

First Ladies and American Women: Representation in the Modern Presidency

Jill Abraham Hummer
Winchester, Virginia

Master of Arts, University of Virginia, 2003
Bachelor of Arts, Allegheny College, 2000

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Steven S. Rado 4/20/07

James Sterling Ewing 4/20/07

Holly Coda Rado 4/20/07

Mary Ann Bonnell 4.20.07

~Abstract~

This dissertation examines the American First Ladies' performance as a representative from 1920 through the present. I argue that representing women has been one of their most important representative tasks. This project applies Hanna Fenichel Pitkin's concepts of representation to reach new conclusions about First Ladies' contributions to the presidency. Drawing on presidency research, as well as women and politics and gender studies literature, this project posits a developmental theory concerning the origin and evolution of their representative roles. The implications of their women-focused political representation are analyzed through the concepts of transgendering and regendering.

First Ladies' performance as a representative has been expressed through several concrete roles. Chapter One examines the work of candidates' wives in reaching out to women voters. Chapter Two focuses on First Ladies acting for women as public liaisons. Chapter Three considers First Ladies' attempts to integrate women into national economic policy and programs through their roles as homemakers and consumers. Chapter Four evaluates First Ladies' lobbying and educative efforts on behalf of the Equal Rights Amendment. And Chapter Five analyzes First Ladies' performance as public diplomats to women abroad.

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Jill Abraham Hummer

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~Introduction~

In the days following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Laura Bush delivered the presidential radio address in its entirety. Her remarks signaled the beginning of what would become a major part of her work as First Lady: the fight for global women's rights as part of the broader war on terrorism. She remarked, "Afghan women know, through hard experience, what the rest of the world is discovering: The brutal oppression of women is a central goal of terrorists."¹ She concluded her remarks with a challenge to the American people to join her in helping to advance the dignity and opportunity of women in Afghanistan.

In November of 1977, during the height of the debate over the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), three First Ladies—Rosalynn Carter, Betty Ford, and Lady Bird Johnson—were the featured participants at the National Woman's Conference in Houston, Texas. According to Mrs. Carter, the significance of the three First Ladies appearing on the same platform together at the conference, along with the best known feminist leaders, was "to affirm the continuity in our government's efforts to improve life for all."² During the 1970s, First Ladies lobbied hard for the ERA, though this controversial constitutional amendment ultimately failed to pass.

¹ Radio Address by Mrs. Bush, November 17, 2001, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011117.html>> (3/9/2006).

² Press Release, Office of the First Lady's Press Secretary, "Rosalynn Carter's Remarks at the National Women's Conference," November 19, 1977, "National Women's Conference in Houston, TX" folder, Box 3, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

In 1953, a *U.S. News and World Report* article entitled "Mamie Works Hard for Ike: Teas, Receptions, Handshakes" reported that Mrs. Eisenhower daily received and shook hands with 600 to 700 people, mainly women, during the Washington, D.C. social season.³ And throughout the Roosevelt Administration, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt worked hard within the patronage system to secure for female Democratic Party workers appointments within the federal government.

All of these examples point to a political relationship that has existed between First Ladies and American women. This project argues that representing women has been one of the First Lady's most important tasks. In exploring the First Lady's female-centered representative role, this project seeks to answer the following questions: What difference does it make that First Ladies have represented women, their issues and interests within the U.S. presidency? Does the First Lady undertaking this representative role relegate women to the status of second-class constituents of the presidency? Has the First Lady actually advanced women's progress, or has the First Lady's representative work further solidified traditional gender stereotypes?

Though the First Lady's role as a women-focused political representative has gone relatively unexplored by the current literature, it is well established that First Ladies have historically engaged in general political activity. One very prominent example of a First Lady engaging in political activity is Edith Wilson's alleged assumption of President Woodrow Wilson's responsibilities after he had

³ *U.S. News and World Report*, 9/21/1953, "Eisenhower, Mamie 1942-1969," Vertical File, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

fallen ill because of a stroke. A great deal of criticism was directed at Mrs. Wilson after people began accusing her of making important governmental decisions and signing her name to presidential documents. One U.S. senator even charged that the country was operating under a "petticoat government."⁴ While this statement questions the legitimacy of the First Lady's political actions, it also points to the underlying gendered character of the presidential branch, which is the starting point of this analysis.

Woodrow Wilson's presidency coincided with the height of the women's suffrage movement. The Nineteenth Amendment was added to the U.S. Constitution in 1920, during the last full year of Wilson's presidency. Before this time, national politics was a very masculine domain, as the national government guaranteed only men the right to vote.⁵ Even after women were admitted to the franchise, politics did not shed its masculine roots. As Wendy Brown argues, "More than any other kind of human activity, politics has historically borne an explicitly masculine identity. It has been more exclusively limited to men than any other realm of endeavor and has been more intensely, self-consciously masculine than most other social practices."⁶

Of all the branches of government, the Executive Branch, which is the focus of this project, is perhaps the most masculine. Georgia Duerst-Lahti argues that the presidency's paramount masculinity stems from its military roots,

⁴ Betty Boyd Caroli, *First Ladies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 149.

⁵ Of course, not all men were granted political rights to the same extent. In the new Republic, only white, male, property owners were given full rights as citizens. Also, throughout the nineteenth century, legal restrictions on women owning property were gradually eased.

⁶ Wendy Brown, *Manhood and Politics: A Feminist Reading in Political Theory* (Totowa, NJ: Rowan & Littlefield, 1988), 4.

centralized command, and hierarchical structure, which are all "constructions of manliness." No woman has ever served as President, and women have had difficulty penetrating the "ring of power" that has surrounded Presidents.⁷ The criticism of Edith Wilson's assumption of executive power provides evidence of this masculinity that pervades the Executive Branch.

The Executive Branch's masculine character raises an important question about its own political relationship with women. Specifically, how has a branch that is characterized by masculinity managed to represent American women? The examples cited above illustrate some notable instances of the First Ladies responding to the political interests of American women. And, as this project will show, her women-focused representative function has manifested itself in several concrete roles: She has forged political relationships with women voters. She has served as the White House public liaison to women, a role that encapsulates advocating for female appointments. And she has championed Administration policies and programs related to women, their rights and issues.

However, the First Lady has been neither elected nor appointed as a political representative. So, what caused the First Lady to take on this role? Explaining how, when, and why she came to serve as a representative sheds light on what necessitated and legitimated her political representative role. Answering this question also helps to define the parameters of the project, as well as to understand the development and evolution of her particular roles. I argue that the interaction between the women's movement and the modern presidency caused

⁷ Georgia Duerst-Lahti, "Reconceiving Theories of Power: Consequences of Masculinism in the Executive Branch," in *The Other Elites: Women, Politics, and Power in the Executive Branch*, ed. Mary Anne Borrelli and Janet M. Martin (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 11.

the First Lady to politically represent women. In so doing, I articulate and synthesize theories about the core structure of the First Lady's position, the impact of the women's movement, the expectations of the modern President, and the roles of masculinity and femininity within the Executive Branch. But before we can grasp the cause, extent, and contours of her representative role, the concept of representation and its application to the First Lady's office must be developed.

Representation and the First Lady

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin's work *The Concept of Representation* is the mainspring for any philosophical discussion on the topic. Since it is the most authoritative piece of scholarship on representation, Pitkin's framework is employed here in the application of the concept of representation to the First Lady's office.

Pitkin defines political representation to mean "acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them."⁸ Pitkin also delineates four particular dimensions of political representation—formal, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive. Each of these dimensions are discussed below and then applied to the First Lady's position.

Formal Representation: This dimension refers to the mechanisms through which people are represented or representation takes place. In the American

⁸ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), 209.

system, elections and constitutional and statutory guarantees ensure representation of the citizenry through individuals who occupy public office. As the following section will show, though the First Lady arguably does have some role in formal representation, this dimension is probably the least important for her position and so for this analysis.

In order for representation to occur, representatives must be *authorized* to act. Elections provide this authorization, whereby voters grant to the elected officials the authority to act on their behalf. Representatives must also be *accountable* to those they govern. The representatives, through elections, will ultimately have to answer to the people for what they do in office. "In genuine representation, the representative must eventually be held to account so that he will be responsive to the needs and claims of his constituents, to the obligations implicit in his position."⁹

In terms of accountability, there has been some empirical research showing that feeling toward the First Lady does have an electoral impact on the President.¹⁰ Some First Ladies even believed that their actions have had an electoral impact. For example, Hillary Clinton, knowing that Bill Clinton's presidency was "part of the electoral calculus" in the 1994 congressional midterm elections, thought that she was partly to blame for the Democratic losses. She would later write, "I wondered how much I was to blame for the debacle: whether

⁹ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 57.

¹⁰ Anthony Mughan and Barry C. Burden, "The Candidates' Wives," in *Democracy's Feast*, ed. Herbert Weisberg (Chatham: Chatham House Publishers, 1995).; Anthony Mughan and Barry C. Burden, "Hillary Clinton and the President's Reelection," in *Reelection 1996: How America Voted*, ed. Herbert Weisberg and Janet Box-Steffensmeier (New York: Chatham House Publishers, 1999).

we had lost the election over health care; whether I had gambled on the acceptance of my active role and lost."¹¹

Yet, even though the First Ladies may have somewhat of an indirect role in the system of formal representation, they are not the ones *directly authorized* to act. The Presidents are. Also, though there is some evidence that demonstrates that First Ladies do play into the public's electoral calculus, they are ultimately not the ones held *directly accountable* to the people. These considerations undermine the relevance of her position for formal representation.

Yet, Pitkin also states that constitutional and statutory laws are part of the system of formal representation. As MaryAnne Borrelli has explained, there are such statutory and case laws that inform the First Lady's position.¹² The White House Personnel Authorization Act of 1978 (PL 95-570) is perhaps the most important in formalizing the First Lady's position. Section 105(e) of the Act provides that

Assistance and services authorized pursuant to this section to the President are authorized to be provided to the spouse of the President in connection with assistance provided by such spouse to the President in the discharge of the President's duties and responsibilities. If the President does not have a spouse, such assistance and services may be provided for such purposes to a member of the President's family whom the President designates.¹³

Along with seemingly providing an exemption for the First Lady from two federal laws that could be interpreted as banning her political activity,¹⁴ Borrelli interprets

¹¹ Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Living History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 249, 57.

¹² MaryAnne Borrelli, "The First Lady as Formal Advisor to the President: When East (Wing) Meets (West) Wing," *Women & Politics* 24, no. 1 (2002): 28.

¹³ PL 95-570, 105(e), qtd. in Borrelli, "The First Lady as Formal Advisor to the President: When East (Wing) Meets (West) Wing," 30.

¹⁴ The Postal Revenue and Federal Salary Act of 1967 (PL 90-206) prohibited nepotism in Executive Branch employment and appointments. The Anti-Deficiency Act of 1884 (31 USC 1342) banned all voluntary governmental service. See Borrelli, "The First Lady as Formal Advisor to the President: When East (Wing) Meets (West) Wing."

this act as having, on the one hand, "formally identified the first lady as an assistant to the president, as a senior member of the White House staff who preside[s] over other presidential aides."¹⁵ On the other hand, Borrelli states that it is possible to argue that the statute did not really address the formal position of the First Lady, as it defined her in terms of her spousal relationship to the President and considered her a designated rather than appointed official. This distinction is important because as a designee she could exercise informal power through the first ladyship but was prohibited from exercising formal power as a federal appointee or officer.¹⁶ Thus, her status as a formal representative is further called into question.

In a law suit concerning the status of the First Lady as a federal official, and more specifically about whether statutory law permitted First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton to hold closed door meetings in her role as Chair of the President's Task Force on National Health Care Reform, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ruled that the First Lady was a "*de facto* federal official."¹⁷ However, the court's opinion did not go much further than this in clarifying the First Lady's legal status.

As Borrelli concludes, the statutory and case law related to the First Lady points to "the problematic nature of this actor's status within the executive

¹⁵ Borrelli, "The First Lady as Formal Advisor to the President: When East (Wing) Meets (West) Wing," 30.

¹⁶ Borrelli, "The First Lady as Formal Advisor to the President: When East (Wing) Meets (West) Wing," 30.

¹⁷ *American Association of Physicians and Surgeons, et al v. Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 997 F. 2d 898 (D.C. Cir. 1993).

branch..."¹⁸ Therefore, the strength and legitimacy of her position as a formal representative is questionable, and so formal representation will not be treated as a relevant category for the purposes of this analysis.

Descriptive Representation: Descriptive representation means "standing for" something. Under this form, representation occurs when someone "stands for" something or someone absent by some correspondence of features.¹⁹ Representation depends upon the representative's characteristics, on what he or she is or is like. If an official or governing body mirrors, reflects, or resembles the characteristics of its constituents, then it may be said that descriptive representation is taking place.

Descriptive representation is usually discussed in terms of legislatures, rather than executives. But achieving descriptive representation has also been a goal of presidential administrations. Male Presidents are limited in their ability to descriptively represent women because they do not necessarily possess all of the characteristics of women. Thus, Presidents have appointed female officials to further the Executive establishment's descriptive representation of women. For instance, recent presidential administrations have tried to assemble Cabinets that "look like America."²⁰ This translates into the mixing of women, African

¹⁸ Borrelli, "The First Lady as Formal Advisor to the President: When East (Wing) Meets (West) Wing," 32.

¹⁹ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 80.

²⁰ In 1992, Bill Clinton asserted that he would assemble a Cabinet that looked like America, in terms of race and gender demographics. See Judy Mann, "A Cabinet that Looks Like America?" *The Washington Post*, 12/18/1992.

Americans, Hispanics, and other underrepresented groups with white men in order to achieve an Executive body that 'stands for' the population as a whole.

The First Lady's descriptive representation has been primarily connected with her gender identity. As this project will show, the First Lady's role as a descriptive representative has been expressed mostly in debates surrounding cultural notions of womanhood. While the following chapters will show that descriptive representation is one of the least pervasive forms of the First Lady's representation, this form is most evident in Chapter Four on the ERA, when the First Ladies were perceived as taking sides within the broader culture war over gender roles. When First Ladies advocated on behalf of the ERA, they were criticized for 'standing for' the women's libbers and not 'standing for' traditional homemakers as descriptive representatives.

Symbolic Representation: Symbolic representation also occurs when something "stands for" something else. But in contrast to descriptive representation, "to say that something symbolizes something else is to say that it calls to mind, and even beyond that evokes emotions or attitudes appropriate to the absent thing."²¹ A symbol is a proxy for what it represents: "Rather than a source of information, the symbol seems to be the recipient or object of feelings, expressions of feeling, or actions intended for what it represents."²²

Human beings, as well as inanimate objects, can be symbols. Though, as Pitkin notes, it is never possible to capture in words the totality of what a symbol

²¹ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 96.

²² Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 99.

represents, it has been often said that the First Lady symbolizes American womanhood. As evidence of this, people's affect for First Ladies is often centered on female-centric characteristics. For instance, we have heard that Barbara Bush is liked because she is grandmotherly; that Hillary Clinton is disliked because she is shrewish; that Laura Bush is liked because she is ladylike or disliked because she is priggish.²³

Symbols can also create meaning. In other words, political figures can also be "symbol-makers." Those figures can undertake activities designed to "foster belief, loyalty, satisfaction with their leaders, among the people."²⁴ Symbolic representation "includes the ideals made manifest by the representative" and encompasses "the meaning that is implicit in their relationships and communications."²⁵ The following analysis will show how First Ladies have served as symbolic representatives along these various dimensions, but specifically in relation to women and gender.

The relationship between the presidential couple has symbolic representative qualities. Presidential couples have purposefully tried to portray their marriages as having certain gender dynamics in order to convey specific ideals to the populace. For instance, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter purposefully tried to portray their marriage as an equal partnership, conforming to the ideals embraced by second-wave feminism. And Ronald and Nancy Reagan conveyed

²³ See for example Barbara C. Burrell, *Public Opinion, the First Ladyship, and Hillary Clinton* (New York: Garland, 1997).; Erica Scharrer and Kim Bissell, "Overcoming Traditional Boundaries: The Role of Political Activity in Media Coverage of First Ladies," *Women & Politics* 21, no. 1 (2000).

²⁴ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 107.

²⁵ MaryAnne Borrelli, *The President's Cabinet: Gender, Power, and Representation* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 10-11.

the ideal of the traditional marriage, conforming to the mores of conservatism. In both of these examples, the presidential couples were serving as symbol makers, purposefully communicating to the public what their relationship meant for gender politics.

Similarly, First Ladies have served as gender role models. This means that they have set examples for women in how to carry out their gender roles. This dimension is particularly apparent in Chapter Three, which concerns how First Ladies have provided guidance to women on how to behave as homemakers and consumers.

The following chapters also reveal how the First Lady can exercise power as a symbolic representative. For example, she has the power to highlight or draw attention to a particular policy or program, thereby according it a more prominent status within the American polity. She also has the power to evoke emotional responses from female members of the population, to awaken their interest in a political activity or mobilize their participation in a government program.

Substantive Representation: According to Pitkin, this dimension of representation is “an acting for others” or “an activity in behalf of, in the interest of, as the agent of, someone else.”²⁶ Also known as “active representation,” this form of representation refers to the “substance or content of acting for others.” Active representation is the concrete manifestation of representing—acting for, looking after, relating to the represented. Based on these definitions, it is reasonable to conclude that substantive representation encompasses several

²⁶ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 113.

dimensions: action, benefaction, and connection. The following section relates these components of substantive representation to the First Lady's office.

Action or activity must occur for substantive representation to take place. To illustrate substantive representation's central importance to this project, the topics of all the chapters are focused on concrete roles or activities that the First Lady has undertaken. Her representative roles are most easily translated into action words or verbs. The chapters focus on how the First Ladies have *campaigned* to women, *liaised* with women's groups, *advocated* for women's appointments, and *advanced* women-centered economic, domestic, and foreign policies. Yet, these actions cannot be understood apart from their aim: conferring a benefit to the represented.

Benefaction is basically the conferring of aid of some sort. In performing substantive activities, the representative is acting in a manner beneficial to the standing or well being of the represented. In other words, the representative is acting in the interests of the represented. This project highlights the actions that First Ladies have undertaken to the benefit of the represented. For instance, when Rosalynn Carter pushed for ERA ratification, she believed that her work was to the benefit of women across America. When Eleanor Roosevelt helped women obtain jobs in the federal bureaucracy, she was acting with their interests in mind. These examples illustrate how benefaction is a central component of substantive representation and of the First Lady's role. But substantive representation cannot be understood apart from its end goal or result—forming a connection with the represented.

Pitkin states that substantive representation forms "some connection or relationship or tie between a representative and those for whom he acts."²⁷

Building ties, cultivating relationships, and forming links: these are all central to the First Lady's representative role in relation to women. When the First Lady receives women at the White House, the overall purpose of this activity is to cultivate a relationship with them. When she addresses them for the purpose of giving them guidance on a women's issue, she is in effect forming a tie with them.

Yet, Pitkin's analysis goes further to explain the various ways in which a representative can 'act for' the represented. These multiple dimensions of substantive representation are discussed below in relation to the First Lady's position.

Analogies for "Acting for": In her discussion of substantive representation, Pitkin undertakes a linguistic analysis of the wide range of terms used to mean 'acting for' something absent. She discusses the concepts of the representative as an "agent," "trustee," "deputy," and "delegate." While these concepts are similar, they are not quite the same, as they highlight or emphasize different dimensions of 'acting for.' The agent analogy emphasizes the elements of action and initiative in representing. The trustee analogy centers on the idea of "taking care of another."²⁸ The deputy analogy focuses on the concept of substitution or acting in another's place. The delegate analogy involves being sent

²⁷ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 114.

²⁸ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 121.

out, as on a mission. The First Lady's representative role can be classified along some of these dimensions. In her 'acting for' women, I argue that the First Lady can best be classified as either a trustee or a delegate, though the agent and deputy analogies are briefly reviewed below.

An agent is one who "does the actual work."²⁹ Under the agency theory of representation, the emphasis is on the representative's action. As Pitkin states, "the stress on action seems to imply freedom to act, strength, initiative. In this sense, putting something into the hands of an agent seems to be turning it over to him to do, the action being his."³⁰ In another sense, "agent" can also mean acting for someone else, not entirely autonomously, but in some way dependent upon those he represents.³¹ First Ladies have certainly taken the initiative to act for American women. Yet, this sense of acting for does not fully characterize her role. Under the agent theory, acting "for" emphasizes acting "instead of" rather than "to the benefit of," which better characterizes the trusteeship analogy of "acting for." Pitkin likens this distinction between the representative as agent and trustee to the use of the terms "on behalf of" and "in behalf of." She says, "*The Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that 'on behalf' means 'on the part of (another), in the name of, as agent or representative of, on account of, for, instead of,' while 'in behalf' is said to mean 'in the interest of, as a friend or defender of, for the benefit of...'" It is this second meaning, 'in behalf of,' that better characterizes the First Lady's representative role.

²⁹ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 125, 22.

³⁰ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 122.

³¹ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 122.

The representative as trustee takes care of another, looks after the welfare of those he or she represents, and acts in their interests. The philosophy of Edmund Burke is most often associated with the trusteeship notion of representation. As Burke has written, "The king is the representative of the people; so are the lords; so are the judges. They all are trustees for the people, as well as the commons; because no power is given for the sole sake of the holder..."³² In this sense, while action and initiative on the part of the representative is still implied, the representative acts more like a "guardian" than an agent.³³ In their relationship to American women, First Ladies as representatives have acted for women with their interests in mind. It is because the trustee theory underlies the obligation to others that First Ladies can better be characterized as trustees than agents.

The representative as deputy is the third of the 'acting for' analogies. The representative as deputy centers on the idea of substitution or acting instead of those he or she represents. A deputy can be a "public official holding an office, and that office is a kind of replacement for a higher office, as the vice-presidency is for the presidency."³⁴ In the same way, the First Lady could stand in the stead of the President on certain occasions. For instance, when the First Lady attends a funeral of a foreign leader when the President cannot, she is serving as a substitute or deputy, and the President is in a sense present through her. However,

³² Edmund Burke, *The Effect of the System on Parliament*, Ross J.S. Hoffman and Paul Levack, eds., *Burke's Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1949), 28.

³³ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 127.

³⁴ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 133.

the First Lady's representative roles in relation to women more closely resemble the delegate analogy.

The representative as a delegate "expresses the notion of being sent from one place or another on orders..." In this sense, the representative is an emissary, a term often ascribed to the First Lady, particularly in regard to her foreign travel. Furthermore, the representative as delegate "is sent in an official capacity," "with explicit instructions, or to do a particular thing" in the name of the one who sent the delegate.³⁵ As this project will show, First Ladies are often sent out by their administrations on both foreign and domestic missions to carry out presidential directives.

With the 'trustee' and 'delegate' analogies, the direction or flow of representation is important. That is, as representatives, First Ladies act as intermediaries between Presidents and women. But then the questions arise: Do First Ladies typically represent the President to women? Or do they represent women to the President? I argue that when the First Lady more closely resembles a trustee, she is representing women to the President. In this way, she is serving as an advocate in behalf of women and acting in their interests. Conversely, when the First Lady's activities are more in line with the delegate analogy, she is representing the President to women, as she is typically delivering presidential messages to women.

In terms of substantive representation, this project will reveal the First Lady most frequently as a trustee. Her role as a delegate, however, is no less important and is most evident in Chapter Five, which concerns her 'acting for'

³⁵ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 133-34.

international women, as well in Chapter Four, which deals with her lobbying work for the ERA. In these roles, First Ladies have frequently served as domestic and foreign emissaries, carrying presidential requests and messages to audiences at home and abroad.

Explaining the Origin and Development of the First Lady's Linkage to American Women

Though the political representation of women has become an integral part of the First Lady's role, she did not always serve this function. I argue that the First Lady's role as a political representative commenced in 1920 when women across the nation were granted the constitutional right to vote.

From the founding until 1920, women across the nation did have universal political representation. Of course, by 1920, several states had granted women the right to vote and there were a number of women influential in state politics, particularly in the American West. Yet, without a constitutional guarantee, the First Lady was not strongly compelled to forge a meaningful representative link with American women.

Before 1920, the predominant belief was not that women should not have political representation. Rather, it was argued that women *were* represented. The law of coverture, derived from British common law, governed the treatment of women in the early Republic. Coverture held that husband and wife were "one person in law, so that the very being and existence of the woman is suspended...or

entirely merged and incorporated in that of the husband."³⁶ Thus, the husband represented his wife in all legal and political matters.

This is not to say that early First Ladies were completely apolitical. First Ladies since Martha Washington have had a political role, derived from the President's role as ceremonial head of state. According to Holly Shulman, within the American constitutional order, the President is both the nation's political leader, the functional equivalent of the British Prime Minister, and the head of state, the functional equivalent of the British monarch. Therefore, the American First Lady "is the wife of the head of state and therefore the practical equivalent of Queen, the monarch's consort." And so her role in the American government is "one that revolves around the diplomatic and political protocol that surrounds the president as head of state."³⁷ Hence, First Ladies from the early Republic through the present time have served as the nation's social hostess for events ranging from the visits of foreign dignitaries to formal dinners for members of Congress and the Supreme Court. As historian Edith Mayo has noted, overseeing state dinners and White House entertainment has been one of the main ways in which First Ladies have established their influence within the presidential administration and also in the powerful social and diplomatic networks of the nation's capital.³⁸

Yet, women's lack of political rights in the early Republic is not the only factor that can explain First Ladies' limited political role beyond the social and ceremonial realm. For First Ladies' political roles are in part derived from

³⁶ Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, vol. 2 (Dublin: published for the Company of Booksellers, 1775).

³⁷ Holly C. Shulman, "Talk for Montpelier on Dolley Madison," (2003).

³⁸ Edith P. Mayo, "Party Politics: The Political Impact of the First Ladies' Social Role," *The Social Science Journal* 37, no. 4 (2000).

presidential duties. And to understand the development of the First Lady's representative role, we must first understand the evolution of the presidency.

The U.S. presidency can be divided into two distinct historical epochs: the traditional and modern eras. In presidential studies, the traditional era encompasses the nineteenth century through the early part of the twentieth century. The modern presidency was rooted in the Progressive era, secured during the New Deal, and has endured through the present day.³⁹ I argue that since presidential political roles were largely circumscribed during the traditional era, it is logical to conclude that First Ladies' roles would have been similarly limited during this time period.

During the traditional era, presidents "were expected to exercise only those powers stated clearly in the Constitution."⁴⁰ Congress, not the President, assumed the leadership role in the policy process. "Throughout much of the nineteenth century, a passive president in domestic policy making was deemed both acceptable and desirable."⁴¹ Political parties, states and localities were the

³⁹ The division of the historical presidency into the "modern" and "traditional" epochs is disputed within the political science literature. See Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997).; David K. Nichols, *The Myth of the Modern Presidency* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994). However, this project subscribes to the view most notably promoted by Fred Greenstein that the presidency can be legitimately divided into such epochs. See Fred Greenstein, "Change and Continuity in the Modern Presidency," in *The New American Political System*, ed. Anthony King (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978).

⁴⁰ Craig A. Rimmerman, *Presidency by Plebiscite: The Regan-Bush Era in Institutional Perspective* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993). The Constitution's Article II enumerates only a limited number of presidential duties: It deems the President the Commander in Chief of the armed forces. It gives him the power to make treaties and to appoint ambassadors and judges. The Constitution allows the President to advise Congress on "measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient." The Constitution also requires the executive to see "that the laws be faithfully executed."

⁴¹ Rimmerman, *Presidency by Plebiscite: The Regan-Bush Era in Institutional Perspective*.

hub of citizen attention and political activity during this time. The President did not reach out to the public, and his rhetorical efforts were circumscribed.⁴²

In *The Federalist Papers*, Publius described the President's representative function. The Federalists envisioned the President as a guardian of the public good, the sole national representative monitoring the administration of government from a raised position, so that when "the interests of the people are at variance with their inclinations," the President can help the people "to withstand the temporary delusion in order to give them time and opportunity for more cool and sedate reflection."⁴³ According to Publius, the Executive's role as a representative was to be marked by distance from the people.

However, the way in which the President carries out his representative function has changed dramatically from the traditional era. "Perhaps in no other way has the representational nature of the presidency changed more over the course of American history than with regard to its 'links' with the American public."⁴⁴ The distance that existed between the President and the public has disappeared, and the solidification of this transformation can be traced to the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt:

With FDR the president for the first time became intimately connected to his constituency. The presidency was transformed into an office of plebiscitary representation from its more independent predecessor. Also, the center of representation within the government itself was transferred from Congress to the presidency as that institution acquired ever more resources and responsibilities.⁴⁵

⁴² Jeffrey K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

⁴³ *The Federalist Papers* #71

⁴⁴ Gary L. Gregg II, *The Presidential Republic: Executive Representation and Deliberative Democracy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997), 35.

⁴⁵ Gregg II, *The Presidential Republic: Executive Representation and Deliberative Democracy*, 125.

Though FDR was instrumental in securing the modern presidency, changes were afoot in the years before he assumed office. Jeffrey Tulis demonstrates how the Progressive era Presidents made innovations in the exercise of executive power. He shows how, ever since this time, Presidents have had "a duty constantly to defend themselves publicly, to promote policy initiatives nationwide, and to inspire the population."⁴⁶ But it is important to remember that, even though the Progressives did bring about change, Congress and the parties were still strong checks on executive power and remained the bastions of policy initiative and popular rule. It took FDR's presidency to secure a permanent and fundamental change. In other words, "It fell to FDR...to consolidate, or institutionalize, the changes in the executive that were initiated during the Progressive Era."⁴⁷

Fred Greenstein writes that before FDR,

there were variations from President to President in how the chief executive conducted his duties. Periodically there were stable shifts in the functioning of the institution itself...With Franklin Roosevelt's administration, however, as part of the general increase in the size and impact of American government, the presidency began to undergo not a shift but rather a metamorphosis.⁴⁸

In the modern era, Presidents became expected to "regularly initiate and seek to win support for legislative action" and to exercise policy making powers unilaterally and directly, through executive orders and other modes not requiring congressional authorization. Their staff support grew to help them carry out their

⁴⁶ Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*.

⁴⁷ Sidney M. Milkis and Michael Nelson, *The American Presidency: Origins and Development 1776-1993*, 2 ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1994).

⁴⁸ Greenstein, "Change and Continuity in the Modern Presidency."

expanded duties. And Presidents came to be evaluated on nonpolitical, personal qualities, a phenomenon known as the "personalization" of the presidency.⁴⁹

The developments of the modern era also had implications for the President's representative role. To show the people he was acting in their interests in a manner responsive to them, he had to develop a stronger personal link to them by meeting with them and speaking to them more regularly. He developed a more active policy role to show the people that he was taking the lead in solving the problems that affected their lives. In short, unlike in the traditional era, the President could not maintain a distance from the people.

The preceding discussion highlighted some of the main developments in the modern presidency. To summarize, the modern presidency is marked by the Chief Executive becoming increasingly *plebiscitary*, *policy-oriented*, and *personalized*. The plebiscitary President must reach out to the public and be responsive to its needs. The policy-oriented President must regularly initiate and seek support for a wide range of issues. The personalized president is scrutinized based on his personal virtues and private life, including familial relationships.

To help the modern President fulfill these obligations, the First Lady's representative role expanded alongside the rest of the executive bureaucracy. But the contours of her representative role must be understood in conjunction with the modern President's relationship to the women's movement. As the women's movement progressed throughout the twentieth century, bringing new groups and issues into the political arena, Presidents had to consider whether and how to be more responsive to women's changing needs and demands.

⁴⁹ Greenstein, "Change and Continuity in the Modern Presidency."

Consequently, in modern presidential campaigns, candidates would have to consider whether and how they would court women voters. After the election, because of political pressures, the plebiscitary President would need decide whether and how to maintain ties to women's groups and organizations to garner or sustain their support. And the modern President, responsible for taking an active policy role, had to decide whether and how to address relevant issues and concerns pertaining to and affecting women.

Complicating the President's ability to represent women is the Executive Branch's masculine character. If it is difficult for the political system to represent those who have been historically excluded from it,⁵⁰ then problems with women's political representation should be exacerbated in the Executive Branch because of its masculinity.

As noted above, the White House's masculine character is partly rooted in its hierarchical structure. This hierarchy is said to have bred intense competition and power struggles between members of the White House staff, who all vie to increase their influence, as determined by proximity to the President.⁵¹ The behavior of the President's top aides is characterized by intense gatekeeping, or closing off access to the President by determining which people and information get to access the Oval Office.⁵² As Duerst-Lahti points out, women have not succeeded in penetrating this inner-circle or "the palace guard" because they have been penalized for, and therefore have learned to avoid, exhibiting traits of

⁵⁰ Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'," *Journal of Politics* 61, no. 3 (1999).

⁵¹ John Hart, *The Presidential Branch* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1987), 131.

⁵² Hart, *The Presidential Branch*, 129.

arrogance, ambition, and aggressiveness, which are required if one is to become a top aide to the President.⁵³ This is evidenced by the comparatively few women who have occupied high-level policy positions in the Cabinet and on the White House staff.⁵⁴ Duerst-Lahti concludes that "comity" or camaraderie among male staffers prevents women's entry into the highest, most trusted positions around the Chief Executive.⁵⁵

Thus, in the realm of governance in general and the Executive Branch in particular, "women clearly constitute the 'other,' or in Simone de Beauvoir's term, women are the 'second sex.'" Women as 'other' "presents intractable problems for women who want to enter politics....because they find entering manhood difficult, virtually by definition."⁵⁶ This would seem to compromise the presidency's ability to represent women.

The overarching point is that the Executive Branch is a *gendered* institution that has a *gendered* way of dealing with *gendered* matters. This is nowhere more evident than in the First Lady's assumption of female-oriented representational duties.

⁵³ Duerst-Lahti, "Reconceiving Theories of Power: Consequences of Masculinism in the Executive Branch," 24. It should be noted that aggressiveness, ambition, and arrogance, which are all sources of power for men, are not stereotypically 'feminine' traits. Thus, women have been traditionally criticized for exhibiting such traits. Along these lines, these traits have not necessarily served as sources of power for women as they have for men. Instead, as this dissertation will show, the First Ladies' feminine traits have actually been a source of power for carrying out her representative role.

⁵⁴ See Kathryn Dunn Tenpas, "Women on the White House Staff: A Longitudinal Analysis, 1939-1994," in *The Other Elites: Women, Politics, and Power in the Executive Branch*, ed. Mary Anne Borrelli and Janet M. Martin (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997).

⁵⁵ Duerst-Lahti, "Reconceiving Theories of Power: Consequences of Masculinism in the Executive Branch," 24-25.

⁵⁶ Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly, "On Governance, Leadership, and Gender," in *Gender Power, Leadership, and Governance*, ed. Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 24.

Within the Executive Branch, female officials turn up “first and most often in functional areas associated with women.”⁵⁷ An overview of the federal government across the twentieth century reveals distinct women’s “spaces” within the Executive Branch and its related organizations. For example, in the years after women achieved the right to vote, political parties’ women’s divisions were the major loci for women’s policy and outreach. A Women’s Bureau was established within the Department of Labor and a Division of Home Economics within the Department of Agriculture. In the middle to late twentieth century, the White Houses appointed various directors of women’s affairs. These institutions established working relationships with organized groups representing varied women’s interests, thereby creating women’s political networks within the Washington community.⁵⁸

If female officials have historically emerged in areas functionally associated with women, then the First Lady’s office would be an obvious place to find women’s political representation. But first it is necessary to understand how the core characteristics of the First Lady’s position—her *femininity*, her *familial connection* to the president, and her office’s *flexibility*—have helped to bring about her representative role.

Flexibility: At its baseline, the First Lady’s position is almost a blank slate. The preceding discussion outlined the First Lady’s only vaguely defined formal

⁵⁷ Duerst-Lahti, “Reconceiving Theories of Power: Consequences of Masculinism in the Executive Branch,” 19.

⁵⁸ See Janet M. Martin, *The Presidency and Women: Promise, Performance, & Illusion* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 32-36.

role.⁵⁹ No law on the books requires her to carry out a particular role. Most of the representative roles she has historically assumed have been imposed by outside forces acting upon her office. This reveals that her position is flexible. Flexibility implies that her position has the capacity to be shaped and reshaped, which, in turn, confirms that it is vulnerable to outside constraints. Flexibility also implies adaptability, meaning that as political situations change, the First Lady's office is pliant enough to meet the demands brought about by new circumstances. Thus, her office's flexible character has allowed for her representative roles to change as the political times have changed.

Femininity: The one thing that does initially define the First Lady is her sex or gender. Theorists have drawn a distinction between sex and gender. Sex refers to biological characteristics, while gender refers to roles or manners ascribed to a sex by societal forces. "In traditional terms, females are supposed to be feminine, and males are supposed to be masculine. Social mores, often reinforced by law, determine exactly what constitutes 'femininity' or 'masculinity,' as well as how those traits should be exercised and rewarded."⁶⁰ Thus, because of her sex, the First Lady's position is also primarily feminine.

Recognizing that 'feminine' can have varied meanings, it is necessary to explain how this term is used in this project. Feminine can mean 'having qualities traditionally ascribed to women.' Feminine can also mean 'belonging to the

⁵⁹ To summarize, though the White House Personnel Authorization Act of 1978 (PL 95-570) appropriated funds for the First Lady's staff to be used "in the discharge of the President's duties and responsibilities" and the *Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, et al v. Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 997 F.2d 898 (D.C. Cir 1993) defined the First Lady as a *de facto* federal official, these laws do not require the First Lady to carry out any particular duties.

⁶⁰ Borrelli, *The President's Cabinet: Gender, Power, and Representation*, 14.

female sex.' Both meanings of 'feminine' are used in this dissertation to describe the First Lady's position; for, both senses of the word have been important in informing the First Lady's representative roles. For example, in Chapter Three's examination of the First Lady's role in the 'domestic' economy, feminine traits, primarily her domesticity, are the basis for her policy activity. However, in Chapter Four's examination of her role in fight for the ERA, her outreach role is largely based upon her 'belonging to the female sex.'

In both senses of the term, the First Lady's office is the most overtly feminine space within the masculine White House. As such, she has been the main Executive Branch figure to be associated with members of her biological sex and with roles ascribed to her biological sex. These associations form the root of her role as a presidential representative of women.

Familial Connection: As the President's wife and presumably most intimate associate, the First Lady has a close, familial connection to the President. The marriage relationship can potentially give her direct access to presidential power. The First Lady is the only individual within the White House hierarchy, besides the Vice President and Chief of Staff, who has this direct line of access to the President. And if power is defined by proximity to the President, then the First Lady may be in possession of it. This line of access may have allowed her to exercise her power as a trustee in terms of substantive representation.

John Hart claims that close advisors are essentially extensions of the President himself and therefore are endowed with the power to use the words,

"the president wants."⁶¹ Though Duerst-Lahti says that "few women presently gain power from the ability to say 'the president wants,'" I argue that the First Lady does potentially possess this power. Because of their familial connection, she, more than any other female in the presidential branch, can speak with authority derived from the President, and therefore represent him. This is apparent when she exercises her role as a delegate in terms of substantive representation.

