backgrounds of Nancy Regan, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Laura Bush and place them into one of the four character categories. In choosing these three First Ladies, the most important factor was public opinion poll data. Nancy Reagan was the earliest First Lady with somewhat regular public opinion polling (Watson 2000, 152). Barbara Bush unfortunately received more sporadic public opinion ratings throughout her time as the First Lady and therefore would result in a weaker analysis. She maintained a quiet presence during her term in the White House and as such was not included regularly in public opinion polls. She also has limited public opinion polls due to the fact that her husband only served one term as President. The other three Ladies served two terms with their husbands which allows for more data to analyze. Throughout research on Barbara Bush’s life, I determined she would be classified as a passive-positive. For these reasons, I felt an analysis of Laura Bush (also a passive-positive), her history, and time as a First Lady would lead to a more secure and precise analysis.

Each of the three First Ladies chosen would be classified into a different Barber category which will allow for a broader analysis with many different variables to

consider. Once the First Ladies have been placed, I will pair the First Ladies with their Presidential husbands and compare both of their character categories. I will also analyze the CBS, Gallup, and Pew Research public opinion polls of the First Ladies and the public approval ratings of their Presidential spouses. In this analysis, I will seek to prove the various impacts the First Ladies will have on the approval ratings of their presidential husbands based on their character evaluations. It is to those characterizations of the modern First Ladies, I now turn in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

Nancy Reagan: the Active-Positive

Using Barber's framework on presidential character, Nancy Reagan should be classified as an Active-Positive First Lady when reviewing her history and behavior throughout the entirety of the time that she held the position. In her own words, she has fit the bill of one who enjoyed her time as First Lady with all the benefits along with the office, which would place her in the positive category. The manner in which she campaigned for awareness to her chosen social issue and the role she took in her husband's administration specifically in regards to his personnel choices, which would place her in the active category. The following elements, the criticism and accolades that Nancy Reagan received from the public and the media during her term as First Lady and her personal feelings about the office, will combine to support this classification of her character.

During President Reagan's first term in the White House, Nancy Reagan received much criticism over her role as the First Lady and how she approached the position. She viewed the Office of the Presidency as similar in stature to a royal seat with all the luxuries and comforts along with it. When first arriving in Washington D.C., Reagan found the state of the White House to be beneath the status of President. She stated, "it just didn't look the way a president's house should look. It wasn't a place we'd be proud to bring people...the White House should be magnificent, and I made up my mind...I would fix it up" (Reagan and Novak 1989, 225). I believe this desire to restore the White House to stem from her childhood, how she was raised, and in which situation Reagan found to feel most safe and loved. She was raised by a single mother, then by relatives,

and finally in a two-parent home with her mother and stepfather (Troy 2000, 276). Her biological father was never in her life and she actually took the last name of her stepfather a few years after he married her mother. Reagan was finally able to live with her mother after spending six years with relatives while her mother was trying to make a living as an actress. Because her mother married her step-father, she was able to permanently live with her mother and also attain a father figure in her life (Deaver 2004, 21, 24) (Reagan and Novak 1989, 73, 78). She identifies most of the happy moments of her childhood and growing up with the time that she spent with her mother and stepfather. Reagan felt secure and safe in that household and viewed her stepfather as her real father which was why she took his last name when she was fourteen (Troy 2000, 276). This household where she felt the most loved, the most secure, and the most stable was significant due her behavior in the White House, especially during the first term. She sought to recreate that home in the White House.

Nancy Reagan's stepfather was a doctor and once her mother married Dr. Davis, Nancy became accustomed to a certain lifestyle. She attempted to continue and recreate this lifestyle once she entered into the White House because that was her comfort zone. She describes her desire to renovate the shabby White House, "I have always been a nester, and my first priority in any new house has been to get that house in order...I also like to provide a warm, restful, and welcoming home for my husband" (Reagan and Novak 1989, 23). She sought to elevate the current conditions of the White House to the standards she thought should be fitting to the Office of the President. She completed the renovations with over \$200,000 from private donations. Reagan admits to not thinking about the reaction of the public when she undertook this project. With this mindset, she

demonstrated the classic flaw of an active-positive. She assumed her course of action to be the correct one and it did not occur to her that there would be any criticism. Reagan explains, “I’ve always felt that the White House should represent the country at its best. To me this was so obvious that I never dreamed I would be criticized for my efforts. If anything, I thought I would be applauded” (Reagan and Novak 1989, 24). Throughout the course of President Reagan’s first term in office, she made several decisions without regards to how the public would react from the china used in the White House to how much money she spent on clothes to the influence she had in the West Wing.

Nancy Reagan’s public image would eventually become so much of an issue that could possibly threaten President Reagan’s potential for a second term that “a group of White House advisors...met at Camp David to discuss what could be done about the ‘Nancy problem’” (Benze 1990, 782). At this meeting, they discussed ways for Reagan to change her public image from perceived elitism at the expense of the taxpayer to more approachable to the average American. In the media, Nancy Reagan was portrayed “as a woman who was interested only in rich friends and fancy clothes, a supercilious and shallow socialite” (Reagan and Novak 1989, 37). The public responded to this perception in a 1981 Gallup poll in which

62 percent of those polled felt that ‘Nancy Reagan puts too much emphasis on style and elegance during a time of federal budget cuts and economic hardships...[and] 61 percent ... believed [she] was less sympathetic to the needs and problems of the underprivileged and the poor (Watson 2000, 163).

With the country emerging from a recession, these advisors were convinced that the current public image of Nancy Reagan would damage President Reagan’s bid for re-

election. Traditionally, the First Lady had the potential to soften the president's image and that would appeal to parts of the constituency. The fact that at this time Reagan's poll numbers were showing a disconnect to the political draw of the First Lady was problematic. Through an intensive marketing campaign, Nancy Reagan performed a self-mocking skit for the Press Gridiron Dinner, "appeared on the NBC-TV comedy series 'Different Strokes' ...cohosted the morning talk show 'Good Morning America' ..., appeared on 23 talk shows to discuss drugs and had narrated a two-hour PBS special..., appeared before international service organizations...[and] invite[d] 17 First Ladies from foreign countries to a drug summit" (Benze 1990, 782). The effect this had on public opinion was staggering. In 1981, Nancy Reagan's public opinion at its highest was 28 percent approval according to a CBS poll (Cosgrove-Mather 2004, 1). By 1985, another CBS poll "found that Mrs. Reagan's popularity was greater than even the President's (72 percent to 62 percent), and an NBC News poll found her approval/disapproval ratio at nearly eight-to-one (Benze 1990, 782). Reagan became an asset to the White House and President Reagan's re-election campaign. This also demonstrates the actions and public perceptions of the First Lady will have an effect on presidential approval.

Nancy Reagan has demonstrated she should be classified in the active category due to her actions on the campaign trail and also while in the White House. In order to achieve her publicity turnaround, Nancy Reagan had to be willing to engage in more targeted events publicly. The marketing campaign was a success because she was willing. When President Reagan was Governor of California, Nancy Reagan had several causes she focused on and engaged with like "fundraising and lobbying efforts on behalf of those Vietnam War servicemen who were either Prisoners of War or Missing In Action..."

regularly visited institutions that cared for the elderly and physically and emotionally handicapped children” (First Lady Biography: Nancy Reagan. 1). This level of activity continued on the road to the White House and throughout President Reagan’s two terms.

Nancy Reagan’s level of activity while in the White House was due to two major influences in her life: her mother and her husband. Edie Davis, Reagan’s mother, once retired from the stage, devoted her time and energy to charity work around Chicago. After marrying Dr. Davis, Edie no longer needed to work, so she filled her days with volunteering around the city. Mrs. Davis “was the chairman of the women’s division of the Chicago Community Fund...involved in the Art Institute, helped set up the Passavant Hospital Gift Shop, and even organized an annual musical skit for [Dr. Davis’s] students” (Reagan and Novak 1989, 77). She also set the tone of the social cause, Reagan would take up later in her time at the White House. Davis took on somewhat of a mothering role over her husband’s students. When she discovered that some of the students were “being picked up by prostitutes and infected with venereal diseases, she had herself sworn in as a policewoman, so she could go out on the streets of Chicago and protect those boys” (Reagan and Novak 1989, 77). She took this role seriously and acted as the protector of these students. This initiative affected Reagan in the manner in which she enthusiastically approached her chosen social cause.

The social cause taken up by the modern First Ladies was first popularized by Nancy Reagan. She spent much her time in the White House on her “Just Say No” campaign. At the time, illegal drug use was a politicized topic among the parties as to the preferred method of solving the issue. When Reagan chose the issue, she “risked opening up herself to attacks from both the right and left” for not choosing a softer, more

traditionally feminine social issue (Deaver 2004, 91). The fact that she chose an issue that struck a chord with her reinforces the ability of the First Lady to mold the office to suit her individuality. White House officials could not force an issue on Reagan but strove to support her once her decision was made. She is quoted as saying, “I want to do something I’m interested in for 4 years” (Troy 2000, 289). This quote demonstrates her mindset when choosing her social platform as First Lady. This further justifies her positive characterization, as she would only choose an issue over which she was passionate.

Nancy Reagan was able to bridge the political aisle by taking the role of the country’s mother, providing support to parents whose children were caught up in the dark spiral of drug use. This demonstrates the active category of her personality that throughout the two terms in office, Reagan “took her crusade to sixty-five cities in thirty-three states, to the pontiff’s side in Rome, and to capitals the world over” (Deaver 2004, 91). It is a tribute to the activeness of Nancy Reagan that her “Just Say No” campaign “was the most successful First Lady project in history... the percentage of students using drugs and alcohol dropped from approximately one-third to one-fourth” (Troy 2000, 291-292). To support the active role that Reagan had taken on, she needed to expand her East Wing staff. Reagan used staffers from both the East Wing and the West Wing to achieve her goals during the Reagan presidency (Watson 2000, Eksterowicz and Paynter 2006). Table 3 lists the staff positions under First Lady Nancy Reagan. It is a tribute to the active nature of Reagan that when Barbara Bush took over in 1988, she cut the East Wing positions by half.

Table 3. Staff Offices of Nancy Reagan

Deputy Assistant to the President	Staff Assistant
Administrative Assistant	Graphics Assistant
Personal Assistant to the First Lady	Director, Graphics and
Calligraphy	
Press Secretary	Executive Assistant
Deputy Press Secretary	Calligrapher (2)
Executive Assistant	Assistant Social Secretary
Social Secretary	Executive Assistant to the
	Director, Projects and
	Correspondence
Director, Projects and Correspondence	Staff Assistant
Deputy Director, Projects and Correspondence	Deputy Press Secretary for
	Communications
Secretary	Director, Scheduling and
	Advance for the First Lady
Assistant Chief, Arrangements	
<i>Recopied with permission from: Robert P. Watson</i>	

Reagan also harnessed the power of the media in her quest to bring attention to her chosen issue. She was willing to work after office hours in order to achieve her goals with the “Just Say No” program. The Reagan administration harnessed the popularity of

the social cause to garner votes during the re-election campaign (Borrelli 2011, Knickrehm and Teske 2006). While the President chose to fight the war on drugs by increasing criminal penalties for suppliers and smugglers, the First Lady was able to take the softer approach of helping families and those struggling with addiction. By covering both the penal and the familial elements to that issue, the President and the First Lady as a unit were able to win public approval (Borrelli 2011, 168).

The active role Nancy Reagan took in her husband's staff and in his schedule has been well documented by admirers and critics alike both within her husband's administration and without. Throughout the 1980 presidential campaign, Reagan would "go from one room to another, meeting in corridors and corners...trying everything [she] could think of to bring people together and smooth things over" among the campaign staff (Reagan and Novak 1989, 206). Initially, there was low morale and personality differences among the staff that needed to be ameliorated. Reagan would see that the staff mended their differences in order to run the best campaign possible for her husband (Troy 2000, 281). This set the tone for her later behavior in the White House when Reagan would assess the staff around her husband to ensure they were utmost loyal and put the welfare of the President above their own ambition.

