JOURNALISTIC GENDER STEREOTYPING OF FIRST LADIES LAURA BUSH AND HILLARY CLINTON

A Thesis by

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B.Ed. (Arts), Egerton University, 1999

Submitted to College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the faculty of the Graduate School of Wichita State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

December 2005
JOURNALISTIC GENDER STEREOTYPING OF FIRST LADIES
LAURA BUSH AND HILLARY CLINTON

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Mariam Muthoni Wachai & the Late Philip Wachai Nduati and

lovely brother David Nduati Wachai
Women rights are human rights and must be respected by all
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without determination, commitment and selflessness of several people. Dr. Patricia Dooley, the thesis chair, shepherded me throughout the entire process of formulating, researching and writing the thesis report. Dr. Dooley went out of her way to offer me the much-needed scholarly and moral support during the entire period of this study. Her high sense of professionalism, selflessness, patience and dedication to duty made what initially appeared impossible possible.

I thank Dr. Susan Schultz Huxman, Director, Elliott School of Communication, for her invaluable contribution to my graduate studies. She helped me secure two summer research assistantships that, without which I could not pay tuition fees.

Funding a master program is a challenging endeavor, especially to international students. I sincerely thank Mr. and Mrs. Allan Speight of Yorkshire, United Kingdom for their financial contribution towards my graduate studies. Without them, I would not have realized my long-cherished dream of acquiring a master degree. May God bless this lovely couple.

I will forever be indebted to the entire faculty of the Elliott School of Communication for their exceptional sense of professionalism.
ABSTRACT

This study investigates media stereotyping of American First Ladies Laura Welch Bush and Hillary Rodham Clinton principally using quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The research explores the amount and qualities of Time magazine’s news coverage during their husband’s first terms of office to establish, (i) who between Mrs. Clinton and Mrs. Bush is framed as most often politically active and (ii) who between them is more negatively stereotyped. Hypotheses predict that the most politically active First Lady will attract more media coverage and more negative stereotypes. Both hypotheses were supported by the research, which indicate that Hillary Clinton was framed both as the most politically active and negatively stereotyped of the two.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, women are poorly represented in many facets of life – economic, political and scientific – despite the fact that they constitute the majority of the world’s population. For example, females represent only about three per cent of all historical figures in Western civilization (Catell, 1903; Eisenstadt, 1978). In addition, only about one per cent of the notable contributors to science and technology are female (Simonton, 1991a).

Women in the United States of America, the most democratic country in the world, are similarly poorly represented in public life. Since the U.S. declared independence in 1776, it has not had a woman president. The closest a woman came to winning the U.S. presidency was in 2000, when Elizabeth Dole contested the Republican Party presidential nomination but withdrew from the campaign because of insufficient financial support (Gordon & Miller, 2001). Dole’s six-month campaign serves as the longest and most serious bid by a woman for a major party’s presidential nomination since the founding of the nation (Heldman et al, 2000).

Similar gender disparities exist in the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives. In the Senate, for example, there are only 18 women compared to 82 men (www.senate.gov/senators). This is not strange, as nowhere in the
world has the proportion of women among the luminaries come anywhere close to the 50 per cent one might expect from population ratios (Simonton, 1996).

Among the theories developed to explain why leadership positions continue to elude women are those that historically have assumed that women generally lack the needed innate faculties for such honors (Shields, 1975). Although women have made great strides in America during the past several decades, such beliefs persist. An example of this was seen recently when the president of Harvard University, Lawrence H. Summers, to the chagrin of many, sought to reinforce this argument by alluding to the existence of innate weaknesses that prevent women from venturing into science and technology disciplines (www.harvard.edu). Although he later apologized, his statement attests to the power of stereotypes that have dogged women for generations.

In politics, women are similarly marginalized by stereotypes that undermine public perception of their talents and potential leadership capabilities. Connell (1995) attributes gender imbalances in American political life to hegemonic masculinity, which builds on Gramscian ideas of hegemony that maintain that social and cultural institutions, particular the mass media, shape public opinion in ways that work against women in public life.

Influenced by such critical thinking, this thesis is concerned with the stereotyping of women in all walks of life, but particularly those who hold or seek to hold significant positions in America’s political realm. More specifically, the
thesis reports on research employing qualitative and quantitative content analysis that studies *Time* magazine’s stereotyping of two First Ladies – Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush.

This chapter summarizes perspectives on stereotypes and their impact on the hegemonic social construction of gender roles in American society, particularly as this relates to women in politics. As discussed in the next section, our use of stereotypes is unavoidable, since they facilitate how we make sense of our experiences. Unfortunately, the prevalence of stereotypes can impede groups from realizing their potentials.

**Etymology of stereotypes**

The word “stereotype” comes from two Greek words: *stereos*, meaning solid, and *typos*, meaning the “mark of a blow.” In his classic study of public opinion, Lippman (1922) wrote of the utility of stereotypes:

> There is economy in this. For the attempt to see all things freshly and in detail, rather than as types and generalities, is exhausting and among busy affairs practically out of the question (pp.88-89).

He continued, however, with the warning that these cognitive labels can account for errors and biases in our conceptions of the world:

> But modern life is hurried and multifarious, above all physical distance separates men who are often in vital contact with each other, such as employer and employee, official and voter. There is neither time nor opportunity for intimate acquaintance. Instead we notice a trait, which marks a well-known type, and fill in the rest of the picture by means of the stereotypes we carry about in our heads (pp.88-89).
Following Lippman, many other scholars have offered more critical definitions of stereotypes. Katz & Braly (1935) define the stereotype as a fixed impression that does not conform to the facts it pretends to represent and results from our defining first and observing second. Harding et al., (1969), define the stereotype as a belief that is a simple, inadequately grounded, representation of someone or something that is held with considerable assurance by many people.

Williams, Cruz and Hinze (1988) define stereotyping as inferring a relatively complete idea about a subject based on a small amount of information. These scholars argue that stereotypes lead to over-simplified conceptions and misapplied knowledge.

Snyder and Miene (1994), on the other hand, claim a stereotype is a set of beliefs and expectations about the characteristics typically possessed by a target group of people.

Byerly (2004) offers an operational definition of gender stereotyping as the portrayal of women as less intelligent and less capable than men, or as representing them in their traditional private spheres roles of mother, wife, sister, caretaker or servant rather than in light of their deeds or more complex identities.

When women are included, the news media misrepresent and distort them, for example, by focusing on their sexual attributes as women instead of their ideas, activities and accomplishments (Byerly, 2004, p. 110)
More recently, Schneider (2004) has argued that when applied to people, stereotypes rigidly stamp those they apply to with the same characteristics. The results can lead to such social problems as racism and sexism, among others.

**Scholarship on gender stereotypes**

Studies abound on gender stereotyping of women. Schneider (2004) considers a paper by Rosencrantz, Vogel, Bee and Broverman (1968) to be the first major research in the area of gender stereotyping. These scholars first, asked their subjects to rate the extent to which males and females exhibited 122 traits. Next, the 41 characteristics that at least 75 per cent of men and 75 per cent of women agreed, “belonged” to a particular gender, were designated as sex-stereotypic traits. In conclusion, the study identified 12 feminine traits (e.g. being talkative, religious, quiet; expressing tender feelings, etc) and 29 masculine traits (e.g. being aggressive, objective, logical, self-confident, active etc).

In an analysis of 16 introductory psychology textbooks published between 1979 and 1982, Denmark (1982) found that topics about women, (e.g. achievement and motivation) were seldom covered and that women were often portrayed in pathological and stereotyped ways.

Deuax and Lewis (1984) found that women were perceived as dealing with the elderly better because they were stereotyped as compassionate, whereas men were believed to be better at dealing with military issues because they were stereotyped as tough and aggressive.
Researchers have also reported that there are fewer central female characters on radio commercials than male characters (e.g. Hurtz & Durkin, 1997). Low & Sherrard (1999) argue that women in radio commercials are also more likely to be portrayed in dependent roles and in the home. Lemish (2004) notes that women are mostly relegated to the private sphere and to the emotional and sexual worlds:

Women and women’s issues (such as concerns for equal rights, health issues, feminization of poverty, women’s peace movements and military service, and the like) are compartmentalized in media texts, formats, and schedules; a restricted set of personal characteristics and profession is considered; and women are presented mostly in subordination to men (Lemish 2004, pg 42).