Thus, the First Lady's position is endowed with political power. However, as explained above, gendered power relations pervade governance, and this has implications for the spouse's role in relation to the President. In executive politics, "women are expected to be helpmates rather than drivers." Women drivers, however, are not completely outlawed. But when women do drive, "they are expected to drive a pink car."⁶² This implies that as long as women work within feminine areas, they will not break gender power barriers, and therefore will not generate controversy. For instance, while Hillary Clinton's leadership role in national health care reform, a masculine policy area, was controversial because she violated gender boundaries, her even more extensive leadership and advocacy role on behalf of oppressed women around the globe went relatively unsung.⁶³

⁶¹ Hart, *The Presidential Branch*, 131.

⁶² Mary Ellen Guy, "Hillary, Health Care, and Gender Power," in *Gender Power, Leadership, and Governance*, ed. Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 240.

⁶³ Mary Ellen Guy, in "Hillary, Health Care, and Gender Power," makes the case that health care is a masculine policy area. This claim runs contrary to the traditionally held belief that women are more capable of dealing with 'care' issues, such as health care, care for the elderly, and other types of social welfare issues. However, Guy makes the case that health care policy is actually a more masculine arena in-part because it is dominated by male physician-experts. In addition, Hillary Clinton heading a major West Wing task force for one of the leading items on the President's policy agenda was seen as stepping far across traditional feminine and First Lady boundaries.

This section set out to answer the question: What caused the First Lady to take on the role of the President's representative of women? To summarize the previous discussion: The modern presidency, as the office became increasingly personalized, plebiscitary and policy-oriented, was pressured to respond to the constituencies, concerns, and issues brought about by women's movement into politics. The First Lady, because her position is flexible, familial, and feminine, became a channel through which the modern Executive reached out to and formed relationships with women voters and constituents, represented women's causes and issues, and responded to the women's policy agenda. This developmental theory sets the groundwork for and defines the parameters of the project, which is focused on the manifestations of the First Lady's representative role.

Linking Women's Studies and the Presidency

"Gender studies and presidency research have, with some notable exceptions, been pursued as distinct fields."⁶⁴ Researchers have analyzed the roles of sex and gender in other political institutions. For instance, they have examined how women behave as voters, legislators, governors, and judges.⁶⁵ However,

⁶⁴ Borrelli, *The President's Cabinet: Gender, Power, and Representation*, 13.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Adell Cook and Clyde Wilcox, "Women Voters in the 'Year of the Woman'," in *Democracy's Feast: Elections in America*, ed. Herbert Weisberg (Chatham: Chatham House Publishers, 1995). Barbara Norrander, "The Evolution of the Gender Gap," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (1999). Lyn Kathlene, "In a Different Voice: Women and the Policy Process," in *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Beth Reingold, *Representing Women: Sex, Gender, and Legislative Behavior in Arizona and California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Sara J. Weir, "Women as Governors: State Executive Leadership with a Feminist Face?," in *Women in Politics: Outsiders or Insiders?*, ed. Lois Lovelace Duke (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1996). Donald R. Songer, Sue Davis, and Susan Haire, "A Reappraisal of

women and politics scholars have passed over the Executive Branch as a productive area for research. This project aims to strengthen the link between gender studies and presidency research. The following chapters will demonstrate that sex and gender are very much present in the operations of the presidential branch and that they are nowhere more evident than in First Ladies' political roles as campaigners, liaisons, and policy activists.

One of these notable exceptions to the separate pursuit of presidential and gender studies is Janet Martin's work *The Presidency and Women: Promise, Performance, & Illusion*, which assess how women have interacted with the White House from 1961 to 1981.⁶⁶ Martin describes her book as a "longitudinal political narrative" that "weaves the actions of presidents, their White House staffs, and others in government with the actions of women and women's organizations."⁶⁷ However, a consideration of the First Lady's office is missing from Martin's account. While acknowledging that First Ladies have had an outreach role, Martin says her intention is to focus on "the routinization of behavior and interactions rather than the idiosyncrasies of each First Lady's actions." Instead, she chooses to cover only "those women with formal positions as advisors, heads, or spokespersons of organizations, political appointees, or civil servants."⁶⁸

This project challenges Martin's claim that First Ladies have had a non-routine and idiosyncratic relationship with American women. The following

Diversification in the Federal Courts: Gender Effects in the Courts of Appeals," *The Journal of Politics* 56, no. 2 (1994).

⁶⁶ Martin, *The Presidency and Women: Promise, Performance, & Illusion*.

⁶⁷ Martin, *The Presidency and Women: Promise, Performance, & Illusion*, 5.

⁶⁸ Martin, *The Presidency and Women: Promise, Performance, & Illusion*, 10.

chapters will reveal how First Ladies' interactions with women have in fact been routinized and consistent from 1920 to the present. Martin also overlooks how First Ladies' duties have continually overlapped with those who have had formal positions. For example, Chapter Two, which focuses on the First Lady's public liaison role, illuminates how First Ladies have regularly worked in conjunction with and as extensions of the formalized offices charged with addressing women's issues. This chapter also claims that and explores the reasons why some First Ladies have actually sometimes served as the primary White House officials to undertake women's outreach.

Another exception to the disconnection between women and politics and presidency research is Janet Martin and MaryAnne Borrelli's edited volume, *The Other Elites: Women, Power and Politics in the Executive Branch*. This volume constitutes "the first collection of articles on the presidency that addresses the issue of gender."⁶⁹ It covers a broad range of topics, including women as officeholders, policymakers, and activists in the Executive Branch. Borrelli and Martin's volume does recognize the importance of the First Lady in presidential politics. Barbara Burrell's piece in this volume, "The Office of the First Lady and Public Policymaking," covers the highlights of her role as a foreign policy representative and domestic policy adviser to the President. However, the First Lady's role in women-centered domestic and foreign policy has remained relatively unexplored in the literature. Chapters Three, Four, and Five will remedy

⁶⁹ MaryAnne Borrelli and Janet M. Martin, eds., *The Other Elites: Women, Politics, and Power in the Executive Branch* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), xi.

this by delineating the First Lady's role in addressing domestic and foreign policies specially affecting women.

In addition, Georgia Duerst-Lahti's piece in *The Other Elites*, which is discussed above, is especially remarkable in its linking gender studies to the Executive Branch. Her piece posits theories about how the Executive Branch is the most masculine branch of government, the power dynamics contained within and among the White House staff, and the consequences of all this for women entering this elite circle of power. Her arguments are important jumping off points for any study linking gender and the presidency, and this project is innovative in that it extends such theories to the First Lady's historical role. In so doing, this project reaches new conclusions about how masculinity and femininity have been practiced inside the White House from 1920 to the present.

An additional exception to the disconnection between women's studies and presidency research is MaryAnne Borrelli's book *The President's Cabinet: Gender, Power, and Representation*.⁷⁰ Her work links Hanna Pitkin's concepts of representation to the U.S. Cabinet secretaries-designate, demonstrating how transgendering and regendering, concepts which are discussed below, are expressed through the nomination process. In this project, I extend Borrelli's analytical framework to the First Lady's office. In so doing, this project draws original conclusions about the First Ladies' contributions to the presidency by relying on an established analytical framework within women and politics literature.

⁷⁰ Borrelli, *The President's Cabinet: Gender, Power, and Representation*.

All of the above works, which constitute the core of research on women and the presidency, provide useful points of departure for this examination of the First Lady's office. This body also leaves much room for innovation. Overall, this project is original in that it links women's studies and presidency research to the First Lady's office. It reveals the First Lady's institutionalized role in the narrative of the White House's relationship with women. It deepens the current understanding of the First Lady's political and policy roles. And it extends the concepts of gender and representation to her position.

Studying the First Lady

The majority of writings on First Ladies are biographical, historical, and anecdotal in nature.⁷¹ As MaryAnne Borrelli has pointed out, "For too long, studies of the first ladies have been primarily biographical, highlighting the charismatic while downplaying the strategic..."⁷² And even though previous First Lady scholars have carefully compared and contrasted First Ladies across presidential administrations, "their unit of analysis remains the individual woman rather than the position or office."⁷³ This approach has contributed to the somewhat erroneous perception that each individual First Lady has been able to

⁷¹ For example see Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *First Ladies: The Saga of the Presidents' Wives and Their Power, 1789-1961* (New York: Quill William Morrow, 1990). Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *First Ladies: The Saga of Presidents' Wives and Their Power, 1961-1990* (New York: Quill William Morrow, 1992). Caroli, *First Ladies*. Lewis L. Gould, *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Their Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Gil Troy, "Mr. And Mrs. President? The Rise and Fall of the Co-Presidency," *The Social Science Journal* 37, no. 4 (2000).

⁷² MaryAnne Borrelli, "The Office of the First Lady: Book Proposal," (2004), 3.

⁷³ Borrelli, "The First Lady as Formal Advisor to the President: When East (Wing) Meets (West) Wing," 27.

conceive of her role exactly as she wishes, with the result being individually varied approaches to the office.

Generally, First Ladies have been perceived as either "traditional" (choosing to abstain from political activity) or "activist" (choosing to engage in political activity).⁷⁴ This typology is flawed in that it overlooks how the First Lady's women-focused representative roles have been strategically shaped in response to political forces. It also overlooks the consistent patterns of political representation that have endured as a result of these forces acting upon her office. Revealing that the First Lady is not a self-determining or idiosyncratic political actor but is susceptible to institutional forces is an additional innovation of this project.

Though much First Lady research focuses on the actions of the individual women rather than their patterns of activity across history, some scholarship has employed social scientific approaches to study the First Lady's position. Such approaches include role definition and categorization, public policy activity, gender boundaries, staff organization and integration, public opinion, media coverage, and rhetoric/communication. To varying extents, this project utilizes many of these approaches in examining the First Lady's representative role.

Role Definition and Categorization: The concrete and symbolic roles that First Ladies have historically assumed can be defined and categorized. As noted above, MaryAnne Borrelli has documented how the First Lady's office has been formally defined through case law and statutes and informally defined through

⁷⁴ See, for example, Scharrer and Bissell, "Overcoming Traditional Boundaries: The Role of Political Activity in Media Coverage of First Ladies." Charles S. Clark, "First Ladies: What Is the Proper Role for the President's Spouse?," *CQ Researcher* 6, no. 22 (1996).

historical practices.⁷⁵ Robert Watson has comprehensively attempted to evaluate the First Lady's roles by breaking them down into categories: wife and mother, public figure and celebrity, the nation's social hostess, a symbol of the American woman, White House manager and preservationist, campaigner, champion of social causes, presidential spokesperson, presidential and political party booster, diplomat, and political and presidential partner.⁷⁶

This project takes a new approach by defining the First Lady's roles in relation to representing women and along two main dimensions: the political and the policy-oriented. Concerning the political, Chapters One and Two explore the First Ladies' roles as campaigners and liaisons. And Chapters Three through Five delineate their roles as domestic and foreign policy activists, all specifically in relation to women.

Public Policy Impact: First Ladies' activities within the public policy arena have been analyzed within the current literature. These studies have been mostly centered on the instances where First Ladies have taken on overt and expansive leadership roles in public policy. The main cases usually include Hillary Clinton and health care reform, Rosalynn Carter and mental health policy, and Eleanor Roosevelt and her role in the Office of Civilian Defense.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Borrelli, "The First Lady as Formal Advisor to the President: When East (Wing) Meets (West) Wing."

⁷⁶ Robert P. Watson, *The Presidents' Wives: Reassessing the Office of the First Lady* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000). Robert P. Watson, "The First Lady Reconsidered: Presidential Partner and Political Institution," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (1997). See also Gary D. Wekkin, "Role Constraints and First Ladies," *The Social Science Journal* 37, no. 4 (2000).

⁷⁷ See, for example, Barbara C. Burrell, "The Office of the First Lady and Public Policymaking," in *The Other Elites: Women, Politics, and Power in the Executive Branch*, ed. Mary Anne Borrelli and Janet M. Martin (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1997). Borrelli, "The First Lady as Formal Advisor to the President: When East (Wing) Meets (West) Wing." Kristin L. Davis and

This project broadens the current understanding of the First Ladies' role in public policy by moving beyond these typically studied instances and examining First Ladies' women-focused policy work related to the 'domestic' economy, the Equal Rights Amendment, and foreign policy. First Ladies' activities in these areas have not been thoroughly examined within the existing literature, though their policy work has persisted from the 1920s through the present.

Gender Boundaries: This approach assesses how and to what extent the activities certain First Ladies have undertaken violate or conform to gender norms. For example, Mary Ellen Guy has evaluated how Hillary Clinton's exercise of power in the masculine field of health policy exhibited the gendered nature of executive politics.⁷⁸ Borrelli has examined the latitude First Ladies have had in choosing their roles as political wives through a systematic analysis of Betty Ford's public mail in the wake of her infamous *60 Minutes* interview, in which she shocked the public by speaking openly and not necessarily discouragingly about marijuana use and extramarital affairs.⁷⁹

As mentioned above, gender is central to this analysis. An overall goal of this dissertation is to show that the First Ladies' roles are fundamentally informed by her sex. This analysis applies concepts of masculinity and femininity, and transgendering and regendering, discussed below, to explain why the First Lady's roles have been female-centric and, as such, both bound and expanded by her sex.

Lawrence Rifkind, "The Role of First Ladies in Health Care Reform," *White House Studies* 2, no. 3 (2002).

⁷⁸ Guy, "Hillary, Health Care, and Gender Power."

⁷⁹ MaryAnne Borrelli, "Competing Conceptions of the First Ladyship: Public Responses to Betty Ford's *60 Minutes* Interview," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (2001).

Staff Development/Integration: As First Ladies' political activities have expanded over the course of the twentieth century, so have their support staffs. Just as presidency scholars have traced the institutionalization of the West Wing staff, some scholars have undertaken similar work concerning the East Wing. Eksterowicz and Paynter argue that as the First Lady's staff has become more professional, her office has become increasingly integrated with the President's office.⁸⁰ Bradley H. Patterson's volume *The White House Staff: Inside the West Wing and Beyond* contains a chapter delimiting the roles of East Wing staff members.⁸¹ And MaryAnne Borrelli's forthcoming book traces the changes in the First Ladies' staffs across the modern presidency, revealing the extent to which East Wing staffers have facilitated First Ladies' greater involvement in the public sphere.⁸²

Though the overt purpose of this project is not to analyze the First Lady's staff development and integration, the proceeding chapters will illustrate the importance of both East Wing and West Wing staffers in encouraging and helping the First Lady to carry out her representative role. Indeed, her role cannot be completely understood apart from the work of her East Wing staff members and the West Wing, as well as outside political institutions.

Media Coverage: Researchers working within this approach have primarily attempted to answer the question: How do the media frame the First

⁸⁰ Anthony J. Eksterowicz and Kristen Paynter, "The Evolution of the Role and Office of the First Lady: The Movement toward Integration with the White House Office," *The Social Science Journal* 37, no. 4 (2000).

⁸¹ Bradley H. Patterson, "First Special Counselor: The President's Spouse," in *The White House Staff: Inside the West Wing and Beyond* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

⁸² Borrelli, "The Office of the First Lady: Book Proposal."

Lady? For example, Scharrer and Bissell have examined the negative and positive tones of First Ladies' newspaper coverage, comparing the tones of coverage for First Ladies who are "activist" versus those who are more "traditional."⁸³ Betty Houchin Winfield has demonstrated how the media have mainly framed First Ladies according to the "escort," "protocol," "good works," "policy making," and "political power" frames.⁸⁴ Darlaine Gardetto has content analyzed the 1992 campaign coverage of Hillary Clinton, concluding that the framing reveals how First Ladies are "potentially threatening to the social imaginary family and the gender inequality upon which it rests."⁸⁵

While analyzing media coverage of the First Lady is helpful in understanding her roles as presented to the general public, the media can only provide a glimpse into what First Ladies actually do and the considerations that inform the roles they assume. While this project, to an extent, utilizes media coverage, its use of archival, primary source materials such as internal memoranda and communications provide a much deeper understanding of the First Lady's roles than an analysis relying mostly on the media ever could. This raises another problem with existing research. Too often, First Lady research projects rely on material that is readily accessible, such as media and biographical accounts, leading to repetitive, superficial, and one-dimensional analyses. Relying

⁸³ Scharrer and Bissell, "Overcoming Traditional Boundaries: The Role of Political Activity in Media Coverage of First Ladies."

⁸⁴ Betty Houchin Winfield, "The First Lady, Political Power, and the Media: Who Elected Her Anyway?," in *Women, Media, and Politics*, ed. Pippa Norris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Betty Houchin Winfield, "From a Sponsored Status to Satellite to Her Own Orbit: The First Lady News at a New Century," *White House Studies* 1, no. 1 (2001).

⁸⁵ Darlaine C. Gardetto, "Hillary Rodham Clinton, Symbolic Gender Politics, and the *New York Times*: January-November 1992," *Political Communication* 14 (1997).

mainly on primary source materials provides a much more comprehensive understanding of First Ladies' representative roles.

Communication/Rhetoric: How and to what extent have First Ladies used their positions to communicate with the public? Myra Gutin classifies First Ladies after 1920 according to their roles as public communicators. She categorizes the First Ladies as "social hostesses and ceremonial presences," "emerging spokeswomen," or "independent activists and political surrogates" and gives an overview of each First Lady's communication activities and priorities in office. Shawn Parry-Giles and Diane M. Blair have examined the boundaries of First Ladies' rhetoric according to gender ideologies that dominated American historical time periods.⁸⁶ And Wertheimer's edited volume *Inventing a Voice* contains an overview of how each First Lady from Ida McKinley through Laura Bush has "used rhetorical communication to carry out her duties."⁸⁷

Communication and rhetoric have been extremely important in helping the First Lady carry out her role as a representative to women. Though a rhetorical analysis is not an overt purpose of this project, the proceeding chapters draw heavily on First Ladies' speeches and other public communications, derived mainly from presidential library archives, to illustrate how they have accomplished women-focused political representation.

Public Opinion: This approach has sought to answer the questions: How does the public view the First Lady? How do citizens react to the things she does?

⁸⁶ Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Diane M. Blair, "The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women's Voice," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 5, no. 4 (2002).

⁸⁷ Molly Meijer Wertheimer, *Inventing a Voice: The Rhetoric of American First Ladies of the Twentieth Century* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 10.

And what is the impact of her approval ratings on the President? Though public opinion data are not heavily employed in this dissertation, this line of research has nonetheless aided in our understanding of when and why First Ladies have managed to gain favor with the American public. Barbara Burrell has tracked Hillary Clinton's approval ratings, mapping them onto landmark events throughout her tenure in office. She has also compared Hillary and Bill Clinton's ratings, paying attention to sex as a variable in predicting approval.⁸⁸ Mughan and Burden have examined the impact of the First Ladies' feeling thermometer ratings on presidential vote choice.⁸⁹ Additionally, other scholars have analyzed results of surveys that rank presidential spouses.⁹⁰

All of the above approaches have helped to advance our understanding of the first ladyship's purpose within politics, and the methods and findings of this project further advance our current understanding. To summarize, by showing how her roles have been strategically shaped, this project will disprove the assumption that each First Lady has been entirely free to choose how she will behave in office. Also, this project will fill in the gaps on the First Lady's political and policy work by conducting a thorough examination of her women-focused representative roles. Additionally, this project makes extensive use of primary source material to provide an original, rich and full understanding of the various dimensions of the First Lady's representative roles.

⁸⁸ Barbara C. Burrell, "Hillary Rodham Clinton as First Lady: The People's Perspective," *The Social Science Journal* 37, no. 4 (2000). Burrell, *Public Opinion, the First Ladyship, and Hillary Clinton*.

⁸⁹ Mughan and Burden, "The Candidates' Wives." Mughan and Burden, "Hillary Clinton and the President's Reelection."

⁹⁰ Robert P. Watson, "Ranking the Presidential Spouses," *The Social Science Journal* 36, no. 1 (1999). See also Dean Keith Simonton, "Presidents' Wives and First Ladies: On Achieving Eminence within a Traditional Gender Role," *Sex Roles* 35, no. 5,6 (1996).

Overview

Women became a politically relevant constituency in the United States in 1920. When they were given the right to vote, they were simultaneously guaranteed political representation. At least, when the Constitution was amended to guarantee women the right to vote, they became integrated into the system of formal representation because they were given the power to authorize the election of their representatives. Correspondingly, it was around this time that First Ladies began to assume political representative responsibilities.⁹¹ Her role as a representative was in a sense activated through suffrage. Thus, this study encompasses the years 1920 through the present, or the administrations of Warren G. and Florence Harding through George W. and Laura Bush.

Chapter One delineates the First Lady's role in reaching out to women during presidential campaigns. Voting integrated women into the American system of formal representation in which elections are a key component, thereby prompting the First Lady's campaign role. This chapter demonstrates how the First Lady's active participation in the campaigns served to pique women's interest and mobilize their participation, to articulate and defend her husband's

⁹¹ Though the first wave of the women's movement is generally dated to the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, the suffrage movement really started to gain ground around 1910. Before that time, only a handful of states had ratified suffrage amendments and suffragettes and their ideas were considered very radical. Thus, it would have been very controversial for a President's wife to have joined in the suffrage cause. Also, it would have been unnecessary for First Ladies to engage in any form of political representation because women were not represented. From 1910 to 1920, the suffrage movement picked up momentum, with many more states ratifying suffrage amendments. Woodrow Wilson occupied the White House during most of this decade (1913-1921). Though Wilson eventually came down in favor of suffrage, he acted only very reluctantly. And his wives demonstrated a similar disinterest toward this first wave women's movement. His first wife Ellen Wilson died only a little over a year into his first administration. She was ill for nearly her entire time in the White House. His second wife Edith Wilson is known to have had little sympathy for the suffragists and their cause. See Caroli, *First Ladies*, 134-48.

record on women's issues, to exhibit the personal side of the candidate, and to display the gender dynamics of the First Couple's marriage.

Chapter Two examines the First Lady as White House liaison to women. In this capacity, the First Lady has built relationships with women's organizations and female constituents in order to maintain their support for the President. Her liaison role has been carried out through a range of activities, including hosting women-focused events such as teas, meetings, conferences, and ceremonies and working within the patronage system to secure women appointments. Here, the First Lady is looking after the interests of women and forming a connection or tie between women and the presidency, the essence of the trustee form of substantive representation. Nearly every First Lady from 1920 to the present has fulfilled both the liaison and campaign roles. However, the final three chapters detail policy-oriented representative roles that are confined to certain historical periods.

First Ladies have also promoted Administration policies and programs related to women, their concerns and issues. Chapter Three details the representative role of First Ladies from the 1920s through the 1970s within the 'domestic' economy, that is, in economic areas centered on women's domesticity. In particular, these First Ladies have reached out to and promoted programs affecting the woman as homemaker and consumer. For example, Betty Ford worked to promote the WIN (Whip Inflation Now) program to homemakers during a time of extraordinarily high price increases. Lou Henry Hoover and Eleanor Roosevelt helped women through their work in behalf of women-focused federal relief programs during the Great Depression. This is notable in that it

reveals the First Lady's power as a gender role model and along other symbolic representative dimensions.

The second wave of the women's movement that burst onto the political scene in the 1970s spurred a new policy agenda, with the Equal Rights Amendment as its centerpiece. Chapter Four reveals how the First Lady lobbied legislators for the ERA, worked closely with feminist groups, and tried to change public opinion to help ensure its passage. The debate over the ERA turned into a culture war, which pitted against feminists and traditionalists, over the proper notion of womanhood. As a result, traditionalists directed their aspersions at the First Lady, calling into question the legitimacy of her role as descriptive representative of women.

Chapter Five examines the First Lady engaging in public diplomacy in the realm of international affairs. Her representative work is notable in that it was largely centered on linking international women's rights to human rights. While rooted in the feminism of the 1970s, this role has persisted through the present day, and recent First Ladies Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush have particularly embraced this role. This chapter reveals the First Lady as a delegate, as she is being sent out as on a mission to represent the President and the nation to women abroad. Her representative role is also largely centered on taking domestic constructions of gender roles to areas of the world where women's rights are being violated.

Evidence to support this dissertation comes from primary source material found in presidential library archives. Relying on primary source material, such as

internal memoranda, interpersonal correspondence, oral history interviews, and speech transcripts, are essential for undertaking a comprehensive developmental analysis of the First Lady's office. Without an examination of primary source material, it is very difficult to get a true and full sense of the First Lady's representative role. Relying on secondary sources provides only an incomplete picture of any presidential administration and therefore cannot provide the depth of knowledge that is necessary for this extensive of an undertaking. This project relies on a diverse array of archival collections and document types, thereby strengthening its evidentiary base. The White House Social Files, the First Ladies' personal papers, and the papers of the President's and First Lady's staff members are invaluable sources for gaining an understanding of First Ladies roles within the presidential administrations.⁹²

Representing Women in the Executive Branch: Beyond the East Wing

Before delving into the First Lady's particular roles, it is important to note that the First Lady's office has not been the only Executive Branch institution to carry out the function of representing women. Over the years, institutions separate from the East Wing were created and specially charged with representing women through initiatives and outreach. For example, during the early to middle twentieth century, women-focused presidential outreach was facilitated largely by

⁹² Each President since Herbert Hoover has had his own presidential library. This dissertation draws upon the archival resources from each library from Hoover through Jimmy Carter. The Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and William J. Clinton libraries do not have many East Wing papers processed and available for research. For these Administrations, I will rely mostly on elite interviews, personal memoirs, oral histories, and news media reports. In addition, I utilize Florence Harding's papers which are available on microfilm from the Ohio Historical Society.

the Women's Divisions of the major political parties. And during the height of second wave feminism, women-centered outreach institutions were created within the White House Office. Table I.1, reprinted at the end of this chapter, provides an overview of the most important offices and officers, beyond the East Wing, for representing women since the 1920s.

Though their influence has been more sporadic, it should be mentioned that some parts of the federal bureaucracy have occasionally worked with the First Lady's office for women's initiatives and outreach. The Bureau of Home Economics in the Department of Agriculture and the women's divisions within the Treasury Department and the New Deal era's Federal Emergency Relief Administration are some that are relevant in the following chapters.

Oftentimes, First Ladies' activities overlapped with these other offices. They shared power with one another in carrying out the representative role. They often coordinated and worked in conjunction with and as extensions of one another. The following chapters frequently discuss the First Lady's connection to these other offices. The partnership between the First Lady's office and these other offices points to (1) the political relevance of the First Lady's integration in broader White House initiatives directed at women and (2) the belief of these separate institutions that the First Lady could wield important influence with women.

Regendering and Transgendering

To begin to understand the implications of this project, the concepts of regendering and transgendering will be evaluated along with the First Lady's representative roles. Regendering occurs when men and women assume similar offices or roles but "are then directed to assume gender-distinct behaviors."⁹³ So, if First Ladies assume gender distinct behaviors or encourage members of society to exhibit gender distinct behaviors, then it can be said that they have furthered regendering.

On the other hand, transgendering means "moving toward a world in which traits and behaviors exhibited by leaders, and actors at all levels and positions, can be seen as suitable for the socially situated context in which they occur regardless of the biological sex...of the person who happens to be the leader or actor at that moment and place."⁹⁴ So, in assessing whether the political and policy roles of First Ladies have furthered transgendering, we must inquire as to whether the representative traits that they have exhibited or encouraged others to exhibit are basically gender neutral or have arisen *regardless of sex*.

In the case of the First Lady, regendering is likely to be exhibited through her representative roles. "Given the strength of history and tradition, a masculinist political system would be more likely to show regendering than transgendering."⁹⁵ And given the presidential branch's status as the most masculine branch of government, compounded by the gender boundaries that others have noted

⁹³ Borrelli, *The President's Cabinet: Gender, Power, and Representation*, 22.

⁹⁴ Rita Mae Kelly and Georgia Duerst-Lahti, "Toward Gender Awareness and Gender Balance in Leadership and Governance," in *Gender Power, Leadership, and Governance*, ed. Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 262.

⁹⁵ Borrelli, *The President's Cabinet: Gender, Power, and Representation*, 23.

characterize the First Lady's position, it would not be surprising to find that regendering has occurred through the First Lady's representative role. However, as this project will show, transgendering has sometimes occurred along with regendering in the First Lady's general role and her particular actions as a representative. For instance, the following chapters will show how First Ladies have been instrumental in drawing women into the political system on a more equal basis with men, encouraging them to participate in politics and policy, and extending to them the promises of American democracy *regardless of their sex*, even though these activities may at the same time be gender-specific or occur *because of their sex*.

This blending both transgendering and regendering in her representative activities indicates that these two concepts are not mutually exclusive. Rather, that First Ladies can contribute to both at once indicates that they can be conceived as existing on a continuum, with differing activities pulling toward one end or the other. The proceeding chapters will reveal under what conditions and in what circumstances First Ladies' actions have tended toward one direction or the other.

Yet, even though regendering is readily apparent in the First Ladies' representative roles, the sum total of evidence brought to bear on this dissertation reveals that her act of representing women, especially in ways that further transgendering, can serve a higher democratic good. For, any time an individual or group of individuals gain representation through a system that once denied it to them, this must be considered a democratic advancement. If women are to be considered political persons, they must be represented. Thus, we must consider

whether the increased political representation of women that she has brought about outweighs the regendered practices simultaneously embraced by her representative role—and so whether the First Lady's furtherance of regendering justifies the abolition of her office, as some scholars have argued.⁹⁶ The concluding chapter will deal with these issues.

⁹⁶ Germaine Greer, "Abolish Her: The Feminist Case against First Ladies," *The New Republic* (1995).

**Table I.1: Representing Women in the Executive Branch:
Beyond the East Wing**

<u>Administration</u>	<u>Offices</u>	<u>Officials</u>
	Political Parties	
Hoover	Women's Division (Republican)	Lenna Lowe Yost Caroline M. Slade
Roosevelt	Women's Division (Democratic)	Molly Dewson Dorothy McAllister
Truman	Women's Division (Democratic)	India Edwards
Eisenhower	Women's Division (Republican)	Bertha Adkins
	White House Staff / EOP*	
Kennedy	Executive Vice Chairman, President's Commission on the Status of Women	Esther Peterson
Johnson	Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs	Esther Peterson Betty Furness
Nixon	Counsellor to the President, Office of Women's Programs Staff Assistant for Executive Manpower	Anne Armstrong Barbara Franklin
Ford	Special Assistant to the President, Office of Women's Programs, Office of Public Liaison	Patricia Lindh Jeanne Holm
Carter	Assistant to the President for Women's Affairs	Sarah Weddington
Clinton	Deputy Assistant to the President, Director, Office of Women's Initiatives and Outreach, Office of Public Liaison	Betsy Myers Audrey Haynes Jennifer Luray

*Executive Office of the President

~Chapter One~

Candidates' Wives and Women Voters⁹⁷

*Headline: "First Lady Looks forward to Meeting Iowa Friends: Will Bid for Votes of Farmers' Wives, while President Seeks to Line up Men...."*⁹⁸

~Lou Hoover and the 1932 Presidential Campaign

*"Republicans have gotten sophisticated about feminism. Laura Bush does not stand up at 'W Stands for Women' rallies and hand out her cookie recipes. She talks about how, in her husband's administration, 'there are more women in senior positions than in any other presidential administration in history.' She talks about how 'across America, millions of women are raising families, working full time, going to college, starting their own businesses.' If you are in the audience in a business suit, she's speaking to you. If you're pushing the stroller, she's speaking to you."*⁹⁹

~Laura Bush and the 2004 Presidential Campaign

Candidates' wives have served as substantive and symbolic representatives through their work in modern presidential campaigns.¹⁰⁰ The First Lady's representative role in campaigns can be classified along three dimensions: reaching out to women voters, promoting policies important to women, and representing gender-based ideals. The 'acting for' of substantive representation is apparent in how First Ladies have conducted outreach to women. This outreach role encompasses everything from making appearances at women-centered

⁹⁷ In this account, I focus mainly on those candidates' wives who have become First Ladies.

⁹⁸ Press Clipping, Source Unknown, 10/4/1932, "Clippings: 1932 Campaign Trips," Box 47, Subject File, Lou Henry Hoover Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library.

⁹⁹ Hanna Rosin, "A 'Real Job'? It Works for Laura Bush," *The Washington Post*, 10/21/2004.

¹⁰⁰ It must be acknowledged that nineteenth century candidates' wives did play some sort of role in campaigns. Catherine Allgor details how wives in the early Republic campaigned on behalf of their husbands. For example, Louisa Catherine Adams made it a point to go out and visit with wives of members of Congress, as well as to regularly entertain the members in her home for the express purpose of getting her husband John Quincy Adams elected President. Even though her efforts sometimes included women or other politicians' wives, her politicking was ultimately aimed at men. For, only men had the power to elect the President. Candidates' wives electoral efforts were not aimed directly at women until they received the right to vote. See Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

campaign events to conducting telephone drives targeting homemakers. For example, Jackie Kennedy and Lady Bird Johnson both were featured participants in get-out-the-vote drives targeting women voters. In their public and behind-the-scenes roles, the wives seem like 'trustees' in their outreach to women, as they frequently appear to be taking the initiative to look after the needs of women voters in these situations. The 'acting for' of substantive representation is also apparent in the wives' work discussing policies that are important to women. Laura Bush, for instance, at 'W Stands for Women' campaign events, would relate her husband's policy priorities concerning medical malpractice, small business, and foreign affairs directly to women voters. In these situations, the wives often resemble 'delegates,' as they are sent out to relate their husbands' accomplishments to women. Lastly, re-presenting ideals, particularly those related to gender and family roles, is a way that candidates' wives have carried out symbolic representation in modern campaigns. As the following analysis will show, Bess Truman's campaign train appearances helped to bolster her husband's image as a good family man, and Rosalynn Carter sought to portray her husband as committed to equal partnership in marriage.

Reaching out to Voters: This form of 'acting for' includes making direct appeals, courting constituents, and building relationships. The act of reaching out demonstrates that the candidate is interested in having a political relationship with those to whom the candidate is reaching out. Thus, outreach is a precursor to political representation. Candidates' wives have performed such outreach activities. As the following analysis will demonstrate, candidates' wives have

made appeals to women, courted them as a constituency, and built relationships with them.

Outreach is a central component of the plebiscitary campaign. The modern, plebiscitary campaign was invented in 1896 by Marcus Alonzo Hanna, the Republican national chairman, and Williams Jennings Bryan, the Democratic candidate. Hanna devised a system of surrogate candidates who campaigned in place of William McKinley. They disseminated millions of pieces of literature and targeted personalized appeals at specific demographics. And Bryan initiated the cross-country whistle stop campaign.¹⁰¹

Progressive leaders such as Woodrow Wilson promoted the view that popular leadership was "the only legitimate basis on which to solicit power, and that all restrictions and constraints upon it should be removed."¹⁰² On these grounds, Progressives desired to diminish the influence of parties in the presidential selection process by advocating primary elections. If candidates were to be selected by the people through primaries, candidates would have to go directly to them to solicit support. The year 1912 marked the first time primaries were used on a significant scale.¹⁰³ That year, Theodore Roosevelt's participation in the Republican primaries against his successor William Howard Taft "set the standard for political barnstorming that continues to this day."¹⁰⁴ According to the James Ceaser, under the plebiscitary model,

¹⁰¹ Stephen Hess, *The Presidential Campaign: An Essay* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1988), 81-82.

¹⁰² James W. Ceaser, *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 211.

¹⁰³ Ceaser, *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development*, 220.

¹⁰⁴ Charles C. Euchner and John Anthony Maltese, "The Electoral Process," in *Selecting the President: From 1789 to 1996* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1997), 25.

the key actors are the people and the individual aspirants. Along with the emergence of this new institutional form has come a new method of generating support in presidential campaigns: 'popular leadership,' or the attempt by individual aspirants to carve out a personal mass constituency by their own programmatic and personality appeals and by the use of large personal campaign organizations of their own creation..¹⁰⁵

This means that the candidate must make direct appeals to the people in order to "get the campaign's message out to the voters and to energize activists."¹⁰⁶ As the following chapter will show, the requirements of the plebiscitary campaign combined with the need to reach out to female voters fueled the First Lady's role in modern campaigns.

Promoting Policy: Candidates must address policies and programs affecting women. Under this form of substantive representation, wives have been dispatched to demonstrate how a candidate has acted or will act in the interest of women's concerns and issues.

Candidates' wives' policy roles also stem from the development of the modern presidential campaign. As the plebiscitary model evolved, campaigns have also become more policy-oriented. This means that candidates must make programmatic appeals to the people based on salient policy issues. Candidates must "take advantage of problems that affect the lives of the voters in a real and direct way."¹⁰⁷ The successful candidate will put forward workable solutions to salient problems such as unemployment, inflation, and national security.¹⁰⁸

Candidates also need to address relevant social issues. Since the 1960s, issues

¹⁰⁵ Ceaser, *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development*, 5, 213-14.

¹⁰⁶ Nelson W. Polsby and Aaron Wildavsky, *Presidential Elections: Strategies and Structures of American Politics*, 10 ed. (New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2000), 152.

¹⁰⁷ Murray Edelman, "The Politics of Persuasion," in *Choosing the President*, ed. James David Barber (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), 167.

¹⁰⁸ Edelman, "The Politics of Persuasion," 167.

such as affirmative action, the environment, abortion, women's rights, and gay rights have grown more important to voters,¹⁰⁹ forcing candidates to articulate positions on these issues. As the following chapter will show, candidates' wives have been instrumental in helping the candidates articulate policy proposals related to problems and issues affecting women.

Re-presenting Ideals: The candidate's personal life has become a criterion of electoral evaluation. To meet the demands of the modern campaign, the candidate for executive office must become a symbol-maker and re-present certain ideals to the public. Another upshot of the plebiscitary system is that campaigns have become increasingly personalized. This means that the candidate must be able to effectively present himself to the public and cultivate an image based primarily on good moral character. "A candidate is helped by being thought of as trustworthy, reliable, mature, kind but firm, devoted to family, and in every way normal and presentable."¹¹⁰

In relation to women, candidates, with the help of their wives, have re-presented ideals along two dimensions: First, wives have helped candidates illuminate their personal roles as husbands and fathers, highlighting their masculinity and by extension the wives' own femininity. Second, wives have helped to display the gender dynamics of couple's relationship. Her familial nature is important for this re-presenting function; for, no one can shape a candidate's personal image and vouch for his character better than his wife.

¹⁰⁹ Polsby and Wildavsky, *Presidential Elections: Strategies and Structures of American Politics*, 168.

¹¹⁰ Polsby and Wildavsky, *Presidential Elections: Strategies and Structures of American Politics*, 193.

According to Jo Freeman, the job of the candidates' wives, as the most prominent surrogate campaigners, has been "to tell the voter that their husbands were good family men."¹¹¹ To illustrate, consider the correspondence of a Republican woman who wrote to Lou Hoover trying to solicit her involvement in 1928 campaign publicity. The Republican woman reasoned that Mrs. Hoover's involvement was necessary because the Hoover-Curtis Campaign Committee "in its work of trying to get the women's votes is stressing Mr. Hoover as a person, and as a family man, rather than Mr. Hoover as an organizer, politician, and financier....It is the personal side that the average woman is interested in."¹¹² Here, it is clear that Lou Hoover was thought to be important in constructing the gender identity of the candidate. Additionally, this quote illustrates that women were purposefully being appealed to on the personal rather than policy level, indicating that their role contributed to regendering in methods of electoral appeals.

Also, with the advent of feminism and the subsequent backlash against it, the public became more interested in the gender dynamics between the candidate and his wife. For instance, they wanted to know whether the couple's marriage was an equal partnership or was more traditional in nature. The candidates' wives were essential in re-presenting a particular ideal of marriage that would appeal to certain constituencies. For example, as the following chapter will illustrate, Rosalynn Carter consciously attempted to portray her marriage as an equal

¹¹¹ Jo Freeman, *A Room at a Time: How Women Entered Party Politics* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 198.