Reagan would also go out on the campaign trail separate from her husband. She would only have engaged in this behavior due to the active classification on her character. A passive First Lady on the other hand would not campaign on her own or perhaps not campaign at all. She would be satisfied to be behind the curtain observing. Reagan acknowledged that while on the road she would be "talking strategy, working on speeches, doing interview, and making plans" (Reagan and Novak 1989, 216). She would

take the initiative, solve problems, and put out as many fires as she could on the campaign without involving her husband. Reagan would rather her husband focus on the big picture in the campaign rather than on the minutiae, which she would take care of. This pattern of behavior was also evident while Ronald Reagan was the governor of California. She would collaborate with Reagan's staff to determine the best moves for the governor to make (Deaver 2004, 17). Later in the White House, she would take a much more significant role in the details of the President's schedule. Table 4 details the travel schedule undertaken by Nancy Reagan.

Table 4. Nancy Reagan as Diplomat

Mrs. Reagan's International Travels (1981-1985)	
State Visit to Canada (March 1981)	Economic summit in England
(June 1984)	
Royal Wedding in England (July 1981)	D-day celebration in France
(June 1984)	
State visit to Jamaica and Barbados (April 1982)	State visit to Canada (March
1985)	
Economic summit to France (June 1982)	Economic summit in Germany
(May 1985)	
Presidential travel to Italy, Germany, and	First Lady travel to Italy (May
1985)	
United Kingdom (June 1982)	
Princess Grace's funeral in Monaco (September	State visit to Spain and Portugal
(May 1985)	
1982)	
State visit to Japan and Korea (November 1983)	Earthquake assistance to Mexico
(August 1985)	
Presidential travel to China (April 1984)	USSR summit in Switzerland
(November 1985)	

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Source: Watson 2000, 91.

It was not common during this time for the First Lady to travel much while not on the campaign trail, especially not alone. The fact that she traveled extensively during the first term also supports the conclusion that she would be classified as an active personality (Watson 2000, 91). Reagan also felt comfortable traveling in order to gain support for her husband's policies and presidency. A more passive First Lady would limit her travel and her place in the national spotlight by doing so. If Reagan felt that her travel would benefit her husband's presidency, there would be no hesitation in taking on more travel plans with or without her husband.

Nancy Reagan was always protective over President Reagan. For that reason, she never disclosed her behind the scenes work on the troubles of the campaign staff to Reagan. She would act on her own, so her husband would be shielded from the undercurrent of discontent. Reagan states, "if something is about to become a problem I'm not above calling a staff person and asking about it... I make no apologies for looking out for his [Ronald Reagan's] personal welfare" (Brower 2016, 237) (Knickrehm and Teske 2006, 242). This also illustrates the active portion of Reagan's character assessment. She is not shy about taking care of issues and problems around her especially if they involve the welfare of her husband (Borrelli 2011, Brower 2016, Watson 2000, Eksterowicz and Paynter 2006, Troy 2000). Because of this sentiment, Reagan would make no qualms in making her feelings known if she felt an advisor was unworthy of his post in her husband's cabinet or on the campaign team (Troy 2000, 296). If she felt a staff member would not place the success of Ronald Reagan above all else, then she would see it to have the person demoted or fired (Eksterowicz and Paynter 2006, 221). This first occurred during the Republican primaries in 1979. The campaign manager at the time

was John Sears. Reagan felt that Sears was trying to take too much control of the campaign out of the hands of the future President and would run the campaign as he saw fit. She admitted that with her “encouragement, Ronnie decided that Sears and his two deputies would have to go” (Reagan and Novak 1989, 206).

The next instance of Reagan’s involvement in the President’s staff occurred over the chief of staff position during the first term in the White House. Reagan believed that the position required a more moderate Republican as opposed to one who was more conservative in the Republican Party spectrum. The Democrats controlled Congress at the time and Reagan understood “that moderates would have a better chance of getting deals done” (Brower 2016, 237). Therefore, James Baker was chosen over Edwin Meese. Baker describes Reagan’s involvement in her husband’s staff, ““I would never have been in the Reagan White House had it not been for Nancy Reagan, I’m quite confident of that”” (Brower 2016, 236-237). Baker’s choice of deputy, Michael Deaver, also demonstrates the impact and influence that Reagan had on the President’s staff. Deaver was a longtime friend of Nancy Reagan and the staffer assigned to her in 1967 while President Reagan was Governor of California. One of Deaver’s duties to Ronald Reagan in the Governor’s Office was to be Nancy Reagan’s contact to the workings of the governor’s staff (Deaver 2004, 14). Even early in Ronald Reagan’s political life, Nancy Reagan was watchful and observant as to the motives of the people surrounding her husband.

Later, in the second term in the White House, Nancy Reagan had several major disagreements with the chief of staff at the time, Don Regan. She felt that Regan should be replaced for the same reason she felt Sears should have been replaced over six years

earlier. She did not hide her sentiments from the President that Regan was not looking out for the best for her husband rather he was looking out for the best for himself. Reagan felt that he was attempting to raise his status in the government as one equal to the President (Troy 2000, 297). Reagan wrote that “what increasingly bothered me about Don Regan...was that he often acted as if *he* were the president...He liked the word ‘chief’ but he never really understood that his title also included the words ‘of staff’ ” (Reagan and Novak 1989, 313). The boiling point arrived when after a heated argument over the phone, Regan hung up on the First Lady (Troy 2000, 302). After that, it was only a matter of time before Don Regan and the Reagan administration would part ways. Nancy Reagan’s number one priority was Ronald Reagan and she expected every staff member to have that same dedication. If not, like Regan, then they would have to find a new position (Brower 2016, 238).

It is a verification of Reagan’s activism in the White House that when others had problems with Don Regan like Michael Deaver, Vice President Bush, William Rogers (former Secretary of State), and Robert Strauss (former national chairman of the Democratic Party), they all went to Nancy Reagan first before approaching the President (Brower 2016, 235). They recognized her ability to influence the President and realized this was the most expedient method to achieve the outcome of replacing Don Regan due to the passive nature of President Reagan. Advisor to the President, Ed Rollins Jr. once stated, “When she has a concern with something it goes to the top of the priority list rather than the bottom” (Troy 2000, 296). At this point during President Reagan’s administration, critics were accusing Nancy Reagan of meddling in the administrative staff and overstepping her authority from the East Wing. William Safire described her “as

‘an incipient Edith Wilson- i.e., she plans to let her husband rest while she administers the office of the Chief Executive’” (Benze 1990, Troy 2000). A counter to that portrayal came from Judy Mann at the Washington Post, who stated,

First Lady Nancy Reagan managed to do what nobody else was able to do—namely rid the administration of someone who was literally crippling the presidency... The President didn’t look like a wimp. He had a wife who understood what had to be done and was willing to do the dirty work. (Reagan and Novak 1989, 334).

The main point from both journalists was that Nancy Reagan took action as the First Lady. Whether the public approved of that action or the media as a part of the office of the First Lady remains to be decided. In this situation, Reagan’s activeness stemmed from a feeling to protect her husband and ensure that his time in the White House was successful. This was further confirmed when President Reagan changed the National Security Advisor from William Clark to Robert McFarlane. Nancy Reagan belied her involvement in the change when she stated, “Ronnie thought... as did I, that there had to be a breakthrough [with the relations with the Soviet Union and] I didn’t just sit back. I was talking to people” (Brower 2016, 237). Robert McFarlane would later say he felt “that policy options were limited because of what Nancy Reagan would allow the president to do” (O’Connor et al 1996, Hastedt 2006). This sense of protectionism was reinforced after President Reagan was shot which also increased Reagan’s involvement in the mechanics of the West Wing.

“I had to be more involved in seeing that my husband was protected in every possible way”, Reagan revealed in her autobiography (Reagan and Novak 1989, 17).

After dealing with the shooting in 1981, in the aftermath Reagan chose to take an active role in determining the President's schedule and meetings. She was incredibly particular regarding who the President was meeting with, where they were meeting, and the date in which the meeting took place. Reagan and her psychic, Joan Quigley, would determine which days could be problematic for President Reagan to travel or to make a public appearance according to the astrological calendar (Troy 2000, 286). Reagan admitted that she felt more comfortable with the President meeting in Washington even though the shooting took place in Washington. She felt this way because she was able to observe and oversee the increased security measures taken place, which were a comfort to her (Reagan and Novak 1989, 49).

This micromanaging of the President's schedule at times caused tension between the First Lady and the West Wing staff. This tension was caused by the belief that the First Lady was overstepping her role and duties by involving herself in that manner. The public also noticed the tension between the East Wing and the West Wing. In a Gallup poll in 1985, the respondents were asked "How much influence do you think Nancy Reagan has on her husband's official presidential policies and decisions- a great deal, some, not very much, or none at all?". In 1985, 64% answered a great deal or some. Later in 1987, that number jumped to 81% (Watson 2000, 157). By the 1987 poll, the public became more aware of Reagan's involvement in the President's schedule and staff changes and voted accordingly. This is yet just another example of the active nature of Nancy Reagan.

In sum, Nancy Reagan overall enjoyed her time while in the White House and she most certainly made an impact in several areas while serving as the First Lady. She

sought to make the White House more fitting for the Office of the Presidency, which is described to her positive and active nature. A positive category placement is justified through her own words in an interview given to *McCalls* in November 1985, “Feminism is the ability to *choose* what you want to do...I’m doing what I want to do” (Troy 2006, 263) (Troy 2000, 294). She established a successful campaign to solve the social issue of drug use which is also attributed to her active and positive nature while First Lady. To further demonstrate her active characterization placement, she “was often characterized as a powerful, behind-the-scenes actor in her husband’s administration... [with] some amount of influence on her husband’s policies” (Sulfaro 2007, 504). In Chapter 5, I will look to placing Hillary Rodham Clinton into the Barber character analysis.

CHAPTER 5

Hillary Rodham Clinton: the Active-Negative

Based on her early record and her activities while in the White House, Hillary Rodham Clinton can be clearly categorized as an Active-Negative First Lady according to the Barber framework. Out of all the modern First Ladies, she is the most apt example of an active First Lady. The manner in which she demonstrates her “activeness” as a First Lady also results in the negative character analysis. In the early stages of her political development, she achieved her goals with a forcefulness or with an adversarial nature of one going into battle. She was not happy as a First Lady because she felt constrained by the traditional roles of the office where in Washington D.C. “she was loved by few and feared by many more” (Bernstein 2008, 9). Rodham Clinton sought to operate a co-presidency publicly with her husband rather than giving him advice behind closed doors.

Throughout her early and later political life, she has always been considered a go-getter. In the Rodham home, the children were raised to be self-sufficient. This is evidenced by her father’s unwillingness to buy the children new clothes (Burgan 2008, 17). If the children wanted something more than their parents were willing to provide, then they needed to make do or provide for themselves. The children were raised “with discipline, hard work, encouragement (often delivered in an unconventional manner), and ...education” (Bernstein 2008, 13). This contributed to the active characterization of Rodham Clinton by encouraging her to take charge of her circumstances and to achieve her set goals. Rodham Clinton was a committed member of the Girl Scouts winning several badges and honors. It is no surprise that Rodham Clinton was elected as her junior class’s vice president, president of the Young Republicans at Wellesley as well as

president of the Wellesley student government (Burgan 2008, 18-19). She has shown time and time again that she would prefer to be involved in decision-making positions in each situation she has found herself. As a result, she was the first ever student to speak at a Wellesley graduation. After a speech by Senator Edward Brooke, Rodham Clinton decided not to use a prepared speech but instead went on the attack against status quo politics saying, “the challenge now is to practice politics as the art of making what appears to be impossible, possible” (Burgan 2008, 24). She had a vision of a better world which could be obtained by changing the old guard in government (Watson 2000, 123). This would later become a campaign theme during the 1992 Clinton presidential campaign. This characterization even extended to her personal life. Contrary to the mores at the time, she walked up to Bill Clinton in the Yale Law library and said, “if you’re going to keep looking at me...we might as well be introduced” (Burgan 2008, Troy 2000). True to how she was raised, she set her goals and went about achieving them.

Hillary Rodham Clinton has also been interested in politics and engaged in government affairs since high school. She went door to door in Chicago to attempt to find instances of voter fraud in the 1960 presidential election between John Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Raised in a Republican household, Rodham Clinton was looking to see if voters actually lived at the addresses listed on their registration cards in order to help the Republican campaign (Burgan 2008, 20). Before she got married, Rodham Clinton served “as a staff attorney then board member of the Children’s Defense Fund, a staff member on the House Judiciary Committee when it prepared the articles of impeachment against President Nixon, and a Carter appointee to the U.S. Legal Corporation” (Borrelli 2011, 48). Here she demonstrates her willingness to perform any action possible that will

subscribe to her belief system to make the world a better place. It is a testament to her political activeness that “in 1988, after she’d learned that her husband believed himself to be in love with another woman [Rodham Clinton] thought about… [challenging her potential ex-husband] and running for governor of Arkansas” (Bernstein 2008, 6).