Gender role content analyses of magazines reveal that the primary concerns of women relate to their appearance, household activities and romantic interests (e.g. Pierce, 1990; Schlenker, Caron & Halteman, 1998).

Lemish (2000), in a study of media coverage of Israeli women in the Hebrew Press, found that the media depicted female immigrants as prostitutes, call girls, drunkards, and escort girls:

This manner of coverage demonstrates the process by which female citizens, who are part of the collective “us” are portrayed as “others” who are foreign to Israeli society and undermine morals and the desired social orders (p.45).

In regard to the U.S. presidency, Rosenwasser & Seale (1989) argue that voters rank “masculine” presidential duties, such as being commander-in-chief, as more important than “feminine” presidential duties, such as promoting civil
Voters assume that men are more competent when dealing with economic issues and foreign policy, whereas women’s expertise is believed to be in the areas of social issues such as education and health policy (Gordon & Miller, 2001).

Karen (2002) takes this argument further by observing that those who exercise their brains and brawn in public are thought to be tough, active, analytic, decisive, competent, and masculine while those who exercise their reproductive capabilities with the attendant responsibilities in the private sphere are identified as nurturing, passive, warm and feminine.

Huddy and Terkildsen (1992) found that stereotypical assumptions about female’s sensitivity and warmth are directly translated into assumptions about their greater competence in handling issues like education, healthcare and poverty.

Huddy and Terkildsen (1993), in another study, reported that voters were “unwilling to support a female presidential or vice presidential candidate because she was seen as less competent to handle the military, war and the economy but were unaffected by her perceived competence on the arts, education and health issues” (p.141).

Skrypnek and Snyder (1982) report in their study on gender stereotypes that women are popularly regarded as more submissive, dependent, emotional, warm, gentle, and nurturing (Lunenburg, 1970; Spence Helmreich & Stapp,
Ochse (1991) and Simonton (1992a) note that such biased gender role expectations, sexist ideologies and strongly male-oriented cultures can often stifle female attainments.

In another study, Simonton (1996) argues that cultural ideologies that confine women to motherhood, cooking, homecrafts and other gender stereotyped endeavors deny them latitude for achieving greatness in the sort of activities that would leave more durable impression on posterity. Khan (1996) agrees by asserting that sexual stereotypes directed at women have slowed their ascendance to political leadership.

When perpetuated by mass media, such gender stereotypes have the potential to suppress women’s motivation to contest for leadership positions. This could be due to the fact that the media plays the role of maintaining the dominant political ideology by celebrating, interpreting the world in its terms, and at times altering it to adapt to the demands of legitimization in a changing world (Hallin, 1994). Women, who do not confront gender profiling, may avoid politics, which could further aggravate their marginalization in all areas of life.

Media gender stereotyping of women who seek political office is as old as political institutions themselves. Journalistic media tend to portray women who find their way into politics as incapable of cultivating their own credibility and reputation. For example, when 120 women were elected to the British parliament
in 1997, front-page headlines labeled them as “Blair Babes” when Blair was pictured in their midst (Rose & Sreberny, 2000).

Miller and Gordon (2001) note that stereotypes have a systematic impact on the viability of female presidential candidates in that they limit the number of women who run or delay their entry into the political arena until after they marry and have children.

Mezy (1978), in her study of the campaigns of men and women running for political office, found that women were asked about their familial responsibilities more often than their male counterparts.


Rose (2002) believes that the media’s agenda-setting proclivities privilege men and masculine concerns, and women politicians struggle hard to attract publicity for their stances.

Ross (2004) argues that the coverage women receive tends to focus more on personal, trivializing issues than on their political and professional status.

In a study by the Women Leadership Fund (1999), researchers found that, compared with male candidates, newspaper coverage of female candidates
focused more on their personal characteristics, report less about their positions and records, published fewer quotes on substantive issues, and publicize no facts, evidence, or reasoning behind their positions.

Burrell (1997) argues that a backlash still attends a woman who steps out of the traditional mold that has been socially constructed for her. Riggle, Miller, Shields & Johnson (1997) suggest that female politicians may face attribution biases not only in election situations but also in evaluations of actual job performances.

Whicker and Isaacs (1999) note that there is a public perception that women will neglect their familial duties if elected to office. For example, when Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Jane Swift became her state’s governor in 2000, Boston Herald, wrote, “When Jane Swift was elected Lt. Governor last week, the first question many people asked was not ‘what are her plans for governing?’ but, ‘What are her plans for daycare.’”

These studies suggest that the role of the journalistic media in shaping public opinion cannot be overlooked in the study of gender stereotypes. The media, the TV, and the World Wide Web, in particular, are increasingly the avenue where citizens comprehend the political process (Lewis, 1991). According to Norris, journalists focus too seldom on issues and too often on women politician’s appearances and family lives, relegating stories about women and politics to the style pages (1996).
Stereotypes and America’s First Ladies

Scharrer and Bissell (2000), argue that although First Ladies are not elected to office, it is conceivable that perceptions about politically active females can extend to them. Furthermore a First Lady who challenges existing cultural norms by engaging in policy making initiatives or being highly opinionated runs the risk of being criticized for failing to assume her proper place in her husband’s presidential realm.

The role of the U.S. First Lady has been traditionally that of “escort” and “hostess,” from Martha Washington to the present (Mayo, 2000). Books and museums exhibits on the First Ladies often devote considerable space to illustrating their effectiveness as admirable parents, as charming hostesses, tasteful interior decorators, and as examples of modest fashion (Simonton, 1996). Blumefeld (1996) argues that Americans want to see an idealized woman at the president’s side, someone who combines the grace of Jackie Kennedy and the nurturing traits of Barbara Bush.

Winfield (1994) suggests that the press expects stereotypical “political wife” standards of the First Lady, and when she does not conform to these standards, the media reacts negatively. Winfield’s conceptualization of a political wife is a First Lady who sticks to the “escort” and “host” roles. Or, as Simonton (1996) succinctly puts it, First Ladies who maintain a comfortable, stable, quiet
home environment where their husbands can rise to fame without the irritating distractions of earthly cares and woes.

Contrary to such notions, there exists a long-standing tradition of public service by First Ladies who have acted as advisors and personal representatives of their husbands (Caroli, 1995). Borrelli (2003) notes that First Ladies have served as policy advocates, spokespersons, campaign surrogates, and presidential partners. In response, such realities have either been ignored or criticized by the media.

Surveying administrations from that of George Washington to Bill Clinton, O’Connor, Nye and van Assendelft (1996) found that at least 31 First Ladies discussed politics with the president, 26 were confidantes or advisors (screening correspondence, highlighting news articles and editing speeches), and 14 influenced the appointment process. In fact, Kelley (1989) argues that First Ladies possess more power, albeit, a latent kind of power, over the president than the vice president. For example, when President Woodrow Wilson suffered a stroke on October 2, 1919, rather than pass the powers of the office to his vice president, he turned to his wife, Edith Wilson. Mrs. Wilson discouraged her husband from resigning and not only supported him morally and physically, but carried out many of the tasks of the presidency (Watson, 2000). In response, Edith Wilson was accused of overstepping the implied limits of her position when she screened correspondence and visitors to her sick husband (Gould, 1996d).
During his first year in the White House, President Jimmy Carter asked his wife Rosalynn to serve a political role on a substantive policy-oriented matter. Specifically, the First Lady went on a tour of Latin America and Caribbean that took her to Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Columbia, and Venezuela (Chanley, 2001). Rosalyn also became the First Lady to attend cabinet meetings and conduct substantive conversations with leaders, meeting with the President for weekly working lunches (Gutin, 1989). During his presidency, Jimmy Carter kept Rosalynn Carter informed about everything the administration was doing, unless it was a matter that dealt with highly secret information or sensitive issues of national security (Chanley, 2001, p.551). Mrs. Carter also played an instrumental role in the formulation and subsequent approval of Congress’s 1980 Mental Healthcare Systems Act. As the legislation made its way through the Congress, the First Lady vigorously lobbied interest groups and healthcare organizations to support it. She also testified on behalf of the bill before the senate committee responsible for the legislation (Chanley, 2001).