¹¹² Mildred Hollingsworth to Lou Henry Hoover, 8/14/1928, "Campaign of 1928: Publicity File," Box 21, Subject File, Lou Henry Hoover Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library.

partnership during the height of the feminist movement. In contrast, Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush, in compliance with conservative ideals, purposefully represented their marriages as more traditional in nature.

The nature and extent of all of the above campaign roles—outreach, policy promotion, and re-presenting ideals—have persisted from 1920 to present, though the precise contours of these roles have evolved along with the political times. Wives' roles have been subject to outside political forces, particularly the evolution of the women's movement. For instance, the campaign roles of the candidate's wife evolved to meet the needs of newly enfranchised women voters, the demands of the feminist movement, and the backlash against the feminist movement. The following chapter is primarily arranged around how these factors have impacted her office. All of the above representative roles also have implications for transgendering and regendering. These implications have also differed by era and are discussed below, as well as summarized in the concluding section of this chapter.

1920-1956: Candidates' Wives and Emerging Voters

This section examines the roles of campaign wives from Florence Harding through Mamie Eisenhower. While their roles in terms of political representation were in their beginning stages, they were nonetheless central to the campaigns' efforts in reaching out to newly enfranchised, previously apolitical women. The campaigns were becoming increasingly plebiscitary in nature, so the wives would accompany the candidates on whistle stop tours and sometimes even make brief

remarks of their own. In terms of symbolic representation, their main jobs were to exhibit the familial sides of the candidates, showing them to be good husbands and family men. Substantively, these wives rarely addressed women's issues, but politically salient women-specific policies were virtually absent during this era. However, some First Ladies did substantively represent women's interests through their behind the scenes work with the parties' Women's Divisions. The Women's Divisions during this period were also important in orchestrating the wives' outreach roles.

Even as the plebiscitary element was incorporated into the general election campaign, early presidential candidates were still somewhat bound by earlier standards of campaigning. Early twentieth century candidates maintained somewhat of a distance from the populace and tried to avoid pandering in order to preserve the respectability of the presidency. For instance, in the 1924 campaign, President Coolidge still had to weigh whether or not to make political speeches. Illustrating the changing nature of the campaign, *The New York Times* reported that, while Coolidge's advisers believed "that the dignity of his office should be observed and feel that the people generally will appreciate close application by him to his duties, these advisers at the same time tell him that the electorate expects to hear from the head of the party ticket every now and then."¹¹³

But before Coolidge, Warren Harding, in 1920, announced he would conduct a front porch campaign from his home in Marion, Ohio, whereby delegations would gather on the lawn of the Harding home and the candidate

¹¹³ "Coolidge Planning for More Speeches," *The New York Times*, September 11, 1924.

would address them from the circular rostrum at the end of his porch.¹¹⁴ While still plebiscitary in nature because he was attempting to form a direct connection between himself and the people, Harding's front porch campaign would be the last such campaign in American history. In subsequent campaigns, the candidates would go to the people, not vice versa.

Unlike candidates' wives who had gone before her, Florence Harding was a visible presence in the front porch campaign, in this first presidential election in which all American women could vote. She was usually introduced in her husband's front porch speeches. In the course of these introductions, she often made impromptu remarks suggesting that all women should become active in political parties. Such remarks were unprecedented for a candidate's wife.¹¹⁵ They also begin to illustrate the candidate's wife's outreach role to women in terms of substantive representation, as well as transgendering that was taking place through her efforts to integrate women more fully into the democratic process. Florence Harding also considered herself a feminist and was active in women's organizations, including the League of Women Voters and the National Woman's Party. These organizations were instrumental in the first wave of the women's movement, and Mrs. Harding's involvement with them illustrates her commitment to women's suffrage. Thus, it reasonable to conclude that her commitment to women exercising voting rights would spill over into her campaign activities.

¹¹⁴ Frank Parker Stockbridge, "That Ideal Campaign Front Porch," *The New York Times*, June 20, 1920.

¹¹⁵ Anthony, *First Ladies: The Saga of the Presidents' Wives and Their Power, 1789-1961*, 381.

Florence Harding was a willing public participant in her husband's campaign. Having previously worked in the newspaper industry, she was sympathetic to the work of reporters and therefore willing to give interviews and be photographed. Mrs. Harding was profiled in numerous press accounts during the campaign period. Her press relations first became apparent at the 1920 convention, as she was "the only candidate's wife who came more than half way to meet newspaper reporters."¹¹⁶ She appeared at her husband's side when he met reporters after he received the nomination, and she gave brief remarks about how pleased she was with the outcome.¹¹⁷ Also, in her newspaper profiles, she discussed the significance of the 1920 presidential election for women. In one such profile, she noted that she was vitally interested in all classes of women. She said that she and other women are new to the "real game of government. We have been on the outside looking in all these years, but now we are a part of it, and I know American women are going to make good."¹¹⁸ Here, Florence Harding clearly resembles a trustee in her 'acting for' American women through her outreach role, as she is expressing her interest in the welfare of all American women. Also, by encouraging women to vote, she is promoting a transgendered democratic process, as she is trying to integrate women into an arena from which they were previously excluded.

As one newspaper profile summarized her campaign activities, "the role she plays is second only in importance to that of her husband and there are times

¹¹⁶ "Mrs. Harding Fears Impending Tragedy," *The New York Times*, June 13, 1920.

¹¹⁷ Mrs. Harding is Elated over Honor to Husband, *The Washington Post*, June 13, 1920.

¹¹⁸ Edna Sheldon Blair, "Florence Kling Harding Is Called True Type of American Woman," *The Washington Post*, September 26, 1920.

when one even forgets the candidate and his wonderful oratory in watching this keen-eyed woman who stands guard, as it were, over this big man."¹¹⁹ This evaluation is nuanced with progressiveness in terms of women's roles. For, at this time, it was not common for women to be portrayed as "keen-eyed" or as protectors. Portraying a public woman in this way again suggests that transgendering may have taken place through Mrs. Harding's role.

One reason for Florence Harding's prominent role was that Republican leaders realized her potential to attract women voters. Thus, Republican officials "began formulating the first 'selling of the First Lady' in this first national election in which women could vote."¹²⁰ The Republican committee sent publicist Judson Welliver to Marion to work with Mrs. Harding on crafting her public persona. Welliver distributed information on such domestic matters as her favorite color, flower, hat, shoe, and leisure activity. He mentioned, "There is going to be a need for this sort of thing right away...in the selling [of] the Harding family to the country."¹²¹ This shows that the campaign organization believed that Mrs. Harding could appeal strongly to women voters and draw them into the campaign. However, it also demonstrates that the basis of appeal was largely through domestic, decorative means, contributing to regendering by the reinforcing of traditional gender stereotypes.

¹¹⁹ Edna Sheldon Blair, "Mrs. Harding on Front Porch Plays an Important Role," *The Washington Post*, October 10, 1920.

¹²⁰ Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *Florence Harding: The First Lady, the Jazz Age, and the Death of America's Most Scandalous President* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1998), 205.

¹²¹ Anthony, *Florence Harding: The First Lady, the Jazz Age, and the Death of America's Most Scandalous President*, 205.

Mrs. Harding understood that campaigns were becoming increasingly personalized, and she knew that she could help make Warren Harding's private character known to the public. She once instructed reporters to "tell everybody what a wonderful man my husband is. I ought to know, having been married to him twenty-six years...He is wonderful."¹²² This illustrates the power of the candidate's wife as a symbol maker, in re-presenting the candidate as an ideal husband and highlighting his masculinity, thereby bolstering his character for the electorate.

In 1923, just over two years after entering office, Warren Harding died, and his Vice President, Calvin Coolidge, was elevated to the presidency and later became the Republican candidate for President in 1924. Aside from a few addresses made in Washington, D.C., Calvin Coolidge did not do much public campaigning. After he found out that he won the election, the press announced that, consistent with his high office, he would not be celebrating: "Business will go on as usual and Calvin Coolidge will be found at his desk attending to the people's business just as he did while the campaign was on and the fight against him raged."¹²³ Since he did not campaign much publicly, neither did Grace Coolidge. However, as part of her female-centered outreach efforts, she did attend a rally held by the Republican Women's Club of Montgomery County, Maryland. This was her first campaign appearance unaccompanied by her husband. She did not make any remarks, though she did shake hands with all the ladies present and

¹²² "Mrs. Harding Fears Impending Tragedy," *The New York Times*, June 13, 1920.

¹²³ "Coolidge Receives Returns Calmly; Is Not to Celebrate," *The Washington Post*, November 5, 1924.

listen to female party leaders' speeches praising her husband's record.¹²⁴ The candidate's wife meeting and greeting women's club members is an activity often repeated throughout the modern era. While the wives, through this activity, helped to engage women in the democratic process, they were simultaneously reinforcing regendered campaign practices. Partisan women's clubs separation from male politics and the wives' entanglement with such clubs indicates that wives and other female club members engaged in this type of politicking precisely *because of their sex*, a key feature of regendering.

Mrs. Coolidge's personal life was also made a political issue in the campaign by Miss Elizabeth Marbury, one of the most influential Democratic women in the country and a delegate to the Democratic convention. At a luncheon honoring Mrs. John Davis, wife of the Democratic candidate, Miss Marbury "found fault with Mrs. Coolidge for having, before her marriage, made her own shirt waists, at a cost of \$1.69 each. She also criticized Mrs. Coolidge for having, after her marriage, baked her own bread and pies." In essence, Miss Marbury was poking fun at the Coolidge's early life on a farm in Vermont and their lack of significant means. This incident outraged many women. For, after the event was widely reported, the head of the Coolidge Nonpartisan League announced that thousands of women were joining the organization in reaction to Miss Marbury's comments.¹²⁵ This incident raises the issue of descriptive representation or what kind of woman the First Lady 'stands for.' Miss Marbury's comment indicates that the First Lady should model a white, middle and upper class understanding of

¹²⁴ "Mrs. Coolidge at Rally," *The New York Times*, September 20, 1924.

¹²⁵ "Criticizes Mrs. Coolidge; Turns Women to G.O.P.," *The Washington Post*, October 16, 1924.

gender. Yet, the strong reaction to her comment suggests that many believed the First Lady should not 'stand for' this class alone. Debates over what kind of woman the First Lady represents have persisted throughout history. This early incident resembles the debate over gender role modeling surrounding Hillary Clinton's remark in the 1992 campaign, discussed further below, in which she stated that she decided to fulfill her profession instead of stay home and bake cookies and host teas. While with Coolidge the debate concerned class, with Clinton the gender role modeling debate had shifted to whether the First Lady should represent the liberated woman or the traditional housewife.

By 1920, the national committees had formed Women's Divisions to work toward securing the loyalty and support of female voters. The rationale behind the Women's Divisions was "that women brought to politics a unique perspective, that they were experts on issues that touched on children or the home, and that only women could organize the woman voter."¹²⁶ This rationale provides support for the perspective that women were thought to be better able to represent women because of their shared feminine identities, which is what motivated First Ladies' active role. This rationale also provides evidence that the Women's Divisions could have contributed to a regendered political process, as the recognition of women's differences and traditional feminine roles partly informed their mission. Most of the work in behalf of women voters was accomplished by the Women's Divisions. The heads of these divisions were among the most influential female political actors in the country. Party women recognized the power of candidates'

¹²⁶ Freeman, *A Room at a Time: How Women Entered Party Politics*, 85.

wives and were largely responsible for incorporating them into campaign strategies for reaching out to female voters.

Lou Henry Hoover was the first candidate's wife to work closely with the Republican Party's Women's Division. Given Mrs. Hoover's history of working with women-related groups and causes, that she would willingly join efforts with the Republican Women's Division was expected. Before becoming First Lady, Mrs. Hoover served as President of the Girl Scouts and the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation. When America entered World War I, her husband was appointed to head the U.S. Food Administration and Lou Hoover helped him assemble women's relief organizations, including the American Women's War Relief Fund and the Food Administration Women's Club. And when her husband became Secretary of Commerce, Mrs. Hoover founded the National Women's Conference on Law Enforcement. Lou Hoover had received a degree in geology from Stanford University in 1898 and, though she experienced difficulty finding work because of her sex, she voiced support for women having careers. Thus, for her time, her views on women's roles were rather progressive.

Mrs. Hoover strongly believed that women should sacrifice their leisure activities to become politically engaged. For the 1928 campaign, Mrs. Hoover did a publicity piece for the *New York Journal*, which focused on her views on women and voting.¹²⁷ The author sent the draft to Mrs. Hoover's secretary for

¹²⁷ Press Clipping, "Mrs. Hoover's Charm and Grace Win Friends," Mary Dougherty, June 15, 1928, "Campaign of 1928: Publicity," Box 21, Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

revisions. Unsatisfied with the writer's characterization of Mrs. Hoover's feelings about suffrage as un-militant, the secretary¹²⁸ wrote back:

I have heard Mrs. Hoover talk so often about voting matters that we thought it best to take liberties with your paragraph about suffrage. We took out completely the short paragraph about Mrs. Hoover never being militant over anything. We have to smile at that, because when she takes sides in a matter that she considers has a vital principle at stake, she is very militant.¹²⁹

At this time, it was generally not acceptable for women to be thought of as "militant." Here, it is apparent that Mrs. Hoover and/or her staff were trying to craft her gender identity as a progressive woman. Also, by voicing her strong and principled commitment to women's suffrage, Mrs. Hoover resembles a trustee in terms of substantive representation through her advancement of women voting.

During the 1928 campaign, Lou Hoover and the director of the Republican Party's Women's Division, Mrs. Louis Slade, frequently corresponded about women-related campaign matters. For instance, they discussed women who could potentially be useful in the campaign. Mrs. Slade would send requests to Mrs. Hoover, who, using her connections from years as a political spouse and activist, responded with detailed lists of women and descriptions of how each could be useful in certain parts of the country.¹³⁰ One of the most important issues to female voters in 1928 was prohibition. Though Mrs. Hoover never spoke publicly on prohibition, she forwarded Mrs. Slade information that came across her desk about Hoover's "wet" opponent Governor Alfred E. Smith, in order to ensure that

¹²⁸ Many times, Lou Hoover wrote as her secretary. This may have happened here, as it is difficult to imagine her secretary sending out such correspondence.

¹²⁹ Mrs. Hoover's Secretary to Mary Dougherty, June 6, 1928, "Campaign of 1928: Publicity," Box 21, Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

¹³⁰ LHH to Mrs. Slade, August 27, 1928, "Campaign of 1928: Women's National Committee for Hoover," Box 25, Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

Mrs. Slade was informed about Smith's latest statements on the issue.¹³¹ Her behind-the-scenes work with Mrs. Slade further illustrates Lou Hoover serving as a trustee, taking the initiative to bring to the attention of American women issues of particular concern to them. At the same time, insofar as she singled out prohibition as an issue of particular concern to women, she contributed to regendering by making a gender-based distinction on the issue.

In the 1932 campaign, Mrs. Hoover maintained the same behind-the-scenes relationship with the new RNC Women's Division director, Mrs. Ellis A. Yost. Yost once wrote to Lou Hoover's secretary, "All the letters and suggestions which you have sent us have been greatly appreciated and we have tried to follow through with them all."¹³² Again, Mrs. Hoover taking the initiative to send along suggestions shows her acting as a trustee in terms of substantive representation. One of the specific ways Mrs. Hoover helped Mrs. Yost was by referring her to women who could target voters in various demographic groups. She wrote to Mrs. Hoover, "We have not been able to find a nationally known farm woman....Can you suggest a prominent German and Jewish woman?"¹³³ Mrs. Hoover was also instrumental in helping Mrs. Yost formulate the Board of Counselors for the Women's Division in 1932 and in recruiting high-profile members for the Board. Mrs. Yost went so far as to ask Mrs. Hoover to persuade Mrs. Henry Ford and

¹³¹ LHH to Mrs. Slade, September 1, 1928, "Campaign of 1928: Women's National Committee for Hoover, Box 25, Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

¹³² Mrs. Ellis A. Yost to Mrs. P.H. Butler, November 5, 1932, "Republican Organizations, etc.: National Committee 1930-1934," Box 48, Girl Scouts and Other Organizations File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

¹³³ Mrs. Ellis A. Yost to LHH, September 16, 1932, "Republican Organizations, etc.: National Committee 1930-34," Box 48, Girl Scouts and Other Organizations, LHH Papers, HH Library.

Mrs. Thomas Edison to join the Board.¹³⁴ In these instances, Mrs. Hoover was working toward the transgendered goal of drawing women into the political process and serving as a trustee in her 'acting for' women. Yet, using women to appeal to women because of their sex is simultaneously indicative of regendering.

Mrs. Hoover also reached out to female party workers in order to boost their morale. For instance, the Chairman of the Republican Women's Organization of the 5th District of Kentucky wrote to Lou Hoover asking for her picture to hang at their headquarters because she believed it would give inspiration to their workers.¹³⁵ Mrs. Hoover promptly complied with her request, and the woman wrote back that the picture had been successful in drawing great interest and admiration: "The actual good that such a likeness of our next 'First Lady' does is difficult to estimate. All women have a natural desire to know something of the one who is to stand for the womanhood of America for the next few years...[T]his picture is a delightful 'answer' to their inquiring interest."¹³⁶ Here, in terms of descriptive representation, there is the recognition that the First Lady 'stands for' the 'womanhood of America.' Moreover, the writer's comment reveals that Mrs. Hoover's picture was being studied for a gendered purpose, more specifically to see what kind of woman will be represented through her position, not merely admired as a depiction of her likeness.

¹³⁴ Mrs. Ellis A. Yost to LHH, September 9, 1932, "Republican Organizations, etc.: National Committee 1930-34," Box 48, Girl Scouts and Other Organizations, LHH Papers, HH Library.

¹³⁵ Mrs. Maurice H. Thatcher to LHH, September 20, 1928, "Campaign of 1928: Women's Activities: General: 1928-Jan.—Sept.," Box 24, Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

¹³⁶ Mrs. Maurice H. Thatcher to LHH, October 9, 1928, "Campaign of 1928: Women's Activities: General: 1928-Jan.—Sept.," Box 24, Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

Lou Hoover was also happy to comply when the Women's Division called on her to make public appearances, which were becoming a requirement in the modern, plebiscitary campaign. For example, at Mrs. Slade's request, Lou Hoover attended a campaign event in New York City sponsored by the National Women's Committee for Hoover.¹³⁷ Though, when Lou Hoover did do public events, she insisted on little publicity, and she declined to make extended remarks. So, while Mrs. Hoover on the one hand wanted to be thought of as progressive in terms of women's political rights, this example illustrates that she was still somewhat influenced by traditional women's roles. For instance, when she wrote to the Republican Women of Pennsylvania agreeing to attend a reception, she requested, "Is it possible for me to accept your invitation and be there without the reporters and photographers making themselves a nuisance?...[I]t is going to be difficult for me to explain why I accept one invitation without accepting others!"¹³⁸ This could have been Mrs. Hoover writing out of concern for offending other groups whose invitations she declined. But, as illustrated below, she did exhibit a degree of timidity in her public appearances.

Lou Hoover often demurred when asked to make public remarks. At a campaign event in California, when asked to speak to a large, mix-gendered audience over a microphone, she declined saying, "'My husband and son think that one talker in the family is enough.'" ¹³⁹ This statement could be interpreted as

¹³⁷ Mrs. Arthur Ringland to Miss Ruth Fessler, October 17, 1928, "Campaign of 1928: Women's National Committee for Hoover," Box 24, Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

¹³⁸ LHH to Mrs. George H. Lorimer, September 7, 1928, "Campaign of 1928: Women's Activities: General 1928, Jan.-Sept.," Box 24, Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

¹³⁹ Press Clipping, "Mrs. Hoover Declines to Make Radio Speech," *The Washington Post*, August 18, 1928, "Clippings 1928, Campaign Trip: California," Box 35, Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

Lou Hoover essentially remarking that the man of the house should be the voice for the family, thereby reinforcing traditional gender roles or regendering. Yet, Lou Hoover did speak at a women's campaign event at the Waterloo (Iowa) Woman's Club, causing a national committeewoman who attended the event to remark, "How wonderful it will be if we have a president's wife who can make a speech." This particular instance illustrates a peculiar blend of regendering and transgendering. The hope expressed that Lou Hoover would be a vocal First Lady by making many public remarks indicates the possibility of transgendering through her position. Yet, the fact that she was willing to deliver remarks to a women's group, but demurred when the audience was mixed, shows Mrs. Hoover exhibiting behavior that was explicitly gender-specific and thus indicative of regendering.

The reporter who wrote of her Iowa speech also observed how Mrs. Hoover's attitude toward public speaking evolved throughout the general election season: "At the outset, she was unwilling even to appear on the rear platform of the train or to speak at all. Later, however, she did this repeatedly, greeting people all along the way, evidently realizing that this was part of her job as the wife of the presidential candidate."¹⁴⁰ Thus, the requirements of the plebiscitary campaign and the need for outreach to women voters overrode any inclination Mrs. Hoover might have had to remain silent.

Lou Hoover was an important part of the "Hoover Special" campaign train westward across the country, and her presence was always well received with the

¹⁴⁰ Press Clipping, "Mrs. Herbert Hoover Has No Time for Hobbies; Is Perfect Hostess and Good Speaker," Waterloo Evening Courier, August 23, 1928, "Clippings, 1928: Campaign Trip, Iowa," Box 35, Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

crowds. Reporters interpreted Mrs. Hoover's campaign train appearances as designed to appeal to women voters. One wrote, "Women, the politicians say, will play a determining role in the presidential race this year. Mrs. Herbert Hoover, accompanying her husband [on the train trip] is doing her share to make good that prediction."¹⁴¹ As part of the personalized campaign, voters were interested in the personal sides of the candidates. And featuring their wives on the campaign train, and the press and publicity that resulted from this, has been one of the ways that candidates have exhibited their personal lives to the American public and satisfied the curiosity of women.

Mrs. Hoover may have in fact been influential in securing the votes of some women. To illustrate, a letter to the Woman's Hoover Committee in Michigan read as follows,

We—my friends and myself—are voting for Mr. Hoover for all of the reasons brought out in this campaign. We are also voting for him because of an additional one—unmentioned—but most important of all. No man could have achieved what he has if his wife had not been a help to them. No man could hold the views about women that he does, if his wife had not inspired him to it...The country needs a superior woman as a model, as badly as it needs a superior man. Therefore, we are voting for Mr. Hoover, not only for what he is in himself but because he has the wife he has.¹⁴²

This remark also recognizes the gender role modeling embedded in the First Lady's position as a descriptive representative, as well as her power as a symbolic representative. For, the remark reveals how she is capable of evoking feelings of

¹⁴¹ Press Clipping, "Mrs. Hoover Providing Big Help to G.O.P. During Westward Trek," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 16, 1928, "Clippings, 1928: Campaign Trip: California," Box 35, Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

¹⁴² Cora Ann Ballore to the Woman's Hoover Committee, October 31, 1928, "Campaign of 1928: General: October-November," Box 16, Subject File, Lou Henry Hoover Papers, Herbert Hoover Library.

inspiration and admiration from portions of the American public based on her strength as a helpmate and political wife.

Further illustrating Mrs. Hoover's power as a symbolic representative, after Herbert Hoover emerged victorious in the 1928 election, the Women's Division of the RNC wrote to her saying, "the interest the women of the country had in Mr. Hoover was partly a reflected interest in you. Their knowledge of you, of your fitness to be 'The First Lady of the Land' and above all your charming personality was an incentive to work on to a successful conclusion of the campaign.... We wish we could convey the many messages of interest these women have expressed in you..."¹⁴³ These remarks again show her power to evoke feelings of inspiration and admiration from the public based on her performance as a political wife.

Eleanor Roosevelt similarly was involved with the Women's Division of the Democratic Party. As in the case of Lou Hoover, Mrs. Roosevelt's involvement with the Women's Division was not out of her ordinary course of activities. Before she became First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt was deeply involved in New York State politics, even while her husband served as Governor. In the 1920s, she was one of the foremost activists within the network of New York Democratic and women-related organizations and causes. In New York during this era, there were four main hubs of political power for women: the League of Women Voters, the Women's Trade Union League, the Women's Division of the New York State Democratic Committee, and the Women's City Club. ER was

¹⁴³ Mrs. Martin Kent Northam to LHH, January 16, 1929, "Campaign of 1928: Republican National Committee Women's Activities," Box 21, Subject File, Lou Henry Hoover Papers, HH Library.

among the premier women in all of these organizations, and through her networks, she "met and worked with every activist political woman in New York."¹⁴⁴

During the Roosevelt Administration, Molly Dewson and then Dorothy McAllister led the DNC women. It is clear, however, that Eleanor Roosevelt had a very strong hand in the Women's Division's operation, representing women's interests behind the scenes. ER's ties to Molly Dewson went back to New York State politics. During the 1920s, ER and Dewson forged a strong friendship. They became acquainted through their mutual political causes and clubs, and their friendship matured as the decade progressed.¹⁴⁵

In the 1932 campaign, Dewson and ER had "back-to-back desks in a small room" at Dewson's headquarters, and "Eleanor was there almost every day seeing to her stacks of correspondence."¹⁴⁶ ER also used her special status as the candidate's wife to function as a liaison between the women and the men of the campaign in behalf of the Women's Division.¹⁴⁷ As part of the plebiscitary campaign, she helped the Women's Division write and print the successful "Rainbow Fliers," which were campaign propaganda targeted at women and printed on paper in different pastel shades.¹⁴⁸ Such behind-the-scenes work in behalf of women reveals her as a trustee in terms of substantive representation, by

¹⁴⁴ Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: 1884-1933*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 338-39.

¹⁴⁵ Susan Ware, *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 142-43.

¹⁴⁶ Ware, *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics*, 168-69.

¹⁴⁷ Ware, *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics*, 169.

¹⁴⁸ Anthony, *First Ladies: The Saga of the Presidents' Wives and Their Power, 1789-1961*, 450.

taking the initiative to make sure women were informed about the campaign and drawn into the democratic process.

ER understood the importance of making appeals to the public to meet the demands of the modern, plebiscitary campaign. She always gave speeches and traveled with the campaign party whenever she was asked to. And when the woman reporter for the Associated Press, Lorena Hickok, was assigned to publicize her campaign activities, ER willingly complied with this extensive press attention.¹⁴⁹

In 1936, ER sat in on meetings with the men working on campaign strategy. She would pass along to Molly Dewson information and recommendations pertaining to women that they had discussed, such as women serving on campaign committees and speaking engagements for FDR to women's organizations.¹⁵⁰ For example, she once wrote to Dewson, "I think that Franklin was urged to make a speech to women primarily on the plea of getting big audiences of women. What do you think about using the Tribune Conference...at which he would make the closing speech...? It would be non-partisan...but primarily of interest to women."¹⁵¹ ER, in maneuvering to get her husband to pay attention to women by addressing them during the campaign, was acting as a trustee in terms of substantive representation.

Dewson would, in turn, run strategies by ER for FDR speaking to women during the campaign. Regarding how FDR should address women, she wrote to

¹⁴⁹ Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: 1884-1933*, 458-59.

¹⁵⁰ ER to Molly Dewson, date unknown, "Roosevelt, Anna Eleanor, 1925-1936," Box 3, Dewson Papers, FDR Library.

¹⁵¹ ER to Molly Dewson, July 25, 1936, "Roosevelt, Anna Eleanor, 1925-1936," Box 3, Dewson Papers, FDR Library.

ER, "I have a hunch that his treating us as people without special feminine interests is more in tune with his whole program....The President could, if he chose, take the curse off talking to women as women by showing how they are affected by all the programs, not confining himself to speaking about the size of the market basket..."¹⁵² Dewson's remark about the curse on addressing women and their specific concerns illustrates how women and their interests were not a priority in the campaign, as well as how ER and Dewson were working to elevate their priority status, further revealing ER as a trustee. It also shows Dewson and ER strategizing about how FDR could make New Deal programs relevant to women's lives but on a gender-neutral basis, as opposed to addressing overtly feminine issues. In so doing, they were trying to implement a transgendered campaign strategy.

Dorothy McAllister looked to ER for guidance to a greater extent than Dewson did, and ER, in turn, willingly gave her directives. When, during the 1940 campaign the Women's Division's budget was slashed, ER intervened and lobbied directly with DNC Chairman Edward Flynn in its behalf. Flynn told ER that all DNC departments were going to have their budgets cut, so ER came up with a plan to make due with what they had. She told Dorothy McAllister, "I think you had better go over your budget, take off every person that is not absolutely necessary, and certainly anybody who has a job anywhere else had better be left off....If you do this, we will go over the budget at the luncheon next week and I will fight for the essentials, such as fliers and radio work." She also

¹⁵² Molly Dewson to ER, July 25, 1936, "Roosevelt, Anna Eleanor, 1925-1936," Box 2, Dewson Papers, FDR Library.

instructed McAllister to wire specific individuals to give radio speeches for the Women's Division.¹⁵³ McAllister also relied on ER to shape the personnel of the Women's Division's Advisory Committee on the 1940 platform.¹⁵⁴ She sought ER's recommendations on who to appoint to direct publicity for the Women's Division.¹⁵⁵ Dorothy McAllister also heavily relied on ER's advice in shaping the program for the National Institute of Government for Democratic Women held during the primary season. And when the West Wing staff told McAllister that FDR would not be able to speak at the Institute, she used ER as a back channel to try to persuade her husband to attend the event.¹⁵⁶ She also went through ER to get campaign speakers cleared with the President.¹⁵⁷ And ER initiated and convened a campaign planning conference in August of 1940 for the Women's Division, where the agenda was everything from policy issues to the budget.¹⁵⁸ All of these examples clearly reveal ER as a trustee, fighting for women, their groups and causes.

Dorothy McAllister relied on ER to do public outreach for the Women's Division. For instance, in 1940, she asked ER to write an article for the Convention issue of *The Democratic Digest*, the principal publication of the DNC Women's Division. Among the topics about which McAllister asked ER to write

¹⁵³ ER to Dorothy McAllister, August 8, 1940, "McAllister, Mrs. Thomas F.," Box 721, ER Papers, FDR Library.

¹⁵⁴ Dorothy McAllister to ER, June 5, 1940, "McAllister, Mrs. Thomas F.," Box 721, ER Papers, FDR Library.

¹⁵⁵ Dorothy McAllister to ER, March 25, 1940, "General Correspondence—Roosevelt, Mrs. Franklin D.," Box 129, DNC Women's Division Papers, FDR Library.

¹⁵⁶ Dorothy McAllister to ER, March 18, 1940, "General Correspondence—Roosevelt, Mrs. Franklin D.," Box 129, DNC Women's Division Papers, FDR Library.

¹⁵⁷ Dorothy McAllister to ER, letter regarding Josephine Roche speaking over the National Forum of the Mutual Broadcast Company, September 28, 1940, "General Correspondence—Roosevelt, Mrs. Franklin D.," Box 129, DNC Women's Division Papers, FDR Library.

¹⁵⁸ Dorothy McAllister to ER, August 10, 1940, "McAllister, Mrs. Thomas F.," Box 721, ER Papers, FDR Library.

were "what the woman's vote can mean in this election year; and why women should participate in party organization work."¹⁵⁹ ER complied and wrote an essay on the value of the ballot for women. Emphasizing women's obligations as citizens, she wrote,

[Women] will not only join a party and vote in the primaries, but they will, if they have the time, work in that party so that they may have a voice in policy making groups. They will take the trouble to find out what the candidates stand for before they vote for them, and they will follow up what they do after elected to office. They will know their own community and the conditions of the country as a whole so that they will know what they wish accomplished through legislation. They will listen to arguments for and against an issue until they decide where they stand and then will fight for their beliefs.¹⁶⁰

Promoting women's citizenship obligations illustrates ER's trusteeship. Also, the language she uses to describe women's political activity is meaningful: women 'decide,' 'stand,' and 'fight,' 'have a voice,' 'work,' and 'vote.' Here, ER is applying masculinized action words to women's political activity, indicating that she was trying to further a transgendered democratic process. The next two candidates' wives to become First Ladies, Bess Truman and Mamie Eisenhower, also served to integrate women into the democratic process, though regendering is also very apparent in their campaign roles.

Unlike Eleanor Roosevelt and Lou Hoover, Bess Truman and Mamie Eisenhower did not have a history of activism with women's organizations. They were homemakers first and foremost and both disliked politics. Yet, Bess Truman and Mamie Eisenhower played no less a campaign role than their predecessors. The heads of the partisan Women's Divisions made sure of this, for they knew

¹⁵⁹ Dorothy McAllister to ER, June 5, 1940, "McAllister, Mrs. Thomas F.," Box 721, ER Papers, FDR Library.

¹⁶⁰ ER, "The Value of the Ballot for Women," *The Democratic Digest*, June-July 1940, Box 3039, Speech and Article File, ER Papers, FDR Library.

that the wives' participation was essential to meet the needs of women voters and the expectations of the plebiscitary campaign. Moreover, this shows that public expectations and political forces, over and above individual preferences, shaped the campaign roles of candidates' spouses.

During the Truman Administration, India Edwards was the head of the DNC Women's Division. A 1951 article, ranking India as one of the ten most powerful women in Washington, broadly described her role as being "responsible for organizing the Democratic women and keeping them organized."¹⁶¹ Democratic Party women knew her as a "go-getter," with the "ability and know-how to get things done." They regarded her highly because she had "the confidence and ear of the President" and the ability "not to take 'no' too easily" when making requests to him.¹⁶²

One of the ways that India would make requests to the President was through Bess Truman. India and Mrs. Truman were friends, which helped foster a close working relationship. And Mrs. Truman was usually willing to concede to requests India made of her. Numerous reply letters President Truman wrote to India, after India would write advising him on a course of action, would begin with the line, "Mrs. Truman handed me your letter..."¹⁶³ Thus, in her own way, Mrs. Truman served as a trustee in terms of substantive representation by facilitating India's working relationship with President Truman.

¹⁶¹ Press Clipping, Doris Fleeson, "Washington's Ten Most Powerful Women," *McCall's*, January 1951, "Truman, Bess W.: April 1945-January 1949," Truman Family File, Vertical File, HST Library.

¹⁶² Mary Richett to Frank McHale, October 14, 1947, "Correspondence, 1940, 1945-1946," Box 1, Papers of India Edwards, HST Library.

¹⁶³ For example see: India Edwards to President Truman, January 27, 1951, "President Truman's Response to Women's Issues [6 of 18]," Box 40A, Student Research File, HST Library.

India persistently approached Mrs. Truman to do outreach events for women voters. For instance, she begged Mrs. Truman to appear on a national broadcast commemorating Democratic Women's Day, which was intended to urge women to register and get-out-the-vote. India wrote to Mrs. Truman, "I have 'sold' the idea of having as the theme the high value women of other countries who have the vote for the first time put upon this privilege which so often American women neglect to exercise...." She went on,

I am hoping that you will agree to appear on this program for just a minute, either to introduce the women of the other countries or to speak at the close of the program and summarize their reports in a plea to American women to register and vote in November in greater party numbers than ever before. It would mean so much to the millions of Democratic women all over the land to hear your voice. Don't you think you could do it?...I am hopeful that you will give an affirmative answer for I believe firmly that to have you address Democratic women even for a minute will be of inestimable value to our Party. I shall be awaiting your reply with fingers crossed in the same way in which I used to cross them when I wanted something very much when I was a child!¹⁶⁴

However, Mrs. Truman, despite India's urging, was compelled to turn down the request. She wrote back, "I had to talk to Mr. T. about the broadcasting. He doesn't think it would be a good thing to do in view of the fact that I have refused a countless (at most) number" of similar requests....¹⁶⁵ Though India was unsuccessful in this request, her plea clearly illustrates the gender power embedded in the First Lady's position in terms of her ability to move American women to political action.

Ultimately, President Truman agreed to do the broadcast in his wife's stead. However, India only got the President to give the remarks because of Mrs.

¹⁶⁴ India Edwards to Mrs. Truman, August 9, 1946, "Correspondence, 1940, 1945-1946," Box 1, Papers of India Edwards, HST Library.

¹⁶⁵ Mrs. Truman to India Edwards, Undated, "Correspondence, 1940, 1945-1946," Box 1, Papers of India Edwards, HST Library.

Truman's influence. As one woman affiliated with the DNC Women's Division recounted, "In spite of the discouragement she met with when she approached several of the men here with the idea of having President Truman speak over the radio for Democratic Women's Day...she did get him to speak....That wasn't an easy thing to do, but Mrs. Edwards used the strong and forceful woman's touch when she had tea with Mrs. Truman and told her what the woman's vote would mean to the President. Anyway, he made the speech...."¹⁶⁶ Here again, Mrs. Truman is acting as a trustee, albeit not in a very public way. However, India actually was successful in arranging many public appearances for Bess Truman.

In 1948, as part of the plebiscitary campaign, Harry Truman took train trips around the country to make himself known to the voters. India Edwards, who came along on the trips, described them as such, "We would go into little, tiny towns, just stop for a few minutes, and I tell you, I think everybody in the town would be out....They wanted to see what kind of guy he was."¹⁶⁷ Mrs. Truman was important for helping the people see what kind of guy Harry Truman was. Though India wished women would pay more attention to issues, she believed that women placed far more weight on the personalities of the candidates.¹⁶⁸ For this reason, India made sure that Bess Truman, as well as her daughter Margaret, came along on the campaign trips. As India would later recount, "I had something to do with Mrs. Truman and Margaret also being along all the time. I don't know

¹⁶⁶ Mary Richett to Frank McHale, October 14, 1947, "Correspondence, 1940, 1945-1946," Box 1, Papers of India Edwards, HST Library.

¹⁶⁷ Oral History Interview, India Edwards, January 16, 1969, HST Library.

¹⁶⁸ Press Clipping, "Women Received at Rebuilt White House; Hear Leaders of Both Political Parties," *Washington Report*, May 9, 1952, "[4 of 18]" Box 40A, President Truman's Response to Women's Issues, Student Research File, HST Library.

that they would have thanked me for it, but I was after Howard McGrath all the time, telling him that the President had to take his wife and daughter with him. So I sold Howard and Bill Boyle, who ran the campaign train, on the idea.” India’s insistence that Mrs. Truman appear on the campaign train shows the First Lady’s power as a symbolic representative, in helping to display the personal side of the candidate. Though the aim of Mrs. Truman’s appearance was to get women interested in the campaign, India’s reasoning behind this—that women were more interested in the personalities of candidates—only served to reinforce traditional gender roles and therefore regendered campaign strategies.

Since Mrs. Truman and her daughter were going along, it was suggested that India should go along too. As she described her duties on the campaign train, “they never before had had a woman politician on a campaign train, and I went along to look after the women.”¹⁶⁹ This statement is clearly indicative of regendered campaign practices because India was assuming a gender-specific role precisely because of her gender. Since Mrs. Truman and Margaret were the primary two women on the campaign train, it fell to them to liaise with any women who came aboard, but India sometimes took some of the burden off of the Truman women and their receiving responsibilities.¹⁷⁰ In addition, at the train stops, India would frequently arrange for the Truman women to meet with Democratic women’s organizations.¹⁷¹ This practice can be interpreted in a couple of different ways. On the one hand, the candidate’s wife was prioritizing women

¹⁶⁹ Oral History Interview, India Edwards, January 16, 1969, HST Library.