As the First Lady of Arkansas, Rodham Clinton was appointed as committee head by the governor to investigate health care issues in the more rural areas of the state during the first term. Later in 1982 after the win, Bill Clinton again appointed his wife to chair another task force, the Educational Standards Committee. Rodham Clinton stayed true to her beliefs that she and subsequently they could make the world a better place. This is later confirmed when the Clintons were decided whether to run for president in 1992. Rodham Clinton believed the last two presidents enabled corruption throughout Washington and George “Bush was out of touch with many of the problems facing the country” (Burgan 2008, 47). She fell back on her beliefs that she and her husband would make the world a better place and they would achieve this by fixing the government system that was oppressing those who needed help. She was incredibly active during that campaign. She served as Clinton’s de facto campaign manager. She would hire the campaign staff, write speeches, and speak with reporters (Burgan 2008, 49). After the victory, Rodham Clinton “attended cabinet meetings, [was] briefed on the issues, and openly functioned as the president’s chief political adviser. [She] travelled on behalf of [her] husband and gave speeches on political and policy topics” (Watson 2000, 129).

Due the flexibility of the office of the First Lady and the ability for each First Lady to remake the functions of the office as she sees fit, President Clinton and the First Lady chose initially to embark on a co-presidency. In this co-presidency, both would

work together to perform the duties of the Office of the President. President Clinton affirmed this plan when he stated during the 1992 presidential election, “‘Buy one, get one free’ [and she would reply] ‘if you vote for him, you get me’” (Burden and Mughan 1999, 237) (Troy 2000, 346) (Brower 2016, 19). Rodham Clinton made it clear from the beginning that she expected an active role in her husband’s campaigning and administration. Clinton confirmed her role in his administration when he stated, “‘If I get elected president, it will be an unprecedented partnership, far more than Franklin Roosevelt and Eleanor...we’ll do things together like we always have...we are a partnership” (Troy 2000, Brower 2016).

After the winning the presidency, there was discussion over what role the First Lady should play. Her suggestion was to be named Chief of Staff for the President. The presidential advisors disagreed because if something went awry, then the President wouldn’t be able to fire or punish the Chief of Staff. Rodham Clinton also suggested the positions Attorney General and Secretary of Education as ones she could potentially fulfill in addition to her First Lady duties (Bernstein 2008, 211). The President appointed her to chair a task force whose job would be to formulate a legislative package to provide universal health care for the country where she would have “six Cabinet members reporting to her” (Troy 2000, 356). Rodham Clinton and her assistant chose the White House staff and the President simply just signed off on their choices which confirms the power she held in the White House as a co-president (Bernstein 2008, 213). She also conducted the final interviews for all the potential senior cabinet members (Bernstein 20008, 221). The public was aware of the substantial presence Rodham Clinton had in the administration which was reflected in a poll in which “52 percent believed she had more

input into ‘her’ health plan than he [President Clinton] did, while only 4 percent said he had more of a say than she did” (Troy 2000 360-361). Rodham Clinton would later demonstrate her negative characterization when the health care bill failed. She “took out her fury on conservative Democrats and members of the medical establishment who dared to differ with her” (Troy 2000, 366). Again, Rodham Clinton would go into attack mode when her attempts to make the world a better place did not work out and there must be someone to blame that does not involve her potential failings (Bernstein 2008, 44). The public took a negative view of Rodham Clinton’s involvement on the task force as “she was directly involved in policy making [because] she had not been elected to or formally installed in public office, her actions were viewed...as inappropriate and her influence on policy was seen as too great” (Knickrehm and Teske 2006, 245).

Hillary Rodham Clinton was the first and so far, only First Lady to set up her office in the West Wing as opposed to traditionally in the East Wing. This move demonstrated how serious and active her role in the administration would be. Even the size of her staff illustrated the activeness of the First Lady. Table 5 lists the positions of Rodham Clinton’s White House staff. She Clinton had a staff size of 16 larger than her predecessor, Barbara Bush.

Table 5. Office of First Lady Hillary Clinton, 1997

Office of First Lady Hillary Clinton, 1997
Counselor to the First Lady
Assistant to the Counselor to the First Lady
Special Assistant to the Counselor to the First Lady
Assistant to the President of Chief of Staff to the First Lady
Deputy Chief of Staff to the First Lady
Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Communications to the First Lady
Special Assistant to the President and Press Secretary to the First Lady
Deputy Press Secretary to the First Lady x2
Special Assistant to the First Lady
Executive Assistant
Staff Assistant
Director of Correspondence for the First Lady
Special Assistant to the President and Social Secretary
Deputy Social Secretary
Special Assistant to the Social Secretary
<i>Recopied with permission from: Robert P. Watson</i>
<i>Source: Watson 2000, 116.</i>

With Rodham Clinton establishing her dominance in the West Wing, it makes sense that her staff would also enjoy some of that prominence with “three aides honored with White House commissions [while] the vice president’s staff had one” (Troy 2000, 357). It is clear the influence Rodham Clinton has over the President and the co-presidency they

were trying to establish in some of the titles given to her White House staff. Rodham Clinton also “fought for her team to have access to information” from the West Wing in order to maintain control of the executive branch (Brower 2016, 171).

As an active First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton also travelled extensively during the two terms in the White House. She represented the United States at international events, she attended the Winter Olympic Games in Norway, she also spoke at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in China (Burgan 2008, 61-62). In advocating her health care legislation, Rodham Clinton exceeded the number of times every other First Lady has appeared before Congress when she testified in front of the House Ways and Means Committee, the House Education and Labor Committee, the House Energy and Commerce Committee, the Senate Finance and Labor Committee, and the Senate Human Resources Committee (Watson 2000, 96). In yet another example of Rodham Clinton’s activism, “when the Clinton administration announced a huge disaster relief package for the earthquake and hurricane victims in Latin America, it was First Lady Hillary Clinton who announced the relief plan to the nation” (Watson 2000, 102). Throughout the Clinton presidency, she had a significant impact in the public as a result of the strong role taken in the executive administration.

To further justify Rodham Clinton’s active classification that because of her “public visibility, or perhaps notoriety, is that she is the only first lady to have been given sustained attention by polling organizations” (Burden and Mughan 1999, 239). To justify her negative classification, “her mean monthly favorability rating for the entire 5-year period is 57 percent” which is lower than the other modern first ladies who generally enjoy much higher approval ratings (Burden and Mughan 1999, 240). A poll in the *Los*

Angeles Times in 1992 showed that 68% of those surveyed believed she should not sit in on cabinet meetings (Bernstein 2008, 240). The perfect way to sum up Rodham Clinton's active classification was an interview she gave where she was asked ““what’s it like to govern?” [and] Hillary answered, ‘It’s been exhilarating, frustrating, and eye opening’- then paused and added, ‘just to set the record straight, I’m not really governing either”’ (Troy 2000, 359).

In examining Hillary Rodham Clinton and the attempt to classify her into one of Barber’s four categories, it is difficult to distinguish her active characterizations and her negative characterizations. She would often perform her actions in the classic negative manner. Because of the intertwining of the two, her analysis will examine the active and the negative evaluations of her character simultaneously. This will be especially true of her behavior while in the White House. Rodham Clinton acclimated to the fact that if something needs to be done, you yourself need to handle it and usually that involves the use of force. She has stated previously that “her parents wanted her and her brothers ‘to be tough in order to survive what life may throw at [them and] ...expected [the children] to stand up for [them]selves’” (Burgan 2008, 18). She described her father as “confrontational, completely and utterly so... [who strove] to ensure that his children were ‘competitive, scrappy fighters’ to ‘empower’ them, to foster ‘pragmatic competitiveness’” (Bernstein 2008, 15). Rodham Clinton learned this lesson early on when she was getting bullied as a four-year-old. When Rodham Clinton told her mom about the bully, her mom told her to challenge the bully and as a result she punched the bully in the nose (Burgan 2008, 17). In the Rodham household according to Dorothy Rodham, “there’s no room in this house for cowards” (Bernstein 2008, 28). This

demonstrated the active-negative characterization of Rodham Clinton; she took care of her own problems by attacking them with literal force in this particular instance. She was encouraged not to back down and not to run from a fight. This reached a level that even “some of Hillary’s greatest admirers came to question whether she genuinely like people” or whether she viewed people as potential adversaries (Bernstein 2008, 36).

Education was important in the Rodham home with the emphasis that gender should not hinder educational goals or opportunities where “Hillary would not be limited in opportunity or skills by the fact that she was a girl” (Bernstein 2008, 13). When Rodham Clinton was fourteen, she applied to go to astronaut training with NASA. She was crushed and outraged when she found out that she wasn’t accepted because “the agency had no plans to train female astronauts” (Burgan 2008, 18). Rodham Clinton was raised with the idea that she had no limits to her opportunities especially due to her gender while society at the time placed boundaries and restrictions on vocational opportunities for women. Rodham Clinton would spend much of her life pounding on the glass ceiling in an attempt to break it down. When Rodham Clinton was a senior in high school, she ran for class president and was soundly defeated. One of her male classmates told her she “was ‘really stupid if [she] thought a girl could be elected president’” (Bernstein 2008, 30). She continued to fight this stereotype in the 2008 and 2016 presidential elections when she declared her candidacy.

In 1969, she succeeded in gaining admission to Yale Law School; out of the 235 students she was one of 37 women. She had to work extremely hard in college to gain admittance to one of the top law schools in the country. When Rodham Clinton moved to Arkansas, she asked a friend about the state of the legal profession there who said, “there

weren't many female lawyers in the state... so, 'you have to be three hundred percent better than any man to succeed'" (Bernstein 2008, 96). Rodham Clinton joined the prestigious Rose Law Firm as the first female attorney. At the firm, she walked a delicate balance between her gender and her job. The wives wanted to get to know her, "but if she spent time with the wives, the partners would reinforce their suspicion that she was, after all, a woman, not a real lawyer" (Bernstein 2008, 131). Betsey Wright, a friend, would say "'She was neither intimidated nor inhibited by any barrier or stereotype...[she] barged through [barriers] with such force that she didn't even seem to take note'" (Bernstein 2008, 42). Again, the manner in which she would attempt to break it down would add weight to her active-negative characterization.

While it is undisputed that Hillary Rodham Clinton was an active First Lady, it was the manner in which she was active that can distinguish her negative characterization. She has been observed by the public to be desirous of power and has been described as a "steely Lady Macbeth" (Borrelli 2011, 28) and in March of the 1992 presidential election, "only 28 percent [of the public] viewed Hillary favorably" (Troy 2000, 346). This journey to the White House began in 1975 when Rodham Clinton agreed to marry Bill Clinton. She was at a crossroads before accepting his proposal. Bill Clinton wanted to go back to Arkansas and begin his political career there. Hillary Rodham Clinton had multiple opportunities to begin her career in New York or Washington D.C. and "she was torn over what to do [but she decided that] 'Bill's desire to be in public like was much more specific than my desire to do good'" (Burgan 2008, 35). During law school, she could be overheard telling their classmates that Bill Clinton was going to be president someday (Bernstein 2008, 107). She realized that she would be

able to achieve her goals of improving the quality of life for the country in a wider-reaching manner as a president's wife rather than running for office on her own. Female representatives were few and far between in the U.S. government during the 1970's and they did not have much power in their chambers as their male counterparts. Little did she know that the First Lady would have much more restrictions put on her activities and her involvement in her husband's administration than a duly elected representative.

She was always an active partner for Bill Clinton throughout his political career, but she still felt the need to distinguish herself and her personal accomplishments which is a characteristic of a negative personality type. One of the friends of the Clinton's "noted that when Bill and Hillary enter 'a room, they go their separate ways. She ... never drew her identity from him'" (Troy 2000, 351). It was for this reason that she decided to not take her husband's last name after they married. While performing an advisory role to her husband while he was governor, Rodham Clinton also took a job at the Rose Law Firm. She justified her decision to not just remain a politician's wife when she stated, "I need my own identity too" (Burgan 2008, 39) (Borrelli 2011, 185).