First Lady Rosalynn Carter’s efforts to forge a public policy partnership with her husband, however, did not go down well with journalists and the public, more generally. Her trip to Latin America and the Caribbean prompted one Brazilian journalist, Roberto Garcia, to write:
Some Brazilians officials are “almost offended” that the president was sending the First Lady to hold serious talks about U.S relations with their nation. They say that for years Latin America has been in the backyard of U.S foreign policy, and now we’re being promoted to the kitchen (McBee, 1977, A6).

A diplomat from another Latin American nation told a U.S. reporter that it was “absurd” to expect that a woman could have meaningful discussions about issues important to the region, especially a woman who had no expertise in the area (Chanley, 2001).

One week after assuming the presidency, Bill Clinton named First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton to head a panel charged with developing a new health care plan for submission to Congress (Gould, 1996). Also, like Rosalynn Carter, Hillary advised her husband on such important issues as cabinet appointments. President Clinton did not shy away from telling the public what role his wife played in his administration. At a news conference to announce cabinet appointments, in January 1993, Clinton noted, “She advised me on these decisions, as she has on every other decision I’ve made in the last 20 years” (Ifill, 1993).

At the height of the Whitewater affair and the demise of the health care reform bill in 1995, First Lady Hillary Clinton found herself besieged by the American public and the media:

She was burned in effigy by tobacco farmers and became a target of the right-wing militia, who accused her of being a “doctrinaire” Marxist who has recruited ‘other American-hating subversives’ for key administration posts, who communes with the spirit of Eleanor Roosevelt, and has taken the lead in big government plans to control people’s lives (see Egan 1994; Quinde, 1994b).
Scharrer & Bisell (2000) argue that First Ladies are often caught in a dilemma that seems rooted in the ambiguity faced by modern American women who are expected to play at least two, sometimes conflicting roles in American society: mother/homemaker and worker/breadwinner. To exemplify the double bind that faces every U.S. First Lady, Rosalynn Carter, wrote, “When you stay in the White House and pour tea, you will be criticized because you don’t get out and conversely, when you get out a lot, you will be criticized because you are trying to do too much” (Carter, 1990, pg 219).

The American public and the media seem to want First Ladies to be active without trespassing on their husbands’ presidential duties. Reno (1996) puts it succinctly, “Unless they (First Ladies) behave like insipid, unopinionated cows, Americans persist in characterizing them as meddlers and dragon ladies.” In the case of former First Lady Mamie Einshower, Anthony (1990), recalls that the media simultaneously condemned First Lady Mamie Einshower in the 1950s for being “perfectly satisfied to be known as a housewife” and criticized her for her activism.

In a study examining media coverage of Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush and Hillary Clinton, Schaller and Bissell (2000) found that politically active First Ladies are likely to be negatively stereotyped by newspapers. One potential explanation for this finding, according to these researchers, is that as a public figure’s power grows, the watchdog function of the press grows as well. Another
explanation is that the public does not feel comfortable with attempts at expanding the role of the First Lady to encompass political decision-making and activity.

Members of the press may hold similar views or may perceive their potential readers to hold these views and may, therefore, create a tone in news coverage of politically active First Ladies that conveys negativity and disapproval. Thus, politically active First Ladies may be penalized for overstepping their usual bounds in stories that have a negative tone. (Scharrer & Bissell, 2000,p79).

Such conflicting expectations of First Ladies from the media and the public may stem from the fact that they are simultaneously accountable to no one and everyone, a paradoxical person in a paradoxical position grounded in power with powerful expectations (Kelley, 2001). Unlike the president, the First Lady is not elected on the basis of her own policy agenda (Chanley, 2001). When Hillary Clinton was appointed to chair the Health Care Reform Task Force in 1994, some critics suggested that the appointment was an error because the president would be unable to fire the First Lady if she did not produce a successful plan and that there would be no accountability for her actions (Perry & Birnbaum, 1993).

Today’s First Ladies seek to use the media to shape their images (Watson, 2000). First Ladies employ fulltime press secretaries, speechwriters and pollsters to cultivate favorable images within the public and the media. By doing so, they acknowledge the power of journalism to shape public perceptions and attitudes toward First Ladies (Scharrer & Bissell, 2000).
The way a first lady is framed as being politically active or non-politically active will play a role in other aspects of media coverage such as valence of stories and degree of stereotyping in images (p55).

In light of the extensive evidence (Berman & Kenny, 1976; Skrypnek & Snyder, 1982; Snyder & Uranowitz, 1978; Zadny & Gerard, 1974) suggesting that stereotypical messages affect public perceptions of First Ladies, this thesis, principally using quantitative and qualitative content analyses, studies whether a First Lady’s active participation in political activities leads to negative stereotyping.

To provide a historical context for the research reported, chapter two focuses on the development of the role of America’s First Lady. Chapter three describes the method employed to answer the study’s research questions. More specifically, the thesis uses qualitative and quantitative content analysis to explore Time magazine’s portrayal of Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush during their husbands’ first terms of office. Chapter four presents the research findings and, in conclusion, chapter five discusses these findings and offers additional concluding remarks.
CHAPTER 2
THE FIRST LADY IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Wilson (1989) noted in 1989 that the First Lady is one of the most fascinating and unexplored facets of the American presidency and the history of women in the United States. But despite a jump in interest in the First Lady starting in the 1980s, much work remains to be done. This chapter summarizes trends in First Lady scholarship since the birth of the field during Eleanor Roosevelt’s “term of office” in the 1930s and early 1940s. As such, it serves as a context for the thesis’s research on Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush.

Early interest in First Ladies

Scholarly work aside, journalistic interest in U.S. First Ladies can be traced back as far as the office of the presidency was established. Newspapers reported on the grief of Martha Washington on the unexpected death of her husband in 1799. When, in 1814, Washington, D.C., was burned by the British, the heroic actions of Dolley Madison, who stayed at home until just before they arrived to occupy the president’s home, were described in the newspaper. Later in the century, in August, 1861, the Chicago Tribune, in a complaint about how rival newspapers were treating Mary Todd Lincoln, wrote, “If Mrs. Lincoln were a prize fighter, foreign danseuse, or a condemned convict on the way to execution, she could not be treated more indecently than she is by a portion of the New York Press.”
The first national poll involving a First Lady was performed by the Gallup organization in 1939, when it asked the public its opinion of Eleanor Roosevelt (Burrell, 1997). Since then, polling organizations such as Yakelovich/Time/CNN; NBC/Wall Street Journal, Gallup/USA Today/CNN, and CBS/New York Times, have conducted numerous polls about U.S. First Ladies. Their findings have been widely reported in both print and electronic media, further fuelling the debate about the role of America’s First Lady.

The public has also shown an interest in the many popular biographies published about America’s First Ladies. In 1949, for example, Katharine Anthony wrote, Dolley Madison: Her Life and Times, and this was followed in 1953 by Ruth Painter Randall’s works that have been published about America’s First Ladies.

According to Watson (2000), scholarly study of First Ladies commenced with Eleanor Roosevelt (First Lady from 1933 to 1945). First ladies who came after Mrs. Roosevelt were hesitant to take on political issues. But when Mrs. Roosevelt moved to the White House, she blossomed as a national celebrity in ways that permanently altered the expectations for presidential wives (Smith & Ryan, 1989). Mrs. Roosevelt attempted to stamp her authority on day-to-day running of the Executive Mansion. As Gould explained,

Afraid of being confined to a schedule of teas and receptions, she volunteered to do a “real job” for the president. She knew the Ettie Rheiner (Mrs. John Nance) Garner served as an administrative assistant to her husband the vice president, so the First Lady tried to convince the
president to let her provide the same service. When the president rebuffed her offer, trapped by convention, she begrudgingly recognized that “the work [FDR’s] work and the pattern his pattern.” Bitterly disappointed, she acknowledged that she “was one of those who served his purpose” (Gould, 1996, p435).

Later, at the urging of the president, Eleanor resigned her positions with the Democratic National Committee, the Todhunter School, the League of Women Voters, the Non-Partisan Legislative Committee and the Women’s Trade Union League.

Eventually, however, Mrs. Roosevelt made it clear to all and sundry that she would not be a lame duck First Lady. For example, Mrs. Roosevelt held weekly press conferences with women reporters to make the general public more aware of White House activities and to encourage their understanding of the political process (Gould, 1996). Mrs. Roosevelt also wrote a syndicated newspaper column, sent articles to popular magazines, earned money as a lecturer and was a radio commentator (Kelley, 2001).