¹⁷⁰ “Report Made by Mrs. India Edwards, October 20, 1948,” “Housewives for Truman, 1948,” Box 3, Papers of India Edwards, HST Library.

¹⁷¹ Press Clipping, *Louisville Times*, October 1, 1948, “Scrapbook-1948 Campaign,” Box 3, Papers of India Edwards, HST Library.

voters, drawing them into the presidential campaign, through the mere act of meeting with them. On the other hand, the candidate's wife could be marginalizing women voters by separating them from the candidate himself, thus evidencing a blend of transgendering and regendering.

Harry Truman's campaign train appearances followed the same basic routine. As one reporter recounted, he would begin with an impromptu speech from the Pullman's platform. "Smiling a big smile, he would finish with: 'Now, I'd like to introduce my family. Here comes the boss.' That was the cue for Bess Truman to step out through the dark green curtain across the Pullman's rear door. As the crowd cheered and women 'oh-ed' and 'ah-ed' over her enormous purple orchids, the First Lady grinned happily." So, by the end of each whistle stop, "the entire countryside knew it had a family man in the White House."¹⁷² India Edwards knew that showcasing Mrs. Truman would help bolster the President's personal image as a family man. In a DNC Women's Division newsletter, India noted that one of the main ways Mrs. Truman had been an asset to the campaign was by portraying the Trumans as the ideal family. "Since the Good Neighbor policy...should be the foundation of our national relations..., to have a family in the White House that could be genuinely described in this manner is an asset to the whole nation."¹⁷³ These campaign train appearances illustrate Mrs. Truman's power as a symbolic representative on a couple of levels. In these appearances, she was depicted as a feminine helpmate, thereby bolstering the President's own

¹⁷² Press Clipping, *Newsweek*, October 4, 1948, "Scrapbook-1948 Campaign," Box 3, Papers of India Edwards, HST Library.

¹⁷³ India Edwards, "Presidential Campaign Trips," *Democratic Digest*, November 1948, "Scrapbook-1948 Campaign," Box 3, Papers of India Edwards, HST Library.

masculinity. Her wifely presence also helped to bolster the President's character as a solid family man. Thus, her power as a symbolic representative was firmly embedded in her gender identity.

Mamie Eisenhower's role on the campaign was very similar to Bess Truman's. She too accompanied her husband on his campaign train trip to meet and greet the citizens of the country. Katherine Howard, who was Secretary of the RNC, a member of Eisenhower's Campaign Policy and Strategy Committee, and the General's principal adviser for women's affairs during the 1952 campaign, described the typical stop: "The train would come in and the music would go on and then he'd go on the rear platform and he'd make a speech, and the people would be standing on the railroad tracks all around. Then he'd say, 'And meet my Mamie,' and Mamie would come out and she would smile and wave" and then a campaign worker would put on 'The Sunshine of Your Smile,' as the train was pulling out.¹⁷⁴ Here, the First Lady's gender power as a symbolic representative is similar to Bess Truman's. The purpose of featuring the candidate's wife in her feminine role as a helpmate was to bolster the candidate's own masculinity and his image as a family man.

Although Katherine Howard came on the campaign train as a member of General Eisenhower's policy staff, her responsibilities slowly evolved into working for Mrs. Eisenhower. Here again is evidence of regendered campaign practices, as Howard became associated with the First Lady—and disassociated from the policy staff—because of her sex. Howard worked with Mary Jane McCaffree, Mrs. Eisenhower's personal secretary, to establish a schedule for

¹⁷⁴ Oral History Interview, Katherine G. Howard, July 16, 1968, pp. 75-76, DDE Library.

taking all the women who came aboard to mingle with Mrs. Eisenhower. Many of these women were state and national committeewomen who Howard knew through her job as Secretary of the RNC. As she described the scenario,

I would take them in to the room, and Mrs. Eisenhower would be there, always gracious and charming, and I would introduce each woman. The group would be probably 10 or 15 at a time, and I would introduce them and chat with them. She's awfully good you know....She could chat and make conversation and make them all comfortable and happy....Then I'd get up in due course, you know, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 minutes, and then we'd all say goodbye, and we'd go out and get past the kitchen and the door would swing between the dining room and the kitchen, and they would say, 'Isn't she charming?....Then back we would go.'¹⁷⁵

According to Howard, Mrs. Eisenhower did not discuss politics with the committeewomen. They would chat about what a pretty country it was and things of that nature, but she would never engage them in substantive conversations.¹⁷⁶

As with Bess Truman, this situation can be interpreted a couple of ways. On one hand, by taking the time to meet with women, she 'acted for' them by prioritizing them or treating them as an important constituency. On the other hand, the practice of secluding women with the candidate's wife to chat about 'fluff' topics could be seen as marginalizing them and fostering regendered campaign strategies.

When General Eisenhower would attend a rally off the train, Mrs. Eisenhower would usually accompany him onstage, and Katherine Howard would go along with her.¹⁷⁷ And then when General Eisenhower and the rest of his staff left the train to campaign in other parts of the country, Mamie stayed onboard to campaign on her own. Sherman Adams gave Howard instructions that she would stay on the train with Mrs. Eisenhower. He said, "We'd like to have you come,

¹⁷⁵ Oral History Interview, Katherine G. Howard, July 16, 1968, pp. 88-89, DDE Library.

¹⁷⁶ Oral History Interview, Katherine G. Howard, July 16, 1968, p. 90, DDE Library.

¹⁷⁷ Oral History Interview, Katherine G. Howard, July 16, 1968, p. 91, DDE Library.

Katherine, as part of the staff, but Mamie would feel rather bereft if you did leave her."¹⁷⁸ So, by being associated with the First Lady, Howard's own role became marginalized, as she moved from being a policy aide to General Eisenhower to an emotional support for his wife.

Off the campaign train, Katherine Howard would plan Republican women's receptions. One of the largest she planned was under the auspices of the Women's Republican Club of Massachusetts, of which Howard had been president. Three thousand women showed up at this particular event to shake Mamie's hand. Howard recognized Mrs. Eisenhower's symbolic power in this situation. As she recounted, "They'd look at Mamie and they just seemed to be sort of transfixed, her personality was such...then they'd go on and they'd be in sort of a daze."¹⁷⁹ Howard was also instrumental in putting together a nationwide radio and television broadcast in which General Eisenhower was to speak with leading women and relate to the nation what he believed about women. Howard and the other writers scripted Mrs. Eisenhower into the program and she appeared with the General and other Republican women leaders on the broadcast.¹⁸⁰ So, Howard probably believed that Mrs. Eisenhower appearing along with the General would help active women's interest in the program and illuminate the General's personal side, thus illustrating her power as a symbolic representative.

Anne Wheaton, who was Director of Women's Publicity for the RNC also accompanied the Eisenhowers on the campaign train. As part of the plebiscitary campaign directed at women, her specific job was to promote Mrs. Eisenhower

¹⁷⁸ Oral History Interview, Katherine G. Howard, February 7, 1970, p. 436, DDE Library.

¹⁷⁹ Oral History Interview, Katherine G. Howard, February 7, 1970, p. 476-77, 479, DDE Library.

¹⁸⁰ Oral History Interview, Katherine G. Howard, February 7, 1970, pp. 468-469, DDE Library.

and handle all the publicity relating to her, including articles in magazines and newspapers, and press interviews. As Wheaton described her role in relation to Mamie, "on the train, wherever she was, I was to be right there."¹⁸¹ She would bring a continuous stream of newspaper women to talk with her in the dining room of the campaign train. Mamie would mainly talk about "what she was doing, what she liked, how she was writing to her son who was then in Korea everyday," and just told about "the habits of a very sweet American mother."¹⁸² So, Mamie Eisenhower was appealing to American women and drawing them into the campaign in a way that centered on stereotypically feminine traits, thus evidencing that potentially transgendered purposes were counterbalanced by regendered practices.

Further illustrating her feminine appeals, it is likely that a campaign staffer either urged her to write or wrote in her name a publicity piece, entitled "A Wife's Big Job." In the article, she provided American women with advice on being a housewife and gave readers glimpses into the Eisenhowers' personal life. She wrote, "I try to breakfast with him every morning and to see that his breakfast is exactly the way he likes it. I prepare for unexpected guests. I am ready to listen when he feels like talking, disappear when he is tired..."¹⁸³ Highlighting Mamie Eisenhower's subservience through this publicity provides further evidence of regendered campaign strategies.

¹⁸¹ Oral History Interview, Anne W. Wheaton, January 31, 1968, p. 53, DDE Library.

¹⁸² Oral History Interview, Anne W. Wheaton, March 8, 1968, p. 147, DDE Library.

¹⁸³ Mamie Doud Eisenhower, "A Wife's Big Job," Source and Date Unknown, "Mamie Eisenhower," Box 9, Campaign Series, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Papers as President, DDE Library.

Regendering through the reinforcing of Mamie Eisenhower's traditional image was also carried out by Citizens for Eisenhower, a campaign entity separate from the RNC, largely targeted at recruiting Democratic voters, and run by the advertising firm of Young and Rubicam, Inc. Citizens for Eisenhower invented broadcast spots and distributed press releases about Mamie Eisenhower under the heading, "Of Special Interest to Women." One such release, entitled "Mamie Eisenhower...Bride," started out, "This year's crop of brides, struggling to...cut budgets and furnish new apartments, may be interested in the housekeeping adventures of Mamie Eisenhower, when she was a bride in 1916..." The press release goes on to describe how Mamie, as a young officer's wife, was able to do the cooking with no icebox, stove, or fireplace, and on a very small income. At the end of the spot, she gives young brides advice about entertaining and other homemaking issues.¹⁸⁴ In this publicity, Mamie came across as a mentor—or gender role model—for young women entering the marriage state. In presenting her this way, young brides are encouraged to look to her for guidance on how to cook, budget, and entertain.

A similar Citizens for Eisenhower spot entitled, "How the Eisenhowers Budget," further reveals how Mamie served as a role model to the women of the country on 'domestic' matters. The spot started out: "Women who have both personal budgets and national budgets so much on their minds these days may be interested in what Mamie Eisenhower has to say about budgeting." It goes on relate Mrs. Eisenhower's opinion that the best way to avoid debt is for the

¹⁸⁴ Citizens for Eisenhower Press Release, "Eisenhower News: Of Special Interest to Women: Mamie Eisenhower...Bride," May 12, 1952, "Mamie Eisenhower," Box 9, Campaign Series, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Papers as President, DDE Library.

husband to give his wife the paycheck: "If he makes her the administrator of his money, her pride will not let her go into debt. Ike has always given me his pay check and my pride in that responsibility made me stretch it to cover our expenses...So long as he had razor blades and cigarettes, he did not mind stew instead of steak at the end of every month, if it made my accounts come out even."¹⁸⁵ By providing an insight into the Eisenhowers' marriage, this spot clearly reveals that Mrs. Eisenhower's sense of respect in the marriage state was directly tied to how well she managed her personal budget and carried out traditional feminine roles—and implicitly instructs American women to do and feel similarly, thus contributing to regendering through her campaign role.

All of the First Ladies during this time period assumed similar representative roles within the campaigns. As substantive representatives and trustees, they looked after the needs of women and tried to active their interest in the presidential campaign and draw them into the electoral realm, into which they were just beginning to enter. This provides evidence of transgendering, as they were trying to get women to pay attention to politics and vote regardless of their sex. However, this transgendered purpose was often countered by regendered practices, as the wives' appeals to women were often carried out in such as way as to reinforce traditional femininity and potentially marginalize them. Their gender role modeling and actions as symbolic representatives provides evidence of this.

¹⁸⁵ Citizens for Eisenhower Press Release, "How the Eisenhowers Budget," Date Unknown, "Mamie Eisenhower," Box 9, Campaign Series, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Papers as President, DDE Library.

1960s: The Dawning of the Second Wave and Emerging Policy Roles

In the 1960s, the government began to pay more attention to issues of direct concern to women. The 1960s also mark the first time candidates' wives consistently discussed such issues. In terms of substantive representation, these wives related women's concerns to their husbands' policies and programs, ranging from the economy and foreign policy to health care. Feminism in the form of a powerful movement was just taking root during this era, so it was still too early for wives to pay close attention to feminist issues. In terms of symbolic representation, bolstering their husbands' character and image as good family men remained important, as did the wives' own obligation to appear feminine. They continued to 'act for' women by drawing them into the campaign and electoral system, but this was often done in a gender-specific way, thereby continuing to illustrate the blending of transgendering and regendering.

Like Mamie Eisenhower and Bess Truman, Jacqueline Kennedy was an intensely private person. She too disliked political life and believed that her main role was to be a wife and mother. Before becoming First Lady, she was not active in women's organizations and did not work for any particular cause. Having been raised within the American aristocracy, grassroots political activism was not in her blood. As a young adult, she was well educated and well traveled. Though she did briefly hold a job as the "Inquiring Photographer" for a Washington newspaper, she did not evidence high career aspirations. However, before the 1960 election, she was already known and admired by American women. As the young, attractive wife of the Senator John F. Kennedy, she was seen as

fashionable and high-class. During her years as a Senator's wife, it became evident that she attracted curiosity and attention wherever she went. Thus, the Kennedy presidential campaign in 1960 had strong reason to believe that she could be an effective tool for reaching out to women voters.

During the 1960 general election campaign, Jacqueline Kennedy was pregnant, and therefore physically unable to travel on the campaign trail with her husband. After the nominating convention in July, she mostly stayed in Hyannis Port.¹⁸⁶ From Hyannis, however, she was the feature of two public relations efforts, both of which specifically targeted women voters. The first was the "Calling for Kennedy" campaign, and the second was a series of articles called "Campaign Wife," that were disseminated to media outlets by the DNC.

The Calling for Kennedy campaign was a nationwide drive conducted during October of 1960. It was "conducted by women in an effort to personally contact women in their homes on behalf of Senator John F. Kennedy for President."¹⁸⁷ Jackie Kennedy launched the effort at a meeting of over 200 female precinct workers, where she personally telephoned statewide chairwomen of the Calling for Kennedy program. This doorbell ringing campaign was particularly targeted at housewives and was intended to gather their opinions about major issues facing the country.¹⁸⁸ Though her pregnancy would not allow her to go door-to-door, at a tea held at her home for the program's announcement, she said: I am "enthusiastic and grateful for the many women joining the 'Calling for

¹⁸⁶ Oral History Interview, John Jay Hooker, Jr., p. 13, JFK Library.

¹⁸⁷ DNC News Release, October 16, 1960, "Jacqueline Kennedy to Launch 'Calling for Kennedy,'" Box 21, Publicity Division, DNC Papers, JFK Library.

¹⁸⁸ DNC News Release, October 16, 1960, "Jacqueline Kennedy to Launch 'Calling for Kennedy,'" Box 21, Publicity Division, DNC Papers, JFK Library.

Kennedy' program. I wish that I were able to go out and join in the doorbell ringing to meet more of the women throughout the country and hear their opinions."¹⁸⁹ So, the principles of political representation—hearing women's concerns and responding to them—were central to the Calling for Kennedy campaign that Jacqueline Kennedy was instrumental in promoting.

The culmination of this canvassing effort was a nationwide television appearance by Senator and Mrs. Kennedy "to answer the questions which the Calling for Kennedy campaign revealed to be uppermost on the minds of a broad cross-section of American womanhood."¹⁹⁰ Mrs. Kennedy's authorship was attached to a newspaper column to promote the broadcast. As the article described the program,

During the first part of the show I showed a few pictures of Jack and Caroline and me, and then I asked Jack a few of the hundreds of questions I had received on the Calling for Kennedy forms. Without exception the issue uppermost in every woman's mind is peace—not a single person put the budget first. Next came education, medical care for the aged, and the cost of living.¹⁹¹

This reveals Mrs. Kennedy's role in 'acting for' women, as she is relating matters of national policy to their unique interests as women.

This column was just one in a series of articles authored by Mrs. Kennedy, distributed by the DNC's Public Affairs Division to newspapers across the country. The column ran from September 16 through the rest of general election. In these columns, she promoted women's participation in the Kennedy campaign.

¹⁸⁹ DNC News Release, October 6, 1960, "Calling for Kennedy 10/6/60," Box 20, Publicity Division, DNC Papers, JFK Library.

¹⁹⁰ DNC News Release, November 1, 1960, "JFK and Wife on TV," Box 21, Publicity Division, DNC Papers, JFK Library.

¹⁹¹ DNC News Release, "Campaign Wife," by Jacqueline Kennedy, November 1, 1960, "'Campaign Wife' by Jacqueline Kennedy," Box 21, Publicity Division, DNC Papers, JFK Library.

She wrote, "Jack has always believed that women are vital to a campaign. In fact, he says that 'one woman is worth 10 men in a campaign. They have the idealism, they have the time to give, and they work without making demands.'"¹⁹² In one way, by singling out women and recognizing their good work on the campaign, Jackie Kennedy was substantively representing them. Yet, Jackie Kennedy's paraphrase of her husband's beliefs on women campaign workers also reinforces regendered campaign roles. For, women's "idealism" could imply romanticism or naiveté; their "time to give" both highlights and devalues their homemaking responsibilities; and their ability to "work without making demands" demonstrates submissiveness.

Mrs. Kennedy also promoted the Women's Committee for the New Frontiers, which was comprised of leading women in the fields of economics (cost of living), health care, education, and foreign policy. These issues had been deemed those about which women were most concerned in 1960. Mrs. Kennedy hosted panel discussions of the Women's Committee at her home on each of these issues. Through her "Campaign Wife" articles, she reported to the nation on the content of these discussions.¹⁹³ In the column devoted the subject of schools, Mrs. Kennedy wrote, "There is no more vital concern in every mother's life."¹⁹⁴ She went on to inform concerned mothers of her husband's record on education:

¹⁹² DNC News Release, "Campaign Wife," by Jacqueline Kennedy, October 13, 1960, "Campaign Wife" by Jacqueline Kennedy," Box 21, Publicity Division, DNC Papers, JFK Library.

¹⁹³ DNC News Release, "Campaign Wife," by Jacqueline Kennedy, October 13, 1960, "Campaign Wife" by Jacqueline Kennedy," Box 21, Publicity Division, DNC Papers, JFK Library.

¹⁹⁴ DNC News Release, "Campaign Wife," by Jacqueline Kennedy, October 6, 1960, "Campaign Wife" by Jacqueline Kennedy," Box 20, Publicity Division, DNC Papers, JFK Library.

My husband has been deeply concerned with these problems and has recently supported in the Senate a successful effort to pass legislation providing Federal aid for school construction and for teachers' salaries. At the same time he stresses that he is not for Federal control of education. He says traditionally local jurisdiction and academic freedom must and will be maintained.¹⁹⁵

Another column was devoted to the topic of medical care for the elderly. Jackie Kennedy wrote,

Several days ago the Sub-committee on Medical Care for the Aged released its report for the Women's Committee for the New Frontier. So many people all over the country had written me about this problem that I was particularly interested in what they had to say....The report stressed the importance of paying for increased medical care through the social security system rather than requiring that older people pass an income or means test in order to get medical benefits...Yesterday Dr. Benjamin Spock was in town and stopped by my house to see me. Along with most mothers in the country, I have read his books and admire him greatly. It was fascinating to talk to him not only about children, but also his views on...medical care for the aged....I'm glad to say, he believes that Jack is the man best qualified to build on a realistic program in these fields.¹⁹⁶

Note how Mrs. Kennedy repeatedly invoked her motherhood in these policy discussions. She used her maternal status to validate her concern for and interest in these substantive policy areas, thus contributing to regendering in the policy realm. Yet, her extensive discussion of women-related policies was virtually unprecedented for a candidate's wife, and she was trying to make important public policies relevant to women, thereby drawing them into the electoral process in a more substantive way, thus illustrating a blend of transgendering and regendering. The changing political times made Jackie Kennedy's new policy role necessary. Whereas in the 1940s India Edwards acknowledged that women were mostly interested in the personal side of the candidate, Mrs. Kennedy's role seems to indicate women now needed to be appealed to on a policy or programmatic

¹⁹⁵ DNC News Release, "Campaign Wife," by Jacqueline Kennedy, October 6, 1960, "'Campaign Wife' by Jacqueline Kennedy," Box 20, Publicity Division, DNC Papers, JFK Library.

¹⁹⁶ DNC News Release, "Campaign Wife," by Jacqueline Kennedy, October 27, 1960, "Mrs. Kennedy's Statements: 1/19/60-10/27/60," Box 1034, 1960 Campaign Press and Publicity Files, JFK Pre-Presidential Papers, JFK Library.

level, albeit in way that reinforced traditional gender roles. The presidencies of the 1960s were in part concerned with helping women reach a fuller potential as citizens, both within and beyond the home. This was reflected in Mrs. Kennedy's campaign roles and was later a central goal of President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women.

Another way in which Jackie Kennedy reached out to women was by hosting debate watching parties and encouraging other women to do the same. At her first party, she hosted Democratic women leaders at her home. She wrote, "Every woman who comes promises that she will hold a listening party of her own for one of the next three debates and ask 10 friends."¹⁹⁷ Fact sheets about the four major issues that were identified as being important to women—peace, education, cost of living, and medical costs for senior citizens—were to be furnished at the listening parties as a basis for discussion of the candidates.¹⁹⁸ Here, the blend of transgendering and regendering is evident, as the future First Lady was helping to supply women voters with information so that they could better participate in the electoral process, yet doing so by invoking gender-specific issues.

In her "Campaign Wife" columns, Mrs. Kennedy revealed much more about her children and private life than she ever did during her White House years. For instance, in her article following the third presidential debate, she wrote, "Jack shows such control under stress--more than I ever could; an absolute

¹⁹⁷ DNC News Release, "Campaign Wife," by Jacqueline Kennedy, September 29, 1960, "'Campaign Wife' by Jacqueline Kennedy," Box 19, Publicity Division, DNC Papers, JFK Library.

¹⁹⁸ DNC News Release, September 25, 1960, "'Campaign Wife' by Jacqueline Kennedy," Box 19, Publicity Division, DNC Papers, JFK Library.

calm beforehand—then, when it is over, he relaxes and laughs and is happy to talk about it with me....I was proud of him for not wearing any make-up and simply presenting himself as he is—a dedicated man concerned about the future of his country.”¹⁹⁹ By discussing her husband’s strength and her own weakness in public situations, she was highlighting his masculine traits, as well as her own feminine qualities. Also, in her campaign writings, Jackie Kennedy revealed many of her own personal day-to-day activities and her feelings about her husband on the campaign trail. She discussed mothering her daughter Caroline to a far greater extent than she was willing to during her White House years. The contrast between Mrs. Kennedy’s behavior on the campaign trail and in the White House highlights how powerful the demands of the plebiscitary and personalized campaign had become. They were even powerful enough to overcome Mrs. Kennedy’s intense privacy, which is discussed in future chapters.

Following JFK’s assassination in 1963, Lyndon Baines Johnson was elevated to the presidency. In 1964, Johnson was nominated as the Democratic candidate for the presidency, and Liz Carpenter, who was also served as Lady Bird Johnson’s Press Secretary, became responsible for managing the First Lady’s side of the campaign. Carpenter, a Texas newspaper woman, was a feminist and would prove to be one of the motivating forces behind Lady Bird Johnson’s woman-focused role. But Mrs. Johnson, who was also involved in the media business having bought and run a radio station in her earlier years, was also attuned to women’s issues.

¹⁹⁹ DNC News Release, “Campaign Wife,” by Jacqueline Kennedy, October 19, 1960, “Mrs. Kennedy’s Statements: 10/19/60-10/27/60,” Box 1034, 1960 Campaign Press and Publicity Files, JFK Pre-Presidential Papers, JFK Library.

The major DNC-sponsored women's outreach program in 1964 was the 'Tell-A-Friend' campaign. The program's highly publicized national kickoff featured Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Humphrey, the vice presidential nominee's wife. On September 14, they placed calls to housewives in their private residences in all fifty states to personally urge women to participate in the 1964 campaign and election. This vote-getting effort is similar to those of candidates' wives who had gone before her. By trying to get women to vote, Lady Bird Johnson was making an effort to pull them into the democratic system, which is a civic good. However, having the candidate's wife target women as homemakers simultaneously contributed to regendered campaign roles.

Mrs. Johnson was personally concerned about women who were politically inactive. As she mentioned in a 'Tell-A-Friend' call to an Alaskan woman, "every time I read the statistics where there are less women who take the opportunity to vote, less eligible voters than do vote, I am annoyed by it, so let's cut it down this time."²⁰⁰ This illustrates Mrs. Johnson's role as a trustee in terms of substantive representation, looking after women's citizenship interests by trying to remedy their political inactivity.

The campaign asked each of the women they contacted to call or write ten friends, tell them about the Johnson record, and urge them to get to the polls on Election Day. The purpose behind the calls was to make women aware that they can participate in the campaign, even if their obligations as wives and mothers do

²⁰⁰ Transcript of 'Tell A Friend', September 14, 1964, "Tell-A-Friend, September 14, 1964," Box 11, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

not permit them to leave their homes to do active party work.²⁰¹ This vividly illustrates the blend of transgendering and regendering that was occurring through the candidate's wife's role. While Mrs. Johnson was urging women to integrate themselves into the masculine realm of politics, she was at the same time encouraging them to tailor their political activity to accommodate or fit into traditional gender roles.

Using the presidential and vice presidential nominees wives proved to be a highly effective technique. Margaret Price, DNC Vice Chairman in charge of women, wrote in a memo to all state Women's Activities Coordinators that the response to Mrs. Johnson's and Mrs. Humphrey's calls had been so overwhelming that she wanted to use the same method with gubernatorial and congressional candidates' wives to spearhead the final get-out-the-vote drives in the states.²⁰² So, even though Mrs. Johnson's campaign somewhat reinforced traditional gender roles, it also proved to be effective in activating women's interest and participation in politics.

After the 1964 presidential election, some began to notice an emerging difference in the way men and women voted. In a memo proposing women's campaign activities for the 1966 congressional midterm elections, Margaret Price noted that women were transferring their allegiance to the Democratic Party, casting 62% of their vote for LBJ, after having supported the Republican ticket in

²⁰¹ DNC Press Release, September 13, 1964, "Tell-A-Friend, September 14, 1964," Box 11, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

²⁰² Margaret Price to State Women's Activities Coordinators, Undated, "Tell-A-Friend, September 14, 1964," Box 11, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

the three previous elections.²⁰³ In addition, Price noted that the women's vote was significant because the percentage of women voting for LBJ was greater than the percentage of men (60%). She stated, "In order to establish this breakthrough as a trend, I believe we must make a concerted effort to reach the women voters in this campaign."²⁰⁴ In the same memo, she outlined a proposal to maintain women's support of the Democratic Party through hosting a nationally televised program called "Coffee with the First Lady," featuring Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Humphrey. This program was to be broadcast to 131 cities via CBS television one week before the election.²⁰⁵ As Mrs. Price described the program,

Mrs. Johnson would ask women across the country to have coffee with her and Mrs. Humphrey at the White House via television. Precincts across the country would organize a coffee hour to coincide with Mrs. Johnson's appearance on television....Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Humphrey would talk about the work remaining to be done by women in the last week of the campaign. They would emphasize the power of a woman with a telephone in her hand and recall the successful Tell-A-Friend program they initiated in 1964....During the coffee session, Mrs. Johnson would request that every woman listening join them in a massive get-out-the-vote telephone effort during the last week of the campaign.²⁰⁶

In her justification of the "Coffee with the First Lady" program, Mrs. Price invoked the President's wife's unique power, as a woman, to appeal to the interests of women voters. She wrote, "I believe we need a special event of national stature to stir the special enthusiasm of women....Having coffee with

²⁰³ It should be noted, however, that research has demonstrated the gender gap was caused by men moving away from the Democratic Party and toward the Republican Party, while the support of women for Democrats remained relatively stagnant over the years. See Karen M. Kaufmann and John R. Petrocik, "The Changing Politics of American Men: Understanding the Sources of the Gender Gap," *American Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 3 (1999).

²⁰⁴ Memoranda from Margaret Price, "1966 Campaign Proposals for the Office of Women's Activities," September 29, 1966, "Coffee with the First Lady, CBS TV," Box 30, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

²⁰⁵ Margaret Price to James R. Jones, November 2, 1966, "9/24/66-3/14/67," Box 63, "PP5/Johnson, Lady Bird," WHCF, LBJ Library.

²⁰⁶ Memoranda from Margaret Price, "1966 Campaign Proposals for the Office of Women's Activities," September 29, 1966, "Coffee with the First Lady, CBS TV," Box 30, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

Mrs. Johnson would percolate their energy and determination to win big.”²⁰⁷ She repeated this theory in a memo to State Democratic Chairmen, saying, “The special nature of the appeal that Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Humphrey will make to women will—I am sure—stir them to renewed enthusiasm to work and work hard during the last, all-important week before election.”²⁰⁸ The further illustrates the symbolic power of the First Lady to activate women’s interest and participation in the political realm.

For the 1964 convention, the DNC women and Liz Carpenter worked together to make press kits to distribute to women reporters and female delegates. The kits included a booklet with excerpts of Mrs. Johnson’s speeches that she had given to and about women during her tenure in office. The booklet was entitled, “It is a good time to be a woman...It is a good time to be alive.”²⁰⁹ They planned to have the kits include photos of Mrs. Johnson speaking in front of audiences and a story about her efforts on behalf of ‘Women Doers.’²¹⁰ Here, the campaign was actually providing women with information on how the First Lady herself had substantively represented, as a trustee, women’s interests within her husband’s administration. This publicity effort also reflected the political climate for women at the dawning of second wave feminism. Without being overtly feminist, Mrs.

²⁰⁷ Memoranda from Margaret Price, “1966 Campaign Proposals for the Office of Women’s Activities,” September 29, 1966, “Coffee with the First Lady, CBS TV,” Box 30, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

²⁰⁸ Margaret Price to State Chairmen, October 10, 1966, “Coffee with the First Lady, CBS TV,” Box 30, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

²⁰⁹ “1964 Press Information: The President’s Ladies...” “Whistle Stop 10/13-16/64,” Box 11, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

²¹⁰ Norma Gordon to Liz Carpenter, August 7, 1964, “Convention 1964,” Box 72, Liz Carpenter Subject Files, LBJ Library.

Johnson embodied and her speeches highlighted active women as engaged citizens.

The convention press kits were used throughout the duration of the campaign, including Mrs. Johnson's groundbreaking train trip through the southern states. This tour was orchestrated principally by Liz Carpenter, in conjunction with the President and his staff. According to Liz Carpenter,

The President knew that Mrs. Johnson would be loved in the South. He knew that he did not want to default the South. They were hearing from so many of their friends that were saying, 'You've forgotten about us. We aren't important. So her real role was to get on a train and go in eight states, four days, forty-seven speeches, and say, 'This President and his wife respect you and you are loved.'²¹¹

It was believed that Mrs. Johnson would be the most able to counteract repercussions from LBJ's support of the Civil Rights Act and draw voters back to the Democratic ticket.

Though the President believed the whistle stop would be a very effective technique, certain members of the President's staff did not regard it as serious campaigning. Some West Wing staffers discounted Mrs. Johnson's ability to conduct the tour. According to one official, "The old-fashioned whistle stop technique is going to be very difficult for any woman....[Mrs. Johnson] cannot, effectively, talk about labor's role in an automated economy, the gross national product, or why Barry Goldwater can't see through his empty spectacles. She needs to talk about things women—and men—know, and want to know about families, children, and the future."²¹² Here is an example of explicit institutional encouragement for regendered campaign roles. The staff member is essentially

²¹¹ Oral History Interview, Elizabeth Carpenter, December 3, 1968, p. 11, LBJ Library.

²¹² Unsigned, Undated White House memoranda, "Whistle Stop 10/13-15/64," Box 11, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

saying that topics such as family and children are appropriate for women to discuss and topics like labor and the economy are better left to men—and that Mrs. Johnson should stay away from those masculine topics.

Though the whistle stop was targeted at mixed-gendered audiences, Mrs. Johnson participated in many more campaign events that were explicitly tailored toward women. Her remarks at these events oftentimes celebrated socially and politically active women and addressed women's issues, evidencing changing social views on women's roles. On a solo swing through the West in August of 1964, she made an appearance at the "Salute to Women Reception," held in Jackson, Wyoming, which was intended to highlight Wyoming women in politics. She remarked, "They rightly call Wyoming 'the Equality State.' There never was a time in Wyoming's history when woman wasn't a man's full partner."²¹³ Then on a trip to the Northeast a few days later, she delivered a speech at the University of Vermont entirely centered on women. She saluted the Vermont Governor's interest in equal rights and for establishing the first Vermont State Commission on the Status of Women. Highlighting LBJ's record on women, she said, "My husband has increased our opportunity to make our voices heard and our contributions count. Your Governor has followed his lead."²¹⁴ In these situations, Mrs. Johnson seems more like a delegate in terms of substantive representation, as she is being sent out to promote her husband's record on women's issues. Her

²¹³ Press Release, Mrs. Johnson Remarks, August 16, 1964, "Wyoming Speeches, 8/14/64-8/16/64," Box 79, Liz Carpenter Subject Files, LBJ Library.

²¹⁴ Press Release, Mrs. Johnson Remarks, August 20, 1964, "University of Vermont, August 20, 1964," Box 79, Liz Carpenter Subject Files, LBJ Library.

language about equal opportunity and equality in marriage, are also among the more feminist sounding remarks given by Mrs. Johnson.

Mrs. Johnson also seemed more like a feminist and a delegate in an October campaign swing through Pennsylvania, which she deemed "a land of super-women." In her speech in Allentown, she defended her husband's record on women's issues and championed his opening up job opportunities in the federal government to women:

The President believes in women. He has declared his 'Profound belief that we can waste no talent, we can frustrate no creative power, we can neglect no skill in our search for an open and just and challenging society.' At his very first Cabinet meeting he announced: 'The day is over when top jobs are reserved for men.' His very first appointment was a woman from trade union ranks, Esther Peterson...to be his Consumer Advisor....The Federal Government has truly become a showcase for equal employment opportunities for women....Because of this President's determination women will no longer be the forgotten sex in labor, in business or in government. And, I know you will justify his faith in you.²¹⁵

Her remarks promoting the integration of women into the federal government on a more equal basis with men reveals her contribution to transgendering. These kinds of speeches were, however, counterbalanced by similar campaign remarks uplifting the role of the homemaker.

Illustrating this blend of progressive and traditional in the First Lady's remarks, later that September, after giving a speech at a rally in Akron, Ohio to bolster support for a female candidate for Congress, she traveled to Columbus, where she addressed the Federated Democratic Women of Ohio. The thrust of the speech was how Americans can bring the Great Society's mission to their hometowns. She praised LBJ's program establishing a federal Job Corps for Girls. And she discussed the housewife's role in the Great Society:

²¹⁵ Press Release, Remarks by Mrs. Johnson, October 24, 1964, "Allentown, October 24, 1964," Box 80, Liz Carpenter Subject Files, LBJ Library.

We women need not make our dream so far beyond our front door that we forget the simple every day contributions we can make around our own hearth...A comfortable atmosphere and a thoughtfully-planned meal are part of the good life. They can change a husband's perspective after a hard day and set his mind on constructive paths to meet tomorrow's problems. When you have set your own small world a-right, you have done a great deal. For this, too, is an element of the practicing citizen in this great society.²¹⁶

This again illustrates the blend of transgendering and regendering that was occurring through the First Lady's role. On the one hand, Mrs. Johnson was trying to make the Great Society relevant to women citizens and integrate them into the workings of government, therefore substantively representing them in the trusteeship sense. Yet, she was also tailoring women's citizenship in the Great Society to accommodate traditional gender roles.

Whether Mrs. Johnson sounded more feminist or traditional, it was generally agreed that she was an asset to the campaign. Douglass Cater, Special Assistant to LBJ, told the President about her appeal on the platform: "She comes across as intelligent and knowledgeable and unlike Eleanor Roosevelt thoroughly feminine....Politicians and reporters alike felt she would be more sought after than the Vice Presidential nominee for many occasions...."²¹⁷ Cater's statement also reveals how her value as a campaigner was tied into her femininity. Perhaps because she was seen as feminine, she was able to get away with more progressive statements about women's equality. As demonstrated below, Laura Bush's campaign role was very similar to Lady Bird Johnson's in this way. Yet, both Lady Bird Johnson and Jackie Kennedy, in their attempts to tie women into to the masculinized political and policy realm, also tailored women's active

²¹⁶ Press Release, Remarks by Mrs. Johnson, September 18, 1964, "Akron and Columbus, September 17-18, 1964," Box 79, Liz Carpenter Subject Files, LBJ Library.

²¹⁷ Douglass Cater to LBJ, August 18, 1964, "7/15/64-10/1/64," Box 62, PP5/Johnson, Lady Bird, WHCF, LBJ Library.

citizenship to accommodate traditional gender roles, furthering a blend of transgendered and regendered campaigning techniques.

1970s: The Feminist Era

This section examines the campaign roles of Pat Nixon, Betty Ford, and Rosalynn Carter. In the early 1970s, the organized feminist movement, which had taken root in the 1960s, became a major force in American politics. Early in this decade, a bi-partisan consensus emerged in strong support of feminist policies and principles. However, later in the 1970s, the Republican Party would distance itself from feminism. In terms of symbolic representation, these wives attempted to represent the ideal of equality in their marriage relationships in order to appeal to the newly powerful political force of feminism. In terms of substantive representation, they became instrumental in responding to the groups and constituencies generated by this movement and in addressing women's rights issues during their campaigns.

The next occupants of the White House, Richard and Pat Nixon, were not as initially attuned to women's issues as were LBJ and Lady Bird Johnson. However, both Nixons did come to understand the political force of the feminist movement and became willing to reach out to "women's libbers."

As the Vice President's wife in the 1950s, Pat Nixon was seen as "stiff" and uneasy with making public appearances, so she became known to the public as "Plastic Pat." As the nation's Second Lady, Pat Nixon was the quintessential housewife, though she did hold a degree from the University of Southern

California and worked as a high school teacher prior to her marriage. Despite her negative image, Pat Nixon came to the first ladyship willing to take on projects and perform representative functions. Though she did not initially embrace feminist principles, she was not averse to them. But, recognizing the political importance of the movement, she was willing to do what she could to help the Nixon Administration appeal to feminists.

In preparation for the 1972 elections, Barbara Franklin, who had been appointed Staff Assistant for Executive Manpower in the Nixon White House, working in conjunction with Dr. Jean Spencer from the Vice President's office, circulated a memorandum, the purpose of which was to "analyze the current emergence of Feminism and to indicate the type of campaign strategy which should be implemented in order to maximize the women's vote and participation for the President in 1972." They wrote, "A new social and political awareness has been developing among women, particularly in the last two years." According to Franklin and Spencer, women were rebelling against the assumption that their primary roles were wives and mothers. Women were beginning to push for equality of opportunity especially in the fields of education and employment.²¹⁸ Issues such as the ERA, abortion, sex discrimination, day care centers, and representation of women at the policy levels of government were becoming mainstream. They wrote,

Central to campaign planning is consideration of whether the eventual awareness and strength of the women's issue will influence political loyalties and break

²¹⁸ Memorandum by Barbara Franklin and Dr. Jean Spencer, October 1971, "Women-Memos," Box 28, Robert Finch Materials, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

traditional voter patterns. If this issue is merchandized so as to strike a chord of pent-up frustration among women, that could well be the case.