After serving his first term as governor, Bill Clinton lost his re-election bid. Rodham Clinton was shocked to find out that the voters did not understand or approve her decision to keep her last name or did not devote her complete time to the duties of the governor's wife (Burgan 2008, 41). Though it went against her personal ideals, she decided to legally change her name to Clinton during the next gubernatorial campaign in order to improve her public image with the constituency (Gutin 2003, Bernstein 2008). Even then Rodham Clinton was aware of the effect she had on her husband's political popularity with the voters of Arkansas. Later once her husband attained the presidency,

Hillary Clinton would change her name again to Hillary Rodham Clinton. “‘Don’t ever lose your own identity in this process. Don’t lose yourself to your husband’s career’” was her warning to other political wives (Troy 2000, 374). This more clearly demonstrates her resolve to support her husband yet still establish her own separate identity and blaze her own trail however she was able. These actions further confirm her negative classification. However, this did not help boost her public image when “twenty-one percent of the public thought that it was a bad idea for the first lady to refer to herself as Hillary Rodham Clinton” (Knickrehm and Teske 2006, 247).

The first example of Hillary Rodham Clinton’s intertwined active-negative characterization arose during the 1982 gubernatorial campaign. Rodham Clinton was on a mission to save the citizenry from the oppressive nature of those currently in power (Bernstein 2008, 73). After Clinton lost his re-election bid, they had to wait patiently till 1982 to run again and challenge current Governor Frank White. During White’s campaign speeches in 1982, Hillary Rodham Clinton would “often show up to challenge his views” (Burgan 2008, 43). This was unheard of, the “wife of” crashing support rallies of the opponent in order to attack the opponent’s campaign promises and gain public support for their cause (Bernstein 2008, 167).

In another example of the same ilk, Rodham Clinton repeated this pattern during the 1992 presidential campaign when she gave an interview about incumbent George W. Bush. Rodham Clinton was upset that so much of the press was covering her husband’s affairs without addressing similar rumors regarding President Bush. She stated “‘the Establishment- regardless of party- sticks together. They’re gonna circle the wagons on [Bush’s alleged girlfriend] Jennifer Fitzgerald’… never before had a presidential

candidate's spouse attacked her husband's rival so directly and so viciously" (Troy 2000, 352). Because of the adversarial presence Rodham Clinton brought to the campaign, "40 percent of voters viewed Bill as a fast-talking 'wishes-washy' pol, and his wife as being in the race 'for herself' and 'going for the power'" (Troy 2000, 353). She would engage in these tactics because "'you can't accomplish anything in government unless you win'" (Bernstein 2008, 50). The tactics used backfired on Rodham Clinton because "media coverage and public evaluations of Mrs. Clinton...declined sharply when she adopted a negative tone and attacked" (Wright 2016, 33).

The next example arrived also during the 1992 presidential campaign when Rodham Clinton took a prominent and public role. As a result, she received critique from the public as if she were the one running. Because the Clinton's presented themselves essentially as running mates, Rodham Clinton received as much speculation and criticism as Clinton. In true negative fashion, she went on the attack to defend her image and "offended female homemakers by appearing to deprecate lifestyles other than the careerist one she had chosen for herself... 'I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies'" (Burden and Mughan 1999, Troy 2000). In defending herself, she alienated potential voters with whom traditionally the potential First Lady would have received support from. Her statement "sounded like a declaration of war on the American home...and bespoke the elitist disdain for homemaking" (Troy 2000, 348). With Rodham Clinton's upfront role in the campaigning process, some voters were wary she would take a larger role in the administration of the executive duties than they were comfortable with or used to with prior First Ladies. The public made this plain in a 1996 Gallup poll in which "over one-half of poll respondents believe Hillary Clinton has too much influence

in the Clinton administration" (Watson 2000, 157). Correspondingly, she was also "criticized as a co-president and for using the term 'we' when referring to herself and her husband" when addressing the nation (Knickrehm and Teske 2006, 244).

Because her introduction to Washington was so caustic, Rodham Clinton sought to put people in and around the White House that she could trust, people who have proven their loyalty throughout the campaign and previously in Arkansas. She believed that the established Washington elite, the permanent White House staff, and the media were out to bring the Clinton's down. In order to achieve the placement of their people in government positions others would need to resign or be fired. There have been allegations of her involvement in the firing of the White House Travel staff in order to place those loyal to the Clinton's in their place. Because of the firings, "President Clinton was under pressure to make sure he and his wife hadn't broken any laws" (Burgan 2008, 60). Rodham Clinton's response to the insinuations was "'It didn't matter that [we] had done nothing wrong...it only mattered that the public was given the impression that we had'" (Burgan 2008, 60). Aides would come forward later confirming instructions given by the First Lady to get rid of the current Travel Office staff to make way for their people (Troy 2000, 365).

Rodham Clinton had an adversarial relationship with the media and had been called paranoid about those around her due to her fear of those in the administration leaking stories to the media whom she believed would love to take her and her husband down (Brower 2016, Bernstein 2008). She was frequently heard talking about the right-wing conspiracy trying to take them down (Bernstein 2008, 198). This fear of leaks led to the decision by Rodham Clinton to attempt to keep her health care task force meetings

closed door and off the record. She came to expect a fight at every turn, so she attempted to shield the deliberations from the public and the media thus confirming her negative characterization. She also closed off the press corps' access to the White House press secretary because she was concerned about controlling the press and controlling the narrative coming from the White House (Bernstein 2008, 246).

It is also possible that Hillary Rodham Clinton was looking over her shoulder and attempting to surround herself and her husband with those who were loyal because of the frequent infidelities that permeated the relationship of the Clintons even in its infancy (Bernstein 2008, 175). These infidelities frequently led to political setbacks; first, when Clinton lost his first re-election as governor, next in 1988 when he decided not to run for President. In both instances, Rodham Clinton blamed her husband's weakness (Bernstein 2008, 163). Setbacks interfered with her mission to make changes in the government and make the lives of the population better than ever before. An aide from the White House states, "Hillary hates the fact that Bill Clinton cheats on her, and that he doesn't need her as much as she wants" (Bernstein 2008, 27). In addition, to Rodham Clinton's driving force to make the world a better place, it's possible that some of her active motivation could derive from the attempt to make her an indispensable partner to her husband. She was not willing to let his weaknesses destroy their political dreams (Bernstein 2008, 113). A friend would say, "she didn't like not to have the upper hand with men" (Bernstein 2008, 33). This would also provide some insight into the complicated marriage of the Clintons.

In sum, Hillary Rodham Clinton wanted to be First Lady to realize her agenda to make the world a better place; however, once she reached that position and realized there

were limits to flexibility of the office and her potential accomplishments, she eschewed the position. She was unwilling to engage in any of the more traditional duties so much so that her “social secretary was flabbergasted by Hillary’s initial unwillingness to engage in the usual protocols of White House entertaining” (Bernstein 2008, 315). Rodham Clinton fought the boundaries placed through custom and formality on the First Lady. That position did not give her control over her agenda or fulfillment when “she came into [the] job thinking she was going to have these great achievements [and] she was the first first lady ever forced to testify in front of a grand jury” (Wright 2016, 80).

It is not surprising that in 1994, Rodham Clinton gave an interview in which she lamented, “I just don’t know what to do. I just don’t know what works anymore...I don’t trust my own judgement. Everything I do seems not to work” (Troy 2000, 368). The particular forceful manner that Rodham Clinton brought to the White House did not gel with the public opinion of how the Office of the First Lady should be run. It is not a wonder that she decided to run for Senate while still serving as First Lady. In that instance, she would be the elected official and would have much less gossamer red tape than her prior position behind the Eagle at the White House. This more than anything cements her placement into the active-negative category of Barber’s character analysis. Her character elements have been described as “ambition and anger...the messianism and sense of entitlement... the seriousness of purpose and quickness to judgement...the chronic impatience and aversion to personal confrontation...the belief in public service, the tenacious attempts at absolute control” completely and totally define one who has been placed in the active-negative category (Bernstein 2008, 37). I will now turn to Laura Bush’s placement in the Barber matrix in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

Laura Bush: the Passive-Positive

Unlike the prior First Ladies, Laura Bush is not as evident and clear cut as to her placement in of Barber's matrix. Once her background, personality, and character are viewed in the aggregate though, her characterization becomes clear. Laura Bush is most assuredly in the positive character grouping of Barber's classification framework; however, her activity placement is initially not as apparent. It is tempting to place her in the active category especially when analyzing her second term as First Lady. It is; however, important to note that her activity served the interests of her husband and her passions; otherwise Bush did not seek out center stage in the political arena or in any other area of her life. She was always content to be reading and out of the spotlight (Wertheimer 2005, 165). Due to these factors, Laura Bush should be categorized as a passive and more completely a passive-positive.

Laura Bush approached the role of the First Lady as a helpmate to the President rather than his equal especially in administrative or policy decisions like the prior First Ladies would. This was a pattern of behavior Bush has exhibited since childhood. Her friends have said, "She was very soft-spoken... [and] you [didn't] think of her as being a leader, but quietly was the one everyone counted on" (Kessler 2006, 51-52). She was brought up in a more traditional household where her mother chose to stay home as a full-time mom although on occasion, she would help her husband keep the books for his business (Wertheimer 2005, 165). Even though her mother chose to stay home, her parents still worked as team (Kessler 2006, 15) (Wertheimer 2005, 165). Bush's mother had a strong influence on her life exuding "a calm competence and quite virtues... that

may be easily overlooked” with putting others before yourself (Kessler 2006, 18). Even as a child, Bush’s friends confirmed her passivity, stating “she doesn’t take up all the oxygen in in the room...she is more likely to ask you questions than to tell you what she thinks” (Kessler 2006, 36). Bush would later follow her parent’s example of family first once she arrived at the White House.

Laura Bush maintained a more traditional and supportive role throughout her husband’s political career but would still provide her thoughts when he asked. A friend of the Bush’s confirms this, “‘He discusses a lot of stuff with her and has huge respect for her way of thinking... but she would never demand or presume to think she was giving advice” (Kessler 2006, 105). She much preferred a behind the scenes role as she is naturally more reserved or even possibly considered shy (Kessler 2006, 27, 85). When addressing the influence that Laura Bush has over her husband, it can be best described as informal. When asked about the gender of the President’s potential Supreme Court justice nominee, Bush simply said, “I would really like for him to name another woman, but I know that my husband will pick somebody who has—has a lot of integrity and strength, and whether it’s a man or woman, of course, I have no idea” (Kessler 2006, 233). In her statement, Bush expressed that the President was the one making the decision over the appointment and not the two of them jointly. With this statement was reinforcing that she did not view the duties of the First Lady intertwined with the President as a more active First Lady would. When asked an off-base question by the media, Bush was known to say, “you know, I don’t have authority; I’m not an elected official” (Kniffel 2008, 44). Laura Bush is reinforcing publicly that she does not view the Office of the First Lady and

the Office of the President to be joined together and form a co-presidency in which she would have authority and decision-making power.

When Laura Bush arrived at the White House, she moved the First Lady's office from the West Wing to the East Wing (Wertheimer 2005, 168). Through this simple act of changing office space, she was figuratively alerting the nation that she would be assuming a more passive role as the First Lady rather than the prior First Lady. Bush performs the duties of the First Lady by looking to ensure the President's emotional and mental state are taken care of by knowing "when the president needs to laugh or be in a quiet place... maybe to escape in a book or with a puzzle or conversation" (Kessler 2006, 168). In this manner, she is able to assist him, so he is able to focus solely on the task at hand which further confirms her chosen status as a helpmate to the president. According to Clay Johnson, the deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, "issues come up in informal conversation. She is very smart and very wise and can give him an objective, big picture-perspective. [She] is not trying to challenge or influence a decision but making sure Bush has thought it out" (Kessler 2006, 156). This is further illustrated during the years George H. W. Bush was Governor of Texas. Laura Bush's office was in the basement of the capitol across from the cafeteria. One day, she went to get a cup off coffee with her protective detail and someone from the line said to Laura Bush, "'someone important is here because the Governor's Protective Detail is here. I wonder who it is?'" Bush replied that she didn't know who the detail was guarding (Kessler 2006, 93-94). She would rather play a more anonymous role when it comes to her political duties that accompany her husband's elected position true to a passive First

Lady. She is a quiet source of strength for her husband, especially after the terror attacks on September 11th (Kessler 2006, 163).