Mrs. Roosevelt’s political mettle astounded many Americans and scholars of the U.S. presidency. She prodded her husband’s administration to appoint more women in positions of responsibility and fervently campaigned for the improvement of working conditions of coal miners in the West Virginia coal town of Scott’s Run. Mrs. Roosevelt participated in anti-lynching campaigns, in contrast to her husband, who refrained from actively supporting anti-lynching
legislation. A very public Eleanor Roosevelt refused to leave the Senate gallery during the filibuster over the bill (Gould, 1996).

**Scholarship since the 1980s**


Despite these studies, little is known about the historical development of the office of the U.S. First Lady. Borrelli (2003) argues that rather than being by a single actor or process, the post of the First Lady is a cultural tradition that has emerged largely behind the scenes. Watson (2000) explains why haven’t shown much interest in U.S. First Ladies:

The reasons for the lack of scholarly interest in the First Lady’s high public profile is that in many ways, the institution evolved in a behind-the-scenes manner and thus many of the accomplishments of early first ladies were realized outside the purview of public inspection (p 149).

Another reason cited for lack of scholarly work about early First Ladies is that the prevailing social etiquette prior to the 20th Century dictated that women should neither appear in newspapers nor be discussed in public.

Methods used in studies of First Ladies have largely been historical, and/or biographical. In fact, most scholarly work on U.S. First Ladies have been authored by historians and political scientists. Anthony (1991) and Caroli (1995) are exemplars of these study methods, which tend to study First Ladies singularly rather than in groups.

Past scholars, Borrelli (2003) contends, choose to profile First Ladies rather than examine their role in presidential image making. Although these authors carefully compare and contrast the First Ladies – and thus look across presidential administrations, their units of analysis remain as individual women rather than the position or office.
Gutin (1989), however, deviated from studying First Ladies in individual biographies. In studies of the speeches, radio and television broadcasts, interviews, press conferences and magazines and newspaper articles produced by First Ladies, Gutin has sought to understand and appreciate the changes that have taken place over 60 years (1920-1988). Gutin places each of the First Ladies, from Harding through Carter, in one of the following categories: “White Housekeepers: Social Hostesses and Ceremonial Presences” (Harding, Coolidge, Truman and Eisenhower), “Emerging Spokeswomen” (Hoover, Kennedy and Nixon), and “Political Surrogates,” and “Independent Advocates” (Roosevelt, Johnson, Ford and Carter.” Her study ends with Nancy Reagan, who, she wrote, “defies pigeonholing,” shuffling instead between “these classifications as her role has evolved during the Reagan administration” (Wertheimer, 2005, p.9).

Two other major studies of First Ladies were written by rhetorical scholar Karlyn Kohrs Campbell: The Rhetorical Presidency: A Two Person Career (1996) and The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary (1998). Both studies provide a framework for understanding why the office of the First Lady is “a vital part of the presidency” as well has a difficult (“impossible”) – damned if you do, damned if you don’t – rhetorical role to play (Wertheimer, 2005).

Davis and Rifkind (2002) argue that there is no recurring methodology in existence for studying the First Lady. Gutin (1989) points out that most
information written about First Ladies includes general biographical information and lacks detail on the role of the First Lady. Existing literature reveals that far less attention has been paid to the systematic ways in which the media constructs First Ladies, in ways that both reify and belittle their status.

U.S. First Ladies are expected to conform to certain socially constructed expectations. The American public and the media seem to despise politically ambitious First Ladies. In an opinion poll conducted in 1995, the vast majority of respondents felt the public held unfavorable view of “non-traditional” First Ladies (Burrell, 1997).

**Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush**

When Hillary Clinton moved to the White House in January 1993, she embarked in an aggressive campaign to entrench her authority in her husband’s administration. Signs that Mrs. Clinton planned to play an influential role in the administration started to emerge when, in addition to the traditional offices reserved for the First Lady in the East Wing of the Executive Mansion, she demanded an extra office in the West Wing, which is considered a preserve of senior male White House officials (Gould, 1996).

Unlike her immediate predecessor, Barbara Bush, Hillary possessed rich academic credentials. She was a partner in a successful law firm in Arkansas. A woman so endowed couldn’t have been expected to play second fiddle in politics. Mrs. Clinton, by deeds and words, made everybody aware of this. At the word
go, the First Lady bolted from the traditional mold set by many of her predecessors, by engaging in high-stake policy making endeavors like healthcare reform (Burrell, 1997).

Scrutiny of Hillary Clinton’s work in healthcare, shortly after she moved to the White House has led to heightened interest in the office of the First Lady. Borreli (2003) observes that scholars’ tendency to examine the cultural institution of the “First Ladyship” rather than the formal position of the First Lady has robbed the field of its scholarly glamour. This latter momentum, according to Borreli, gained momentum in 1993, when three interest groups brought a suit against First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton as chair of the President’s Task Force on Health Care Reform. The bone of contention was her committee’s insistence on holding closed-door hearings. Her critics, however, felt that this violated the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA; PL 92-463), which stipulates that meetings of executive advisory bodies must be open to the public when membership included members who are not fulltime federal employees or officials. Mrs. Clinton was deemed not to have satisfied this criterion. The court ruled in Mrs. Clinton’s favor, declaring that she was a *de facto* administration official. This marked the beginning of scholarly examination of Mrs. Clinton’s First Ladyship, much of which has taken the form of biographies.

Gould (1996d) argues that Hillary Clinton’s experience highlights the conflicting expectations Americans still have about the wives of American
presidents. On one hand, Americans expect First Ladies to serve and be seen but should not outdo their predecessors. Mrs. Clinton defied these conventions, effectively exposing herself to public ridicule and intense scholarly examination. Her unusual handling of Bill Clinton’s White House has made her one of the most studied American First Ladies. Mrs. Clinton’s marriage, feelings about children, work as a lawyer, attitude about money and religion and changing views of politics have all been explored (Gibbs & Duffy, 1996).

In contrast, no major studies have scrutinized Laura Bush in such ways. This may be because she is still in the office. Another reason could be that, unlike Hillary Clinton and Eleanor Roosevelt, Laura Bush has not engaged in policy-making initiatives, which most Americans believe to be the main source of friction between First Ladies and the media. In glaring contrast to Hillary Clinton, Laura Bush has exhibited no political ambition of her own (Wertheimer, 2005).

Early in her marriage, Mrs. Bush declared her distaste for politics. When Laura Lane Welch married George W. Bush, it was on condition that she would never have to become a public person – the kind who make statements to the national press and give speeches to a national audience (Wertheimer, 2005, p.235).

Over the years, Mrs. Bush has advocated many of her husband’s causes, but not to the extent where she caused controversy. A former public school teacher and a librarian, Mrs. Bush has seemed to be contented with handling
such soft issues as promoting early childhood education and literacy. According to Wertheimer, this was consistent with her husband’s agenda, especially during his reelection campaign of 1996 for the Governor of Texas, when he emphasized, that he would promote reading and literacy, a cause his mother, Barbara Bush had been associated with.

An intensive search for scholarly writings about Laura Bush produced disappointing results. Gould Lewis’ *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Legacies*, (2001) is, perhaps, the first biographical treatment of Laura Bush by a historian. Ann Gerhart, style section writer for the *Washington Post*, in 2004 authored, *The Perfect Wife: The Life and Choices of Laura Bush*. The book is casual and offers only a skeleton account of Laura Bush’s life. A somehow more in-depth treatment of Mrs. Bush is included in Molly Meiyer Wertheimer’s *Leading Ladies of the White House: Communication Strategies of Notable Twentieth-Century First Ladies* (2005). However, the chapter on Laura Bush is in the form of an epilogue implying its peripheral significance. This collection gives readers insight into the important role First Ladies play in American presidential politics. The book also shows how First Ladies used rhetorical communication to achieve their goals.