Franklin and Spencer proposed a series of responses to address the rise of feminism. While they said that the Nixon campaign did not have to support the extreme "women's lib" factions, they did warn that the President "must understand the nature of the new awareness of women. That understanding must be reflected, where appropriate, in statements by the Administration and later by the campaign organization." At the local levels, they said women should be encouraged to organize on a mixed basis, such as in "Suburbanites for Nixon" or "Couples for Nixon." Presumably, they wanted to end outreach efforts that targeted only housewives and that were gender-specific. In other words, gone were the days of Jackie Kennedy's "Calling for Kennedy" and Lady Bird Johnson's "Tell-A-Friend" campaigns. Franklin and Spencer's proposal that men and women should be targeted on a gender-neutral basis indicates that they were attempting to implement transgendered campaign strategies.

Franklin and Spencer proposed incorporating Pat Nixon into the campaign's transgendered outreach efforts. In a special section of their memorandum entitled, "The First Lady," they warned against the First Couple's traditional, sex-based campaign division of labor:

In the past, Mrs. Nixon has campaigned very effectively in women's groups while the President spoke to the men or the general public. In 1972, we feel that her activities must be more oriented to mixed audiences, with speaking topics of general interest. The President, too, should minimize his publicized meetings with groups of men only. This will require a substantial re-orientation of the advance men and those who will manage Mrs. Nixon's activities.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ Memorandum by Barbara Franklin and Dr. Jean Spencer, October 1971, "Women-Memos," Box 28, Robert Finch Materials, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

That the campaign strategies and tactics required a "substantial re-orientation" indicates how entrenched gender-specific appeals had become. By incorporating the First Lady into transgendered campaign strategies designed to reach out to "mixed audiences" on topics of "general interest," Franklin and Spencer believed that they could appeal to values of the feminist movement, even though they did acknowledge Mrs. Nixon's effectiveness in gender-specific settings.

Perhaps because of Mrs. Nixon's effectiveness with women's groups, in Barbara Franklin's subsequent proposals for outreach to women voters, she did not strictly adhere to the transgendered tactics she had previously outlined. Franklin instead proposed numerous events for Pat Nixon directed at all-female audiences. However, many of these events were more 'feminist' in nature. For instance, she came up with a communications plan, the purpose of which was to convince the women of America that they should vote for Richard Nixon because he has done and can continue to do the most to advance their interests.²²⁰ In her plan, she proposed that Mrs. Nixon hold a reception for members of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service, as well as give a luncheon for all of her husband's female appointees. She planned for Mrs. Nixon to host a "Salute to Women" reception, commemorating Equal Opportunity for Women Week. For the anniversary of the first women's rights convention, Franklin proposed that Mrs. Nixon place a bust of Susan B. Anthony in the White House in order to

²²⁰ "Communications Plan" by Barbara Franklin, "Barbara Franklin Suggestions," Box 35, Anne Armstrong, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

“demonstrate that the President ‘cares about women.’”²²¹ In these instances, Mrs. Nixon is being sent out to relate to American women how well the President has looked after their interests. Thus, she is acting more like a delegate in terms of substantive representation. These proposed events also reveal that Franklin had reverted back to treating women as a specialized constituency, with the First Lady as the primary delegate to them. However, these events featuring Pat Nixon did serve to highlight the Administration’s attempts to integrate women more equally into the operations of government—as members of the Armed Services, as administration appointees, and as citizens, again providing evidence of a blend of transgendering and regendering.

Pat Nixon’s campaign activities were reflective of the Republican platform in 1972, which advocated ratifying the ERA, appointing women to prominent government positions, and providing equal pay for equal work, among other provisions.²²² At the national convention, Pat Nixon’s role was to promote the Party platform and present her husband’s record on women. She was a featured speaker at the “See How She Runs” breakfast, honoring all of the women attendees who were running for state and federal office.²²³ Also, the RNC’s Women’s Division hosted a brunch honoring the First Lady. More than 2,000 people, primarily women, attended, including Cabinet and congressional wives, women delegates and RNC members, and female Administration appointees. The

²²¹ Barbara Franklin to David Parker, May 16, 1972, “Presidential Schedule Proposals (BHF),” Box 40, Anne Armstrong Files, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

²²² “Republican Platform: A Better Future For All,” Box 13, Gwendolyn B. King Files, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

²²³ Constant Stuart to Mrs. Nixon, August 8, 1972, “Republican Convention,” Box 11, Susan Porter Files, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

theme of the brunch was “Women of Achievement” in American history. One feature of the program was a slide show depicting Mrs. Nixon’s travels to Africa, Peru, China, and Russia. The purpose of this tribute was to highlight Mrs. Nixon’s “activities which have given...the position of First Lady an added new dimension—that of a stateswoman.”²²⁴ The point of showcasing Mrs. Nixon’s role in foreign affairs was to portray her as a politically active woman to whom her husband had entrusted a substantive foreign policy role. By highlighting her activities as a stateswoman, the Nixon campaign was trying to portray the presidential couple’s marriage as a partnership. In other words, the Nixons were symbol makers in their efforts to re-present an ideal that would conform to the principles of women’s rights activists.

The rise of feminism had clearly shaped Pat Nixon’s 1972 campaign activities. As a symbolic representative, Mrs. Nixon was the first candidate’s wife to be portrayed as her husband’s political partner in a substantial way. As a substantive representative, she was sent out as a delegate to highlight her husband’s advancement of women’s interests. Though Nixon’s staff members initially indicated that they would initiate gender-neutral campaign events for Mrs. Nixon, she continued to appeal to women’s groups, but on topics in accord with feminist ideals, such as integrating women more equally into the workings of the federal government, thus illustrating a combination of transgendering and regendering. However, the 1972 campaign would prove to be the last in which

²²⁴ Fact Sheet: Brunch Honoring the First Lady, August 17, 1972, “Republican Convention,” Box 11, Susan Porter Files, SMOF, WHCH, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Republicans demonstrated a real eagerness to curry favor with feminists through the First Lady's role.

Just four years later in 1976, the Republican candidates' wives and their strategists demonstrated a reluctance to trumpet women's rights too loudly. Though the Republican and Democratic platforms both endorsed the ERA, divisions within the Republican Party over feminist issues were beginning to emerge. While the Democratic platform advocated abortion rights, the Republican platform recognized a division in their Party over the issue. Their platform resolved, "The Republican Party favors a continuance of the public dialogue on abortion and supports the efforts of those who seek a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the right to life for unborn citizens."²²⁵

Betty Ford, who became First Lady after Richard Nixon's resignation in August of 1974, was very supportive of women's rights. In the first few weeks of her husband's administration, Betty Ford voiced her support for abortion rights and stated that she would work toward ERA ratification.

While Betty Ford vocally supported women's rights during the 1976 primaries, during the general election, she had to temper her campaign rhetoric to accommodate the divisions emerging among Republican women. In the primaries, these divisions most prominently manifested themselves in the rhetoric of Betty Ford and Nancy Reagan, as Mrs. Reagan represented the anti-feminist forces emerging in the GOP.

²²⁵ Campaign Issues Book on Women's Issues, folder "Campaign of 1976—Campaign Issues Book on Women's Issues (1)," Box 7, Patricia Lindh and Jeanne Holm Files, Gerald R. Ford Library.

Nancy Reagan and Betty Ford took opposite positions on the ERA, reflecting their husbands' differing views. During the primary campaign, Nancy Reagan repeatedly stated that she supported her husband's view that the ERA "could lead to a lot of mischief." Mrs. Ford, on the other hand, reiterated her belief that only a constitutional amendment could guarantee equal rights to women.²²⁶ And regarding internal Republican divisions on the abortion issue, Constance Armitage, former president of the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW), said that seventy-five percent of the organization endorsed Ronald Reagan in the primary election. Explaining why, she said many agreed with Nancy Reagan's frequently stated position against abortion: "Nancy Reagan makes sense...she can't get away from the idea that this is destroying a life."²²⁷ Armitage's statement is indicative of a broader debate over descriptive representation that was occurring through the candidates' wives. Specifically, this debate concerned which wife better represented Republican beliefs about womanhood and women's issues.

The candidates' wives drew distinctions between themselves on other women's issues as well. For instance, when Betty Ford was asked whether there was one thing about her husband's political life that she would like to change, she replied, "Appoint a woman to the Supreme Court." But when Nancy Reagan was asked about whether she would try to secure presidential appointments for women, she stated, "I am sure my husband knows much better than I do who is

²²⁶ Press Release, UPI, May 4, 1976, folder "Betty Ford-Campaigning," Box 37, Shelia Weidenfeld Papers, Gerald R. Ford Library.

²²⁷ Press Clipping, "Distaff Vote for Reagan Claimed," by Dorothy Austin, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 24, 1976, folder "Betty Ford-Campaigning," Box 37, Sheila Weidenfeld Papers, Gerald R. Ford Library.

qualified and who is not qualified."²²⁸ In these instances, the candidates' wives were each trying to re-present diverging marital gender dynamics in order to appeal to certain constituencies. Betty Ford was attempting to come across as a political partner, while Nancy Reagan seemed to be framing herself as the deferential political spouse, although history would later reveal Mrs. Reagan as one of her husband's most important behind-the-scenes political confidantes.

Similarly, Betty Ford criticized Nancy Reagan's traditional view of a woman's role, saying, "I just think when Nancy met Ronnie, that was it as far as her own life was concerned....She fell apart at the seams."²²⁹ And Nancy Reagan did not shy away from playing on the negative public reaction that Mrs. Ford received from her controversial *60 Minutes* interview, in which she said that she would not be surprised if her daughter had an affair and that premarital sex might prevent divorce. In a speech to a women's Republican club in Michigan, Nancy Reagan criticized the "new morality" or breakdown of traditional moral standards that had overtaken young people, particularly a more permissive attitude toward premarital sexual relations. After her remarks, commentators immediately pointed out Mrs. Reagan's implicit criticism of Betty Ford's liberal social views.²³⁰ This statement further illustrates how the debate over the descriptive and substantive representation over womanhood and women's issues was being carried out through the candidates' wives.

²²⁸ Press Clipping, "Wouldn't Advise on Presidential Appointments, Mrs. Reagan Says," *The Indianapolis Star*, April 23, 1976, folder "4/30/76 Indiana," Box 24, Shelia Weidenfeld Papers, Gerald R. Ford Library.

²²⁹ Press Clipping, "Personalities," by Carla Hall, *The Washington Post*, August 23, 1976, folder "8/20-9/4/76 Vail, Colorado," Box 28, Shelia Weidenfeld Papers, Gerald R. Ford Library.

²³⁰ Press Clipping, "Conservatives Like Speech Criticizing 'New Morality': Nancy Reagan Disagrees with Betty Ford on Sex," by Robert Shogan, folder "President Ford Committee-5/76-11/76," Box 12, Susan Porter Files, Gerald R. Ford Library.

Many observers commented on how the "Betty-Nancy factor" was influencing votes of Republican women:

Betty Ford's radical views favoring abortion (The Supreme Court ruling was 'a great, great decision')...have made her the darling of the women's lib movement but is costing the President votes....In contrast to Mrs. Ford's political drag, the latest polls reveal that Nancy Reagan's campaign appearances for her husband have been a plus factor for him among Republican and independent voters.²³¹

Whether true or not, voters were ascribing the wives' views onto their husbands, since these women so frequently were the ones who represented women's issues during the campaign.

During the general election season, because of internal Party divisions and because the President's campaign staff was unsure whether Mrs. Ford's radical statements were hurting his poll numbers, Betty Ford's remarks on women's issues were noticeably circumscribed. For instance, before Mrs. Ford was to address the "Women of Achievement" brunch hosted by the influential NFRW at the convention, a background memo was circulated stating that each state in the NFRW had split half and half on whether to support the ERA.²³² As a result, her remarks just generally praised the work of the women in attendance and did not touch on any of the controversial issues dividing the audience.²³³ She also mentioned at another Republican women's luncheon, "I'll be speaking but I don't know as I'll be speaking on issues...I think I'll leave that to him."²³⁴ Here, Mrs.

²³¹ Paul Scott, "Betty Ford v. Nancy Reagan," *Manchester Union Leader*, January 27, 1976, "Betty Ford Campaigning," Box 37, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Gerald R. Ford Library.

²³² Memorandum, Unsigned, Undated, folder "National Federation of Republican Women, Kansas City, Missouri, August 17, 1976," Box 2, Frances Kaye Pullen Papers, Gerald R. Ford Library.

²³³ Speech Notes, Betty Ford to NFRW, August 17, 1976, folder "National Federation of Republican Women, Kansas City, Missouri, August 17, 1976," Box 2, Frances Kaye Pullen Papers, Gerald R. Ford Library.

²³⁴ Press Release, "Betty Ford to Speak in Campaign," UPI, January 12, 1976, folder "Betty Ford—Campaigning," Box 37, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Gerald R. Ford Library.

Ford was trying to re-present herself as a deferential political helpmate, a reversal of her previous efforts in symbol making.

Though her policy remarks were toned down, Mrs. Ford continued to make women-focused public appearances. For instance, Betty Ford's symbolic power was used to bolster the Women for President Ford campaign organization at the Minnesota State Republican Convention. Elly Peterson, deputy chairman of President Ford's campaign committee wrote her,

We have had a difficult time getting the proper PR on Women for President Ford. Therefore, you will be signing up in Minneapolis as their No. 1 signature and hopefully we can get some press on this. It would be nice to mention in your speech later how pleased you are to have Women for President Ford off the ground-how supportive he is, etc.²³⁵

Mrs. Ford was the featured speaker at the Minnesota convention, but her staff warned her not to mention the Women for President Ford organization in her remarks to the entire convention, in order to avoid giving the delegates the impression that she was a liberal feminist. One of her staffers wrote, "Since the group sponsoring the Women for Ford in Minnesota is the Feminist Caucus, a liberal organization, you probably would not want to mention this signing up in your remarks. There will no doubt be press attention to the sign up anyway, and the convention appearance is more oriented toward conservatives."²³⁶ By strategizing about how to tailor Mrs. Ford's remarks to certain groups, the campaign aide was carefully trying to craft a message about what kind of woman the First Lady descriptively represents. To the Minnesota State Republican

²³⁵ Memorandum, Elly Peterson to Mrs. Ford, Undated, folder "6/25/76 St. Paul Minnesota—Republican State Convention," Box 26, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Gerald R. Ford Library.

²³⁶ Addendum to Memorandum, Elly Peterson to Mrs. Ford, Undated, folder "Minnesota GOP Convention, Minneapolis, MN, 6/25/76, Box 1, Frances Kaye Pullen Files, Gerald R. Ford Library.

Convention, she wanted Mrs. Ford to descriptively represent conservative Republican women by avoiding associating herself with feminist organizations.

Yet, there were others among the President's campaign staff who regarded Mrs. Ford's more liberated side as an asset. For the New Hampshire primary, Stuart Spencer, a Ford campaign manager, wanted her to make an independent trip to the state because of her immense symbolic power. He wanted her "to do a woman's luncheon and a couple of drop-bys at nursing homes and the like."²³⁷ A newspaper article substantiated what Spencer had been trying to impress upon his staff, that Mrs. Ford's candor was actually helpful in some circles. The article noted how many in the public were praising Mrs. Ford's willingness to speak honestly to the American public on certain issues, even though many disagreed with her stances on them. To those who admired Mrs. Ford's outspokenness, the article portrayed Nancy Reagan as the one who was a liability to her husband's campaign, for saying she would never disagree with her husband publicly.²³⁸

²³⁷ Memorandum, Terry O'Donnell to Jerry Jones, February 12, 1976, folder "Ford, Betty 12/10/75-2/25/76," Box 4, PP5-1, WHCF, Gerald R. Ford Library.

²³⁸ Press Clipping, "Betty Ford Out Front with Most Everyone," by Mary McGrory, Undated, folder "Ford, Betty 12/10/75-2/25/76," Box 4, PP5-1, WHCF, Gerald R. Ford Library.



The Washington Star, February 11, 1976, folder "Betty Ford Campaigning," Box 37, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Gerald R. Ford Library.

In the general election, Betty Ford faced Rosalynn Carter, the Democratic candidate for First Lady. Unlike the Republican Party which was beginning to show a split on women's rights, the Democrats were solidly behind feminism in the late 1970s. Thus, it was imperative that the Democratic candidate's wife embody feminist principles.

During the 1976 general election, Rosalynn Carter faced many questions about Betty Ford's outspokenness. Mrs. Carter's strategy for handling these inquiries was to emphasize that she and Betty Ford were very different women. But she would always be careful to note that they were alike because they both had always worked and that Mrs. Carter would continue to work in the White House and influence her husband's political decisions.²³⁹ By phrasing her responses in this manner, she could appeal to supporters of women's rights, while implying that she did not agree with Betty Ford's *60 Minutes* radical statements.

²³⁹ Memorandum, Unsigned to Rosalynn Carter, Undated, folder "Speech Notes, Campaign 1976," Box 1, Mary Finch Hoyt Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

Campaign staffers advised Rosalynn Carter that at every opportunity she should mention how she was fully involved in campaign strategy meetings. They told her, "This is a good woman's issue. You cannot overstress that you are independent, yet, of course, plugged into the whole campaign at the highest level—and that the decision makers include you and your own staff."²⁴⁰ Here, the campaign staffer is acknowledging that the gender role modeling the First Lady exhibits is explicitly a woman's issue. This also shows that, in terms of symbolic representation, the campaign was trying to re-present Rosalynn Carter as an independent female, yet also as a wife who was invested in her husband's career—but on a politically meaningful level. The campaign even released a statement by Mrs. Carter focusing on what she would do and what she would like to see her husband do on behalf of mental health policy if he were elected.²⁴¹ This also served to re-present Rosalynn Carter in the traditionally masculine role of policy advisor to the President, thus furthering transgendered campaign roles.

As previously noted, abortion was a politically salient issue in the 1976 campaign and Rosalynn Carter was implicated in this debate. The campaign had to carefully strategize about how Mrs. Carter would field questions on abortion. Mrs. Carter said that abortion was the number one issue she was asked about on the campaign trail and that at almost every stop, reception, rally or fundraiser, someone would question her on the issue. At a stop in Sacramento, California, she became so exasperated that she exclaimed, "I have told you all I know about

²⁴⁰ Memorandum, Unsigned to Rosalynn Carter, Undated, folder "Speech Notes, Campaign 1976," Box 1, Mary Finch Hoyt Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

²⁴¹ Press Release, Jimmy Carter / Walter Mondale campaign, October 15, 1976, folder "President's Commission on Mental Health," Box 1, Mary Finch Hoyt Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

abortion. Just because Jimmy is a candidate for president, I don't know all the answers."²⁴² A major issue during the campaign was the Hyde amendment, which denied the use of Medicaid funds for abortions. The campaign's strategy for Rosalynn answering questions about the Hyde amendment was to say that Governor Carter had always drawn a distinction between his personal views and his duty as a public official to carry out the law handed down by the Supreme Court.²⁴³ Here, Mrs. Carter appears to be taking on the delegate form of substantive representation, as she is representing to the public her husband's view on an issue of concern to women.

Another pertinent issue about which reporters asked Mrs. Carter was the Displaced Homemakers Bill pending before the U.S. Congress. The bill was designed to assist middle-aged, divorced, or widowed women, who had no marketable skills because they spent their adult lives as housewives. The bill would establish funding to set up centers to help them with job training and with generally adjusting to their changing circumstances. Mrs. Carter's pre-formulated response was to say that full-time homemakers are probably the most discriminated-against group in our society in terms of the law and that the bill does not do enough to protect them.²⁴⁴ Here, Rosalynn Carter seems like a trustee in terms of substantive representation, advocating for and guarding the welfare of

²⁴² Press Clipping, "Abortion Topic Exasperates Mrs. Carter," by Susan Sward, *St. Louis Slate-Democrat*, September 16, 1976, folder "Presidential Campaign Material, August-September 1976," Box 53, Mary Finch Hoyt Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

²⁴³ Memorandum, Eleanor Holmes Norton to Rosalynn Carter, Undated, folder "Speech Notes Campaign 1976," Box 1, Mary Finch Hoyt, Jimmy Carter Library.

²⁴⁴ Memorandum, Helen Dougherty to Rosalynn Carter, August 26, 1976, folder "Speech Notes, Campaign 1976," Box 1, Mary Finch Hoyt Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

women who were impeded from getting ahead in the marketplace because of their assumption of traditional gender roles.

In the late 1970s, conservative forces were on their way to derailing the ERA's ratification. When in 1980 the board of the National Organization for Women (NOW) announced they would oppose President Carter's re-nomination because he had not done enough to get the ERA ratified, it was his wife who was dispatched to defend his record. She said, "I think we haven't passed it because people don't understand it and because there has been so much distortion about what it will do." She also highlighted that her husband had appointed more women to top jobs in the federal government than any other President. And she criticized his challenger for the Democratic nomination, Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), for discovering women's issues only "because it was politically expedient to appeal to women's groups who carry large blocs of votes."²⁴⁵ Here, it seems that Mrs. Carter had been sent out as a delegate in terms of substantive representation to defend her husband's record on the ERA. This has implications for gender power, as it was her sex that endowed her with the authority to speak on this woman's issue.

As the above statements suggest, Rosalynn Carter was a very strong advocate for women's rights throughout the Carter Administration. And Sarah Weddington, White House advisor on women's issues, recognized that Mrs. Carter could use her record to serve as a spokesperson for women's rights during the 1980 campaign. Weddington had Mrs. Carter's advisor Kathy Cade meet with

²⁴⁵ Press Clipping, "Board of NOW to Oppose Carter, Charging Lag on Women's Issues," by Adam Clymer, *The New York Times*, December 10, 1979, folder "Women's Issues [1]," Box 59, Mary Finch Hoyt Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

the DNC Women's Caucus to tell them what Mrs. Carter was doing to promote the President's accomplishments for women. She asked the DNC Women's Caucus for help in educating people about "our outstanding accomplishments in this area."²⁴⁶ The campaign believed that the First Lady's 'acting for' women as trustee was central to the entire Administration's record on women's concerns.

The DNC Women's Division also featured Mrs. Carter in their fundraising plan for the 1980 election. Gretta DeWald, Director of the DNC Women's Division, said that she wanted to "bring Democratic women into full political participation...for all aspects of party involvement, including the often unpleasant task of fundraising." To accomplish this, she proposed formulating the "First Lady's Council." The First Lady's Council would be composed of about twelve women from across the country, who would come to Washington to meet with Mrs. Carter for lunch, at which time they would each pledge to raise \$25,000.²⁴⁷ Rosalynn Carter and her staff heartily supported the idea.²⁴⁸ Here again, the First Lady is serving as the channel through which to integrate women more fully into partisan fundraising, an area in which their participation was seemingly lagging, according to DeWald. However, this endeavor also reveals the blend of transgendering and regendering occurring through the First Lady's form of substantive representation. Encouraging women to become active participants within a political area in which they did not previously belong—as fundraising

²⁴⁶ Memorandum, Kathy Cade to Rosalynn Carter, January 18, 1980, folder "Inner-Office Memos-1980 [1]," Box 23, Kathy Cade Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

²⁴⁷ Memorandum, Gretta DeWald, "1979-1980... Women's Division... Democratic National Committee... Full Participation... Equal Responsibility... New Leadership," Undated, folder "Women-Democratic National Committee," Box 46, Kathy Cade Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

²⁴⁸ Memorandum, Kathy Cade to Rosalynn Carter, January 24, 1979, folder "Women-Democratic National Committee," Box 46, Kathy Cade Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

presupposes aggressiveness and financial savvy, which are traditionally masculine characteristics—further transgendered political practices. But bringing women into fundraising on a rather limited basis and with gender-specific associations—through the First Lady's position—reinforces regendered roles.

Though First Ladies Nixon, Ford, and Carter's campaign roles did occasionally further regendered political practices, this era would prove to be the most significant in which transgendering occurred through the First Lady's representative roles, both symbolically and substantively. Symbolically, there was a strong push to re-present presidential marriages as equal partnerships. Substantively, the First Ladies highlighted their administrations' efforts to treat women on an equal level with men, illustrating the influence of the feminist movement on the wives' activities.

1980 and Beyond: The Family Values Era

By 1980, the anti-feminist forces that had been germinating within the Republican Party finally predominated, and the Democratic Party's reputation as a bastion for feminists was firmly established. One corollary of the parties' differing stances on women's issues was the implication for partisan support of diverging gender roles. That is, because of its opposition to the ERA and abortion, Republicans seemed to support traditional roles for women, which in turn put Democrats on the defensive for being anti-family values.²⁴⁹ As this section illustrates, these changing political ideologies ushered in an era in which

²⁴⁹ Christina Wolbrecht, *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 47-48.

regendering through the First Lady's representative role was overt, purposive and premeditated.

This section examines the campaign roles of candidates' wives from the 1980s through the present. In the 1980s and 1990s, family values, which ran contrary to feminist values, were at the center of electoral politics. In terms of symbolic representation, Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush worked to re-present the ideal of the traditional marriage relationship, which corresponded with conservative principles. These conservative forces proved to be an obstacle for Hillary Clinton, who was portrayed as her husband's political partner in the campaign. In terms of substantive representation, Barbara Bush and Nancy Reagan avoided women-focused policies, nor did Hillary Clinton trumpet them too loudly, as she was under severe attack by family values forces. Laura Bush, on the other hand, has spoken out quite extensively on issues relevant to women. While still centered on family values, her campaign role reveals that the Republican Party may be shifting away from its anti-feminist positions of the 1980s and 1990s.

As she did in the 1976 primary, Nancy Reagan took on the role of a traditional helpmate and worked to re-present the family values ideals of the Republican Party. The nation's next President and First Lady, George and Barbara Bush, also re-presented the ideal of the traditional marriage. Barbara Bush, who also embodied the deferential, traditional political helpmate, was important to the Republicans' 1992 campaign strategy especially as a contrast to Hillary Clinton.

By 1992, "the family values debate was front and center in American political discourse."²⁵⁰ Republicans and social conservatives did not promote non-traditional women's roles. As a result, "Republicans were especially critical of Hillary Clinton as the quintessential liberated woman, failing in her duty to her family and advocating antifamily public policies..."²⁵¹ Overall, in the 1992 campaign, the candidates' wives mirrored the partisan divide over women's issues and the broader 'values' message that separated the two parties.

Hillary Clinton's background only furthered her anti-family image. She had been educated at Wellesley and then Yale Law School. Then, she moved to Arkansas and married Bill Clinton and had one daughter, Chelsea, along with a very lucrative career at the Rose Law Firm in Little Rock. From the beginning of Bill Clinton's political career, he and Hillary truly were partners. As the First Lady of Arkansas, Mrs. Clinton had an active public policy role in her husband's administration. So, when she ran for First Lady of the United States, her expectations were that she would have a similar policy role in this national office.

Hillary Clinton entered the general election campaign on the defensive. Her role in the general election was circumscribed because of three widely derided remarks made during the primaries. The first was Bill Clinton's statement in New Hampshire that their new campaign slogan would be "buy one, get one free," implying that Hillary would be an equal partner in his administration. The second remark Hillary Clinton made during a *60 Minutes* interview in January: "I'm not sitting here, some little woman standing by my man like Tammy

²⁵⁰ Wolbrecht, *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change*, 62.

²⁵¹ Wolbrecht, *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change*, 64-65.

Wynette.” Then in March, she said to a reporter, “I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas, but what I decided to do was fulfill my profession...”²⁵² All three comments were widely circulated in the media and cemented her image as opposed to playing the role of traditional homemaker and political helpmate.

Hillary Clinton would later remark on how her role in the campaign was reflective of changing views on women’s roles:

While Bill talked about social change, I embodied it. I had my own opinions, interests, and profession...I represented a fundamental change in the way women functioned in our society....I was called a ‘Rorschach test’ for the American public, and it was an apt way of conveying the varied and extreme reactions I provoked....I was being labeled and categorized....because I had turned into a symbol for women of my generation. That’s why everything I said or did—and even what I wore—became a hot button for debate.²⁵³

Yet, women’s roles had been undergoing changes for several decades. It is important to remember that while candidates’ wives of the 1960s and 1970s embraced second wave gender ideals, they were not maligned to the extent Hillary Clinton was. The difference in 1992 was the polarization of the parties over family values and feminism. In the above statement, Hillary Clinton acknowledges that she was a symbolic representative. However, it is clear that in the 1992 campaign, she was not serving as a symbol maker. Rather, in 1992, Hillary Clinton seemed to have very little control over what she symbolized, as her symbolic representation of feminist values was established for her by both the media and conservative forces.

²⁵² Clinton, *Living History*, 105, 07, 09.

²⁵³ Clinton, *Living History*, 110.

At the Republican convention, Pat Buchanan railed against the Democratic Party and Bill and Hillary Clinton for destroying the moral fiber of America:

"There is a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war....Radical feminism [is] the agenda Clinton & Clinton would impose on America—abortion on demand, a litmus test for the Supreme Court...women in combat."²⁵⁴ President George H.W. Bush even referenced Hillary Clinton's previous legal writings when attacking the Democrats as being lax on family values, saying that they "even encourage kids to hire lawyers and haul their parents into court." Hillary Clinton even acknowledged, "I think...part of their strategy about me is to say that the work I have done for more than twenty years on children's issues is somehow out of the mainstream or undermining family values."²⁵⁵ This further illustrates how, though Hillary Clinton was a symbolic representative with gendered implications, she exercised very little power through this role.

Hillary Clinton later observed that because of her feminist-toned remarks during the primaries, she had to be careful where she stepped.²⁵⁶ During the general election, she did not tout any policy, program, or accomplishment that possessed anti-family values. Her only regular policy statement during the rest of the campaign was, "I want to be a voice for children in the White House."²⁵⁷ So, it seemed that to counteract the qualities she evoked as a symbolic representative,

²⁵⁴ Jo Freeman, "Feminism V. Family Values: Women and the 1992 Democratic and Republican Conventions," *PS: Political Science and Politics* (1993): 27.

²⁵⁵ Maralee Schwartz, "Hillary Gets on GOP 'Case,'" *The Washington Post*, August 1, 1992.

²⁵⁶ Clinton, *Living History*, 111.

²⁵⁷ Alessandra Stanley, "A Softer Image for Hillary Clinton," *The New York Times*, July 13, 1992.

she engaged in purposeful regendering by associating herself with children's issues, which lie within the traditionally feminine domain.

At the same time Republicans were attempting to portray Hillary Clinton as the quintessential liberated woman, Party strategists used Barbara Bush, a symbol of self-sacrificing traditional motherhood, to win over mainstream American voters. Mrs. Bush's image was that of a kindly grandmother, who forfeited a career to raise her children, and therefore was the ideal person to tout the Republican 'family values' mantra. Her poll numbers far exceeded the President's, thus she was viewed by strategists as a big asset.

Barbara Bush was the featured speaker at the Republican convention on the evening deemed 'family values night.' As the newspapers reported the event, "President Bush has said his campaign is going to be about 'family values,' and if the message has not been clear enough, it will be at the Republican National Convention. The ultimate symbol in family values—Barbara Bush—will deliver a prime-time address...."²⁵⁸ The content of her speech was centered on the 'family values' theme, and she also touted her husband's character, noting that he is "the strongest, the most decent, the most caring, the wisest...man I know." Here again, Barbara Bush is explicitly identified as a symbol with gendered implications. Unlike Hillary Clinton, Mrs. Bush was able to serve as a symbol maker and therefore exercise power through this role. However, the traditional gender roles she both symbolized and advocated further reveal how this era witnessed purposeful regendering through the First Lady's representative role.

²⁵⁸ Maralee Schwartz and Howard Kurtz, "Exemplar of 'Family Values' to Address GOP Convention," *The Washington Post*, July 30, 1992.

The Republicans left it to Second Lady Marilyn Quayle to directly attack feminism at the convention. She stated that the lesson of the social revolution of the 1960s was that "women do not wish to be liberated from their essential natures as women." And that even during the height of the women's movement, "Not everyone believed that the family was so oppressive that women could only thrive apart from it." In their speeches, both Mrs. Quayle and Mrs. Bush paid homage to women who sacrificed for their families. Barbara Bush reassured women who may have been in doubt of their decision to sacrifice their own ambition, saying "You are doing the right thing, and God bless you for it."²⁵⁹ By explicitly sanctioning the virtue of traditional women's roles, Barbara Bush and Marilyn Quayle were engaging in overt regendering.

On the campaign trail, Barbara Bush took several bus trips through the swing states with the President's female relatives. As she described these stops,

We would each give a short talk and then work the crowd. I spoke first, introducing Nan, who spoke as a sister and then introduced Margaret, who spoke as a teacher and daughter-in-law and then introduced Doro, who spoke as a daughter and then introduced Noelle, the cleanup hitter, who spoke as a granddaughter.²⁶⁰

The purpose of the female relatives' trips were obviously to humanize President Bush, display his personal side, and, of course, to show off his family values. Additionally, it is significant that Barbara Bush describes each speaker according to her feminine relational identity to the President. This implies that each was framing her remarks according to her gender identity, and, by extension, accentuating the President's own masculinity.

²⁵⁹ David Broder and Ruth Marcus, "Bush Nominated for 'Fight of Our Life,'" *The Washington Post*, August 19, 1992.

²⁶⁰ Barbara Bush, *Barbara Bush: A Memoir* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), 490.

George H.W. and Barbara Bush were quite different in their approach to gender politics than George W. and Laura Bush. By the 2000 election, the Republican Party, under the leadership of George W. Bush, seemed to have altered its orientation toward women. Whereas Presidents Reagan and Bush I shied away from championing women's rights, George W. and Laura Bush did not. Unlike Hillary Clinton, Laura Bush initially seemed very unthreatening to the public. And so she was able to get away with championing women's issues in a way that Hillary Clinton was not. Laura Bush was the demure former Texas librarian and schoolteacher who had given up her career as soon as she married George W. Bush. While First Lady of Texas, she promoted non-controversial causes such as literacy, and she gave the impression that she would treat the office of First Lady of the United States more like Barbara Bush than Hillary Clinton.

Laura Bush's campaign activities, however, indicated that she would not emulate her mother-in-law in her First Lady duties. In the 2000 and 2004 campaigns, George W. Bush employed the slogan "W Stands for Women" to capture the support of female voters. Laura Bush was frequently the featured speaker at "W Stands for Women" rallies. At these female-focused rallies, as well as at mix-gendered events, Laura Bush used a standard stump speech. Stump speeches "are targeted to specific groups and put in language that the groups understands; frequently code words are used to generate a particular response...Groups get only those positions and priorities which the campaign has determined to be the most in accord with their interests and beliefs."²⁶¹ Laura

²⁶¹ Stephen J. Wayne, *The Road to the White House, 2000* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 214-15.

Bush, in her stump speeches, made issue-based appeals regarding economic security, health care, and national security, the issues women voters ranked most important,²⁶² couching her remarks in language women could relate to.

For instance, when Laura Bush would praise the increased economic security brought about by her husband's tax relief plan, she would also invoke the economic gains women have received from this program:

We want our economy to be strong and for all women to have the opportunity to work if they want to...The President's tax relief plan is putting more money into the hands of millions of people across America....More than 80 million women will save an average of nearly \$1,900 each in taxes this year....Over one-and-a-half million new jobs have been created since last July 2003..... Because of the President's sound economic policies the economy is strong and getting stronger.²⁶³

Similarly, she would regularly use ordinary female citizens as examples in defending George W. Bush's economic record. In each town she visited, she would recognize a female entrepreneur and relate how that woman's business had grown because of husband's economic policies. Oftentimes, she would invoke the example of Carol Schneider from Grafton, Wisconsin. Laura Bush would describe how Carol struggled to start a business, while simultaneously attending community college and raising three young children. She would say, "Carol refused to give up. Today, she...leads a company worth \$36 million. Carol told me the economy is doing great, and it's because President Bush's policies allow people to keep more of their own money to spend how they choose."²⁶⁴ Another consistent refrain in her stump speeches was that when high school graduates go

²⁶² Susan Carroll, "Women Voters and the Gender Gap," <http://apsanet.org/content_5270.cfm> (10/23/2005).

²⁶³ Laura Bush, "Mrs. Bush's Remarks at 'W Stands for Women' Event in St. Louis, MO," August 17, 2004, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/08/20040817-10.html>> (10/23/2005).

²⁶⁴ Laura Bush, "Mrs. Bush's Remarks at Victory 2004 Rally in Wausau, Wisconsin," September 23, 2004, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/09/20040923-12.html>> (10/23/2005).

on to work, "I'm proud to say that a lot of them will go to work for a woman boss. Ten million American women own their own businesses, and this sisterhood just keeps growing. In fact, women are starting small businesses at twice the rate of men in the United States."²⁶⁵ By invoking the language of women's "sisterhood" and expressing pride in women's outpacing men in business, Laura Bush seems to closer to First Ladies of the feminist, not family values, era.

In the area of health care, one of President Bush's main campaign promises was to reform the legal system's handling of medical malpractice lawsuits. When Laura Bush discussed this legal reform, she would make this relevant to women by describing how the current system could ruin women's relationships with their obstetrician/gynecologists.

President Bush also knows that reliable health care is vital to every family's economic security....And because frivolous lawsuits raised the cost of health care, the President wants to reform the medical liability system. The growing crisis of medical liability is a particular concern to women. Obstetricians have some of the highest liability premiums of all. And as their rates go up, doctors are retiring or relocating because they can't afford to practice medicine. Women who've spent years building a trusting relationship with their OB/GYN are left searching for a new doctor, sometimes while they wait for the arrival of a new baby. We need medical liability reform.²⁶⁶

Laura Bush would often cite the example of Erin Zezzo, a woman she met while campaigning in the battleground state of Pennsylvania. She would say, "Erin had a trusting relationship with her OB/GYN, who had delivered her first two children. Into her third pregnancy, Erin's doctor stopped delivering babies, because he could not longer afford the high premiums of his medical liability

²⁶⁵ Laura Bush, "Mrs. Bush's Remarks at Victory '04 Rally in Lebanon, New Hampshire," October 21, 2004, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/10/20041021-17.html>> (10/23/2005).

²⁶⁶ Laura Bush, "Mrs. Bush's Remarks at 'W Stands for Women' Event in St. Louis, MO," August 17, 2004, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/08/20040817-10.html>> (10/23/2005).

insurance. Erin had to find a new doctor when she was six months pregnant.”²⁶⁷ In these instances, Laura Bush seems like a delegate in her ‘acting for’ women, as she is being sent out to convey to women how her husband is looking after their interests.

During the 2004 election, George W. Bush was put on the defensive for being too quick to involve the U.S. in wars in the Middle East. During the first Bush Administration, Laura Bush had undertaken the cause of liberation for Middle Eastern women, particularly in Afghanistan. Just as President Bush justified the wars by stressing the new freedoms of millions of Middle Easterners, Laura Bush justified the Administration’s military intervention by highlighting the liberation of women that had been achieved as a result of her husband’s foreign policy:

After years of being treated as virtual prisoners in their homes by the Taliban, the women of Afghanistan are now able to leave their houses without a male escort. And after being denied education, even the chance to learn to read, the little girls in Afghanistan are now in school. More than 10 million Afghan citizens have registered to vote in this fall’s presidential election, and more than 40 percent of that number are women.²⁶⁸

Here again, Laura Bush resembles a delegate in her ‘acting for’ women.

Finally, in her stump speeches, to show how her husband respected women as professionals, Laura Bush frequently championed her husband’s record on the appointment of women to federal offices.