Laura Bush was raised in a small town in Texas by two parents who treasured her. Her familial bonds are incredibly strong as she is her parent's only surviving child (Kessler 2006, 17). Because her family was incredibly tight-knit, Bush was extremely protective of her family's privacy while in the White House which would contribute to her passive characterization. She chose to keep her focus on her family and support her husband rather than placing herself in the political spotlight. This was illustrated when George H. Bush was Vice President to Ronald Reagan and the George H.W. Bush family went to Washington D.C. to visit. During the visit Laura Bush and her husband wanted to take the children up the Washington Monument but the lines were too long. They never told the park attendant who they were in order get to the top (Kessler 2006, 83). At a later date, Bush and a friend were discussing a trip to Yellowstone National Park in which they would have to enter in a lottery to win a space at the park. When Bush mentioned this, her friend said, "Laura, you're the daughter-in-law of a president of the United States and the wife of the Texas Governor and you're on the waiting list?" (Kessler 2006, 94). These instances demonstrate that Bush wanted to avoid the inevitable publicity and allow her family as much privacy as possible. She was not interested in the limelight her position as First Lady brought.

Throughout her life, she showed no interest in politics and even initially refused to meet George Bush because he was at that time working on his father's congressional campaign (Kessler 2006, 62). It is again a verification of her passive nature that she even made her husband promise before they got married that she would never have to make a

political speech (Kessler 2016, Wertheimer 2005). This arrangement did not hold up and she has made several speeches on behalf of her husband and her several projects. In fact, each speech she gave had to be proof read to remove any mentions of “I” (Kessler 2006, 111). She performs these duties in spite of the fact that she is not comfortable with the press and only gives interviews when absolutely necessary (Kessler 2006, Wertheimer 2005). It is typical for even passive “first ladies who avoided the public spotlight while occupying the White House [to be] avid spokespersons for their husbands on the campaign trail” (Wright 2016, 13). For example, when Bush was interviewed by National Public Radio and was asked to read on air a few pages from *The Brothers Karamazov*, “you got the impression she would just as soon dispense with the small talk and keep on reading” (Kessler 2006, 113). Bush’s press secretary said, “she’s never going to be the kind of person who calls the press secretary and says, ‘I want to be on *Meet the Press* next week’” (Kessler 2006, 139).

At the beginning of her political life, when her husband first ran for the House of Representatives, she “was uncomfortable with politics and hesitant about her role in his political career” (Watson 2006, 312). While on the campaign trail even though she was not comfortable with the role, it was clear that Bush was popular with the public and the President preferred her to be on the campaign trail (Wertheimer 2005, 166). Bush was also talented at raising funds for the campaign, and when asked “why she wanted to put so much effort into it [she replied,] ‘it’s a lot better than losing’” (Kessler 2006, 185). Bush was willing to help make the campaign as successful as possible, not for herself but rather for her husband which further explains her position in the Barber matrix as a passive. On the 2004 presidential campaign, her political activity was relatively little only

appearing in a few campaign commercials simply nodding and not speaking or quietly sitting next to her husband showing support non-verbally (Sulfaro 2007, 490-491). In the aftermath of September 11th, Bush knew that she would have to address the nation to provide a feeling of safety and security she was able to as the nation's comforter in chief. Because of her approach to the Office of the First Lady, "she has not functioned as a war counselor to the commander in chief, as did Edith Wilson" (Watson 2006, 310). She still "wasn't a political animal", but she did what she knew she had to as First Lady of the United States (Kessler 2006, 139).

The clear passive distinction for Bush is that her first inclination is not towards political activity. She once described herself as "'a Republican by marriage' [but] it was not that she had given up any strong political beliefs: she never had any" (Kessler 2006, 88). Laura Bush is essentially a-political in her public life. During a White House interview, Bush was asked if her background prepared her for political life. She responded, "'it really did...and I would have never really thought it before, but both the experience I had reading to children over and over and over and over, and storytelling, were really excellent training for giving speeches'" (Kniffel 2008, 43). It is clear that Bush was not expecting a life in politics; however, she used the tools at her disposal in order to best help her husband on the campaign and later in the White House. Although there are a few issues of importance to her, those issues typically transcended party lines which further confirms her passive character in which the First Lady will choose non-controversial issues which achieve wide-spread appeal. Laura Bush was content to support her husband in his chosen career rather than seek out a career in politics whether in partnership with her husband or on her own. This is further illustrated when the Twin

Towers fell and the beginning of the War on Terror. Bush wasn't in the war room giving her thoughts on military strategy, she fulfilled the role she was most comfortable with, “‘comforter-in-chief’, reassuring a nation on edge” (Kessler 2006, 84). When asked what the most important thing about was being the First Lady, Bush responded, “being married to the president” (Kessler 2006, 105). Her response succinctly summed up the way in which she approached the office of the First Lady and how she would shape her role while in that office.

“Perhaps in response to the hardships they faced both Laura’s parents adopted an irreverent, lighthearted approach to life” which they passed on to their daughter (Kessler 2006, 17). “She makes a conscious choice to go through life with a positive attitude... choos[ing] to view the world and the people around her” (Kessler 2006, 19). Even when facing hardships, Bush always attempted to see the lighter side. During her husband’s first presidential campaign in 2000, he lost the New Hampshire Republican primary to John McCain. Her response to the loss was “‘we’re going to win this [and] you’re going to be strong in the upcoming South Carolina primary, in the upcoming debates... you’re the right candidate [and] things are going to be fine’” (Kessler 2006, 100-101). The presidential candidate drew strength from his wife’s support in the role that she best exemplified on the campaign trail and later in the White House. She fulfills her positive characterization in the following description, “she wakes up every day with a big smile and says, ‘What are we going to do today?’ She thinks of herself as incredibly fortunate to have this life, doing interesting things, meeting interesting people” (Kessler 2006, 168). It is clear that Bush enjoyed her time as First Lady and the opportunities she was able to experience through serving in that capacity. A friend has said, “she is always in

the background but always there...[and] George [drew] great comfort and strength from that" (Kessler 2006, 72). The President affirms, "she's always been a very positive influence on me... in terms of forcing me to ask the right questions" (Kessler 2006, 156).

Laura Bush has had a lifelong passion for education and while as the First Lady of Texas and the First Lady, she chose her social platform to reflect that dedication (Wertheimer 2005, 166). She was willing to become active in advancing her causes but in this case, it was her passion for her social causes and not her passion for the political world that drove this dedication (Wertheimer 2005, 168). For this reason, Bush's activity in her social causes best reflects her positive nature while holding her title. While the First Lady of Texas, Bush

conceived of Ready to Read, Ready to Learn, a program to get Head Start teachers [to] teach kids to read..., she hosted a forum on early cognitive learning with the legislature, [and] started the Texas Book Festival [which] 'included any Texas author who wrote a book that year, regardless of their politics' (Kessler 2006, 91).

These interests and activities were for the sole purpose of promoting Bush's passion for education, not a political party or a political agenda. Bush has said, "books are so important to me, and I think they're so important to a democracy and so important to our society that it just seems natural that we would try to promote books in any way we could" (Kniffel 2008, 43). Laura Bush channeled her passions from her pre-political life to give her purpose throughout her political life with her husband. While in the White House, Bush "shine[d] a spotlight on libraries, librarianship, education, and literacy" (Kniffel 2008, 45). By adopting the issue of women's rights while in office, Bush

employed this same philosophy of using her passions and interests to develop her social outreach programs. She was shocked by the condition of women around the world and strove to improve educational opportunities for women in the Middle East. Again, this was not driven by a partisan agenda but rather Bush shaping her agenda while in the White House regarding the social issues that she was passionate about.

While serving as the First Lady of Texas, “Bush promoted many bipartisan initiatives to support the visual and literary arts, education, libraries, and other issues involving women’s health” (Wertheimer 2005, 167). When she came to Washington D.C., she brought the programs that she developed in Texas and expanded them into national programs. For example, Laura brought her idea of the book festivals to Washington and partnered with the Library of Congress to develop a national book festival which became immensely popular (Kessler 2006, 115). During her time as First Lady, Bush also brought “Ludmila Putina, the wife of Russian president Vladimir Putin to open the second festival with her...the following year, Mrs. Putin held her own book festival in Moscow, and Laura attended” (Kessler 2006, 116). Laura Bush attempted to put together a symposium to honor American poets. From the guest list, it was clear that there was not “a political litmus test” applied in the form of pre-screening the invitees (Kessler 2006, 151). These examples further demonstrate Bush’s commitment to her passions regardless of partisan politics.

Her passion for working with children reinforces the positive distinction of her term as First Lady. Bush also developed the Laura Bush Foundation for America’s Libraries in which “she was able to scale her passion for books and reading...[where] her primary goal for the foundation [was] to put books in the hands of kids” (Kniffel 2008,

46). While in the White House and “because of Laura, funds for cultural programs have been increased” and for example, the National Endowment for the Arts received their largest increase in the budget in twenty years” (Kessler 2006, 153). She enjoyed her position in the simple fact that she was able to increase reading among more children across the country rather than in a singular state. It was for this reason that Laura Bush testified before Congress to shine a light on improving education and “asked Congress for a \$100 million appropriation to expand the extra-help program—called Striving Readers—to schools across the country” (Kessler 2006, 187). It evident in her interactions with teachers and children that she enjoys working on these initiatives because ““she connects [to them] in such a warm and genuine fashion”” (Kessler 2006, 112). Laura Bush felt very honored to be able to hold the position of First Lady and was “very respectful of [the] history and tradition and the fact that [it] is a very special place” (Kessler 2006, 126).

In conclusion, Laura Bush emanates the passive-positive characterization of James Davis Barber. As a positive, she enjoyed the holding the office during her husband’s terms in the White House. In order to achieve this, she was able to conduct and merge her interests into her First Lady social platform and that contributed to her enjoyment in holding the office. Her choices in developing her social platform “reflect [her] priorities and typifies her style in office [as]… the education first lady [who promotes] an array of early childhood education and teaching initiatives… [which] are causes that she is ideally suited to embrace and causes that mirror her heart-felt interests” (Watson 2006, 323). Though Bush was active in promoting her social causes, she is categorized as a passive according to the Barber matrix as she was not interested in the

political power that also arrived with the office. She was described as “as very hesitant political spouse [and]...a small-town girl from rural Texas with no interest in politics... [who had] never been the trusted political confidante [of the President]” (Watson 2006, 309). She had no political ambitions before holding the office or while in office. She had “no desire to use the office as a means to effect change and establish a record of accomplishment [and was] genuinely apolitical” (Watson 2006, 313). The reasons for her wide-spread approval from the public and the media as a more traditional First Lady who does not encroach on the sphere of executive power further confirm her placement as a passive-positive. In Chapter 7, I will analyze different events during the various First Ladies terms to determine if their public opinion poll numbers impacted the public approval for the President.

CHAPTER 7

Public opinion and Public approval

Even in the early days of the presidency, the First Lady was able to contribute to the positive political standing of the President through her traditional role as the nation's hostess as both courteous and capable (Watson and Eksterowicz 2006, 10). Several of the early First Ladies were able to turn their skill as the nation's hostess into political capital for their husband's success in the Office and thus aiding him in winning more public approval points. Dolley Madison's ability "as a hostess [was] seen as crucial at times to her husband's success" and she was able to further her husband's success through those social arts" (Knickrehm and Teske 2006, 243). The White House is aware of the effect of the First Lady on public approval of the President; therefore, public appearances of the president's spouse are strategic efforts to advance the administration's agenda" (Wright 2016, 26). Illustrating the potential impact of the public opinion of the First Lady on the public approval of the President is Michelle Obama's 2012 Democratic National Convention speech. Her speech "drove unprecedented levels of social media activity, generating an average of 28,003 tweets per minute, nearly double the tweets for which Mitt Romney's RNC acceptance speech... 14,289 tweets per minute" (Wright 2016, xi). These numbers demonstrate the ability of the First Lady to gain national attention for the benefit of the success of her husband's administration and policies.