Other notable, but less significant, works that include information on Laura Bush include Ruth Ashby’s *Presidents and First Ladies* (2005), Ann Bausum’s *Our Country’s First Ladies: A Special Supplement to Our Country’s Presidents*

Since no substantive work has been done on the pattern of media coverage of Laura Bush, this study marks the first step in understanding how she has related with the American media. In addition, no studies have compared how the journalistic press has stereotyped Hillary Clinton in comparison with Laura Bush. The next chapter will describe the methods used to answer the thesis’s questions about the press’s treatment of these two First Ladies.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research suggests that journalistic coverage of America’s women politicians has been rife with stereotypes, some of which might be considered inaccurate or even demeaning of their roles, talents and contributions to public life. Of special concern is the press coverage of two contemporary First Ladies – Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush. From the start of her husband’s administration, Hillary Clinton desired to play a role that took her into the field of public policy, and it is well known that she suffered considerable criticism for doing so. Laura Bush, in contrast, vowed from the start of her husband’s term of office that she would not follow in her predecessor’s footsteps. Irrespective of their differences, both can be considered women in politics who have been subjected to considerable press coverage. But did Hillary Clinton’s public policy work lead to more journalistic attention than was afforded Laura Bush? And how have the themes embedded in such coverage differed in their stereotypical treatments of these two women? In this chapter, I describe how I addressed these questions in research involving quantitative and qualitative content analysis of Time magazine coverage of these two women during their husbands’ first terms of office.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

**Research Question One:** During their husbands’ first terms of office, how many Time magazine articles included Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush in their headlines
and/or lead paragraphs and how many words did these articles devote to the First Ladies?

**Research Question Two:** Did the magazine articles that included Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush in their headlines and/or lead paragraphs employ “political” and “traditional” frames and, if so, what was the rate of such use in relation to these two First Ladies?

**Research Question Three:** Was the First Lady framed most often as “political” by *Time* magazine subjected to more negative stereotypes than the First Lady framed most often as “traditional”?

A review of literature on First Ladies in American history and on the gender stereotyping of political women has led to several hypotheses. First of all, it seems reasonable to suggest that a major magazine such as *Time* would include a considerable number of articles on First Ladies Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush. In relation to research questions two and three, it is hypothesized that two prominent frames used in relation to these First Ladies would be “political” and “traditional,” and that the woman most often labeled as “political” would receive the most coverage in *Time*. Finally, in relation to research question three again, it is hypothesized that the First Lady framed most often as “political” would be subjected to more negative stereotyping than the First Lady most often framed as “traditional.”
To clarify, hypotheses predict a positive correlation between rate of use of “political” and “traditional” frames and rate of coverage of each First Lady, and a positive relationship between political frames and negative stereotyping.

**Data Collection**

*Time* magazine will be used for this study. *Time* magazine coverage of First Ladies Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush took the form of news, features, news analyses, letters to the editor, commentaries and opinion.

*Time* is one of the highly respected and widely read weekly newsmagazine not only in the U.S. but the rest of the world. Newsmagazines play an important role in informing and entertaining a readership in the mainstream of a national U.S. audience (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2000).

A report released by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) on August 15, 2005, showed *Time* magazine leading other newsweeklies in circulation and readership. *Time* recorded a circulation of 4.05 million copies for the first half of 2005 compared to *Newsweek’s* 3.2 million. In a study of readers’ attitude towards the U.S. media, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, in 2003, found that most Americans preferred *Time* to *Newsweek*. The fact that readers prefer *Time* to other weekly newsmagazines attests to its high quality journalism. *Time*, by dint of its wide readership, has the ability to set national and international agendas. Due to its wide coverage, its agenda setting proclivities are stronger than those of other newsweeklies. *Time’s* agenda-setting proclivity
is also reinforced by the fact that it names everyone who is known in the public arena in its “Person of the Year” edition. Bearing this in mind, *Time* may influence public opinion on First Ladies, thereby making it a suitable selection for use in this study.

*Time* magazine is believed to espouse conservative philosophy. *The People’s Almanac* documents *Time* magazine’s historically conservative bias. For example, *Time* is said to have propagandized for the U.S. to enter World War II, not for the purpose of saving democracy, or the British, but to establish American dominance in the world. The magazine, therefore, is an ideal unit of analysis for a study involving a conservative First Lady – Laura Bush and a liberal (Hillary Clinton).

**Setting**

The study will cover the first term of Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush’s First Ladyship. Their spouses, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, took office on January 20, 1993, and January 20, 2001, respectively.

Using *Time* magazine archival records, and “Hillary Clinton” as the search name, all articles about her that appeared in *Time* magazine of January 20, 1993, through January 20, 1997, were selected. This similar procedure, but with “Laura Bush” as the search name, was replicated to identify the articles *Time* published between January 20, 2001, and January 20, 2005. The periods
January 20, 1993 – January 20, 1997 and January 20, 2001- January 20, 2005 mark the dates President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush started and completed their first presidential terms, respectively.

Only articles in which a First Lady is mentioned in the headline, in the lead paragraph, or both, were selected for analysis. Headlines and leads are some of the cues editors use to illustrate the salience of an issue in a newspaper or magazine.

Coding

To understand how coding for “political” and “traditional” frames was conducted, a definition of media frames is pertinent. Media frames, according to Scharrer & Bissell (2000), are implicit messages in media content that result from the way their subjects are described. These two authors contend that framing is less what the media covers than how something or someone is described and what aspects are emphasized.

In this research, each article was read to code for political and/or traditional frames. A “political” frame is operationally defined as that text describing a First Lady’s participation in policy-making initiatives (e.g. government-appointed task forces, testifying in Congressional committees); representing the president on official duties (surrogate); making public speeches on such issues as foreign policy, war, military and economy. For example, if a Time magazine’s article reports a First Lady serving on a committee to formulate
a mental health policy, it will be deemed as framing her as politically active.

“Traditional” frames are based on descriptions of First Ladies hosting guests in the White House, escorting and/or dealing with historically gendered social issues such as education or performing familial duties such as baby-sitting and cooking. Articles without clear-cut frames about the First Ladies will be classified as having “undetermined frames.”

The dependant variable, “media coverage,” is conceptually defined as the volume/amount of editorial content dedicated to each First Lady. It will be coded by conducting a physical count of all articles that mention a First Lady, either in the headline or in the lead paragraph or both. The number of words in each article will also be recorded to determine article length.

In question four, the dependent variable is negativity/positivity in stereotypes. Positive stereotypical textual messages are theoretically defined as texts that, 1) show historically acceptable roles and activities of the First Lady, such as being associated with fashion, making decisions about décor or entertaining, spending time with children, the elderly, or those who are ill, or grandstanding other politicians and, 2) include positive bias.

Negative stereotypical textual messages are theoretically defined as texts that 1) show First Ladies preoccupied with policy-making and political issues such as writing presidential speeches, testifying in Congressional committees, attending cabinet meetings, engineering the hiring and firing of senior
administration officials, and acting as presidential advocate and surrogate, and, 2) include negative bias. Magazine articles that include attribution bias, adjective bias, adverbial bias, contextual bias and outright bias will be considered to employ either positive or negative bias.

Attribution bias stems from the magazine’s means of attributing information on the First Lady. For example, if a magazine article reports a First Lady to have “remarked,” this will be considered to be a neutral and non-opinionated information attribution. Since such attribution evokes no emotional response, it will be ignored in this study. In contrast, if the article reports the First Lady to have “barked,” it will be considered a negatively affective attribution of information. Such a word is designed to appeal to our emotions, to give a judgmental stimulus.

Adjective bias attempts to build up an impression of the person described. For example, “Snobby Hillary” casts her in bad light. The adjective “snobby” evokes negative bias. It depicts Mrs. Clinton as aloof and unfriendly. On the other hand, “elated Hillary” portrays Mrs. Clinton as friendly and loving. Its use designates positive bias.

Adverbial bias depends on qualifiers or magnifiers and magazines will usually use it to reinforce an attribution bias. For example, “She joked jovially,” can be considered positive. “She shouted rudely,” on the other hand, is negative in tone.
Contextual bias is the bias in whole sentences or paragraphs or in other (and larger) units of meaning, even an entire meaning. This requires reading a whole sentence or paragraph and making a judgment. For example, a sentence such as, “Mary could not defend herself against charges of looting public resources,” depicts this subject negatively. In contrast, “Joan is the mirror through which young women see their future evokes positive bias.