As we look around the world, we can see how important women are to building a democracy and how fortunate we are in the United States that women are empowered. I’m proud that in my husband’s administration, there are more women

²⁶⁷ Laura Bush, “Mrs. Bush’s Remarks at Victory ’04 Rally in Primus, Pennsylvania,” October 19, 2004, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/10/20041019-18.html>> (10/26/2005).

²⁶⁸ Laura Bush, “Mrs. Bush’s Remarks at BC ’04 ‘W Stands for Women Rally in Lewiston, Maine,” September 10, 2004, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/09/20040910-17.html>> (10/23/2005).

in senior positions than in any other presidential administration in history. Dr. Condoleezza Rice advises the President on foreign policy and Margaret Spellings is in charge of domestic policy. That means in the White House, women are in charge of everything abroad and everything at home. And that sounds just about right to me.²⁶⁹

As indicated by this statement, as well as her previously cited ones, Laura Bush's campaign role cannot be easily equated with Barbara Bush, Nancy Reagan, or Hillary Clinton's, all of whom arguably purposefully attempted to further regendered campaign roles. In terms of symbolic representation, Barbara Bush and Nancy Reagan worked to re-present the ideal of the traditional marriage relationship, which corresponded with conservative principles. There is also evidence that Hillary Clinton tried to do this after she came under attack from the family values forces. Laura Bush's status as a symbolic representative is questionable, however. While she certainly possessed the image of the traditional helpmate, she did not seem to try to serve as a symbol maker by portraying any particular gender dynamic in her marriage. In terms of substantive representation within the campaign, Barbara Bush and Nancy Reagan avoided advocating women-focused policies, nor did Hillary Clinton promote them too loudly. However, Laura Bush 'acting for' women as a delegate championed her husband's accomplishments on women's issues, while frequently invoking feminist phraseology. Laura Bush's campaign rhetoric demonstrates that the Republican Party may be in the process of partially trying to shed its anti-feminist image of the 1980s and 1990s and shifting how it substantively represents women.

²⁶⁹ Laura Bush, "'Mrs. Bush's Remarks at BC '04 'W Stands for Women Rally in Lewiston, Maine,'" September 10, 2004, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/09/20040910-17.html>> (10/23/2005).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how candidates' wives from 1920 through the present have served as substantive and symbolic representatives for women. As trustees, they have looked after the civic interests of female voters. As delegates, they have promoted their husbands' women-centered policies and achievements. As symbolic representatives or symbol makers, they have represented certain ideals regarding the gender dynamics of their marital relationships to the public. At various times, in changing instances, and to different degrees, the wives' representative roles have furthered a blend of transgendering and regendering. The character of their representative roles and the related gendered implications have changed along with the rise and fall of women's movements and their corresponding ideologies.

The wives' representation of women in the electoral process was similar from Florence Harding to Mamie Eisenhower. Substantively, as delegates, these wives rarely promoted their husbands' policy goals or accomplishments related to women's issues, as this would have been far out of accord with women's social status during this era. However, as trustees, they made sure women were not overlooked by and actually drawn into the democratic process through getting them interested in politics and encouraging them to exercise their relatively new right to vote. In one way, this can be seen as transgendering, as they were trying to encourage women to act within electoral politics, a previously masculine realm. However, sometimes the way they went about encouraging women to do this solidified traditional gender roles. For example, Mamie Eisenhower's campaign

train meetings with women were intended to active their interest in politics, but her conversations with them about mothering and other feminine topics unrelated to politics furthered regendering in the electoral realm. In terms of symbolic representation, the wives' main jobs were to exhibit the familial sides of the candidates, showing them to be good husbands and family men. This is a relatively clear example of regendering because, as symbol makers, they regularly highlighted their own traditionally feminine qualities while drawing attention to the candidate's masculinity.

Beginning in the 1960s, the government started to pay more attention to issues of direct concern to women. This was reflected in Jacqueline Kennedy and Lady Bird Johnson's campaign roles. Their 'acting for' women as trustees in terms of substantive representation was particularly remarkable, as this was the first era in which candidates' wives made federal policies and programs directly relevant to women. They continued the work of earlier First Ladies in reaching out to women voters and tying them into the electoral process. Again, on this level, they were contributing to transgendered political roles, as they were trying to get women to participate in the electoral realm on a policy level. However, their methods of appeal oftentimes related policy and participation to women's traditional gender roles, contributing to regendering within the campaign. As symbol makers, all three women were careful to come across as feminine, but not overtly feminist. They did not often attempt to portray their marriages as equal partnerships but did frequently draw attention to their roles as wives and mothers.

During the height of the feminist movement, Republican wives Pat Nixon and Betty Ford and Democratic wife Rosalynn Carter assumed similar campaign roles. In the 1970s, there was a bi-partisan consensus in strong support of feminist policies and principles. As a result, in terms of symbolic representation, all three of these wives attempted to re-present the ideal of equality in their marriage relationships in order to appeal to the newly powerful political force of feminism. They also 'acted for' women as trustees and delegates. As delegates, they were dispatched to tout their husbands' records on women's appointments and women's issues. As trustees, they also spoke out in their own voices on principles of equality and women's rights. As a result, transgendering through the candidates' wives representative role is evident in this era to a greater degree than in any other.

The 1980 election ushered in the family values era, as well as an era of purposive regendering through the candidates' wives representative roles. As symbolic representatives, these women made an overt effort to come across as traditional and submissive wives. Even Hillary Clinton did this to an extent after she came under attack from family values forces. Substantively, they did not tout women-centered policies, as had the First Ladies of the 1960s and 1970s. The exception here is Laura Bush. Mrs. Bush actually more closely resembles Lady Bird Johnson in her campaign roles than Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, or Hillary Clinton. While coming across as feminine, Laura Bush addressed women as a specific constituency, making her husband's policies relevant to them and touting his accomplishments on issues about which women were particularly concerned.

Laura Bush's campaign role indicates that the Republican Party may be entering a new era concerning how it represents women.

As the next chapter will show, the way the electoral system operates, and the wife's role within these operations, is reflected in the character of the presidency. One upshot of an electoral system and executive office influenced by the plebiscitary model of campaigning is presidential authority based on "an informal relationship with the people."²⁷⁰ In the modern era, the reelection of incumbent presidents depends upon how well they maintain this relationship. As in campaigns, Presidents' wives as substantive representatives have helped them maintain personal ties to the people, and have been particularly important in liaising with female constituents. The representative function within and evolution of the First Lady's public liaison role is examined in Chapter Two.

²⁷⁰ Ceaser, *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development*, 258.

~Chapter Two~

The First Liaison: Maintaining White House Ties to Women

After the campaign has ended, the elected President must make an effort to stay in the good graces of the groups that lent support to the ticket, as well as other influential constituencies that could impact the President's reelection and the Administration's ability to enact its program. Under the plebiscitary presidency, as in elections, the Chief Executive must exercise 'popular leadership' or attempt to carve out mass constituencies by making personal appeals.²⁷¹ In the modern presidency, national executives can no longer maintain a representational distance from the masses, as they could in the traditional era.²⁷² Because the President has taken on the task of popular leadership, various mass constituencies now look to the President to directly represent their interests. As presidential scholar John Hart notes, because of the increasingly burdensome demands of interest groups for representation in the White House, "outreach" has become one of the principal concerns of the contemporary White House staff.²⁷³ Since the President cannot perform the outreach function alone, he has used other members of the Executive Branch as surrogate representatives.

This chapter argues that, even though scholars have not generally recognized her as such, serving as a public liaison to women has been one of the

²⁷¹ Ceaser, *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development*, 220.

²⁷² Gregg II, *The Presidential Republic: Executive Representation and Deliberative Democracy*, 126.

²⁷³ Hart, *The Presidential Branch*, 110.

First Lady's most important functions within the modern presidency. Recognizing that other institutions within the Executive Branch have been formally established for women's outreach, this chapter explores the First Lady's collaborative working relationships with such offices. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to answer the question, under what conditions have First Ladies initiated or solely undertaken the liaison role? I argue that the absence of a formalized women's outreach office and presidential partisan ideologies can explain First Ladies' leadership in women's outreach. That is, when another formalized women's affairs office is not connected to the Executive Branch, it falls to the First Lady, as a prominent feminized space within the presidency, to handle women's outreach. And partisan ideology as related to women's rights also has informed the extent to which and ways in which First Ladies have reached out to women.

As noted above, the First Lady has not been the only White House entity to conduct outreach. As John Burke states, "To manage relationships with the political environment presidents have increasingly established special channels of influence for important constituent groups."²⁷⁴ One of these channels has been the Office of Public Liaison. Richard Nixon created this institution in 1970, "as the organizational home within the White House staff for the increasing number of aides who served as conduits to particular groups."²⁷⁵ Within the Office of Public Liaison, staffers are matched with diverse client groups, such as consumers, labor, African Americans, Hispanics, different religious faiths, the elderly, and

²⁷⁴ John P. Burke, *The Institutional Presidency* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 34.

²⁷⁵ Burke, *The Institutional Presidency*, 35.

women.²⁷⁶ However, the Office of Public Liaison has not been the only channel of influence with specific constituencies. Historically, another critical link between the President and his constituents has been the political party. In the early to mid twentieth century, before the establishment of the Office of Public Liaison, the parties had Colored Voters Divisions and Women's Divisions, as well as separate divisions for nationalities, labor, and agriculture.²⁷⁷ This chapter specifically concerns outreach to women, and Table I.1 in the introductory chapter delineates the specific institutions, as well as their leaders, that were formally charged with women's outreach and initiatives from 1920 to the present. Though the First Lady's post has not been officially connected to the Office of Public Liaison or the political parties' Women's Divisions, a consistent pattern of informal working relationships has developed between the First Lady and these separate institutions.

This chapter is structured around the historical periods in which First Ladies either worked with specific public liaison institutions or assumed the primary leadership of this task. This analysis also incorporates how the women's movement shaped the changing contours of her liaison role during these historical periods. From 1920 through 1933, based on the available historical record, it seems as though these First Ladies either initiated liaison activities themselves or were agreeable to doing outreach that the President or outside groups deemed beneficial. Though partisan women's divisions did exist, they did not have powerful leaders, were not very influential, and were not intimately connected

²⁷⁶ Bradley H. Patterson, *The White House Staff: Inside the West Wing and Beyond* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 175-76.

²⁷⁷ See Cornelius P. Cotter and John F. Bibby, "Institutional Development of Parties and the Thesis of Party Decline," *Political Science Quarterly* 95, no. 1 (1980): 8.

with these White Houses. However, the period from 1933 through 1961 witnessed influential partisan Women's Divisions, the leaders of which helped First Ladies set their liaison priorities, and they focused a good deal of their outreach efforts on party and club women. The next sections explain Jackie Kennedy's role as a limited liaison and Lady Bird Johnson's leadership in outreach to "women doers." Presidential administrations from 1969 through 1981 had formalized White House women's outreach institutions, which helped to define and facilitate the First Lady's liaison activities in response to second wave feminism. The next section examining Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush explores how the conservative backlash against feminism complicated these First Ladies' outreach roles. And the final section on Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush explores how the First Lady's post has reemerged as the central White House institution to handle women's outreach.

The First Lady's outreach is an integral part of political representation, as 'responsiveness' is a central concept within the act of reaching out. Relationship building, communicating, and attending are all ways in which the First Lady has 'acted for' women constituents. Her concrete liaison activities have included everything from hosting White House teas for party women to presiding over White House conferences on women's concerns. In her substantive representation of women through liaison work, she has most often demonstrated trusteeship, looking after citizenship needs of women. Her trusteeship is particularly apparent in her 'acting for women' through the patronage system. Some First Ladies have worked in this system to secure women appointments within the federal

government. This function is embedded in their outreach roles because it is directly related to maintaining friendly relationships with women by rewarding those who have faithfully served the President and appeasing the demands of groups who advocate women's appointment to high office.

The liaison role has implications for symbolic representation, but not always in exactly the same way as in the campaign. In the campaigns, her main symbolic roles were to highlight the masculinity of candidate or display the gender dynamics of the marital relationship. Yet, symbolic representation not only involves conveying images, it also concerns the evocation of feelings within members of the public. The point of any liaison activity is to make personal connections with women. The following chapter will illustrate how First Ladies through their personal connections were able to evoke feelings of appreciation, dedication, excitement, friendship, and inspiration within the women to whom they reached out.

Issues related to descriptive representation also have occasionally arisen through the First Lady's liaison role. Certain outreach activities spurred debate over what cultural notion of womanhood the First Lady represents. Thus, First Ladies have had to negotiate what kinds of women they 'stand for' in terms of descriptive representation. Controversies over this kind of representation became relevant in the late 1960s, when second wave feminism elevated the active, public woman as a progressive alternative to the traditional, private woman.

The First Lady's representative role as a liaison to women is also infused with gendered implications. To begin, how the First Lady came to assume the role

of women's liaison can be explained by the gendered culture of the Executive Branch. To summarize the arguments made in the introductory chapter, the behavior of the President's top aides is characterized by severe gatekeeping, or closing off access to the President by determining which people and information get to the Oval Office.²⁷⁸ Because of such gatekeeping, it has been difficult for women to enter into the 'boys' network' that operates around the Chief Executive.²⁷⁹

It has been found that "women in office do make some difference in government responsiveness to women's interests."²⁸⁰ Historically, presidential responsiveness to women's interests has occurred, not exclusively but primarily, in those areas within government in which women are the principal officers. In the Executive Branch, female officials have come to power "first and most often in functional areas associated with women."²⁸¹ Examples of these areas have included political parties' Women's Divisions, offices that deal with consumer affairs, and even the White House's own women's initiatives and outreach offices. Over the twentieth century, these offices established relationships with women's organizations and interest groups, thereby creating their own 'girls' network.' Such government offices have historically been major loci where responsiveness to women's interests has occurred.

²⁷⁸ Hart, *The Presidential Branch*, 129.

²⁷⁹ Duerst-Lahti, "Reconceiving Theories of Power: Consequences of Masculinism in the Executive Branch," 24-25.

²⁸⁰ Virginia Sapiro, "When Are Interests Interesting? The Problem of Political Representation of Women," in *Feminism and Politics*, ed. Anne Phillips (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 183.

²⁸¹ Duerst-Lahti, "Reconceiving Theories of Power: Consequences of Masculinism in the Executive Branch," 19.

If the presence of a woman in office does indicate that responsiveness to women's interests will likely occur through that office, then it would be logical to find political representation of women through the First Lady's position. Her office is the most prominent feminized space within the masculinized executive branch. As this chapter will show, since femininity is one of the core characteristics of her office, she has been one of the main Executive Branch figures to be associated with women and be responsive to their interests. She has been a key actor in the 'girls' networks' that have operated outside of the 'boys' networks' surrounding the President.

The existence of 'girls' networks' and 'boys' networks,' as well as other aspects of the First Ladies' liaison activities, has implications for transgendering and regendering. A similar blend of transgendring and regendering as found in the campaign role is also evident in the liaison role. This chapter will show how First Ladies, working alone or with the help of formalized women's outreach institutions, have attempted to further women's integration into the political system on the grounds that their participation in the political realm is appropriate regardless of sex. However, this form of transgendering has been complicated by the way in which the liaison role has been carried out. The very existence of 'girls' networks' and 'boys' networks' confirms regendered representative practices within the presidential branch. Oftentimes, the responsibility for liaison work was passed off from the President's office to the First Lady, thereby potentially marginalizing women constituents.

From Socialites to Liaisons: 1921-1933

This section examines the liaison roles of First Ladies Florence Harding, Grace Coolidge, and Lou Hoover. The years after women received the right to vote were critical in the evolution of the First Lady's liaison role. The groups these First Ladies liaised with were largely those that promoted the civic and political engagement of women and girls, such as the Camp Fire Girls, Girl Scouts, League of Women Voters, and Daughters of the American Revolution. Of these three women, Florence Harding took an active role in women's patronage.

White House entertainments under Florence Harding took on a markedly different character from those of previous administrations. Her receptions were not just social in nature, nor were the women whom she received simply socialites. Florence Harding was clearly affected by the new opportunities for women brought about by suffrage, and she used her position to advance women's active participation in political and civic organizations. For these reasons, the Philadelphia newspaper described her as "the connecting link between the voteless woman of the Victorian periods and the new American womanhood whose indomitable spirit symbolized the new woman."²⁸²

Mrs. Harding was affiliated with and actively hosted more organizations, particularly women's organizations, than any previous First Lady.²⁸³ She clearly conceived of her role as a link between the women of the country and the

²⁸² Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, August 9, 1923, qtd. in Anthony, *Florence Harding: The First Lady, the Jazz Age, and the Death of America's Most Scandalous President*, 314-15.; Anthony, p. 323;

²⁸³ "Women Delegates to Many Conferences Invade Capital," *Washington Herald*, Warren G. Harding Papers, Ohio Historical Society (microfilm edition, roll 244).

President. She even stated that she was “‘particularly anxious’ to bring women’s organizations to the White House because ‘I want to help the women of the country to understand their government and their duty to government....I want representative women to meet their Chief Executive and to understand the policies of the present administration.’”²⁸⁴ In addition, female citizens would often write to Mrs. Harding to express concerns about women’s participation in politics. She encouraged these types of letters, writing, “I am always anxious to know what the women are thinking, and the President is ever eager to be responsive to their wishes whenever it is consistently possible. I do hope therefore that you will keep us well informed.”²⁸⁵ First of all, this paragraph reveals Mrs. Harding as a trustee, looking after women’s interests through encouraging their active correspondence with her presumably about their thoughts on political matters. Note how she states that she is “always” interested in women’s situations, while the President is responsive to them “whenever...possible.” This indicates that the First Lady, over and above the President, was the primary individual to look after women’s interests in the White House. Second, it is clear from these statements that Florence Harding wanted to integrate women into the workings of government, helping them to understand its operations and policies. This could be an illustration of transgendering, as she was trying to incorporate newly enfranchised women into the governing process, a realm from which they were

²⁸⁴ Abby Gunn Baker, “With the Hardings in the White House,” *Christian Herald*, August 27, 1921, Qtd. in Anthony, *Florence Harding: The First Lady, the Jazz Age, and the Death of America’s Most Scandalous President*, 312.

²⁸⁵ FKH to Mrs. Tod, January 25, 1925, Warren G. Harding Papers, Ohio Historical Society (microfilm edition, roll 242).

previously excluded, and convince them that political participation was appropriate regardless of their sex.

Mrs. Harding would write to women's organizations for the purposes of promoting women's civic engagement and bolstering the clubs' activities. She wrote to the Republican Women of Massachusetts, "The time has passed for discussion about the desirability of having the women actively participate in politics. They are in politics, and it is their duty to make their participation effective, and of real service to their country. This necessarily means that much and aggressive effort is needed to maintain their interest, and to inform them concerning issues and public problems."²⁸⁶ And to the president of the Republican Woman's Club of Pennsylvania, she wrote,

Your statement that 'the political party in the United States is the only efficient agency through which women citizens can work effectively' is justified by the country's political history....I am convinced that we will accomplish most by associating our activities with the established political agencies. As a life-long Republican, I naturally feel that the Republican Party has most to offer of opportunity for this kind of accomplishment. I believe its invitation to the woman citizen will appear more and more attractive, as woman equips herself for the more thorough understanding of the issues.²⁸⁷

Here again in these statements, Mrs. Harding resembles a trustee, as she is looking after women's citizenship interests. Her statements indicate that she is pushing transgendering in the midst of a regendered political system, as she pushes women's need to be further educated on the issues so that they can work within the political parties on an equal footing with men.

²⁸⁶ FKH to Mrs. James Tillinghast, November 21, 1921, Warren G. Harding Papers, Ohio Historical Society (microfilm edition, roll 242).

²⁸⁷ FKH to Mrs. Lorimer, April 10, 1922, Warren G. Harding Papers, Ohio Historical Society (microfilm edition, roll 242).

The following examples are just a sample of the ways in which Florence Harding used her position as First Lady to substantively represent women and their causes and organizations: She consistently honored female high school and college graduates at the White House. To show support for women in athletics, she hosted a tennis match at the White House between famous female tennis players Marion Jessup and Molla Mallory. When the President of the Camp Fire Girls asked Florence Harding to send a message of encouragement for their convention, she responded, "I want the Camp Fire Girls to know that my interest and confidence in their work increase as I know more of its character and usefulness. They are accomplishing a true service for American womanhood..." She enthusiastically accepted an invitation to dedicate a statue of Joan of Arc as a symbol of brave womanhood, and she honored the famous scientist Marie Curie at the White House. She frequently invited the League of Women Voters to meet with her, and she served as the Honorary President of the Southern Industrial Association because she liked how the mountain women sold their own crafts in order to improve their welfare.²⁸⁸ Her activities honoring women's accomplishments and promoting women's self-improvement again reveal her as a trustee in terms of substantive representation.

Mrs. Harding worked within the patronage system to secure women appointments. An Ohio woman once wrote her to express dissatisfaction that a male postmaster was promoted over a highly competent female postmistress. She appealed to the First Lady because "There is no woman's organization here, so I

²⁸⁸ Anthony, *Florence Harding: The First Lady, the Jazz Age, and the Death of America's Most Scandalous President*, 313-23.

am merely voicing the sentiment of the lady voters of this place in a question that has grown state wide." She went on, "I am asking you to do something relative to the situation here, knowing that if the matter was brought to the attention of your husband, the President of the United States, he would not hesitate for a moment to act" to remedy the ousting of "a worthy woman from office."²⁸⁹ This example illustrates how the First Lady served as a gatekeeper, or as a channel through which women believed they could access the President. This also demonstrates that female citizens often look for political representation in the areas of government in which a woman is the principal officer.

Mrs. Harding actively encouraged women to apply for administration jobs. To one woman she wrote, "The position of State Librarian seems an interesting one with all the chance it gives you to get sound conservative literature before schools and clubs, and to wield a really wide influence. If you wish to try for it why don't you go ahead? Mr. Harding wants to do what he can to assist in your welfare..." But "I must confess that to me the post office job would seem to have some advantages for you...but after all congenial occupation means a lot in the long run and if the library appeals to you the most why don't you go right after the job?"²⁹⁰ This work on behalf of women's patronage again reveals Mrs. Harding as a trustee. That she advocated the appointment of women to governmental positions is indicative of transgendering, though regendering is also apparent in her letter. On the one hand, Florence Harding does recommend to the

²⁸⁹ Mrs. E.B. Ledyard to FKH, March 16, 1922, Warren G. Harding Papers, Ohio Historical Society (microfilm edition, roll 242).

²⁹⁰ FKH to Mrs. Lee, May 30, 1921, Warren G. Harding Papers, Ohio Historical Society (microfilm edition, roll 242).

woman a job in the more traditionally masculine post office, yet she also acknowledges that a job in the library system, a traditionally feminine profession, would provide a more friendly atmosphere.

A U.S. Senator also wrote to Mrs. Harding to recommend a Mrs. Louise McKay for an executive appointment. He noted in his recommendation letter, "you have been kind enough to express an interest in the success of her efforts." But perhaps the most famous example of Mrs. Harding's influence in presidential patronage was the appointment of Mrs. Hattie Jewell Anderson of Oakland, California to be the Receiver of Public Moneys. Widely circulated press accounts detailed how Mrs. Anderson made and maintained connections with Mrs. Harding and went directly through the First Lady, not the President, to secure this appointment.²⁹¹

This example and all of the above examples illustrate how Mrs. Harding served as trustee in terms of substantive representation, looking after the interests of women through promoting their causes and appointments. On one level, Mrs. Harding furthered transgendered practices by encouraging women to actively participate in political realms from which they had previously been excluded. On another level, however, this also illustrates the development of a distinct 'girls' network' within the federal government within which the First Lady was a primary actor and from which the President maintained somewhat of a distance. The existence of 'boys' networks' and 'girls' networks' indicates regendered

²⁹¹ Park Trammell to FKH, August 9, 1922, Warren G. Harding Papers, Ohio Historical Society (microfilm edition, roll 242).; Edward H. Hamilton, "This Woman Shows Politicians: Wins Job through Mrs. Harding," Warren G. Harding Papers, Ohio Historical Society (microfilm edition, roll 244).

practices, as such networks further gender-based distinctions. Duerst-Lahti upholds that women have been excluded from the President's inner circle because of their femininity.²⁹² The formation of these 'girls' networks' can be seen as a consequence of that exclusion.

The White House under Grace Coolidge continued to transform as it had under Florence Harding. That is, Mrs. Coolidge increasingly hosted women's organizations, making the White House less exclusively dominated by female socialites. An article by *The Washington Post* society columnist Vylla Poe Wilson entitled "Progress of the Women's Organizations" stated that it was Grace Coolidge's "habitual policy" to aid "local women in their civic and philanthropic work." In her regular columns, Wilson often pointed out that "Mrs. Coolidge, somehow, is never too busy to give a helping hand and a cheerful smile and the use of her distinguished name to worthy projects in which women locally and nationally are interested."

Many a corner stone and project of worthy nature inaugurated during the Coolidge administrations will have inscribed in their official records the kindly and intelligent interest taken in them by Mrs. Coolidge. Just as the Prince of Wales usually represents the King of England in such events so Mrs. Coolidge is the member of the White House family who finds corner stone laying and attending dedications and such events part of her daily round.²⁹³

The above quote points to Grace Coolidge's "intelligent interest" taken in elevating women's civic organizations, indicating her trusteeship in substantively representing women's interests. Yet, it also indicates that there is a gender

²⁹² Duerst-Lahti, "Reconceiving Theories of Power: Consequences of Masculinism in the Executive Branch."

²⁹³ Vylla Poe Wilson, No Title, *The Washington Post*, 12/6/1925; Vylla Poe Wilson, "Progress of the Women's Organizations," *The WashingtonPost*, 5/31/1925.

division of labor within the "White House family," with the First Lady taking on the traditional ceremonial role for these oftentimes female-centric events.

Indeed, Mrs. Coolidge did do a good amount of cornerstone laying, and almost exclusively for women's organizations. She laid the cornerstone for the new Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) building in Washington. She laid the cornerstone of Constitution Hall, the new auditorium building housing the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). She also laid the cornerstone of the Girl Scouts' "Home Sweet Home" building in Washington, DC. This house was the Girls Scouts' contribution to the Better Homes in America educational campaign started in 1922 to enable every American family to get the most beauty, comfort, efficiency and economy out of their homes.²⁹⁴

The groups Grace Coolidge hosted ranged from the Women's National Farm Garden Association to delegates from Bryn Mawr College to Washington women writers. Mrs. Coolidge was also often dispatched by the White House to attend woman-related ceremonies around the country. In Massachusetts, she was the guest of honor at the ceremony inducting Mrs. Lucy Jenkins Franklin as the first Dean for Women of Boston University. She officially opened the first Woman's World Fair in Chicago, which showcased women's accomplishments in invention, commerce, art, and farming, among other fields. And she sponsored along with the Women's Overseas Service League an essay contest for young women in which they were to describe why young men should attend the citizens

²⁹⁴ "DAR Stone-Laying Program Complete," *The Washington Post*, 10/28/1928, "YWCA Activities," *The Washington Post*, 5/23/1926; "In America Given to Girl Scouts, Mrs. Coolidge Lays Cornerstone," *Mt. Sterling Key Advocate*, 5/20/1924, "Girl Scouts Little House Clippings and Printed Material" folder, Box 12, Girl Scouts and Other Groups" File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

military training camps conducted each summer by the War Department. Mrs. Coolidge then hosted the winners at the White House for an awards ceremony.²⁹⁵

All of the above examples reveal Mrs. Coolidge as a trustee through elevating women's accomplishments and bolstering their civic roles. However, they also further reveal the Washington civic and philanthropic 'girls' network' of which Mrs. Coolidge as First Lady was an important part. By implication, this is also indicative of a gendered division of labor in the Coolidge Administration, with Mrs. Coolidge serving as the Administration's primary representative to women's civic and philanthropic events. This division of labor was confirmed by Vylla Poe Wilson's newspaper accounts, cited above.

But unlike Florence Harding, Grace Coolidge was not as willing to make public remarks or send messages of greeting to meetings of women's groups. When Lou Hoover was President of the Girl Scouts, she asked Mrs. Coolidge to send a message of encouragement to the leaders of the 1925 Girl Scouts convention. Mrs. Coolidge's Social Secretary wrote her back saying that she did not want to break her established policy of not sending messages of any kind. The Social Secretary went on, "to quote her own phrases...she is 'just timid' about making even semi-public utterances."²⁹⁶ Though Grace Coolidge was willing to engage in representative activities such as cornerstone laying and lending her name to events, her refusal to make even semi-public remarks reveals how her

²⁹⁵ "Mrs. Coolidge to be Guest," *The New York Times*, 12/10/1924; "President's Wife to Open First Woman's World Fair," *The New York Times*, 4/12/1925; "First Lady to Give Awards for Training Camp Essays," *The Washington Post*, 4/2/1924.

²⁹⁶ Laura Harlan to LHH, May 19, 1925, "Girl Scouts Administrative Correspondence, Coolidge, Grace" folder, Box 2, Girl Scouts and Other Organizations File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

form of representation was connected to a traditional conception of women's proper roles—being seen but not heard.

Lou Hoover, however, did on occasion make public utterances, especially to the Girl Scouts. She had played active leadership roles in the Girl Scouts since 1917, and she used her platform as First Lady to promote and publicize scouting. She promoted the Girl Scouts over and above any other women's group. In her speeches, she emphasized the Girl Scouts' role in the training young women to be involved citizens:

Another characteristic of the era is the way that the women are taking their share more and more in civic and social enterprise. Through the Federated Women's Clubs, the American Association of University Women, the League of Women Voters, Parent-Teachers' Association, boards of charitable and social organizations, they are called upon for executive work for the community. If you awaken the right kind of interest in public matters in young people, they will grow into finely effective citizens. They need to have inculcated in them a constructive patriotism.... They need training as followers and as leaders in civic and social movements. They need to learn to work together without thought of self for a common aim.²⁹⁷

Mrs. Hoover's remarks further illustrate how First Ladies during this era were primarily interested in elevating women's civic interest and participation. In addition, Lou Hoover "made herself the bridge between Girl Scouts and certain initiatives of her husband's administration,"²⁹⁸ indicating how she served as a gatekeeper for women to access the presidency.

One of Mrs. Hoover's first speaking engagements as First Lady was to Radcliffe College in celebration of the anniversary of the college's founding. In her brief remarks, she noted that the college had initially wanted the President to

²⁹⁷ LHH Girl Scout Convention Address, Indianapolis, IN, October 1, 1930, Box 6, Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

²⁹⁸ Susan Estabrook Kennedy, "Pioneer Girl: Lou Henry Hoover and the Girl Scouts," in *Uncommon Americans: The Lives and Legacies of Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover*, ed. Timothy Walch (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 85.

come, but "the business upon which he is engaged does not permit him to go so far away just now. So, by me, he sends his greetings on this occasion."²⁹⁹ A newspaper article, however, identified the other "business" upon which he was engaged as an out of town fishing trip.³⁰⁰ This revelation indicates that this female-centered event was low on the President's priority list, as well as the gendered division of labor present in the presidential couple's representative duties.

Further illustrating the gendered division of labor, sometimes the Director of the DNC Women's Division would put in special requests to Mrs. Hoover's Social Secretary for the First Lady to meet with women: "Mrs. H.M. Willis of Los Angeles and Mrs. F.J. Fredericks of Hollywood are in the city at the Mayflower...I wanted you to know this, thinking there might be an opportunity to greet Mrs. Hoover. There is also an important woman from Hawaii, Mrs. J.W. Vannatta of Honolulu in the city for a week longer, I think. It would be very helpful if she, too, could greet Mrs. Hoover."³⁰¹ Therefore, female officers seemed to look to the First Lady when there was a need to liaise with important female constituents, thereby furthering the existence of 'girls' networks.'

In their activities as trustees, First Ladies of this era took it upon themselves to look after women's interests by elevating their roles as civically engaged political participants, drawing them into the political system from which

²⁹⁹ Mrs. Hoover remarks, Radcliffe College Speech, May 31, 1929, "Radcliffe College Speech" folder, Box 6, Subject File, LHH Papers, Hoover Library.

³⁰⁰ Newspaper Clipping, "First Lady Visits Radcliffe While President Fishes," *Washington Herald*, 6/1/1929, "Radcliffe College Speech" folder, Box 6, Subject File, LHH Papers, Hoover Library.

³⁰¹ Mrs. Ellis A. Yost to Mrs. Hoover's Secretary Mrs. Butler, September 23, 1931, "Republican Organizations, National Committee" folder, Box 48, Girl Scouts and Other Organizations File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

they had been previously excluded, thus contributing to transgendered forms of political participation and serving as important gatekeepers between the women of the country and the White House. Yet, practices during this era also point to the early development of a distinct 'girls' network' in which the First Lady serves as the primary presidential representative. This 'girls' network points to a gender-specific division of labor, in which the First Lady assumed the primary responsibility for liaising with women.

1933-1961: Partisan Women's Divisions and the First Lady

While there is some evidence that Mrs. Hoover worked in conjunction with the Republican Women's Division, the strength of her ties do not compare with those of Eleanor Roosevelt, Bess Truman, and Mamie Eisenhower to their parties' women's divisions. In this era, First Ladies' outreach was largely carried out through these divisions. The Democratic Women's Division became strong in the 1930s particularly because of the influence of Molly Dewson. She and Eleanor Roosevelt worked together for women's patronage. The divisions were also influential in arranging for the First Ladies to liaise largely with business and professional women's associations, party women, and women in government, probably because these are the types of groups with which division leaders were connected.

Dewson worked hard to rally Democratic women for FDR's 1932 campaign. So, in the spring of 1933, when "Eleanor Roosevelt convinced the president and Jim Farley to make the Women's Division of the Democratic

National Committee a full-time operation, Dewson was everyone's first choice to head the division."³⁰²

ER served as a bridge between Dewson and FDR, or more broadly between women's concerns and the President. And Dewson was successful in many of her endeavors on behalf of Democratic women because she had the ear of Eleanor Roosevelt.³⁰³ Dewson once remarked, "'When I wanted help on some definite point, Mrs. Roosevelt gave me the opportunity to sit by the President at dinner and the matter was settled before we finished soup.'"³⁰⁴ To cite a specific example, Dewson had a meeting with women's organizations who expressed concerns that FDR had not done enough to counter attacks on women made by Adolf Hitler, who said that women could not function in any other capacity than wives, mothers, and homemakers. After her meeting, she immediately wrote to ER asking if she could arrange fifteen minutes of FDR's undivided attention so that she could convey to him "the state of mind of articulate women."³⁰⁵ These examples illustrate ER's gatekeeping role.

One of Dewson's primary objectives was to obtain political appointments for party women.

From the 1930s through the 1960s, when political scientists assert patronage declined steadily both in availability and as an incentive to party activity, the DNC Women's Division emphasized patronage and importuned presidents for appointments of women. A large part of Dewson's extant correspondence pertains to appointments for—not the abstract principle of appointing women, but appointment of specific women whose names are advanced as candidates for specific positions, at

³⁰² Ware, *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics*, 182.

³⁰³ Freeman, *A Room at a Time: How Women Entered Party Politics*, 89.

³⁰⁴ qtd. in Ware, *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics*, 205.

³⁰⁵ Molly Dewson to ER, "Roosevelt, Anna Eleanor 1925-1936" folder, Box 3, Dewson Papers, FDR Library.

times competing with prospective appointees submitted by the party chairman and other influential party members.³⁰⁶

ER helped Dewson open many doors for women's appointments. It can even be said that ER and Dewson together controlled the system of women's patronage during FDR's Administration. A letter from Dewson to ER in the spring of 1933 attests to the centrality of ER's role: "Jim [Farley, DNC Chairman] told me whatever you want for the women goes and since you are the 'key' woman I hope you are not held back by also being the President's wife. Otherwise it's quite an awkward situation for the handful of women who did the outstanding work."³⁰⁷ So, it appears that even the DNC Chairman passed off the work concerning women's appointments to the First Lady, indicating a gendered division of labor.

Dewson would frequently update ER on her conversations with Jim Farley and others about women's appointments. She would remind ER of the continuous day-to-day pressure that needed to be placed on the men if women were to make any headway. For instance, she deemed the case of a potential female State Department appointment as another in which "nothing may be done unless you come into the picture."³⁰⁸ When FDR was about to appoint directors of the Veterans' Administration, Dewson wrote to ER, "will you please ask him whether he has considered appointing some women to these positions? I know he believes that the point of view about women is an advantage in any big administrative

³⁰⁶ Cotter and Bibby, "Institutional Development of Parties and the Thesis of Party Decline," 24.

³⁰⁷ Molly Dewson to ER, April 3, 1933, "100 Dewson Jan-June 1933" folder, Box 575, ER Papers, FDR Library.

³⁰⁸ Molly Dewson to ER, November 27, 1933, "100 Dewson July-Dec 1933" folder, Box 575, ER Papers, FDR Library.

service.”³⁰⁹ And when Miss Elizabeth J. Newton, a descendant of Sir Isaac Newton, told Dewson that she wanted to be Assistant Commissioner of Patents, she asked ER to have her to the White House for tea and remarked, “as soon as you see her you will go right out and get her made Assistant Patent Commissioner.”³¹⁰ Upon Dewson’s request, ER also went to FDR to appeal for an appointment of a woman to the Parole Board, after Dewson had asked Jim Farley to do so and he did not comply.³¹¹

ER proved to be very persistent in her patronage requests. She asked Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, “Is it possible to be sure that the Assistant Commissionership of Education which is now held by a woman will be retained by a woman, and that women will receive half of the jobs under Mr. Alderman’s plan for employing unemployed teachers?”³¹² She would also constantly implore Jim Farley with patronage requests. She wrote to Dewson in a series of letters:

I had a talk with Jim before I left and I think things are going to come along alright. I told him Mrs. Gregory and Mrs. Cotton were not to be considered until our regular list of people had been attended to. Is that all right?³¹³

Mary Ward is to be made Immigration Commissioner according to my last talk with Jim. Mrs. Fickle’s husband is to get what he wants and all the other people mentioned are to be given positions. I hope to goodness it goes through O.K. Jim’s sister-in-law has just died so I cannot hound him just now but I will see him when I get back to Washington...to see what has happened.³¹⁴

³⁰⁹ Molly Dewson to ER, April 27, 1933, “100 Dewson Jan-June 1933” folder, Box 575, ER Papers, FDR Library.

³¹⁰ Molly Dewson to ER, October 20, 1933, “100 Dewson July-Dec 1933” folder, Box 575, ER Papers, FDR Library.

³¹¹ Molly Dewson to Jim Farley, September 16, 1933, “100 Dewson July-Dec 1933” folder, Box 575, ER Papers, FDR Library.

³¹² ER to Harold Ickes, December 13, 1933, “100 Dewson July-Dec 1933” folder, Box 575, ER Papers, FDR Library.

³¹³ ER to Molly Dewson, August 2, 1933, “100 Dewson July-Dec 1933” folder, Box 575, ER Papers, FDR Library.

³¹⁴ ER to Molly Dewson, August 3, 1933, “100 Dewson July-Dec 1933” folder, Box 575, ER Papers, FDR Library.

In these instances, ER is clearly serving as a trustee, acting in behalf of women's interests through attempting to secure appointments for them.