In experiments performed by Dr. Laura Wright to gauge the persuasiveness of the First Ladies on the public opinion of the President, she found that compared to respondents who received no treatment (i.e., neither a speech excerpt nor a video clip), respondents who read or watched a speech made by the

president's spouse were quite supportive of the presidential agenda items discussed...and that first ladies are sometimes quite capable of convincing respondents that the president is a strong leader, cares about Americans, is moral, or is intelligent (Wright 2016, 125)

Dr. Wright found the public exposed to material from the First Ladies had an impact on their opinions of the President. This further justifies the phenomenon that the public opinion of the First Ladies can affect the approval of the President. If the public had a favorable opinion of the First Lady, then she is able to use that to increase the support for her husband. Table 6 further demonstrates the importance of the First Lady to the achievement of the West Wing initiatives and policies in the eyes of the public.

Table 6. Success of the President relating to the First Lady

The First Lady is important to the success of a president	
Strongly Agree	55.7
Agree	34.3
Neutral	7.1
Disagree	2.9
Strongly Disagree	0

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Source: Watson 2000, 158

With 90% of the population agreeing that the First Lady is important to the success of the President, it makes sense that the campaign team and the White House staff has increased their incorporation of the First Lady in to events to gain support for the President's agenda.

Throughout the campaign process, the potential president's team takes great care in the way they market the potential first lady because "studies have shown that would-be first ladies play a significant role in shaping affect toward presidential candidates as well as the choices of voters...[because] in many ways [the spouses] are...running for the position" (Burrell et al 2011, 157). There is a significant effort among the West Wing to use the First Lady's popularity with the constituency to bolster support for the President because "Presidents and presidential advisers recognize that the first lady affects public perceptions and public opinion about the president" and use the First Lady as a surrogate in the delivery of the President's message (Watson 2000, 114). Because she is "like any official sent to Washington, to succeed she must appear articulate, well informed, and self-assured" (Campbell and McCluskie 2006, 169). Because the First Lady's public opinion affects presidential approval, the campaign team will ensure that the First Lady is a useful political marketing tool. This will be advantageous to the President because of the First Lady's "ability to attract the attention of Americans...surpasses that of other well-known surrogates and sometimes the presidents themselves" (Wright 2016, xi).

Scholars have found that "during the 2004 fall campaign appearances of the wives of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates... were heavily and strategically used [especially] making the majority of their appearances in the battleground states and [also] escalating their appearances as election day drew closer" (Burrell et al 2011, 158). If this was not the case and the First Lady or potential First Lady had no impact on public approval of the President, then there would be no urgency for the First Lady to present herself in such a manner or to travel in the purposeful method in which she travelled. The wives "are deployed...to generate positive media coverage, raise money, and appeal to

particular voting blocs” to boost the success of the campaign efforts (Burrell et al 2011, 158). Because of their typically higher approval ratings, First Ladies will have a wider appeal to the constituents than the President. It is also true that the First Lady “may not be strongly associated with political scandal or legislative successes or failures... [so she can] prove a valuable tool on the campaign trail and when approval ratings of the president and his administration are low” (Wright 2016, 36).

To take advantage of this popularity, she will travel as the presidential surrogate to gain support with voting blocs in which the President has trouble with gaining their support. She is best able to have an impact on reinforcing the existing message and building on what is already there (Wright 2016, 88). The First Lady will intentionally appeal to those voting blocs to win over electorate appeal for the presidential campaign because “research has shown that during the presidential campaigns of the 1990s, respondents with favorable feelings toward a candidate’s spouse were more likely to hold a favorable impression of her husband” (Burrell et al 2011, 164). Modern presidential candidates are more reliant on their spouses throughout the campaign process and beholden to the political parties less. Due to the overall decline in partisanship, “presidents instinctively offered up their wives to help forge ties with millions of voters” (Troy 2000, 4). Presidents are more dependent on their wives to help spread the campaign message rather than the political parties. Table 7 confirms this sentiment, public has made their position clear that the First Lady or “wife of” the campaigner has an impact in the support of the candidate.

Table 7. Importance of the Spouse in Campaigning

Candidates' wives play an important role in campaigning	
Strongly Agree	50.0
Agree	41.4
Neutral	7.1
Disagree	1.4
Strongly Disagree	0

Recopied with permission from: Robert P. Watson

Source: Watson 2000, 158

With 91.4% of the public confirming that the wife of the candidate has an impact in the manner in which the candidate is viewed by the public, campaign teams have included the “wife of” in their political tool box as another way for the potential President to gain public support. Candidate’s wives were able to “[winnow] the primary field, [aid] campaign operatives in their support functions, and [narrow] the gender gap by appealing to women voters” (Wright 2016, 15). As a result of this knowledge, “media coverage of the first lady is assisted by a White House that is concerned with public opinion ratings and values the boost in approval and visibility a popular first lady can bring to the presidency” (Watson 2000, 151).

Another advantage to using the First Lady as political asset would be her mobility. She does not carry the same security detail that the President does or require the same logistical details necessary for travel. As a result, she is able to travel to more places domestically and internationally to represent the President to as many constituents as she is able (Wright 2016, 124). First Ladies are able “to mitigate damage to the president’s

public image in addition to maximizing his popularity” (Wright 2016, 14). This was the goal of Lady Bird Johnson’s whistle stop tour throughout the South. Johnson took a train ride stopping in several cities as a presidential surrogate to increase the presidential approval numbers after the appearance of the civil rights legislation. It was a credit to the First Lady that “the positive impact of these kinds of appearances in [the President’s] supposition that Lady Bird’s trip minimized Republican gains in the region” (Wright 2016, 14).

After the trip, three states gave their electoral votes to President Johnson when two of those states, Virginia and Florida, had voted Republican in the 1960 presidential election (Borrelli 2011, 115). Another way the White House can capitalize on the popularity of the First Lady in order to gain popular support is through the First Lady’s social platform. The White House can harness the popularity of the First Lady’s “pet project agenda to frame the president’s policy agenda, and to mobilize the first lady on issues where the president was weak and unpopular” (Wright 2016, 56). The White House can capitalize on the support the First Lady receives on her social outreach programs to use “as an instrument of positive media and public relations” in order to raise his own standing with the public through her (Watson 1997, 814). Even though Barbara Bush was not active during her husband’s presidency, he undoubtedly benefited from her public standing and popularity (Watson 2003, 343).

As a potential first lady can be an asset to the presidential campaign, so to a “first lady [who] is involved in unpopular activities risks negatively affecting presidential approval ratings and thus public and political support for the president” (Watson 2000, 160). Some have argued the expectation of the potential First Lady is to bring support to

the campaign that a First Lady who does not can do more harm than good. President Carter was dealing with the Iranian hostage situation during his re-election campaign of 1980 and was not able to perform much campaigning. He relied on Rosalyn Carter to spearhead the campaign on his behalf (Watson 2000, 47). The public had felt that Carter was becoming too active in her husband's administration which could have had a negative impact on the campaign given that she was front and center as the presidential surrogate. It has become a trend that "more voters are likely to refuse to vote for a president because the dislike his spouse than are likely to vote for him" (Troy 2000, 392).

If the public does not believe the First Lady is fulfilling the duties and following the parameters of the office, there could also be negative implications to the campaign and the candidate (Sulfaro 2007, 486). There have been instances in which the refusal of the wife to become involved in the campaign was negatively interpreted by the voters. As such was the case with Howard Dean's wife who refused to quit her job and campaign with her husband for the Democratic primaries in 2004 (Sulfaro 2007, Wright 2016). The "wife of" through the nature of her married relationship to the candidate can personalize her husband to the voters and give them an inside look behind the curtain as to the character of the man they will elect (Burden and Mughan 1999, 240). Voters become apprehensive of the candidate when the wife is not there to perform that function. Michelle Obama believes, "'it's considered a detriment if you have [a spouse] who won't participate [and] if you're bad at it, it's...not good...[because] there's a lot of ground to cover [in a presidential election], so you need that extra voice out there'" (Wright 2016, 79). In this view, it's possible that a wife of "might not be the reason [the candidate] gets elected but could be the reason they don't" (Wright 2016, 78).

In the case of the Reagan presidency, there is evidence that Nancy Reagan's actions contributed in part to a change in the public opinion of President Reagan. Nancy Reagan was characterized as an active-positive in the Barber matrix, and it appears that the active portion of Reagan's classification most affected her public favorability. It was Reagan's activity in the President's administration which had an impact on the public approval ratings of President Reagan. Reagan had two significant situations with the public and the media in regard to her polling numbers and the potential impact those situations could have had on the President's polling numbers.

The first situation occurred at the beginning of her term in the White House when she chose to redecorate and refurbish the White House. Reagan received much backlash from the public and the media for appearing to recklessly spend on non-essentials and luxury goods while the President was making budget cuts during a recession. In Figure 3, there does not seem to be a correlation between the favorability of Nancy Reagan and that with Ronald Reagan in 1981. Ronald Reagan was on the receiving end of the honeymoon phase with the American public with his approval rating at 67% while Nancy Reagan's was at 57%, a moderately low number for an incoming First Lady.

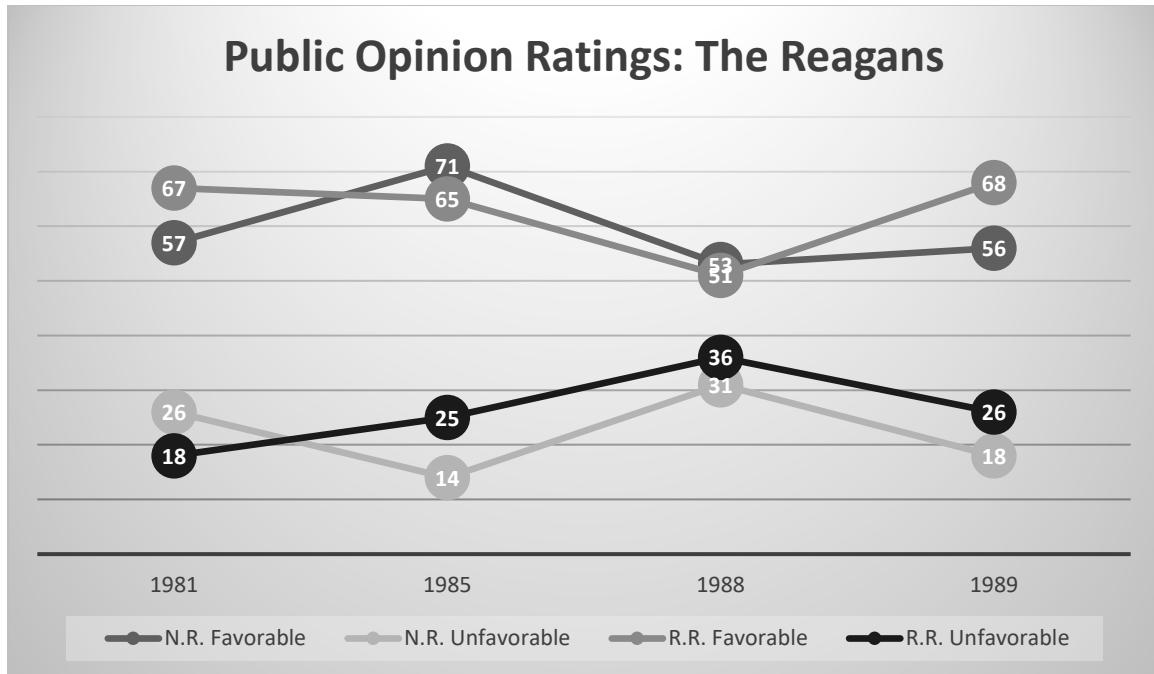


Figure 3. Public Opinion Ratings: The Reagans

Source: CBS News, Gallup, the Roper Center, and the American Presidency Project

Note: There was a significant percent of “don’t know” responses in each year listed (Watson 156).

The public opinion of Nancy Reagan was that of a California socialite whose sole cares were her clothes, jewelry, and lunching with her rich friends. When the public heard about the cost of the china for the White House, the White House staff had to hold a separate meeting about the “Nancy problem” and how it could be resolved. Through a calculated public relations overhaul of her image, it was achieved. Reagan’s polling favorability shot up to a high of 71% in 1985. Nancy Reagan became the face of the “Just Say No” campaign which was the most successful social outreach program of any First Lady at that time. It can’t be known whether the public opinion of Nancy Reagan would have truly appeared and made an impact in the polling numbers of Ronald Reagan because the White House staff intervened. The fact that they did intervene could provide

credence to the thought that there might have been an effect later on in President Reagan's term based on the current polling numbers for Nancy Reagan.