Outright opinion is presenting a judgment, i.e., a holistic evaluation of an entire article’s bias towards a particular subject or issue. Outright bias in this study will require reading every article and then deciding if it portrays the First Lady negatively or positively.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Using quantitative and qualitative content analysis, the research explored the amount and qualities of *Time* magazine’s news coverage of First Ladies Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush during their husband’s first terms of office. Of primary interest is the amount of coverage devoted to each and, within such coverage, how *Time* magazine framed them: as “traditional” or “political” First Ladies. In addition, I am concerned with the stereotypes – both positive and negative – that were embedded within *Time*’s articles on these First Ladies. I have predicted that the First Lady most often framed as politically active will not only receive the most coverage of the two, but will be subjected to more negative stereotypes than the one most often framed as a traditional First Lady. This chapter presents data pertaining to the study’s research questions and hypotheses. The findings are organized under the study’s four research questions.

**During their husbands’ first terms of office, how many *Time* magazine articles included Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush in their headlines and/or lead paragraphs and how many words did these articles devote to the First Ladies?**

Considerable differences exist between *Time* magazine’s coverage of Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush during their husbands’ first terms in office. In
terms of the number and the length of articles published by *Time* during the period under review, Hillary Clinton outshone Laura Bush.

Figure 1. Amount of *Time* magazine coverage of Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush

As portrayed in Figure 1., Hillary Clinton received more coverage in *Time* than Laura Bush. The magazine published 83 articles about Hillary Clinton, between January 20, 1993, and January 20, 1997, which mentioned her either in the headline, the lead paragraph, or in both.
In contrast, between January 20, 2001, and January 20, 2005, *Time* published 18 articles about Laura Bush in which, she was mentioned in the headline, the lead paragraph, or in both.

Looking at the number of words in these articles, Hillary Clinton far surpassed Laura Bush in amount. In total, articles about Hillary Clinton had 71,029 words while those about Laura Bush had 10,584 words. The shortest article about Hillary Clinton contained 213 words, while that about Laura Bush had 91 words. Mrs. Clinton’s longest article included 4,616 words, while the longest article about Laura Bush was 1,213 words in length.

Looking at the length of stories about each First Lady, *Time* magazine included a greater number of long articles about Hillary Clinton than those it published about Laura Bush. Thirty-seven per cent (31 of 83) of the articles about Hillary Clinton included between 1 and 400 words. Another twenty per cent (17 of 83) were in the 401-800 words bracket. Additionally, twenty seven per cent (23 of 83) of the articles about Mrs. Clinton were in the 801-1600 word category.

About 44 per cent (8 of 18) of the articles about Laura Bush were in the 1-400 word bracket. Twenty per cent were in the 401-800-word category. Another 33 per cent (6 of 18) articles about Laura Bush were in the 801-1600 word category.

*Time* did not publish a single article about Laura Bush in the 1601-4800 words range. In contrast, it published 12 articles about Mrs. Clinton of this length.
Generally, most articles on Laura Bush were short news items and occasional features or commentaries.

It’s instructive to note that most analytical articles in newspapers and magazines range between 800-1200 words in length. One can rightly argue that *Time* magazine journalists wrote more analytical articles about Hillary Clinton compared with Laura Bush.

Did the magazine articles that included Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush in their headlines and/or lead paragraphs employ “political” and “traditional” frames and, if so, what was the rate of such use in relation to these two First Ladies?

As seen in table 1 and figures 2 and 3, *Time* articles framed both Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush as executing “political” and “traditional” roles of a U.S. First Lady.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hillary Clinton</th>
<th>Laura Bush</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Political” First Lady</td>
<td>39 (46%)</td>
<td>5 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Traditional” First Lady</td>
<td>23 (27%)</td>
<td>13 (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undetermined frame</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. *Time* magazine framing of Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush as "Political" and "Traditional" First Ladies
As seen in Table 1, 46 percent (39 of 83) of the articles on Hillary Clinton framed her as politically active, whereas Mrs. Bush was framed in such a way in 28 percent (5 of 18) of the articles. In contrast 72 percent (13 of 18) of the Bush articles portrayed her as a “traditional” First Lady, whereas Hillary Clinton was framed as a “traditional” First Lady in 27 percent of the articles that centered on her.

**Political issues**

*Figure 2. Media coverage of Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush as politically active First Ladies*
It is illuminating to examine the specific activities described within the articles that ultimately led to the designation of such frames as political or traditional. According to Figure 2, the 39 articles that framed Hillary Clinton as a political First Lady reported her in a series of politically related activities, such as her participation in government-appointed task forces. The First Lady chaired the Health Reform Task Force, which her husband had established upon winning the presidency in 1993. Health care being a lucrative industry (estimates value it at $800 billion annually), it is a major source of news for the American media. *Time* magazine reported, in-depth, Mrs. Clinton’s words and actions pertaining to her stewardship of the taskforce.

In contrast, no article portrayed Laura Bush as participating in government-appointed task forces and, unlike Hillary Clinton, Laura Bush rarely interacted with the U.S. Congress. Only one article reported Mrs. Bush taking part in a Congressional hearing. This was on September 11, 2001, when the First Lady had gone to the Capitol for a Senate education hearing only to be interrupted by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

Neither did *Time* Magazine report Mrs. Bush articulating any economic-related issue. Laura Bush, however, faired quite well as George Bush’s surrogate and advocate. Four articles reported her drumming up support for her husband’s policy on war against terror. For example, the First Lady was reported as
appearing on 60 Minutes, Larry King Live and the National Press Club, to support the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As the chair of the Health Reform Task Force, Mrs. Clinton regularly briefed the Congress on the committee’s progress, articulated foreign policy and campaigned for her husband in the 1996 presidential election. Four articles reported Mrs. Clinton discussing foreign policy and economic issues.

Three stories framed Mrs. Bush’s articulating foreign issues. For example, in 2003, she traveled to France, to mark the U.S.’s re-entry into United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization (UNESCO).

First Lady Hillary Clinton, more than Laura Bush, was portrayed as a presidential surrogate and advocate, with vigor and passion. Thirteen articles framed her as acting for or on behalf of President Bill Clinton on a range of policy-related issues. Time reported her representing her husband in foreign summits, writing and re-writing his speeches, attending cabinet meetings and participating in the appointment of senior government officials.

In contrast, three articles portrayed Laura Bush acting as presidential surrogate. Mrs. Bush fervently defended her husband against accusations of mishandling the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. She also advocated the Bush administration’s No-Child-Left-Behind Education Act. Mrs. Bush also articulated foreign policy issues. She, on a number of occasions, visited Afghanistan to champion the cause of Afghan women. Although such a gesture may be
interpreted as a “traditional” role, it aimed at promoting America’s image abroad, and thus is an example of political framing.

According to *Time*, both Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush showed very marginal interest in military issues. Only one article framed them discussing the issue, further testimony that this is a male-domain.

Figure 3. shows *Time* magazine’s framing of First Ladies Laura Bush and Hillary Clinton in their “traditional” modes. It details how the two First Ladies performed various tasks that the American public and media deem “traditional.”

![Figure 3. Media Coverage of Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush as “Traditional” First Ladies](image)

*Time* magazine portrayed Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush as having fulfilled the traditional roles in articles that describe them as active homemakers.
For example, *Time* portrayed them redecorating the White House living rooms and/or tending to their spouses, children and parents.

Despite her indulgence in policy-related matters, Hillary Clinton also performed roles that the American public traditionally associate with every U.S. First Lady. Fifteen articles portrayed her either tending to President Clinton or their daughter Chelsea. During this period, Mrs. Clinton's father, Hugh Clinton, suffered a stroke and was confined in a nursing home. The First Lady closely monitored his condition until his death.

The bulk of *Time* magazine coverage of Laura Bush as a traditional First Lady portrayed her as a homemaker. Out of 18 articles about Mrs. Bush, seven reported her fulfilling familial duties.

And Mrs. Bush's homemaking tendencies were evident every time her husband would break for vacation. Mrs. Bush made it a habit to leave Washington in advance for their Crawford, Texas, Ranch “to tidy up the porch.”

*Time* magazine portrayed Laura Bush as more dedicated to youth issues than Hillary Clinton. Most of Mrs. Bush’s efforts towards youth zeroed on helping them acquire reading and writing skills at an early age. Mrs. Clinton, on the other hand, was more interested in fighting drugs abuse among the youth.