However, ER was not successful with every case, and Dewson once lamented, "I realize I may be asking more from you than is possible at this stage of women's development."³¹⁵ Dewson felt that she was being unfairly treated when many of the 124 women she and ER recommended for appointments failed to materialize. She wrote to ER complaining when Massachusetts Democratic men opposed national committeewoman Mary Ward's appointment to the Immigration Commission of Boston. "I thought the big idea was that the women who worked for you and me—the Women's Division were to have a few jobs on our recognition and not on the men's recognition."³¹⁶ And ER could not successfully lobby her husband to appoint women to foreign service positions in South America. She told Dewson that FDR felt that "the status of women is such there that, while Franklin might appoint them...they would be quite useless as representatives because of the different attitude toward women in those countries." She continued, Franklin "says he could have told us this two months ago if we had asked him."³¹⁷ These examples illustrate the difficulties ER and Dewson had in trying to further transgendered practices in a regendered, primarily masculinized, political system.

³¹⁵ Molly Dewson to ER, April 29, 1933, "100 Dewson Jan-June 1933" folder, Box 575, ER Papers, FDR Library.

³¹⁶ Molly Dewson to ER, May 15, 1933, "100 Dewson Jan-June 1933" folder, Box 575, ER Papers, FDR Library.

³¹⁷ ER to Molly Dewson, August 30, 1933, "100 Dewson Jan-June 1933" folder, Box 575, ER Papers, FDR Library.

All of ER's patronage activities reveal that the women were operating in a 'girls' network' or a sphere distinct from the inner White House circles. Whether their patronage efforts succeeded or failed, Dewson and even sometimes ER seemed like outsiders who had to fight hard for influence, with ER oftentimes serving as the gatekeeper between Dewson, women's patronage and the President.

Additionally, an overview of ER's social schedule reveals that she spent just as much time as any other 'traditional' First Lady liaising with ladies' groups through formal White house teas and receptions. During a typical week in the social season, ER held as many as eight teas, four luncheons, two dinners, plus many private functions.³¹⁸ Many of these ceremonial events were arranged by Dewson and her successors at the Women's Division. Of course, the kinds of women she hosted at the White House were ultimately of her choosing. When Dewson urged her to meet with the Women's Democratic Educational Council of Washington, she reasoned, "they are made up of the simpler business and professional women which is the kind you usually like to talk to."³¹⁹ Also, she made an innovation in federal entertaining by hosting garden parties for women who had executive and administrative jobs in the federal government.³²⁰ This indicates that the particular constituency ER mostly intended to descriptively represent included those who were active in government and the professions.

³¹⁸ Betty C. Monkman, "'First Lady, Ceremonial Role'," in *The Eleanor Roosevelt Encyclopedia*, ed. Maurine H. Beasley, Holly C. Shulman, and Henry R. Beasley (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 192.

³¹⁹ Molly Dewson to ER, November 11, 1933, "100 Dewson July-Dec 1933" folder, Box 575, ER Papers, FDR Library.

³²⁰ Monkman, "'First Lady, Ceremonial Role'," 192.

One of ER's main purposes in meeting with women's groups was to mobilize them to political activity. She believed that women's clubs were an essential force within politics "because they bring to women a sense of their own power, and secondly, because through the clubs much can be done which individual women could never accomplish alone."³²¹ To audiences of Democratic women, she emphasized the importance of organizing nationally and locally in precincts and outlined for party women the opportunities for involvement which were available to them, thereby giving them "a new vision of what the women of the country can achieve through political action."³²² Empowering women through encouraging their increased political activity is one way ER tried to contribute to a transgendered democratic system.

Sometimes women's groups would also write to Dewson and ER asking them to persuade FDR to speak at their events. However, within the Roosevelt White House, greeting women's groups fell almost entirely under ER's jurisdiction. In 1936, when one of the leaders of DAR asked ER and Dewson to persuade the President to speak at their Congress, Dewson reasoned, "I wrote her that I would do my best, but since he had not spoken to any of the other powerful women's organizations I doubt whether he would make an exception in favor of the DAR Congress, unless the shadow of the Ides of November were sufficiently

³²¹ ER Speech to General Federation of Women's Clubs, May 29, 1936, "Education for Living" folder, Box 3032, Speech and Article File 1936-1937, ER Papers, FDR Library.

³²² Dorothy McAllister to ER, June 24, 1939, "McAllister, Mrs. Thomas F." folder, Box 695, ER Papers, FDR Library. ER gave numerous speeches and wrote many articles on the importance of women's clubs and the necessity of more active participation of women in party affairs. For example see also ER's article in the *Women's Democratic News*, Box 3024, Speech and Article File, ER Papers, FDR Library.

heavy across his path.”³²³ This further indicates that women were a low priority to the President--except of course if he believed they would make a difference in his reelection prospects. It also supports the contention that there was a gendered division of labor, and ER and Dewson were the ones primarily responsible for taking care of the women. Here again, they seem to be operating within a distinct ‘girls’ network,’ with ER serving as the main gatekeeper between women and the President.

Just as Dewson was the main individual formally charged with women’s outreach during the Roosevelt Administration, during the Truman Administration, it was India Edwards’ job to serve as the link between the women of the country, the Democratic Party, and the President. And she looked to Bess Truman to help with this endeavor. When Mrs. Truman met with women’s groups, it would often be at India’s insistence. India seemed to feel free to take liberties in asking Mrs. Truman to participate in women’s events, and Mrs. Truman often but not always complied to do these events when India was arranging them. India frequently gave Mrs. Truman suggestions for White House women’s events, and India’s papers are filled with numerous examples of her requests to Mrs. Truman to receive women’s groups at the White House. Bess Truman made India’s job a little easier by giving the DNC Women’s Division the authority to recommend names of individuals to be invited to her White House receptions.³²⁴ Thus, India Edwards was instrumental in helping Mrs. Truman set her priorities as First Lady.

³²³ Molly Dewson to ER, February 17, 1936, “100 Dewson Jan—“ folder, Box 629, ER Papers, FDR Library.

³²⁴ India Edwards to BWT, May 28, 1948, “Ed” folder, Box 7, Files of the White House Social Office, HST Library.

To illustrate some examples of India's influence, she was successful in persuading Mrs. Truman to meet with the women lawyers and wives of men on the Federal Communications Commission.³²⁵ She also got Mrs. Truman to host a reception for the women of official Washington to meet the new female Ambassador to Denmark, Eugenie Anderson.³²⁶ She arranged for Mrs. Truman to be the special guest at a luncheon for The Fashion Group, composed of women whose professions pertain to fashion, of which India was a member.³²⁷ India would also use invitations to White House receptions given by Mrs. Truman as a reward for Women's Division staffers and volunteers. She once wrote to Mrs. Truman about how much a White House reception would mean "to these women who work so hard for the Democratic Party."³²⁸ After one particular reception, the women attendees wrote to India, "We know that it was through your efforts that this was brought about and we are most grateful....Friday's visit was a highlight for all of us, and the graciousness of Mrs. Truman...something to be long remembered."³²⁹ She convinced Mrs. Truman to attend a DNC luncheon for women in government. One DNC official wrote to her afterward, "A number of the Government women spoke to me after the luncheon and some of them later called me...to say how much it had meant to them....You were so very kind to

³²⁵ Reathel Odum to BWT, November 24, 1948, "Ed" folder, Box 7, Files of the White House Social Office, HST Library.

³²⁶ India Edwards to BWT, September 14, 1951, "Dem-Dep" folder, Box 6, Social Office Files, HST Library.

³²⁷ India Edwards to BWT, October 3, 1945, "Ed" folder, Box 7, Files of the White House Social Office, HST Library.

³²⁸ India Edwards to BWT, March 20, 1952, "Ed" folder, Box 7, Files of the White House Social Office, HST Library.

³²⁹ DNC Women to India Edwards, December 5, 1952, "[4 of 18]" folder, Box 40A, President Truman's Response to Women's Issues, Student Research File, HST Library.

express interest in all that was being accomplished by these women.”³³⁰ The DNC official’s statement about Mrs. Truman’s expressed “interest” points to her trusteeship, as her mere presence at the meeting to them was perceived as a great representative act, even though India was the one to actually arrange the meeting. Yet, it also points to Mrs. Truman’s role as a symbolic representative. Symbols have the power to evoke emotional responses within citizens. Here, Mrs. Truman’s symbolic power is evident, as she has the ability to induce feelings of friendship and warmth among women through her connection-making efforts.

Not all pressure on Bess Truman to meet with women’s groups came from India Edwards. The West Wing would also occasionally make such requests. For example, a member of the President’s staff asked her to meet with the Women’s Action Committee for Victory and Lasting Peace, which boasted high-profile, women’s rights activist members such as Carrie Chapman Catt. He wrote to Bess Truman’s secretary, “We have always sought to cultivate and maintain their good will,” so “it would be a very happy compromise if Mrs. Truman consented to receive them.” For, if Mrs. Truman met with them instead of the President, it “would do away with the necessity for more than a handshake.”³³¹ As in the Roosevelt Administration, here again is a gendered division of labor operating in White House liaison work, with the President’s staff passing off women-centered outreach to the First Lady.

The gendered division of labor is not the only similarity between ER and Bess Truman’s liaison roles. They both served as trustees in terms of substantive

³³⁰ Gladys Tillett to BTW, February 13, 1947, “Woman” folder, Box 24, Files of the White House Social Office, HST Library.

³³¹ W.D.H. to Edith Helm, December 5, 1946, “1945-1946” folder, PPF2, WHCF, HST Library.

representation, expressing interest in women through the act of reaching out to their organizations, with the DNC Women's Division heads helping to set their priorities. Chapter One provided evidence of Bess Truman's gatekeeping role, as she would pass requests from India to the President, which is similar to the gatekeeping performed by ER. And as indicated by the gendered division of labor, with Bess Truman we also see the existence of a 'girls' network' operating largely outside of the presidential inner circle, indicating that she was a primary actor in regendered liaison practices. Mamie Eisenhower's liaison role would also prove to be similar to ER's and Bess Truman's.

Upon entering office Mamie Eisenhower was not necessarily enthusiastic about performing the liaison role. However, two years into the Eisenhower Administration, White House staffer Charles Willis³³² proposed to Assistant to the President Sherman Adams that Mrs. Ruth Butcher, wife of President Eisenhower's former Naval Aide Harry C. Butcher, be appointed to serve "as a liaison between Mrs. Eisenhower and the various women's clubs of the United States, with an office in the Executive Office Building."³³³ Though there is no evidence that this appointment was ever made, it does indicate that Mamie Eisenhower's liaison role to women had become very important within the plebiscitary presidency. It also hints at how the President's staff promoted a gendered division of labor, with Mrs. Eisenhower responsible for looking after the women, thereby furthering regendered outreach roles.

³³² Willis held the title "Assistant to Sherman Adams" who was the Assistant to the President

³³³ Memorandum, From Charles Willis to Governor Adams, March 12, 1954, "March 1994" folder, Box 541, PPF, WHCF, DDE Library.

Many of Mamie Eisenhower's public appearances were coordinated by Bertha Adkins, head of the Women's Division of the Republican National Committee. It was Adkins' responsibility to work with Mrs. Eisenhower "in bringing women's groups for tea and receptions in the White House." As Adkins described it, Mrs. Eisenhower "would not be interested in doing some of the things we asked her to do, and at times there was genuine reluctance on her part to do them." So, Bertha would have to convince her that doing a certain tea or reception would really help Ike. "Once you could get her to understand that whatever you asked her to do would be helpful to Ike, she was grace and charm personified."³³⁴ According to Adkins, Mrs. Eisenhower on her own was unaware of how she could be helpful in women's affairs.³³⁵ Adkins' sentiments indicate that even though Mamie herself was not too concerned with looking after women's interests, her appearances conveyed the impression of trusteeship and so were politically helpful, as women believed the First Lady was acting in behalf of them.

Both Mrs. Eisenhower and Bertha Adkins found the sheer number of requests that came to the First Lady "irksome." So, for the events that Adkins and her staff deemed worthwhile, "we really had to sell it pretty hard to Mamie that this was for Ike...before she would say that she would do...what we requested, be it a tea or a reception for women."³³⁶ Realizing the good public relations that came as a result of women meeting with Mrs. Eisenhower, Adkins frequently arranged visits for members of the RNC Women's Division. In one letter of

³³⁴ Oral History Interview, Bertha Adkins, December 18, 1967, p. 43, DDE Library.

³³⁵ Oral History Interview, Bertha Adkins, December 18, 1967, p. 44, DDE Library.

³³⁶ Oral History Interview, Bertha Adkins, December 18, 1967, p. 46, DDE Library.

thanks to Mrs. Eisenhower for receiving about 1,400 delegates to their national convention, Adkins elaborated on the warm relationships that were established as a result of the reception: "Without a doubt, visiting the White House was of special interest to the women and they left with a feeling of friendship that comes only from personal contact."³³⁷ Mamie's cultivation of such relations is the essence of substantive representation—forming "some connection or relationship or tie between a representative and those for whom he acts."³³⁸ It is also the essence of symbolic representation, as she "left a feeling of friendship" within the women with whom she had made a connection.

Sometimes when Adkins got word that a women's group had sent an invitation directly to Mrs. Eisenhower, she would intervene with Mamie's secretary Mary Jane McCaffree and urge her to accept or regret the request. For instance, she urged her to accept an invitation from the bi-partisan Maryland's Women's Council to meet with her.³³⁹ It was also Bertha Adkins who coordinated Mrs. Eisenhower's reception for members of the National Woman's Party at the White House.³⁴⁰ Adkins intervened on behalf of the National Association of Deans of Women to get them an audience with the First Lady.³⁴¹ Here, Bertha Adkins was clearly the gatekeeper between the women of the country and the

³³⁷ Letter, Bertha Adkins to MDE, "4-23-53 Women's Conference Group Republican National Committee-Receive (1)" folder, Box 5, A.B. Tolley Records, Social Office Files, DDE Library.

³³⁸ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 114.

³³⁹ Letter, Bertha Adkins to Mary Jane McCaffree, December 14, 1953, "3-30-54 Maryland Women's Council" folder, Box 28, A.B. Tolley Records, Social Office Files, DDE Library.

³⁴⁰ Letter from Helen Cann Janne to Mary Jane McCaffree, "National Woman's Party" folder, Box 5, A.B. Tolley Records, Social Offices Files, DDE Library.

³⁴¹ Memorandum, Mary Jane McCaffree to Unknown, Undated, "4-6-54 National Association of Deans of Women" folder, Box 29, A.B. Tolley Records, Social Office Files, DDE Library.

First Lady. As such, it is not a surprise that many of Mrs. Eisenhower's liaison activities were directed toward party women.

Members of executive departments and agencies would also call upon Mrs. Eisenhower to host groups of women at the White House. Thalia Woods, coordinator for women's participation in the Federal Civil Defense Administration, asked Mrs. Eisenhower to receive female regional and state officers when they were in Washington for their meeting.³⁴² As further evidence of the First Lady's symbolic power, after the reception, the Women's Conference adopted a resolution that stated, "the thrill of meeting Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower...added much to our determination to carry on."³⁴³ Director of the United States Information Agency Abbott Washburn coordinated the Betty Crocker Homemaker of Tomorrow contest finalists' visit to the White House to meet Mrs. Eisenhower. This contest was tied to the President's Youth Fitness Program, which was intended to enhance the moral, spiritual, physical, and mental fitness of American young people.³⁴⁴ C.C. Hearne of the Foreign Agricultural Service Division of the Agriculture Department initiated Mrs. Eisenhower's visit with twenty-three women from South American countries who were attending a clinic at the Department. Mary Jane McCaffree was advised, "Agriculture Officials feel that these people are goodwill ambassadors and that it is most important they have an opportunity to say 'hello' to Mrs. Eisenhower so

³⁴² Thalia Woods to Mary Jane McCaffree, February 12, 1953, "2-21-53 Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.-Receive" folder, Box 1, A.B. Tolley Records, Social Office Files, DDE Library.

³⁴³ Resolution Adopted by the Women's Conference on Civil Defense, March 6, 1953, "3-4-53 Women, Federal Civil Defense Administration-Receive" folder, Box 1, A.B. Tolley Records, Social Office Files, DDE Library.

³⁴⁴ Press Release Draft, April 28, 1960, "4-28-60 Homemakers of Tomorrow Group-Receive" folder, Box 88, A.B. Tolley Records, Social Office Files, DDE Library.

that they can go back to South America and tell about meeting the First Lady.”³⁴⁵

The State Department intervened in a request for Mrs. Eisenhower to meet with delegates of the Inter-American Commission on Women. The U.S. Delegate to the Commission wrote to Secretary Dulles,

I have a strong feeling that Mrs. Eisenhower, in her charming manner, could set the pace for a most successful Assembly if she would consent to receive the delegates this year. A personal introduction to our First Lady would stimulate a feeling of friendship and genuine hospitality, long to be remembered by those in attendance. I do not know of anyone more qualified by personality for this responsibility than Mrs. Eisenhower. If she consents I predict a very successful Assembly.³⁴⁶

This statement also demonstrates Mrs. Eisenhower's power as a symbolic representative, as she is able to evoke feelings of “friendship and genuine hospitality,” and presumably goodwill toward the Administration, by liaising with the conference goers.

Members of Congress and the President's staff would also make requests for Mrs. Eisenhower to receive particular groups of women. Congressman William Ayres (R-OH) wrote to Jack Martin, a member of Eisenhower's congressional relations staff, asking for Mrs. Eisenhower to meet with women from the Ayres-for-Congress organization because “they would go back home and push even more doorbells than they have in the past.”³⁴⁷ Again, this shows her power as a symbolic representative, in that she is able to inspire and motivate female citizens to work for a particular cause or candidate. And when Congressman Francis Dorn (R-NY) wrote to Special Assistant to the President

³⁴⁵ Memorandum, General Wilton B. Persons to Mary Jane McCaffree, April 23, 1953, “4-27-53 Latin American Women, Department of Agriculture Training Program” folder, Box 6, A.B. Tolley Records, Social Office Files, DDE Library.

³⁴⁶ Frances M. Lee to Secretary Dulles, May 8, 1957, “6-4-57 Inter-American Commission on Women 12th Assembly” folder, Box 64, A.B. Tolley Records, Social Office Files, DDE Library.

³⁴⁷ William Ayres to Jack Martin, March 25, 1954, “April 1954” folder, Box 542, PPF, WHCF, DDE Library.

General Wilton Persons to ask if Mrs. Eisenhower could meet with members of the New York Republican State Committee from his district,³⁴⁸ Homer Gruenther, a member of the congressional liaison office, wrote to McCaffree saying, "it would be very helpful to Congressman Dorn if [Mrs. Eisenhower] could see the ladies," as they make up "the backbone of the Republican organization in Brooklyn."³⁴⁹ Here again, Mrs. Eisenhower's helpfulness was rooted in her symbolic power to inspire and stimulate a sense friendship by liaising with female constituents.

All the First Ladies during this era served as symbolic representatives, but not necessarily by means of gender role modeling, as they did during the campaigns. Rather, their symbolism as liaisons stemmed from their ability to evoke emotions from female citizens—feelings of appreciation, excitement, friendship, and inspiration—through their various outreach activities. ER was the only First Lady during this era to work within the patronage system, demonstrating her trusteeship. Mamie Eisenhower and Bess Truman served as trustees as well—though the initiative for the activities they undertook was not always their own, their 'acting for' women by liaising with them signaled that these First Ladies were looking after women's interests.

During this era, the heads of the Women's Divisions were important gatekeepers, controlling access between women of the country and the First Lady and helping to set the First Ladies' liaison priorities. Also, ER and Mrs. Truman

³⁴⁸ Francis Dorn to General Wilton Persons, May 13, 1953, "1-19-53 Republican Women of King County, New York" folder, Box 16, A.B. Tolley, Social Office Files, DDE Library.

³⁴⁹ Memorandum, Homer H. Gruenther to Mary Jane McCaffree, May 14, 1953, "1-19-53 Republican Women of King County, New York" folder, Box 16, A.B. Tolley, Social Office Files, DDE Library.

at times seemed to function as gatekeepers between the heads of the Women's Divisions and the President, as there is evidence that they brought requests from these women to their husbands. In addition, there is evidence that during this era, the Presidents and their staffs would pass off women-centered liaison obligations to the First Ladies, providing evidence for a gendered division of labor and regendered liaison practices. Likewise, this era witnessed the operation of distinct "girls' networks" operating separately from the "boys' networks" of the Presidents' inner circles, in which the First Ladies were primary actors.

1961-1963: Jacqueline Kennedy as the Limited Liaison

While Mrs. Truman and Mrs. Eisenhower may have been reluctant to liaise with women's groups, because of the pressures put on them by the India Edwards, Bertha Adkins and others, they were not able to shirk the liaison role. However, Mrs. Kennedy, who was even more reluctant than Bess Truman and Mamie Eisenhower to host women's groups, was mostly successful in evading them. One explanation for this, detailed below, is that the institutional forces were not in place to cajole her into performing the outreach role. This, combined with her forceful will and her husband's view of the first ladyship, allowed her to act as only a limited liaison to women.

Letitia Baldrige, Mrs. Kennedy's social secretary, used to get frustrated with the First Lady's apathy-bordering-on-hostility toward socializing with women's groups:

If she had one failing—not actually a failing, but let's call it a lack of enthusiasm—it was a reluctance to spend a lot of time with women's groups. Women, of course, were fascinated by her, and every female organization in America, and other

countries in addition, did everything possible to jockey themselves into the position of being entertained, or at least received, by Jackie in the White House. She would finally acquiesce to receiving a large group, as I had begged her to do, and sometimes at the last minute she canceled 'because of sudden ill health.'³⁵⁰

When Mrs. Kennedy would feign illness to escape the women's organizations, Baldrige would call on Lady Bird Johnson or the President's mother Rose Kennedy to fill in for her. Despite having on-call substitute women's liaisons, Baldrige was still put in a very awkward position when Mrs. Kennedy decided to cancel. She said that she lived in fear "that the press would catch her playing hooky, riding her horse out in Virginia, when she should be at one of these women's receptions."³⁵¹ Even though Mrs. Kennedy had a lack of enthusiasm for spending time with women's groups, the above passage indicates that among female citizens, at least, there was a strong desire to have a connection with the First Lady. In other words, female members of the public looked to Jackie Kennedy to provide substantive and symbolic representation.

Over the years 1961-1962, Mrs. Kennedy participated in approximately 155 official functions, including trips abroad and events at home.³⁵² Of these events, only about fourteen were directed at groups of women. Unlike her three predecessors who actively hosted party women, Mrs. Kennedy met with Democratic committee women only once, on May 13, 1962. Jacqueline Kennedy

³⁵⁰ Letitia Baldrige, *A Lady, First: My Life in the Kennedy White House and the American Embassies of Paris and Rome* (New York: Viking, 2001), 183.

³⁵¹ Baldrige, *A Lady, First: My Life in the Kennedy White House and the American Embassies of Paris and Rome*, 183.

³⁵² These figures are based on "Mrs. Kennedy's Engagements and Official White House Social Schedule, 1961, 1962," Box 101, Pierre Salinger Files, WHCF, JFL Library. Her schedule for 1963 would not reflect activities similar to the previous two years, as the White House announced that, due to her pregnancy, Mrs. Kennedy would end her official activities until the late summer. See also Barbara A. Perry, *Jacqueline Kennedy: First Lady of the New Frontier* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 76. Her son Patrick was born prematurely in August of 1963 and died two days later, and then her husband was assassinated on November 22 of that year.

met with the ladies of the press several times, including a Women's National Press Club dinner on June 19, 1961 and a White House luncheon for press ladies on April 11, 1961. She also held a tea for representatives of Miss Porter's School, a private girls' academy she had attended, and another tea for the wives of foreign ambassadors. Many of the rest of the women's events consisted of luncheons and receptions for wives of members of Congress.

Though they tried, even the most prominent women in government had difficulty getting an audience with the First Lady. From May 30 to June 15, 1961, Mrs. Kennedy traveled to Paris, Vienna, London, and Greece. While she was away, Congresswoman Martha Griffiths (D-MI) was struck by how warmly the First Lady was received in the foreign nations. Griffiths suggested that "it would be good politics" if Mrs. Kennedy were to also be warmly received by the "lady Members of Congress, wives of Members, and representatives of the various Democratic women organizations in the area."³⁵³ Though Griffiths was one of the most influential women leaders at the time, her event failed to materialize.

There are numerous explanations for why Mrs. Kennedy largely succeeded in shirking her duties as a public liaison to women. First, by the late 1950s, both parties' Women's Divisions had been dissolved.³⁵⁴ While the parties did still have women workers who were in charge of women's issues, without a formal institutional structure, they did not have the force of the earlier Women's Divisions. There were no outstanding, powerful women leaders within the parties of the same caliber as Molly Dewson, India Edwards and Bertha Adkins. There

³⁵³ Memorandum, Claude Desautels to Ken O'Donnell, June 9, 1961, "PP5/Kennedy, Jacqueline 1961" folder, Box 705, SF, WHCF, JFK Library.

³⁵⁴ Freeman, *A Room at a Time: How Women Entered Party Politics*, 107.

were also no formal women's liaison offices in the White House at this time. So, there was no institutional force to encourage Mrs. Kennedy in the liaison role.

Mrs. Kennedy also had a strong distaste for political conventions and political meetings.³⁵⁵ And when Mrs. Kennedy did not want to do something, she had an uncanny ability to get her way. She revealed the secret behind her lack of public involvement to Bill Walton, who would become Chairman of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. "I was tired—& I wanted to see my children—so I just told Tish [Letitia Baldrige]—who nearly died from shock—that I would NEVER go out—lunches, teas, degrees, speeches, etc. For 2 months there was a flap—Now it is a precedent established."³⁵⁶ Others noted that she survived in the White House the same way she survived in the Kennedy family, "by being very private and stubborn, and saying no, and kind of carving out her own existence."³⁵⁷ Her insistence on privacy was so intense it enabled her to avoid many public duties.

Mrs. Kennedy was also the only First Lady in the twentieth century to have toddlers in the White House. She noted in her official White House biography that she placed her family duties above all other obligations.³⁵⁸ Nor did she have the support and encouragement of her husband to engage in political activities. President Kennedy once declared, "First Ladies are not public officials. Their responsibility to their family is the same as any other woman's—efforts on

³⁵⁵ Letitia Baldrige Hollensteiner Oral History Interview, April 24, 1964, p. 70, JFK Library.

³⁵⁶ JBK to William Walton, June 8, 1962, "Letters from Kennedys 1960-1964(?)" folder, Box 1, William Walton Papers, JFK Library.

³⁵⁷ Laura Bergquist Knebel Oral History Interview, August 1, 1977, p. 37, JFK Library.

³⁵⁸ "Biography of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy," February 1962, "Kennedy, Jacqueline Bouvier, 1961/1962," folder, Box 10, Pierre Salinger Files, WHCF, JFK Library.

behalf of charity, trips abroad, or special projects are extra. It is up to her to do what she can, within her own limitations."³⁵⁹

To summarize, even though female citizens and public officials looked to the First Lady to provide substantive and symbolic representation, Jackie Kennedy played only a limited liaison role. The above section articulated several explanations for her limited role. First, she jealously guarded her privacy and hated engaging in political activity. However, so too did Bess Truman and Mamie Eisenhower to an extent. The difference between these First Ladies and Mrs. Kennedy was that there were active Women's Divisions who worked very hard to facilitate liaison activities for the First Lady during the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations. During the Kennedy years, there was no such powerful institution in place to pressure Mrs. Kennedy to perform the liaison role. These factors, combined with her husband's belief that the First Lady need not assume political activities, helped to counteract the pressure placed upon her by outside forces.

The East Wing as the Hub of Women's Outreach: The Johnson Years 1963-1969

When Lyndon Johnson was elevated to the presidency, there were still no formal or institutional structures within the West Wing designated for women's outreach, though LBJ did appoint Esther Peterson to look after the interests of consumers/housewives. Lady Bird Johnson and her Press Secretary Liz Carpenter took upon themselves the task of liaising with America's women. Under Lady

³⁵⁹ Qtd. in Perry, *Jacqueline Kennedy: First Lady of the New Frontier*, 204.

Bird Johnson, the East Wing took the lead in promoting female appointments, highlighting women's achievements, and liaising with women's groups. Mrs. Johnson largely focused on building relationships with activist, but not necessarily feminist, women, such as those who were accomplished in the professions and influential in social welfare causes.

Mrs. Johnson's efforts were ultimately helped because LBJ was genuinely interested in bettering the position of women. Esther Peterson said that the advancement of women would be part of his lasting legacy, but that this would not have been possible without the influence of Mrs. Johnson:

I say without hesitation that he has done more to promote the advancement of women than really any president at all...I think part of it is because of Mrs. Johnson...As a person, you see, here is a woman with ability and with brains who has been a businesswoman of her own, and I think he is accustomed to recognizing that there are other skills that [women can have]...I've always felt that part of his basic understanding of the problems of working women was because of her and the relationship he has with her.³⁶⁰

The Johnson Administration did coincide with the early beginnings of the women's rights movement. When he appointed women to high-level positions, it was to demonstrate his belief in working women's abilities. This underlying purpose was different from that of the women's patronage system that was in place during the Roosevelt years. During the Roosevelt years, women's patronage appoints were rewards-based, or intended to acknowledge the hard work of women for the party ticket. During the Johnson years, they were intended to demonstrate the President's compliance with principles of equality.

Soon after LBJ took office, Liz Carpenter circulated a memo titled "anyone interested in women." She wrote that there was an increasing interest

³⁶⁰ Esther Peterson Oral History Interview, November 25, 1968, p. 26, LBJ Library.

within the press to see the “upgrading and appointment of women,” and she urged that members of the Executive Branch should announce any women appointments with “a little more fanfare than usual.”³⁶¹ Liz even “scooped” the heads of agencies by announcing top female departmental appointments herself, perhaps not believing they would do an adequate job. She also fed the President press statements on women appointments and invented ways for him to make announcements. She once proposed that LBJ unexpectedly drop into her briefing with women reporters on Mrs. Johnson’s schedule and say, “I hear you are interested in women. So am I, and here is the way things are going,” and then go on to announce top-level executive appointments.³⁶²

Liz also circulated memoranda to women on the East Wing staff, attempting to gather the names of other bright women they might know to put on task forces or committees, reasoning, “We might score some hits if we had some new names.”³⁶³ The amount of oversight the President gave to the East Wing in women’s appointments is illustrated by a letter from Helen Thomas, the legendary White House newswoman. She wrote to Liz, “Sometime ago I told President Johnson that in line with his tremendous policy of putting women in top government jobs, I had a candidate for director of the Children’s Bureau. He said, ‘good tell Liz.’” Thomas noted that she had submitted her candidate’s resume to Ralph Dungan, Johnson’s personnel advisor, a year prior, but that it had gotten

³⁶¹ Memorandum from Liz Carpenter to “anyone interested in women,” February 24, 1964, “Equality for Women 11/22/63-6/14/64” folder, Box 58, HU3, LBJ Library.

³⁶² Memorandum from Liz Carpenter to LBJ, February 28, 1964, “Equality for Women 11/22/63-6/14/64” folder, Box 58, HU3, LBJ Library; Memorandum from Liz Carpenter to LBJ, February 25, 1964, “Equality for Women 11/22/63-6/14/64” folder, Box 58, HU3, LBJ Library.

³⁶³ Memorandum, Liz Carpenter to Bess Abell, January 11, 1968, “Women Biographies [1 of 2]” folder, Box 68, Liz Carpenter Subject Files, LBJ Library.

nowhere.³⁶⁴ Yet, Ralph Dungan expressed to Liz his great appreciation for all of the responsibilities she had assumed for women appointments.³⁶⁵ He would even pass onto Liz the names of women for potential appointments. And when he wrote to her about a recommendation he had for Martha Allen, Director of Camp Fire Girls, he noted, "Mrs. Johnson was impressed and asked me to be sure she is put on a list for consideration."³⁶⁶ These examples illustrate several things. First, Mrs. Johnson and her East Wing staff acted as trustees in terms of substantive representation through their role in securing women's appointments. This attempt to bring women into the federal government on a more equal level with men can be viewed as transgendering. However, as in previous administrations, the President and his staff intentionally passed off to the East Wing the oversight of women appointments, potentially marginalizing them as a result. This fostered a gender-based division of labor and reinforced a 'girls' network' operating outside of the 'boys' network' surrounding the President, all of which have regendered implications.

Liz would also go directly to the heads of departments to point out women on their staffs who would be good candidates for promotion. She wrote to Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, "It has come to my attention...that there is a woman of great ability in the Department of Agriculture who should be

³⁶⁴ Helen Thomas to Liz Carpenter, March 16, 1965, "Women Applicants [2 of 2]" folder, Box 67, Liz Carpenter Subject Files, LBJ Library.

³⁶⁵ Memorandum, Ralph Dungan to Liz Carpenter, February 19, 1964, "Women Appointments [1 of 2]" folder, Box 67, Liz Carpenter Subject Files, LBJ Library.

³⁶⁶ Memorandum, Ralph Dungan to Liz Carpenter, "Women Applicants [1 of 2]" folder, Box 67, Liz Carpenter Subject Files, LBJ Library.

examined in reference to possible promotions. Her name is Mabel Snyder.”³⁶⁷ Because of such efforts, she became the go-to person for women within the agencies to direct their personnel concerns. The women of the National Security Agency (NSA) wrote to her complaining that the inequality that existed within the agency “so flagrantly violates the President’s desire to abolish inherited attitudes and fears that cause discrimination.” They asked her to do something about the NSA’s “continuing disregard for and the humiliation of the many who give dedicated service but must stand aside and watch the men they have so patiently trained go forward.”³⁶⁸ This also provides evidence that female appointments were being marginalized by the ‘boys’ network,’ and that they needed to find a more female-friendly point of access to the presidency. Women evidently looked for and found this channel in the First Lady’s office, a highly prominent feminine space within the Executive Branch.

Beyond the realm of executive appointments, the First Lady and her staff made a special effort to highlight the contributions of women to various causes and issues. This was primarily accomplished through Mrs. Johnson’s Women Doers’ luncheons, which she initiated in 1964 to focus attention on women activists and their involvement in local and national problems. These luncheons so captured the public’s attention that Liz Carpenter became inundated with requests from people around the country recommending particular women to be invited to the White House gatherings. By 1968, Mrs. Johnson had to increase attendance

³⁶⁷ Liz Carpenter to Orville Freeman, June 23, 1964, “Women in Government” folder, Box 127, Liz Carpenter Alpha File, Social Files, LBJ Library.

³⁶⁸ NSA Women to Liz Carpenter, August 16, 1965, “Women in Government” folder, Box 127, Liz Carpenter Alpha File, Social Files, LBJ Library.

from eighteen guests to 50.³⁶⁹ And planning and support for these luncheons remained exclusively within the First Lady's domain—with Mrs. Johnson, Liz Carpenter, and Social Secretary Bess Abell working out all of the details of the luncheons themselves.

Mrs. Johnson also created Women Doers events because she “didn’t want to have luncheons of people to sit around and talk about their ailments and their bridge games.” So, she wanted to move beyond highlighting traditional women’s roles and toward the realm of transgendering. However, a problem did develop over the invited speakers and guests. Liz Carpenter characterized the women honored at the luncheons as “professional career woman types, not always an attractive lot, vital, but not always attractive,” and therefore “not always the kind that the average woman can identify with.”³⁷⁰ So, citizens wrote to Mrs. Johnson expressing their concern that by focusing on Women Doers, the Administration was being unmindful of “ordinary women.”³⁷¹ Thus, they had to be careful to include “average women” on guest lists in order to achieve “balanced luncheons.” Here, some controversy developed over what kind of woman Mrs. Johnson represented, thereby raising the issue of descriptive representation. Mrs. Johnson’s desire was not to represent traditional bridge clubbers, but rather active and professional women. In so doing, however, she invited charges that she was not representing “ordinary women” through her outreach activities. Evidently, Mrs. Johnson wanted to be fairly inclusive in her descriptive representation of

³⁶⁹ Press Release, Office of the Press Secretary to Mrs. Johnson, January 13, 1968, “Women Doers Luncheon 1/18/68” folder, Box 45, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

³⁷⁰ Liz Carpenter Oral History Interview, April 4, 1969, pp. 33-34, LBJ Library.

³⁷¹ See for example Liz Carpenter to Mrs. Joseph F. Roller, February 27, 1964, “Women Doers” folder, Box 127, Liz Carpenter Alpha File, Social Files, LBJ Library.

women, so she found a way to recognize ordinary as well as professional women through her functions.

At a typical Women Doers event, a three-course lunch would be served, then Mrs. Johnson would give brief remarks about the topic at hand, and then a woman activist or expert in a particular field would deliver a more extended address about her work in an area germane to national events.

One of the first Women Doers events featured Barbara Miller Solomon, Director of Women's Archives at Radcliffe College's library. Mrs. Johnson decided to feature Radcliffe's archival collection after Liz Carpenter discovered that it was a valuable repository for documents that chronicle women's contributions throughout American history. After interviewing Mrs. Solomon about the collection, Liz determined that she would be the ideal speaker, noting, "she sounds very intelligent and articulate...and would be a nice egg-head touch."³⁷² So, even though Mrs. Johnson made an effort to include "ordinary women," her main object was to highlight intelligent and activist women in her luncheons.

Other Women Doers luncheon topics included, "What Citizens Can Do to Help Insure Safe Streets," "The Consumer is You," "Rediscovering America," "What Citizens Can Do to Improve the Health of the American Child," and "Beautification." Speakers included Atomic Energy Commissioner Polly Bunting, Vice Chairman of the Commission on Crime in the District of Columbia Marjorie McKenzie Lawson, vehicles expert at the Goddard Space Flight Center Eleanor

³⁷² Memorandum, Liz Carpenter to Mrs. Johnson, Undated, "Women Doer's Luncheons [2 of 2]" folder, Box 71, Liz Carpenter Subject Files, LBJ Library.

C. Pressley, and principal of Public School 184 in New York City Mrs. Arthur Tuchman. So, through these events, Mrs. Johnson was descriptively representing activist women by holding White House functions that honored their innovative efforts in the professions.

While the Women Doers luncheons were the centerpiece of Mrs. Johnson's outreach efforts, she regularly made connections with a diverse range of women's organizations. When the President could not address the National Association of Postmasters, the Postmaster General asked if Mrs. Johnson could attend in his place, "in view of the large proportion of postmasters who are women."³⁷³ And when Liz Carpenter told the President and First Lady that the 300 delegates to the Women's Council on Poverty invited them to address their convention, LBJ jotted in a note back to Liz that the event was "OK for Bird. I'll come if I can."³⁷⁴ Mrs. Johnson herself would even plead with the President to attend major women's events at the White House. She once wrote him a note while he was in a Cabinet meeting explaining how it would be beneficial for him to appear with her before a 600-person Women's National Press Club reception.³⁷⁵ Examples such as these abound within the LBJ Library papers. They provide further evidence for the gendered division of labor, with the First Lady assuming or being given responsibility for much of the women-centered outreach.

³⁷³ Memorandum, Postmaster General to Jack Valenti, June 23, 1964, "4/12/64-7/14/64" folder, Box 62, PP5/Johnson, Lady Bird, WHCF, LBJ Library.

³⁷⁴ Memorandum, Liz Carpenter to The President and Mrs. Johnson, April 22, 1968, "3/23/68-7/31/68" folder, Box 63, PP5/Johnson, Lady Bird, WHCF, LBJ Library.