The second situation of note occurred earlier into President Reagan's second term in office. Nancy Reagan had assumed more control over the President's schedule after the shooting in 1981, but this control was not yet public knowledge. Reagan also had a prior history of ensuring that the staff around her husband had his best interests at heart and worked for his and the administration's betterment. She made no secret about attempting to remove those who did not fit that description. After Don Regan was named chief of staff in 1985, he and Nancy Reagan would butt heads over the President's schedule. Reagan felt that Regan was only out for himself and did not have her husband's best interests at heart. The discontent between the First Lady and the chief of staff was spilling into the press and soon became public knowledge in 1987. Soon after that, President Reagan replaced Regan, but the damage had already been done. Right before this situation played out in the media, the President was also dealing with the Iran-Contra scandal.

The President was not aware that the profit from the sale of arms to Iranians was diverted to Nicaragua to support the overthrow of that government. The media "painted a picture of a president who was greatly disengaged from the policy process [and]... the First Lady's apparent involvement in the firing of Donald Regan only made the President seem even weaker" (Benze 1990, 784). In this case, the actions of Nancy Reagan contributed to an on-going situation in the White House which appeared to the public to form a pattern of behavior. A representative from the House questioned, "How can the President deal with the Soviets if he cannot settle a dispute between his wife and the chief

of staff”” (Benze 1990, 784). In the case, it seems that Nancy Reagan’s actions and involvement in the staff of the West Wing contributed to the already falling public approval ratings of the President.

During both scandals, “the number of people believing that she had too much influence on the president rose to 43 percent and the president’s overall job approval rating declined… [and] there is evidence that some members of the public were affected by the negative publicity” of Nancy Reagan (Knickrehm and Teske 2006, 247). Opinion polls regarding the influence of Nancy Reagan over the President began to circulate. In 1987 in a NBC/Wallstreet Journal poll, 81% of those surveyed agreed that Nancy Reagan had a great deal or some influence over the President (Watson 2000, 157). In Figure 1, it is plain that after the Iran-Contra scandal and the firing of Don Regan in 1987, both Nancy and Ronald Reagan’s approval numbers dropped, and their disapproval numbers rose dramatically. This lends further credence to the belief that the First Lady can affect the approval ratings of the President.

Throughout the Clinton’s time in the White House, there is also evidence that Hillary Rodham Clinton’s approval numbers affected presidential approval ratings. As with Nancy Reagan, Hillary Rodham Clinton’s activity as a First Lady contributed to two situations in which her public opinion ratings had the possibility of affecting the President’s public approval. The first situation involves the appointment of the First Lady to the health care task force by the President which includes the general sentiment that the Clinton’s would co-president the country. Both the President and the First Lady had a dip in their public approval ratings at the time the health care bill failed to get through Congress. The second instance occurs towards the middle of President Clinton’s second

term in the White House when his affair with Monica Lewinsky became public knowledge. In this case, the decision of Hillary Rodham Clinton to support her husband throughout this time possibly saved the President's ratings from dropping lower than they could have.

At the beginning of the presidential campaign, Bill Clinton advertised that his wife would be included in an unprecedented fashion into the executive office administrations. As this was such a break with the traditional and historical role of the First Lady, there was immediate and lasting public polarization in the opinion polls regarding Hillary Rodham Clinton. Immediately after his inauguration, President Clinton appointed Rodham Clinton as the chief of the health care task force. The goal of the task force was to put together a packet of legislation that would provide Americans with universal health care. It was clear from the beginning that the undertaking would be too much given the deadlines for the committee. Hillary Rodham Clinton's leadership was noted by the public and the committee "came under attack because it met in secret...excluded Congress and the affected interests from its deliberations" (Greenstein 2009, 180). Scholars noted that "media coverage and public evaluations of Mrs. Clinton...declined sharply when she adopted a negative tone and attacked the health insurance industry" (Wright 2016, 33).

The public response in regard to Mrs. Clinton's hand in the health care task force is documented in Figure 2 below. In Figure 4, Hillary Rodham Clinton and President Clinton's approval ratings dropped in 1996 as a result of the failed health care legislation.

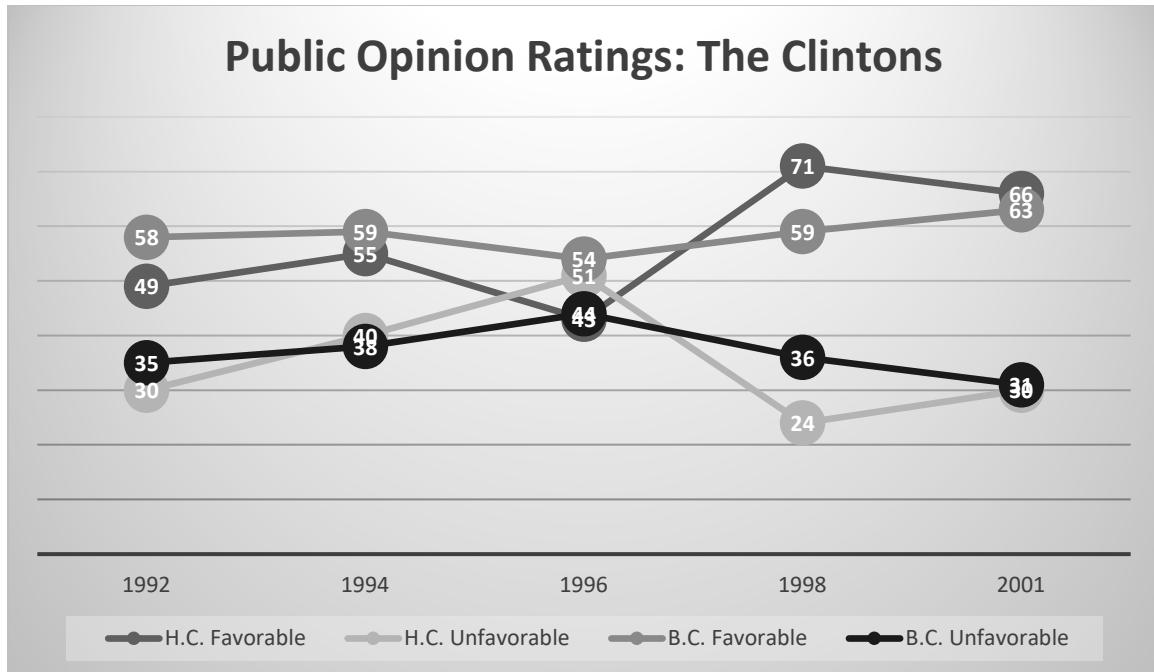


Figure 4. Public Opinion Ratings: The Clintons

Source: Gallup, ABC News, the Presidency Project, and the Roper Center

The public began to question the placement of the First Lady in such a demanding position and the way she handled herself in that position. The repercussions of the bill were now “40% of voters viewed Bill as a fast-talking ‘wishes-washy’ pol, and his wife as being in the race for herself and ‘going for the power’” (Troy 2000, 353). For this reason, “over one half of poll respondents believe[d] Hillary Clinton [had] too much influence over the Clinton administration” (Watson 2000, 157). In a study performed by Dr. Laura Wright, respondents were asked to read speeches by Hillary Rodham Clinton and President Clinton and provide their opinions about the President. Dr. Wright found that if respondents read a speech attributed to Hillary Rodham Clinton, they “claimed Bill Clinton did a *worse* job on the economy and health care” (Wright 2016, 112). With a 42% approval rating for Rodham Clinton and a 54% positive rating for Clinton, it was

clear that the voters were punishing both the President and the First Lady for the health care debacle.

In 1998, the public was made aware of an affair between the President and one of his interns. In the Starr investigation over Whitewater and perjury, President Clinton was impeached by the House for lying under oath about his relationship his intern, Monica Lewinsky. While the trial was progressing in the Senate, Hillary Rodham Clinton was at cross-roads in which she could support the President or file for divorce. Throughout their marriage and even prior to, the President had cheated on his wife numerous times. This time though the affair became public and Rodham Clinton had to deal with it publicly. She made the decision to “stand by her man” and try to repair the marriage. This struck a chord with the public. For this reason, Rodham Clinton’s approval ratings in 1998 were at an all-time high of 71%. She was able to show “Americans how to forgive their wayward leader” (Troy 2000, 381). The public was sympathetic to her and her choice of forgiveness, so “she would see her popularity soar and, eventually, would save her husband’s presidency” (Troy 2000, 369). It is possible that due to Rodham Clinton’s handling of the Lewinsky situation, the public was able to also forgive the President. This would prevent the President’s public opinion ratings from falling too far. True to her active persona, Rodham Clinton would channel her political capital later to help secure Democratic seats in the midterm elections.

As a passive, it is more difficult to pull out specific situations in which Laura Bush affected presidential approval simply because of her lack of overt political activity. Bush focused more on her social programs and supporting her husband true to her passive-positive characterization. Throughout her term as First Lady, she advocated for

literacy and improving education. President Bush was able to pass the No Child Left Behind education legislation with a bipartisan majority (Greenstein 2009, 196). This was most likely achieved with the aid of the First Lady. As a former librarian, Laura Bush has always been passionate about the importance of education. Figure 5 addresses the popularity of the President and the First Lady.

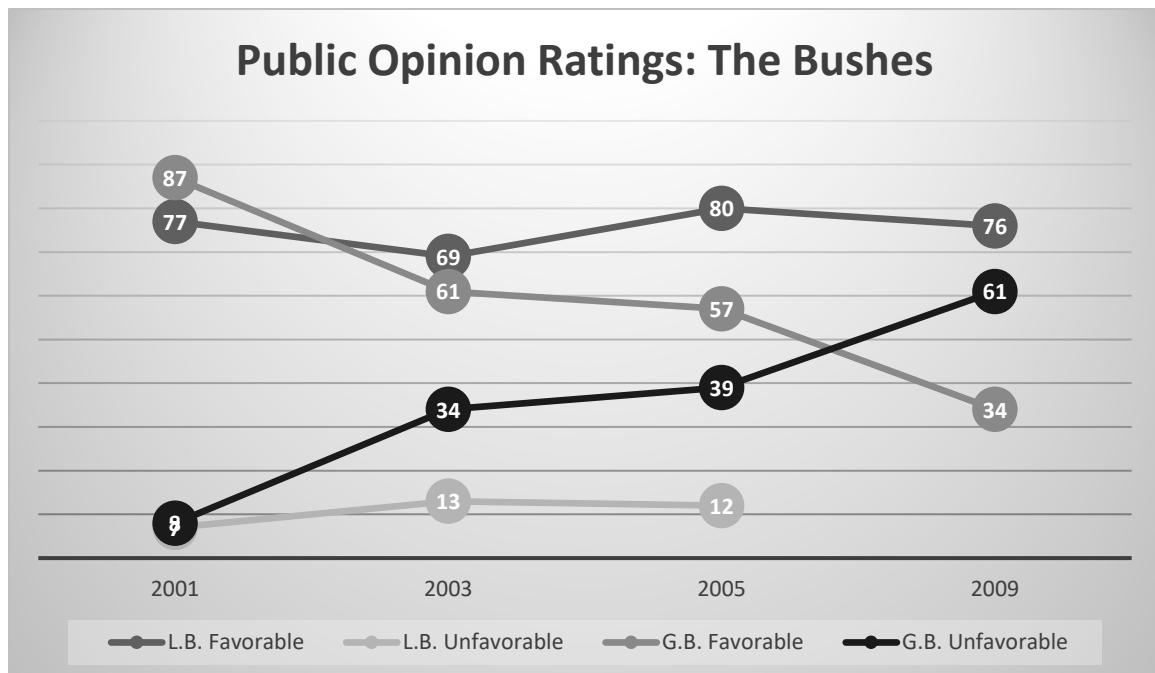


Figure 5. Public Opinion Ratings: The Bushes

Source: Gallup and the Presidency Project

Note: There was not an unfavorable rating for Laura Bush in 2009.

It is clear that Laura Bush had consistently high public approval ratings as well as consistently low disapproval ratings. She had very few responses of “don’t know”. The Bush administration was able to harness the First Lady’s popularity in order to gain support for the No Child Left Behind legislation across the aisle.