*Time* did not portray Laura Bush playing the role of an “escort,” which many scholars of the U.S. Presidency have come to associate with “traditional"
First Ladies. Three articles, however, reported Hillary Clinton conducting guests on a tour of the White House.

Was the First Lady framed most often as “political” by *Time* magazine subjected to more negative stereotypes than the First Lady framed most often as “traditional”?

As reported in the previous section, of the two First Ladies, Hillary Clinton was most often portrayed as politically active. I have hypothesized that the First Lady most often framed in such a way would be subjected to more negative stereotypes than the other. In short, this hypothesis is strongly supported by the research. Overall, *Time* coverage of Hillary Clinton was anything but just favorable, whereas the coverage of Mrs. Bush was just the opposite.

A shown in Tables 2 & 4, *Time*’s journalists used words/phrases to depict First Ladies Laura Bush and Hillary Clinton either negatively or positively. Words/phrases with negative connotations were apparent when a First Lady involved herself in politically charged activities. On the other hand, words/phrases with positive connotation were associated with First Ladies who stuck to their “traditional” roles.

Table 2. (see next page) is a snapshot of subjective expressions *Time* magazine used to represent Hillary Clinton.

*Time* richly exploits various linguistic devices to negatively stereotype Mrs. Clinton. Her main source of friction with *Time* magazine seems to be her attempt to “co-manage” the White House and her insatiable thirst for political power.
Through the use of such phrases as “overbearing wife” and a “feminist champion,” *Time* seeks to question Mrs. Clinton’s mannerisms. To drive the point home, *Time* becomes part of the rumor mill that claimed that Hillary Clinton once “smashed a lamp at Bill Clinton.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribution bias</th>
<th>Adjective bias</th>
<th>Adverbial bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Hillary argued”</td>
<td>“She is a popular figure”</td>
<td>Mrs. Clinton deliberately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The First Lady insisted”</td>
<td>“A very effective speaker”</td>
<td>“She impatiently told”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“She admired”</td>
<td>“Strong woman”</td>
<td>“Hillary stood steadfastly”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hillary insisted”</td>
<td>“A policy-making First Lady”</td>
<td>“Learned painfully”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mrs. Clinton profited”</td>
<td>“A proud woman”</td>
<td>“She characteristically dealt with”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hillary Clinton highly recommended”</td>
<td>“Her czar-like role”</td>
<td>“She laughs heartily”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“She implied”</td>
<td>“Political liability”</td>
<td>“She struggled gamely”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World-class professional legal</td>
<td>“Too ambitious”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Too accomplished”</td>
<td>“Bill Clinton’s best asset”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Too powerful”</td>
<td>“Bill Clinton’s worst liability”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hillary’s high-handed style”</td>
<td>“A congenital liar”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“She defended”</td>
<td>“Counterculture Mrs. Clinton”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hillary conceded”</td>
<td>“A powerful woman”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“backed away”</td>
<td>“Inexcusably uppity”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hillary Clinton extolled”</td>
<td>“Too darn”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“First Lady labeled”</td>
<td>“She is cheerful”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“She would blurt out”</td>
<td>“She is confident”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She twice professed “ignorance”</td>
<td>“She is proudly unapologetic”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘She admitted’</td>
<td>“A drawling First Lady”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“She suggested”</td>
<td>“Hillary’s smatter”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Lied about her role”</td>
<td>“Hillary Clinton, the feminist champion”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“Hillary Clinton obstructed justice”</td>
<td>“Hillary…Co-prez of sleaze”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hillary smashed a lamp”</td>
<td>“A brilliant intellect”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hillary complained”</td>
<td>“A cheerleader First Lady”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“She dismissed”</td>
<td>“Congressional lobbyist”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“She ridiculed”</td>
<td>“First adviser”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“She gushed”</td>
<td>“Mushy-headed spiritual adviser”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“She deposed health-care experts”</td>
<td>“Polite but passionate”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“She tackled”</td>
<td>“Overbearing wife”</td>
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<td>“She rewarded”</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“Hillary applauded”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The First Lady lambastes”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“She shrugged off criticism”</td>
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<td>“She elbowed”</td>
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<td>“She impressed the Whitehouse”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Mrs. Clinton criticized”</td>
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Table 2. Subjective expressions used by *Time* magazine in reports on Hillary Clinton.
*Time* describes Mrs. Clinton as a “strong woman,” “a policymaking First Lady,” “a popular figure” and “too ambitious.” This may sound complimentary to a casual observer but the description is full of irony and paradox. *Time*’s main mission here is to remind all and sundry that the First Lady is a policy wonk – a role she ought to leave to her husband. Simply put, Mrs. Clinton was portrayed as guilty of trespassing territories that the American public and media consider male-domains.

For example, when the White House dismissed the entire travel office workforce in mid 1993 in questionable circumstances, the media accused Hillary Clinton of engineering the move. *Time* interpreted the incident as yet another attempt by the First Lady to firmly entrench herself in the workings of White House. “Hillary’s high-handed style,” is how *Time* summed Mrs. Clinton’s behavior.

Not all *Time*’s stereotypes were negative, such as when it variously referred to Hillary Clinton as a “world-class professional legal,” “a brilliant intellect” and “a highly effective speaker” - all fine qualities that qualified the First Lady to be “Bill Clinton’s best asset.”

But when Congress rejected Mrs. Clinton’s health-care reform proposals, and when she found herself embroiled in Whitewater controversy, which many believe made Republicans wrest control of Congress from Democrats in 1995, *Time* branded the First Lady “Co-prez of sleaze,” “a congenital liar” and “Bill Clinton’s worst liability.” Mrs. Clinton’s flat refusal to shoulder responsibility for
Democrats’ electoral misfortunes prompted *Time* to declare, “She was too proud to apologize.”

*Time*, on regular basis, characterized Hillary Clinton’s speech in a manner to arouse emotions in the minds of readers. To ward off her critics, Mrs. Clinton would “lambaste” and “ridicule” them. The First Lady regularly “complained, shrugged off criticism, and criticized” her detractors. To portray Hillary Clinton as tenacious and brave, *Time* used such action verbs as “tackled, elbowed, blurted and struggled.”

Sometime, Hillary Clinton “cheered and applauded.” The First Lady would be “cheerful,” especially while in the company of her daughter Chelsea. In the best of her moods, Mrs. Clinton would “laugh heartily.” The First Lady, despite her “high-handedness,” was sometimes “polite” and “passionate.”

Closer evaluation of words and phrases (see Table 3.), *Time* magazine used to describe Laura Bush reveals a holy alliance between the First Lady and the publication.
This study finds that the closest *Time* came to negatively stereotyping Mrs. Bush was when it referred to her as “ex-smoker.” Otherwise, *Time’s* coverage of Laura Bush is full of favorable descriptors and qualifiers. For example, when Mrs. Bush moved to the White House in the spring of 2001, *Time* described her as a “low-key successor” to Hillary Clinton. Henceforth, according to *Time*, the “coiffed First Lady” with a “calming demeanor” played her role as the U.S. First Lady in a “steady” and “elegant” manner. *Time* reminded readers that Laura Bush was “not a controversial President,” a phrase purposely meant to ridicule Hillary Clinton’s First Ladyship. Instead, Mrs. Bush is described as the “least ambitious First Lady” and President Bush’s “Comforter-in-Chief.” Ideally, these are the traditional roles of the U.S. First Lady.
Mrs. Bush’s motherly posture, no doubt, endeared her to the American public and the media. Mrs. Bush is portrayed as “gentle” and “full of mirth.” According to *Time*, Mrs. Bush’s love to foes and friends is “as soothing as a warm bath.”

Mrs. Bush, unlike Hillary Clinton, was framed in *Time* as a person who rarely craved publicity. *Time* portrayed her as “publicity shy” person. This, however, does not imply that Mrs. Bush had the tendency to insulate herself from the media. When opportunities arose, *Time* inferred that Mrs. Bush did not hesitate to speak from the heart. For example, she was reported as an “aggressive advocate” of the Bush Administration’s policies such as No-Child-Left-Behind and the war on terror.

One would argue that Laura Bush’s refusal to engage in policy matters shielded her from critical media scrutiny.