These high ratings in 2003 were translated into votes on the campaign trail. It is well understood that “Laura [was] an immense asset to the campaign, softening the

president's image, explaining his policies, and drawing in contributions of more than \$5 million" (Kessler 2006, 184). It is also a testament to Bush's likability that at the White House Press Dinner in 2005, her speech "received a standing ovation from the normally anti-Bush crowd [where]... Senator Charles E. Schumer...[said,] 'it's not going to make everybody say, 'we're for Social Security privatization now,' but around the edges, it helps'" (Kessler 2006, 228). This demonstrates the impact that the First Lady had on the press and the public to garner support for the President's agenda through her public opinion ratings.

The White House was able to channel Laura Bush's popularity into support for executive policies like the War on Terror. Through her role as the comforter-in-chief, she was able to place a softer and more humanized image on the White House administration. This was further justified during Dr. Wright's study when "Democrats who watched Laura Bush's War on Terror video were also significantly more supportive of U.S. interventions in foreign conflicts than those who saw no video" (Wright 2016, 108). Laura Bush's popularity was used to attempt to gain more support for the War on Terror in 2004 and 2005. Through her public favorability "Democrats [after reading or viewing a Laura Bush treatment] often rated the president's foreign affairs performance more favorably and the notion that President Bush's foreign policy increased terror abroad more negatively" (Wright 2016, 112).

The effect of Laura Bush on public approval of executive policies also extended to the female demographic. As "women who received a Laura Bush speech treatment were significantly more approving of the way in which George W. Bush 'handled his job as president' than women who read the same speech by George W. Bush" (Wright 2016,

114). Of course, the effect was also extended to the President's own party. When "Republicans...thought the speech was made by Laura Bush[, they] were more likely to report that the threat of terrorism had *decreased* because of the war [on terror than] Republicans who thought Dick Cheney made the speech" (Wright 2016, 116). It is also evident that while her positive political capital contributed favorably to the President, there were other factors at play pulling down his approval ratings in 2009 illustrating the limits to the effectiveness of the First Lady. This demonstrates that although Laura Bush is classified as a passive-positive, she is still able to have an impact on public approval of the president through her public opinion ratings.

In pairing the First Ladies with their presidential husbands in the Barber character matrix, there is an important distinction to make. While the active-positive President typically has higher public approval ratings, the same is not true for the First Lady. Table 8 illustrates the pairing of the presidential couple in the Barber matrix as well as their collective average favorable and unfavorable public approval ratings.

Table 8. Barber Matrix of the Presidents paired with the First Ladies

	POTUS	FLOTUS	Average Rating
The Reagans	Passive-Positive	Active-Positive	Favorable: 61% Unfavorable: 24%
The Clintons	Active-Positive	Active-Negative	Favorable: 58% Unfavorable: 36%
The Bushes (43rd)	Active-Negative	Passive-Positive	Favorable: 68% Unfavorable: 25% (not as strong an assessment due to the missing 2009 rating for Laura Bush)

It is true that the public has become more accepting of an active First Lady, the population is still more comfortable with a more traditional First Lady. This more traditional First Lady will be classified as a passive. This is confirmed by the consistently high approval ratings of Laura Bush and the fluctuating approval ratings of Nancy Reagan and Hillary Rodham Clinton. Out of the three First Ladies analyzed, Laura Bush achieved the optimal category. Nancy Reagan's category was the next most desired by the public even with certain situations where her activity dropped her approval ratings. Of the three, Hillary Rodham Clinton's characterization was the least desirable for the public which was illustrated by her higher disapproval ratings than the other ladies.

In sum, political scientists "have long noted that the most important asset to any successful president is his wife" as the First Ladies have assisted the President in every aspect of his administration whether formally or informally (Watson and Eksterowicz 2006, 363). Authors Burrell, Elder, and Frederick also found in their studies that "when respondents rated the candidate's spouse favorably, they were more likely to evaluate the presidential candidate favorably" (Burrell et al 2011, 172). A quote attributed to Florence Harding also demonstrates the influence that the First Ladies have in affecting the public perception and approval of the President. She allegedly stated, "Well Warren Harding, I got you the Presidency. Now what are you going to do?" (Wright 2016, 13-14). This further justifies the understanding in national politics that the "wife of" has an impact in altering the public approval of the politician.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusions

It has been thought “the President was the president, and his wife was an accessory, one of the many flourishes that helped paint the presidential portrait” (Troy 2000, 1). It has been proven that this is patently untrue and “the president’s spouse can be a tremendous asset in courting and persuading supporters of the president” (Wright 2016, 33). While there is limited research over what could be argued the second most powerful position in the free world, the woman who is the partner and has the ear of the President of the United States does have significant influence over the President and the public. The development of the position “of the First Lady has undergone significant development during the past fifty years...increasing [the] professionalization of the office and... integration with the White House Office” (Eksterowicz 2005, 66). First Ladies are “some of the most recognizable figures in U.S. politics and among the least studied figures in political science” (Wright 2016, xii).

It is possible that the modern presidency could be viewed as a partnership with the First Lady who as the President’s closest confidante has “the vantage point of close proximity to the president, staff support, visibility, and the expanded opportunities to participate in political activities” (O’Connor et al 1996, 848). The position has evolved from a time where “women were mere appendages of their husband with no independent [public] recognition” to a place in modern time where “women have their own prominence and ideas and can act independently from their spouses” (Eksterowicz 2005, 66). As the public and the media have become more accepting of an active First Lady, so to has the influence the First Lady has emerged from behind the curtain of the East Wing.

A former member of the Nixon White House staff, Bradley H. Patterson, Jr. refers to the First Lady as the President’s “first Special Counselor;” his vice president, his ‘Second Special Counselor’” (O’Connor et al 1996, 846). It is evident that “it is [quickly] becoming the rule and not the exception that the first lady has surpassed the vice president and even the most senior advisers...in terms of visibility and perhaps even power and influence both in and out of the White House” (Watson 1997, 814). For this reason, public appearances of First Ladies outpaced public appearances by the Vice President (Wright 2016, 122). Each modern President in the White House seeking re-election has utilized the popularity of the First Lady while on the campaign trail because “as voters feel more positive towards the wives of the candidates, some of those positive feelings translate into a more positive view of the candidate” (Burrell et al 2011, 172).

Although there is little research on the impact of the First Lady, she is an important figure in the executive administration with varying degrees of influence over the President and the public. (Watson 2000, 19). Since there have been “public opinion polls to measure how much Americans like their First Lady, they show [consistent]... public [support] of these women” (Burrell 2005, 43). Presidents and their staff have realized the importance of the role of the First Lady and the high approval ratings that could be translated into political capital. For example, “Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower each discovered how important a high-profile wife could be on whistle-stop campaign trips...[and] the Carters and the Reagans... established a co-presidency, with the president’s wife as the second most powerful person in the White House” in order to gain support for the executive policies and agenda (Troy 2000, 2).

The First Lady has the ability to re-present the President to the public because she “may not be strongly associated with political scandal or legislative successes or failure” (Wright 2016, 36). She is a logical choice as a presidential surrogate to certain demographics that are more hostile to the President. She is able to humanize the President and vouch for his character which can result in higher approval ratings. With this information about the political impact of the First Lady,

the White House has sharpened and perfected its strategy for mobilizing the president’s spouse strategically in order to bring attention to the president’s political agenda, to control the media coverage of that agenda, and to boost public support for those policies and their authors when possible (Wright 2016, 51).

The White House is also able to channel the First Ladies popularity by aligning her social outreach programs with the presidential agenda. The First Lady’s social platform “will inevitably have some political aspect...[and]...such a linkage to the President’s agenda might also serve to promote the President’s agenda and popularity” (Anthony 2005, 52).

Scholars believe “analyzing the work of the first ladies provides a valuable and insightful path to knowledge about the American Presidency” (Watson 2000, 30). It has been demonstrated that “the flow of influence could run from wife to husband as citizens punish or reward the president by ‘blaming’ him for his wife’s actions” (Burden and Mughan 1999, 240). Whether the First Lady is active or passive, it is crucial that she be aware of her husband’s programs and initiatives. Every First Lady has followed this guideline because public opinion of the First Lady affects public opinion for the President of the United States, and the public has become more expectant of an active First Lady in

the modern era. As a result, there has been documentation that a few First Ladies have influenced policy outcomes (O'Conner et al 1996, 847).

In measuring the impact of a First Lady on presidential approval ratings, it is helpful to first place the First Lady in the Barber characterization matrix. In the delicate balance of public opinion concerning the office of the First Lady, the Barber character matrix enables a more clear analysis to the nature of potential changes in public opinion. Once her characterization is developed, it becomes simple to locate events during her time holding the office that could potentially affect the President and his approval ratings. The positive and negative characterization as well as the passive-active characterization will allow for the White House staff to best determine a strategy on maximizing the public opinion of the First Lady. This in turn will allow for a greater maximization for a boost to presidential approval as the First Lady is a political tool that could be used to gain favorability for the presidential agenda.

While the Barber matrix has received criticism from presidential scholars due to its limitations and lack of acknowledgment of institutional factors in the analysis of the Presidents, those factors are not present in the analysis of the First Lady. Due to the informal nature of the power of the office and the malleability to suit the tastes of its current occupant, the Barber analysis becomes more relevant and more complete in assessing the character of the First Ladies. In this case, the personality of the First Lady is crucial and will inform the public as to what can be expected from the East Wing and how the East Wing will interact with the West Wing. It is currently the best way to judge the potential impact of the First Lady. This analysis can inform the presidential campaign

staff on how best to use the potential First Lady in the initial campaign, during the mid-term elections, and later the re-election campaign.

In conclusion, while it is a difficult task to determine the effect of the First Lady on presidential approval, it is a worthwhile endeavor. The White House will be able to use every political tool at their disposal for the President to maximize public opinion. This will in turn allow for the President to increase his persuasive powers when dealing with Congress and allow the President to implement more of his legislation and executive programs. In assuming every President would like to leave a legacy, it is crucial to marshal every potential political tool at their disposal. It is clear that this should now include a focus on the ability of the First Lady to lend her approval ratings to the executive mission.

APPENDIX

Appendix A:

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Robert Watson, Ph.D. Distinguished Professor of American History Director, Project Civitas College of Arts and Sciences

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From: Marrs, Brittany <blm052@SHSU.EDU> Sent: Thursday, May 31, 2018 9:46:02

PM To: Robert Watson Subject: Copyright permission requested, please

Good Evening, Professor Watson,

My name is Brittany Marrs and I am currently working on my graduate thesis requirement. My topic concerns opinion on the First Lady affecting public approval of the President. I have cited your book The Presidents' Wives: Reassessing the Office of the First Lady throughout my paper. I was wondering if I would be able to use the following tables that you created: Political Activities of First Ladies, Staff Offices of Nancy Reagan, Nancy Reagan as Diplomat, Office of the First Lady Hillary Clinton 1997, and Importance of the First Lady. Thank you so much for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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Title of the article or chapter the portion is from	Messenger-In-Chief
Editor of portion(s)	n/a
Author of portion(s)	Laura Wright
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VITA

Brittany Lee Marrs

EDUCATION

Master of Art student in Political Science at Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas. August 2013-June 2018. Thesis title: “The Woman Behind The Eagle: The Impact of the Character of the First Lady on Presidential Approval Ratings.”

Teacher Certification in Social Studies Composite, Region 4 Alternative Certification Program (May 2011), Houston, Texas.

Bachelor of Arts (May 2008) in Political Science, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

EMPLOYMENT

Magnolia High School in Magnolia Independent School District, Magnolia, Texas

Cypress Creek High School in Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District, Houston, Texas

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

World Geography

AP Human Geography

United States Government

Economics

AP Macroeconomics

AP United States Government

CERTIFICATIONS

Gifted and Talented

AP Human Geography

AP Macroeconomics

AP United States Government

PROFESSIONAL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Student Leadership Program sponsor

Stand Leader sponsor

Response to Intervention Committee, Social Studies representative

PROFESSIONAL ANNUAL EVENTS COORDINATOR

Veteran's Appreciation Night

The MHS BIG Event community service project

Get Out and Vote Initiative

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

AP Macroeconomics reader

Texas Education Agency Social Studies Streamlining committee member

Gilder Lehrman Institute Teacher Seminar

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Junior League of the Woodlands member

The Woodlands Kappa Alpha Theta Alumni Chapter member

Grace Presbyterian Church Nursery and Vacation Bible School volunteer