Having reported on the most common words and phrases *Time* magazine used to describe Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush, I now turn to statistical comparison of stereotypes/biases attributed to these two women.
In Figure 4., Hillary Clinton emerges as the most negatively stereotyped First Lady. In total, 162 negative and 121 positive biases were embedded in *Time* coverage of Mrs. Clinton. Both negative and positive biases against her were unevenly spread in attribution, contextual, adjective, adverbial and outright bias categories. It is also important to mention that there were more negative biases than positive ones in all the five bias categories used in this study. The negative biases mainly took issue with Hillary Clinton’s attempt to play politics and her tendencies to outshine Bill Clinton in familial issues.

Most of the stereotypes about Hillary Clinton were concentrated in the contextual bias category. This study identified about 56 positive and 60
negative contextual biases about Mrs. Clinton. Here is an example of a negative contextual bias identified in the *Time* magazine of January 15 1996:

But just when the First Lady was preparing to return to the political stage after a year quietly refashioning her image into a combination of Martha Stewart and Mother Teresa, Hillary Rodham Clinton now faces a crisis that even the most artful public relations may not be able to fix. Within the space of 48 hours last week, the sudden discovery of controversial records has cast new light on her role in two controversies: the purge of the White House Travel Office in 1993 and her work at the Rose Law Firm in Little Rock for Madison Guaranty, the Whitewater savings and loan that lost $60 million of taxpayer’s money (*Time*, January 15, 1996).

This paragraph refers to Mrs. Clinton’s attempt to make a political comeback after the administration suffered a string of defeats, notably, the 1995-midterm Congressional elections and the Healthcare Reform Bill. All fingers were pointed at the First Lady for her role in the Healthcare Reform Taskforce. The attribution bias category contained the second highest number of negative stereotypes about First Lady Hillary Clinton. About 35 instances of negative biases were documented. Attribution bias, essentially, contained information attributed to the First Lady. *Time* magazine used such action words as lambasted, ridiculed, blurted out, labeled, dismissed, complained, shrugged off criticism, criticized tackled, obstructed, argued, deposed elbowed, to portray Mrs. Clinton negatively.

There were 14 positive attribution biases concerning Hillary Clinton. *Time* used such positive attributive words as “impressed,” “applauded,” “extolled,” and “admired,” in referring to Mrs. Clinton. Similarly 30 adjective biases framed Hillary
Clinton negatively. Some examples of negative adjective biases *Time* used against Mrs. Clinton included overbearing wife, congenital liar, proud woman, counterculture Mrs. Clinton, mushy-headed spiritual leader and high-handed. On the other hand, such words as popular figure, strong woman, world-class professional legal, cheerful, confident, brilliant intellect, polite but passionate, Bill Clinton’s best asset, were present in the 24 positive adjective biases identified by this study.

Overall, there were 42 positive and only three negative biases on First Lady Laura Bush, a strong indication that she commanded positive media coverage from *Time* magazine. And the fact that this study did not identify a single case of negative outright opinion further reinforces this assertion. It is therefore safe to state that the entire 18 articles about Laura Bush used for this study stereotyped Mrs. Bush positively.

There were nineteen positive biases with such words as “steady,” “devoted,” “assuring,” “selfless,” “clever,” “least ambitious,” “publicity shy” First Lady and, America’s “weapon of mass seduction,” to describe her. Only one adjective bias, “ex-smoker,” seemed to cast Mrs. Bush in bad light.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research reported here, using quantitative and qualitative content analyzes, has explored *Time* magazine’s stereotyping of First Ladies Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush. Although the research has studied only one magazine’s coverage of two First Ladies over a four year period, the findings reinforce the argument that journalists in their coverage of political women, tend to focus on traditionally expected, historically acceptable roles in positive ways, while they fail to highlight their professional achievements in positive ways.

Such journalistic portrayal of women as subservient to men merely reinforces our society’s negative attitude toward the women folk. Across the globe, societies maintain deeply rooted cultural beliefs that, among other things, seek to pigeonhole women to specific schemas, from where they can hardly advance themselves professionally. Women are expected to play such subservient roles as satisfying their husband’s emotional needs, babysitting, cooking, laundry and home decoration. They are seldom candidates for niche political offices or top positions in the corporate world.

In its coverage of First Ladies Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush, *Time* magazine, with much gusto, replayed these stereotypes. By according Hillary Clinton more media coverage than Laura Bush, *Time* magazine confirmed the widely held view that politically active First Ladies, for good or bad reasons, will have every one of their words and deeds evaluated and interpreted by the media.
Mrs. Clinton, by dint of the many official responsibilities she used to undertake, could not avoid media glare as she made policy pronouncements, represented her husband on official duties and penned newspaper columns. All this “violated” the terms of reference of her job as a First Lady. In such a situation, it is the media that blows the first whistle. It is apparent that the main reason behind Mrs. Clinton’s unfavorable media portrayal stems from her propensity to challenge the existing norms that forbid First Ladies from dabbling in politics.

The American public and the media traditionally expect First Ladies to play the role of an escort and host. Mrs. Clinton, from the onset, said that she would be a different First Lady. Soon after moving to the Executive Mansion, Hillary, in addition to her East Wing office, requested a second office in the West Wing of the White House, an area traditionally reserved for the president’s most senior male staffers. Many observers rightly speculated that Mrs. Clinton’s move signaled a new order where the First Lady would have a greater say in the presidential administration.

Mrs. Clinton’s appointment to chair the Presidential Health Care Reform Task Force early in the administration’s life, helped to reinforce these assertions. This appointment laid bare her political ambitions. The media, in turn, saw this as a godsend opportunity to dress Mrs. Clinton down. A woman who dared to challenge the status quo had to be reported intensely for the American public to gain a deeper understanding of her character.
Mrs. Clinton’s hidden hand in the dismissal of White House Travel Office staff for alleged corruption rekindled another foray of media coverage. By engineering the dismissal of White House staff, the First Lady was seen as overstepping her role. To fire and hire senior government officials is the sole prerogative of the president and the First Lady is not expected to interfere. Mrs. Clinton would also attend cabinet meetings, writes the president’s speeches and influence appointments of key administration officials.

Hillary Clinton’s entanglement in the Whitewater scandal further complicated her public image. Thousands of newspapers pages and magazines and enormous amount of TV and radio airtime portrayed Mrs. Clinton as corrupt and untrustworthy.

The way *Time* magazine portrayed Hillary Clinton is further evidence of the dilemma U.S. First Ladies face in their attempt to define their roles. First Ladies are traditionally expected to maintain a low profile. But they must also appear active or else they are branded lazybones. In the case of Hillary Clinton, the media saw a First Lady of rare candor – one who dared to challenge masculine hegemony at the White House and other corridors of power.

It is instructive to mention that the media will always find something to write or broadcast about First Ladies irrespective of their political activities. Were this not the case, this study could not have identified a single article on Laura Bush. Laura Bush’s ambivalence toward politics, one can rightly argue, spared her microscopic media scrutiny. *Time* handled Mrs. Bush with kid’s gloves. It is
also instructive to point out that this study found very little coverage of Laura Bush, which is further evidence that the media has little interest in First Ladies who stick to their traditional roles. Since such issues do not make headlines, the media ignores them altogether.

*Time* magazine seems to have rewarded Mrs. Bush with favorable coverage for avoiding controversial issues. All along, Mrs. Bush was content with playing the role of a homemaker. She was always preoccupied with ensuring that their twin daughters, Jenna and Barbara Bush grew up responsibly. Rarely did George Bush attend major local and international events without Laura’s company. All through, Mrs. Bush would avoid media attention. She refused to be dragged into politics of the day.

Using newsmagazine articles to gauge the political activeness of First Ladies can be misleading. Many are times First Ladies participate in major events that go unreported by major newsmagazines, either because they were unaware of them or proved expensive to cover. For example, a newspaper or magazine may find it uneconomical to fund a journalist to accompany a First Lady in a far country. In the event that the First Lady makes a major policy pronouncement, such would not find its way into the media.

More scholarship on media coverage and stereotyping of First Ladies is needed. For example, research should compare their verbatim speeches and raw copies of press releases with respective media artifacts such as newspaper and magazine articles, radio and TV broadcasts or online scripts. This way,
researchers would be able to establish how much spin journalists put on First Ladies’ activities.

Hopefully, these findings will help foster future research that further explores the stereotyping of America’s First Ladies.
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