³⁷⁵ Lady Bird Johnson to LBJ, "9/24/66-3/14/67" folder, Box 63, pp5/Johnson, Lady Bird, WHCF, LBJ Library.

Beyond the division of labor, which provides evidence for regendered outreach practices and the potential marginalization of women constituents, it is important to highlight the portions of the First Lady's representative role that furthered transgendered practices. The First Lady's office was instrumental in attempting to secure women's appointments, thereby bringing women into the federal bureaucracy in a substantive way and on a more equal footing with men. This, along with Mrs. Johnson's efforts in behalf of "Women Doers," reveals the First Lady's office 'acting for' women as trustees.

Moreover, it is important to explain why the First Lady's office was the major loci for women's representation during the Johnson years. First of all, LBJ, unlike JFK, favored an active role for the First Lady. Additionally, there was no other major and powerful institution connected to the presidency designed to conduct women-focused liaison activities. Mrs. Johnson, like her husband, was interested in representing active women, and she was greatly aided in this effort by her likeminded staff member Liz Carpenter. For all of these reasons, in addition to the practice of passing off women-centered work to the First Lady, during the Johnson years, the East Wing became the primary Executive Branch institution through which women's representation was carried out.

The East Wing and the White House Offices of Women's Affairs: Reaching Out to "Women's Libbers" 1969-1981

This section covers Pat Nixon, Betty Ford, and Rosalynn Carter and their outreach efforts to women. As noted in the previous chapter, by the Nixon

Administration, the women's rights movement had fully materialized. To respond to this movement, the White Houses formally established officers and institutions to focus on women's outreach. This section details how First Ladies of this era worked with these officers and institutions, as well as on their own, to conduct outreach to women.

Richard Nixon appointed Anne Armstrong Counsellor to the President and head of the Office of Women's Programs, the first officially sanctioned women-centered institution within the EOP. He also appointed Barbara Franklin as Staff Assistant for Executive Manpower, with a special focus on women. Franklin, Armstrong, and members of the First Lady's staff worked together to plan women's outreach events in which Mrs. Nixon was the principal Administration figure. Within the context of the feminist movement, it is no surprise that many of the events staged for Mrs. Nixon were designed to highlight equality and feminist values in order to curry favor with politically influential women's rights groups.

For instance, they planned luncheons honoring female presidential appointees that featured Pat Nixon. However, some members of the West Wing staff expressed concern that having a luncheon hosted primarily by the First Lady would suggest that these women were merely token appointments: "[T]hese are Presidential appointees who are women. They are not appointees of the First Lady. If we are to develop serious credibility with the moderate women leaders in the country, then I think we have to look at our appointees as appointees who happen to be women rather than women who are appointed merely because of

their sex.”³⁷⁶ This is a clear example of the Nixon Administration attempting to avoid regendered practices. Though Pat Nixon would have been fulfilling expectations and emulating practices initiated by previous First Ladies, the rise of the feminism generated a heightened sensitivity surrounding her women-focused activities. During this era, there was a concern that associating women with the First Lady would marginalize them.

But more often than not, members of the Nixon Administration thought Mrs. Nixon’s participation in women-centered events would be helpful to the President. For example, Helen Delich Bentley, Chair of the Federal Maritime Commission, wrote a widely circulated memo to the President outlining Republican women’s gripes about the Nixon Administration not doing enough to advance women. One of her proposed remedies to draw more attention to and provide greater recognition for outstanding women was to hold a series of White House luncheons with Mrs. Nixon.³⁷⁷ In such settings, Mrs. Nixon would be descriptively representing activist women. Also, she would appear to be serving as a trustee in her provision of greater recognition for them.

Mrs. Nixon was featured in a ceremony for the Advisory Committee on the Economic Role of Women, the Citizens’ Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Task Force on Women’s Rights and Responsibilities. In the White House State Dining Room, these groups presented the First Lady with a

³⁷⁶ Memorandum, Bill Rhatigan to Charles Colson, February 9, 1972, “Barbara Franklin Memos” folder, Box 39, Barbara Franklin Reference File, Anne Armstrong Papers, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

³⁷⁷ Memorandum, Helen Delich Bentley to The President, Undated, “Women and the Administration” folder, Box 28, Robert Finch Papers, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

bust of Susan B. Anthony in recognition of the President's achievement in advancing women to top-level government positions.³⁷⁸ White House staffer Judy Kaufman proposed that Mrs. Nixon accept the bust so that they could get good national coverage on the presentation. More importantly, Mrs. Nixon's accepting the bust would be a symbolic and timely addition to the President's efforts "to demonstrate his concern that women in this country are allowed equal opportunity and 'the freedom to pursue whatever career' they wish." Kaufman strategized that the purpose of the event would be

To accentuate the outstanding recognition which the President and Mrs. Nixon have shown for equality of opportunity for women during this Administration. Mrs. Nixon's acceptance of the bust and placement in the White House would demonstrate further the desire for continued progress which is being made for women's rights.³⁷⁹

This statement signals that the Administration believed it was important for the First Lady, as the most visible woman attached to the presidency, to exhibit a commitment to equality. Mrs. Nixon's act of accepting the bust of a suffragist who embodied the ideal of women's equality would symbolically convey the message that she too represented the ideals Anthony stood for. Kaufman also recognizes the First Lady's symbolic power in drawing national press attention to this women's event.

Judy Kaufman also proposed that Mrs. Nixon open the Assembly of the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States, even though this organization originally asked Richard Nixon to greet their

³⁷⁸ Mrs. Nixon's Event Schedule, "Mrs. Nixon's Activities: Sept. 1973-March 1974" folder, Box 17, Susan Porter Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

³⁷⁹ Memorandum, Judy Kaufman to Dave Parker, September 27, 1972, "Presidential Schedule Proposals (BHF)" folder, Box 40, Barbara Franklin Reference File, Anne Armstrong Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

delegates. As Kaufman noted, the purpose of the event was "to accentuate Mrs. Nixon's concern for women of all nations" and "further demonstrate the Administration's belief that women have much to contribute to national life." Barbara Franklin agreed that this would be an appropriate activity for Mrs. Nixon, given her "foreign travels and concern for women" and also given that the event would get good coverage in the "style" sections of papers.³⁸⁰ While this is yet another instance of an administration passing off women-centered events from the President to the First Lady, Kaufman seems to indicate that Mrs. Nixon's appearance may actually be preferable to the President's. Though the event's probable coverage in the style sections could be seen as marginalization, Kaufman's statement does indicate this may pique women's interest in the event, as well as highlight the First Lady's activist role and concern for women's rights.

Even the President initiated events featuring Mrs. Nixon as the centerpiece for women's outreach. He initiated an interview with the ladies of the press "concerning Mrs. Nixon and matters of interest to women." The interview was described as "giving the President an opportunity to develop certain themes on the First Lady, and to discuss with the ladies of the press matters of interest to women." The interview was recorded and broadcast over the radio on Saturday, March 13, 1971, a date chosen because of its proximity to Mrs. Nixon's

³⁸⁰ Memorandum, Judy Kaufman to Dave Parker, September 8, 1972; Memorandum, David Parker to Barbara Franklin and Jeanne Davis, August 28, 1972; Mrs. Grant Johnston to President Nixon, August 23, 1972, "Presidential Schedule Proposals (BHF)" folder, Box 40, Barbara Franklin Reference File, Anne Armstrong Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

birthday.³⁸¹ The President's focus on developing themes of equality surrounding not necessarily himself but his wife demonstrates the extent to which the First Lady symbolized the Administration's commitment to women's equality.

The First Lady's Office and Anne Armstrong's office would often work together to bring women's groups to the White House. Armstrong would regularly receive and respond to requests for the First Lady to meet with women's groups.³⁸² Members of the First Lady's staff would rely on Armstrong for recommendations concerning Mrs. Nixon's events. And they would look to Armstrong to research activities in which Mrs. Nixon was asked to participate.³⁸³

The First Lady's staff also took the lead in hosting women's events at the White House. Barbara Franklin told Anne Armstrong that Social Secretary Lucy Winchester

is interested in having any ideas about White House social functions or entertainment which involves, includes, or highlights women. It would be good, for example, to make sure women leaders are invited to church services and other functions. There may well be a number of other things we could do. Suggest someone think about it and touch base with Lucy.³⁸⁴

Mrs. Nixon and Anne Armstrong also served as surrogates for each other when one was unable to participate in a women's event. When Mrs. Nixon had to miss a

³⁸¹ Memorandum, "Interview with Ladies of the Press Concerning Mrs. Nixon and Matters of Interest to Women," March 11, 1971, "1/1/71-12/31/71" folder, HU2-5 Women, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

³⁸² For example, this was the case when the Ladies Auxiliary of Gideons International was trying to secure a meeting with Mrs. Nixon. See Memorandum, Susan Porter to Anne Armstrong, May 2, 1974, Box 3, Susan Porter Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

³⁸³ For example, Susan Porter relied on Armstrong's office to make recommendations for the City of Philadelphia's Bicentennial Celebrations and to research the American Freedom Train for Mrs. Nixon's potential participation. See Memorandum, Susan Porter to Anne Armstrong, August 14, 1973 and Memorandum, Susan Porter to Anne Armstrong, July 18, 1973, Box 3, Susan Porter Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

³⁸⁴ Memorandum, Barbara Franklin to Anne Armstrong, May 9, 1973, "Barbara Franklin Suggestions" folder, Office of Women's Programs File, Box 35, Anne Armstrong Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

tea for the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs in order to attend the inaugurations for the new Presidents of Venezuela and Brazil, Anne Armstrong hosted the ladies at the White House in her stead.³⁸⁵ And women's groups would sometimes write asking if either Anne Armstrong or Mrs. Nixon could participate in an event, as did the Susan B. Anthony Republican Club for their Annual Garden Party.³⁸⁶

So, even though some staffers expressed concern that handing over to the First Lady the responsibility for liaising with women would marginalize them, this trend continued through the Nixon Administration. The officers in charge of women's affairs actually helped to facilitate this gendered division of labor. In other words, though there was a belief that transgendered outreach would appeal to feminists, regendered practices still remained. Through Pat Nixon's liaison work, the predominant concern of administration officials seemed to be making sure that she symbolized principles of equality. For, there was a prevailing belief that the President's wife could best symbolically represent the Administration's commitment to women's equal treatment.

Immediately after Richard Nixon resigned from office, Anne Armstrong made a point to continue the working relationship she had with the First Lady's office. She wrote to the new First Lady Betty Ford, "My staff and I stand eager and ready to help you in any way on women's matters or any of the other areas for which I am responsible." She also sent a copy of questions and answers on

³⁸⁵ Lucy Winchester to Helen Engel, March 14, 1974, Box 4, Susan Porter Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

³⁸⁶ Marian D. Sweeting to Mrs. Nixon, January 31, 1974, "Possible Events" folder, Box 4, Susan Porter Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

women's issues her office drafted for Mrs. Ford to use as a reference source, along with a more detailed briefing packet on "issues of interest to women."³⁸⁷ This signaled that the gendered division of labor, as facilitated by presidential women's affairs officers, would continue into the Ford Administration.

The President sometimes encouraged Mrs. Ford to liaise with important women's groups. For instance, President Ford strongly encouraged his wife to attend a forum sponsored by the National Council of Negro Women on the topic of "Women in Housing." Because the women were high-powered executives of the country's top women's voluntary organizations, the President's advance staff recommended that Mrs. Ford remain with the group for as long of a time as possible. They reasoned that every extra minute she spent with them "would give each of these women a feeling of more personal involvement with Mrs. Ford and would be very advantageous."³⁸⁸ These statements reveal, first of all, that the President was prone to pass off women's outreach duties to the First Lady, indicating the continuation of the gendered division of labor, as well as the potential marginalization of female constituents. It also conveys the belief that Mrs. Ford could be a powerful symbolic representative through her outreach work because of her ability to stimulate a feeling of connectedness and friendship among women attendees.

Though, sometimes the First Lady recommended her own attendance at women's outreach events. For example, Mrs. Ford was the one who suggested

³⁸⁷ Anne Armstrong to Betty Ford, August 15, 1974, "Ford, Betty-Briefings" folder, Box 21, Lindh/Holm Files, Gerald Ford Library.

³⁸⁸ Memorandum, Susan Porter to Patti Matson, August 27, 1974; Memorandum, Patti Matson to Helen Smith, Undated, "9/14/74 National Council for Negro Women (1)" folder, Box 1, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

that she give a White House reception commemorating International Woman's Day, which would bring together outstanding women from all walks of life and fields of interest.³⁸⁹ Thus, she assumed some of the responsibility for the First Lady's office taking on women's liaison work, revealing her trusteeship.

Anne Armstrong resigned her post as Counsellor to the President and head of the Office of Women's Programs in 1974, within months of Nixon's resignation. During the Ford Administration, the Office of Women's Programs was embedded in the Office of Public Liaison, was headed by Special Assistant to the President Patricia Lindh and then later Jeanne Holm. When Patricia Lindh resigned in March of 1976 to work in the State Department, she wrote a letter to Betty Ford that encapsulates the extent of the First Lady's involvement with women's public liaison activities:

Probably at no time, and certainly not within recent memory, have the East Wing and the West Wing worked so closely together on issues of mutual concern. In particular your wholehearted support of the principle of true equality has been a tremendous source of morale for my office. Because of your dedication and spirit, the quality of my service to the President was immeasurably improved.³⁹⁰

This statement reveals how the First Lady was the major source of substantive and symbolic representation for women's issues.

Recounting all of Mrs. Ford's specific outreach efforts to women would be too lengthy, so the following paragraphs illustrate some of her more high-profile public liaison activities. Two such events included her participation in the Identity in Homemaking conference and the opening of the Remember the Ladies exhibit. These two events are generally representative of the types of events she would

³⁸⁹ Memorandum, Susan Porter to Sheila Weidenfeld and Nancy Lammerding, February 6, 1975, "Ford, Betty-Briefings" folder, Box 21, Lindh/Holm Files, Ford Library.

³⁹⁰ Patricia Lindh to Mrs. Ford, March 5, 1976, "Ford, Betty 2/26/76-3/17/76" folder, Box 4, PP5-1, WHCF, Ford Library.

undertake. During the peak of the feminist movement, the Ford Administration, like the Nixon Administration, made a concerted effort to highlight the achievements of activist women. At the same time, they had to be mindful not to offend the constituency of traditional homemakers who did not sympathize with feminism.

Betty Ford's participation in the Identity in Homemaking conference was a strategic political move to counteract her women's rights activism, which is recounted in detail in Chapter Five. In light of the women's rights movement's elevation of the working woman, the purpose of the conference was to give recognition to the status of homemakers and to highlight the need for research into contemporary problems faced by homemakers.³⁹¹ Susan Porter wrote to Sheila Weidenfeld that Mrs. Ford's participation "might have a positive effect of focusing her interest in women in the home and diluting some of what has been characterized as her radical stand in support of the Equal Rights Amendment."³⁹² Thus, in her remarks to the convention she elevated homemaking to the status of a career. She was careful to connect this with her support of the ERA, which she said promoted women's right to choose their own profession:

So let's face it; being a homemaker really is a profession and we must look at it as a profession. And just as a homemaker needs to find that same sense of awareness, that same sense of self through her job as a homemaker...And this is exactly why the subject of equal rights for women is so important. I am sure you all know how I stand on the Equal Rights Amendment...And I am in favor of the equal rights amendment...because I feel that everywoman should have the right to decide the direction of her life. Whether a woman chooses a career in the home or outside the

³⁹¹ Jinx Melia to Mrs. Ford, March 20, 1975, "9/26/75 Identity in Homemaking Conference (1)" folder, Box 7, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

³⁹² Memorandum, Susan Porter to Sheila Weidenfeld, May 1, 1975, "East Wing 8/9/74-9/30/74" folder, Box 11, Susan Porter Files, Ford Library.

home, what is important is that she makes that decision herself. Any pressures to restrict her choice should not be there... This is what real liberation is all about.³⁹³

Just as Lady Bird Johnson had to be careful not to exclude "ordinary" women from her Women Doers Luncheons, Betty Ford felt some pressure to descriptively represent homemakers through her own liaison work. Though, since the two sides were so opposed, it was very difficult for her to successfully justify how she 'stood for' both liberated and traditional women. Chapter Four will detail how Rosalynn Carter faced similar obstacles in her attempt to simultaneously descriptively represent these two types of womanhood.

Mrs. Ford's staff regularly organized events with career women's groups. When the Women Stockbrokers' Association, the first professional organization for women registered with the New York Stock Exchange, requested an appointment with her, Betty Ford's staff seized the opportunity. Susan Porter reasoned that Mrs. Ford meeting with this group would be ideal in light of International Women's Year and would be another chance for the Administration to "focus on women and their opportunities and potential."³⁹⁴ So, it seems that Mrs. Ford's staff pushed her to descriptively represent more liberated types of women through her liaison work.

To illustrate, the country's Bicentennial celebration fell during the Ford Administration. Betty Ford's biggest public role in the celebration was serving as the National Honorary Patroness of the Bicentennial Exhibition "Remember the Ladies: Women in America 1750-1815" in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Twenty

³⁹³ Remarks of the First Lady to the Homemakers Association, September 26, 1975, "9/26/75 Identity in Homemaking Conference (1)" folder, Box 7, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

³⁹⁴ Susan Porter to Mrs. Ford, Undated, "9/24/75 Women Stockbrokers Association" folder, Box 6, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

national women's groups were involved in the exhibition, which documented the changes that took place in the lives of women during the Revolutionary period. The Exhibition received widespread publicity and was considered among the finest exhibitions surrounding the Bicentennial.³⁹⁵ The directors of the exhibit envisioned that Mrs. Ford, reminiscent of Abigail Adams, would issue her own letter to President Ford to "remember the ladies," but she ended up delivering remarks that focused on the "unfinished business of the Revolution—full freedom and justice for women."³⁹⁶ However, during this time, the anti-ERA movement was well underway. During her speech, a group of hecklers chanted, "Go away, ERA," and carried signs that read, "Equal Rights Amendment Stamps out the Family" and "Stop ERA."³⁹⁷ Betty Ford's call for the advancement of "full freedom and justice for women" indicates her trusteeship in her 'acting for' women. Her call also has transgendered implications, as she was advocating for complete citizenship rights for women. However, the protest cries indicate that Mrs. Ford was not entirely successful in 'standing for' all types of women as a descriptive representative.

Betty Ford did have a role in presidential appointments. Within the Ford Administration, she was a very vocal advocate for high-profile female appointments, particularly to the Cabinet and the Supreme Court. She was very

³⁹⁵ Memorandum, Susan Porter to Peter Sorum, June 18, 1976, "6/29/76 Plymouth, Massachusetts- 'Remember the Ladies' Exhibit (1)" folder, Box 27, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

³⁹⁶ Remember the Ladies representative to Shelia Weidenfeld, January 26, 1976; Press Release, "Remarks of Mrs. Ford at Dedication of 'Remember the Ladies'" June 29, 1976, "6/29/76 Plymouth, Massachusetts- 'Remember the Ladies' Exhibit (1)" folder, Box 27, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

³⁹⁷ Judy Klemesrud, "Mrs. Ford Helps 'Remember the Ladies' of Revolutionary Era," *The New York Times*, June 30, 1976, "6/29/76 Plymouth, Massachusetts- 'Remember the Ladies' Exhibit (1)" folder, Box 27, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

candid about her efforts to push her husband to put more women in high office. She claimed responsibility for Carla Hills' appointment as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, remarking, "I think I've done a good job...I got a woman in the Cabinet." And she also stated, "I'm working on getting a woman on the Supreme Court as soon as possible...I always have it in the back of my mind."³⁹⁸ She reaffirmed these statements about her influence in getting a female Cabinet appointee and her intent to influence her husband to put a woman on the Supreme Court in her famous and controversial *60 Minutes* interview with Morley Safer,³⁹⁹ and on numerous other occasions during the Ford Administration.

Her activities in behalf of women's appointments, as well as her initiative in the liaison role, show her trusteeship as a substantive representative of women's interests. They also reveal how she furthered transgendered roles, as she pushed for women's appointments to high office on a more equal basis with men and advocated in behalf of women being given full citizenship rights. As with Pat Nixon, White House women's outreach offices, the President himself, and the East Wing staff helped the First Lady set her priorities as a liaison. And as in previous administrations, sometimes it seemed that the President and his staff were passing off women's liaison activities to the First Lady, potentially reinforcing a gendered division of labor and contributing to regendering. However, Mrs. Ford had to be careful how she descriptively represented women through her liaison work. Because of her activism in behalf of women's rights,

³⁹⁸ UPI Wire, "Madame Justice," May 6, 1975, "5/6/75 Federal Advisory Committee on the Status of Women," Box 5, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

³⁹⁹ Transcript, CBS 60 Minutes Interview with the First Lady, August 10, 1975, "8/10/75 '60 Minutes' Interview" folder, Box 6, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

she came under fire for 'standing for' only liberated women, while failing to represent traditional homemakers.

Like Betty Ford, Rosalynn Carter had a representative role in behalf of women's appointments. Sarah Weddington, Assistant to the President for Women's Affairs, was concerned about "the white male nominee trend" in U.S. District Court judgeships and about the President being blamed for the lack of female nominations. During a strategy meeting she held to discuss the problem, the attendees resolved that the First Lady and her female political network should play a large role in turning around this trend. Paul Costello, a spokesperson for Mrs. Carter, told the First Lady, "It was suggested that through your contact with Senators, their wives, Governors and their wives and others, you could informally discuss your's [sic] and the President's concern about the make-up of the nominees and urge sensitivity for a better representation of women and minorities."⁴⁰⁰ They also included her in their public liaison efforts "to get out the word that the President is not a free agent when it comes to naming women to the bench." Specifically, they asked Rosalynn Carter to mention the problem of women in federal judgeships in her interviews with Washington women reporters.⁴⁰¹ This is another instance of the President's staff passing off responsibility for women's representation to the First Lady, while simultaneously affirming the existence of and reinforcing the role of a 'girls' network' operating outside of the President's inner circle.

⁴⁰⁰ Memorandum, Paul Costello to Mrs. Carter, January 18, 1979, "Judicial Appointment Meeting 1/18/79" folder, Box 8, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁴⁰¹ Memorandum, Patricia Barrio to Jody Powell and Anne Wexler, January 24, 1979, "Judicial Appointment Meeting 1/18/79" folder, Box 8, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

West Wing staffers also lobbied Mrs. Carter to influence bureaucratic female appointments. Nelson Cruikshank, Counselor to the President on Aging, wrote to her regarding a vacancy in the position of Under Secretary of the Department of Health Education and Welfare (HEW). He told the First Lady that HEW Secretary Joseph Califano preferred a male for the position, but he went on, "Both in terms of substance and in terms of politics, I would suggest a woman be appointed to this post....I believe a woman would reflect social concerns in a way that would greatly strengthen the Secretary's top staff."⁴⁰² Here again, it is Rosalynn Carter who was delegated the task of substantively representing women as a trustee in the federal bureaucracy.

In turn, Mrs. Carter tried to make sure women were being considered for top posts. In her Projects Director Kathy Cade's papers on judicial appointments, there is a note from Mrs. Carter that reads, "Does Sarah Weddington have a list of women's names for possible appointments? If not she should have—and get to Hamilton [Jordan, Jimmy Carter's Chief of Staff]."⁴⁰³ This again reveals Mrs. Carter's trusteeship, as she is acting in the interest of women by securing appointments for them.

The First Lady also defended her husband's record on female appointments, while portraying herself as the one pushing the hardest for them. Her remarks to the New York Women in Communications luncheon illustrate her multifaceted role:

⁴⁰² Memorandum, Nelson Cruikshank to Rosalynn Carter, July 10, 1978, "Aging-Memoranda" folder, Box 1, Kathy Cade Papers, Carter Library.

⁴⁰³ Handwritten note by Rosalynn Carter, Undated, "Women-U.S. Judge Appointments," Box 48, Kathy Cade Papers, Carter Library.

I am here today to say that Jimmy has quietly, methodically done more to elevate women to their rightful place in policy positions in this Government than any other President in the history of the United States...Only five women have ever been appointed as Cabinet secretaries in the history of our country—two in his Administration. Only four women have been appointed as Under Secretary in the history of our country—two in his administration. Fourteen women Assistant Secretaries have been named. And for the first time—and listen to the numbers soar—we have five General Counsels for Cabinet-level departments; four out of twelve women Inspector Generals...and eight women Ambassadors appointed to foreign countries....

One of the most constructive steps that could be taken on behalf of this country would be to put the heat on your Senators about nominating women to the bench. In the history of the United States, only fifteen women have ever been appointed to Federal courts. But you should know that the Carter Administration expects to name a woman to at least eight of the Federal judicial circles, and to double the number of women on the Federal district bench.

I want to assure you that I use my influence at home on behalf of women whenever I can. Now Jimmy and I try not to talk business after hours, but I have been known to, well, mention that he needs—more women on the White House staff—more women in departmental jobs—and a list of distinguished women just in case he finds himself looking for a woman Supreme Court Justice!⁴⁰⁴

In this statement, Rosalynn Carter is acting as both a trustee—claiming initiative in advancing women's interests and explicitly stating that she was acting "on behalf of women"—as well as a delegate—defending her husband's record on women's appointments.

Beyond appointments, the First Lady made an effort to advance women's causes through White House events and other liaison activities. On May 15, 1978, the First Lady's Press Secretary released a statement announcing that for the first time in history, women of the Armed Forces would be participating in a formal White House arrival ceremony for a visiting head of state, President of Zambia Kenneth Kaunda. The release attributed the change in protocol to the First Lady's concern for the absence of women from such ceremonies. Mrs. Carter became aware of the unequal gender representation when a group of servicewomen wrote

⁴⁰⁴ Press Release, "Matrix Luncheon of New York Women in Communication: Mrs. Carter's Remarks," April 26, 1979, "New York Women in Communications Lunch 4/26/1979" folder, Box 9, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

to her asking for help in speeding the Military District of Washington's consideration of their request to be included in White House public ceremonial functions. She then issued a statement of support for the inclusion of women, and the Pentagon responded by announcing that the Military District of Washington would immediately begin making women part of their ceremonial units. In announcing the change in policy, Rosalynn Carter said, "I am gratified by the willingness of the services to correct an imbalance in the ranks of their ceremonial units and pleased, but not surprised, by the speed with which women met the necessary requirements. We will all be doubly proud in the future of the White House Honor Guard as an appropriate reflection of the role of women in the services."⁴⁰⁵ That the servicewomen would appeal to Mrs. Carter, and that the First Lady would respond by acting in behalf of them, shows Mrs. Carter's trusteeship, as well as her furtherance of transgendered White House protocol affairs practices.

The President's staff also planned to make Mrs. Carter the focal point of White House ceremonies honoring women, even when those events were to include the President. A strategy memo regarding a reception for the National Women's Political Caucus read, "It has been suggested that the President's participation be that of introducing his wife who will then make a brief statement (perhaps a minute for the President—2-3 minutes for Mrs. Carter). The reception is honoring women in government and the President's introduction of Rosalynn

⁴⁰⁵ Press Release, Office of the First Lady's Press Secretary, "Women Selected for White House Honor Guard Duty," May 15, 1978, "White House Honor Guard Ceremony, May 17, 1978" folder, Box 4, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

could tie in nicely with that.”⁴⁰⁶ Just as in the Nixon and Ford years, there was a prevailing belief that the First Lady could most effectively symbolize women’s equality for the Administration.

Similarly, Mrs. Carter presided over the White House “Pap Stamp Ceremony,” where a new 13-cent stamp honoring the late Dr. George Papanicolaou, who created the Pap test for the detection of cervical cancer, was unveiled. The First Lady delivered the opening remarks to the group in attendance, which included officials from health and women’s organizations.⁴⁰⁷ Also, in June of 1979 during a ceremony on the South Grounds of the White House, Rosalynn Carter accepted the new Susan B. Anthony coin from Secretary of the Treasury Michael Blumenthal on behalf of the President. The new dollar coin was the first official U.S. coin to portray an American woman. In her remarks to the group assembled, she attributed the bill’s passage to the hard work of women’s organizations, including the National Organization for Women, Daughters of the American Revolution, National Women’s Political Caucus, and the League of Women Voters, noting, “The new coin is not just a symbol, but rather a true sign that women are beginning to get the credit they deserve.”⁴⁰⁸ This ceremony was featured in White House public relations material promoting the President’s dedication to women, including an issue of the publication “White

⁴⁰⁶ Memorandum, Fran ? to Tim Smith, March 29, 1977, “HU 1-6 3/1/77-3/31/77” folder, Box HU-14, WHCF, Carter Library.

⁴⁰⁷ Press Release, Office of the First Lady’s Press Secretary, May 18, 1978, “Pap Stamp Dedication 5/18/78,” Box 4, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁴⁰⁸ “Remarks of Rosalynn Carter, White House Ceremony Commemorating Susan B. Anthony Dollar Coin,” June 20, 1979, “Susan B. Anthony Coin Reception” folder, Box 9, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

House News on Women,” produced by Sarah Weddington’s office.⁴⁰⁹ Rosalynn Carter’s role here was also symbolic. As with Pat Nixon’s acceptance of the Susan B. Anthony bust, Rosalynn’s Carter’s acceptance of the Susan B. Anthony coin helped to project onto the First Lady the ideals of women’s equality that Anthony embodied.



First Lady Rosalynn Carter and Susan B. Anthony's nieces, Susan B. Anthony and Charlotte Anthony at the unveiling of the Susan B. Anthony Dollar Coin. White House News on Women, Volume I, Issue III, Box 44, Sarah Weddington Files, Carter Library.

And it is important to note that, just like other First Ladies of this era, Rosalynn Carter’s office often planned women’s outreach events in conjunction with Sarah Weddington’s office. This was the case with the White House reception for the National Council of Jewish Women. The Council went through Weddington’s office to make the request for a meeting with the First Lady. And Weddington’s office also came up with suggestions for what to say to the group, emphasizing that Mrs. Carter should “talk about the necessity for ERA, about

⁴⁰⁹ “Susan B. Anthony on New Dollar Coin,” White House News on Women, Volume I, Issue III, Box 44, Sarah Weddington Files, Carter Library.

some of the work she has been doing on mental health and volunteerism, and emphasize how effective the women can be in advocacy.”⁴¹⁰

To summarize, First Ladies of this era served as trustees, through their work in behalf of appointments and their efforts to highlight women's achievements and focus attention of women's concerns. Similar to previous eras, as symbolic representatives, their liaison roles were intended to cultivate feelings of camaraderie with women's groups through the connections they made with them. As descriptive representatives, they were compelled to consider what notion of cultural womanhood they 'stood for.' Because of the influence of second wave feminism, they usually opted to 'stand for' the modern, liberated woman, in order to appease women's rights groups. However, as in previous eras, their women-focused liaison roles were often delegated to them by the West Wing and women's affairs officials, furthering a gendered division and, thereby, regendered liaison roles. However, transgendering is very apparent in these First Ladies' liaison roles. When First Ladies 'stood for' and 'acted for' liberated women, they were in effect sending the message that they were working against traditional gender roles, thus transgendering.

The Liaison Role in the Era of Family Values: Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush

This section examines the roles of Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush in women's outreach. As the above section demonstrates, in the decades before the

⁴¹⁰ Memorandum, Sarah Weddington to Paula Watson, October 12, 1979, "National Council of Jewish Women 10/16/79" folder, Box 9, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

1980 election, there was "a synchronous movement of the presidency and women to more broadly include women within the work of administrations, in political appointments made, and in policy considered." However, "this movement forward came to a halt in the 1980s."⁴¹¹ The Republicans disassociated themselves from feminism, and feminist groups became an independent power base within the Democratic coalition. Thus, both Republican administrations were reluctant to reach out to women as women, and this had implications for the First Ladies' public liaison roles.

Many Reagan Administration officials pointed to a lack of attention to the concerns of women. Even Linda Chavez, the deputy assistant for public liaison acknowledged that many of the senior White House officials "unfamiliar with dealing with women." One former White House aide remarked, "There's very much a barefoot-and-in-the-kitchen mentality in the White House....Nancy Reagan prefers to deal with men, and that certainly has the effect of setting a pace."⁴¹² Chavez's statement reveals the power and influence that the First Lady can potentially have in taking the leadership of and setting the tone for women's outreach within a presidential administration. Nancy Reagan's avoidance of this duty meant that there was no obvious role model for other officials to follow in how to conduct women's outreach.

As in the Kennedy Administration, the lack of an influential, formalized White House institution to exert pressure on the First Lady could partly explain why Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush played the most limited public liaison roles

⁴¹¹ Martin, *The Presidency and Women: Promise, Performance, & Illusion*, 6.

⁴¹² Lois Romano, "Women and the Narrow Corridors; At the White House, Frustrations Linger over the Lack of Access and Recognition," *The Washington Post*, 2/4/1986.

since Mrs. Kennedy. The club women of the earlier eras had long ceased to be an important constituency, and many of the major organized women's interest groups had feminist leanings. That is not to say that Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush had no involvement with women's groups. Both women occasionally gave speeches to partisan women's groups and other such organizations. But, compared to First Ladies before and since, there is much less evidence that this constituted a major part of their role.

During the Reagan years, it was the President's daughter Maureen Reagan who served as the Administration's most prominent liaison to women. Near the end of Reagan's first term, Maureen decided that her father's support among women was not as strong as it could be. Therefore, she took it upon herself to travel around the country speaking to women's groups about the Reagan Administration.⁴¹³ While Nancy Reagan said that she supported Maureen in her endeavor, she was not a major co-participant. Mrs. Reagan's lack of involvement provides evidence that she mostly eschewed 'acting for' women as a liaison.

Another possible reason for these Republican First Ladies not taking as active of a role in reaching out to women as women was that these efforts could be framed as conflicting with the Republican family values agenda. The liberated versus traditionalist women's debate was exhibited in the furor over Barbara Bush's invitation to give Wellesley College's 1990 commencement address. American First Ladies have been routinely called upon to address women's colleges. But no such address before or since sparked such a great amount of

⁴¹³ Nancy Reagan, *My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1989), 154.

coverage or controversy. The Wellesley incident reveals the complications involved in First Ladies substantively representing women in the midst of the culture wars.

About 150 graduating seniors had signed a petition opposing Barbara Bush delivering Wellesley's commencement speech. The petition stated that "to honor Barbara Bush as commencement speaker is to honor a woman who has gained recognition through the achievement of her husband, which contradicts what we have been taught over our years at Wellesley." The news accounts focused on this because of the clash of feminism and family values. They focused on how she had dropped out of Smith College in 1944 at the end of her freshman year to marry George Bush.⁴¹⁴ In other words, the Wellesley students were saying that Mrs. Bush could not and should not speak for them because she did not descriptively represent them. In other words, she could not 'stand for' them because she was not sufficiently like them.

Barbara Bush was actually the students' second choice for a commencement speaker. The first was feminist Alice Walker, author of *The Color Purple*. In the midst of the furor, Wellesley President Nan Keohane remarked that the controversy over Barbara Bush was beneficial because it fostered a public debate about the meaning of feminism. And spark a public debate it did. The protest resulted in "reams of editorials, letters, calls, telegrams from alumnae, talk shows and call-in radio programs" and prompted "a lot of talk about women, feminism, and the current buzzwords: changing roles, choices and

⁴¹⁴ Donnie Radcliffe, "Mrs. Bush's School Battle; The First Lady Calm, in the Wellesley Storm," *The Washington Post*, 5/3/1990.

empowerment.”⁴¹⁵ In this situation, Mrs. Bush evidenced clear symbolic power and symbolism, as she evoked strong emotional sentiments from the public based on her embodiment of traditional feminine ideals.

Barbara Bush did ultimately deliver the commencement speech, and her address delicately walked the line between feminist values and family values. She urged the graduates to embrace diversity and practice tolerance. But she also urged them not to put career above human relationships and not to put anything before their children. The theme the First Lady carried through her speech was that graduates should direct their own paths and choose their own dreams:

For over fifty years, it was said that the winner of Wellesley's Annual Hoop Race would be the first to get married. Now they say the winner will be the first to become the CEO. Both of these stereotypes show too little tolerance....So I offer you today a new legend: The winner of the hoop race will be the first to realize her dream...not society's dream...her own personal dream. And who knows? Somewhere out in this audience may even be someone who will one day follow in my footsteps, and preside over the White House as the President's spouse. I wish him well!⁴¹⁶

Mrs. Bush's speech can be compared to Betty Ford's address to the Identity in Homemaking conference. Only, in this case, Mrs. Bush was under fire for being too traditional, while Betty Ford was criticized for being too activist. Both, however, used their speeches to clarify their descriptive representation of women. They affirmed women's roles as both homemakers and professionals, indicating that they did not want to be viewed as representing just one particular cultural notion of womanhood.

⁴¹⁵ Megan Rosenfeld, "The Wellesley Protest, Beyond Barbara Bush," *The Washington Post*, 5/28/1990.

⁴¹⁶ Text of Remarks of Mrs. Bush to Wellesley College Commencement, June 1, 1990, in Bush, *Barbara Bush: A Memoir*, 568-71.

Controversies between women collegians and Barbara Bush over feminism and family values were not just limited to Wellesley. Barbara Bush ran into opposition when her would-be alma mater Smith College decided to confer upon her an honorary degree. While she was there, she ran into a group of protesters with a picture of her screened onto the front with the caption reading, "Left in '44 to marry George" and a statement on the back reading, "There must be a better way to get a Smithy in the White House." Other students were upset because of President Bush's anti-abortion stance. One student remarked, "I feel that of all the women they could have chosen as most representative of women's rights and the feminist movement there were plenty of others who have a hell of a lot more to say than Barbara Bush."⁴¹⁷ This student was conveying that she did not believe Barbara Bush 'stood for' or descriptively represented the students of Smith because the traditional gender roles she embodied did not mirror their own.

To summarize, First Ladies during the Reagan-Bush era served as relatively limited liaisons to women. Nancy Reagan did not 'act for' women on a regular basis, while Barbara Bush's experiences demonstrated the difficulties traditional First Ladies had reaching out to women's groups in the midst of the culture wars. Several other factors contributed to their roles as limited liaisons. First, there was no influential, formalized women's outreach institution in the White House to either pressure First Ladies to perform outreach activities or to help them strategize about how to be more effective in liaising with women. The second inhibiting factor was a new conservative ideology that did not prioritize

⁴¹⁷ Donnie Radcliffe, "First Degree for the First Lady," *The Washington Post*, 9/7/1989.

women's outreach. Thus, First Ladies Reagan and Bush served as the most limited liaisons since Jacqueline Kennedy.

Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush: The Liaison Role Resurrected

The Clinton Administration made an effort to build ties with women's rights groups. To this end, President Clinton established a women's affairs office, but it only lasted a couple of years and its influence was weak.⁴¹⁸ Though Hillary Clinton sometimes worked with this office, the East Wing can be more accurately characterized as the main White House entity for liaising with women during the Clinton years. George W. Bush has not established a women's affairs office. However, within the Bush Administration, Laura Bush has served as the main women's liaison. While some of Hillary Clinton's outreach efforts had feminist undertones, her work also focused on the softer theme of women, children, and families, perhaps in an effort to appease the family values forces. Laura Bush has been particularly responsive to women and their health and wellness concerns.

In 1995, President Clinton created the Office of Women's Initiatives and Outreach (OWIO), which was attached to the Public Liaison's Office within the Executive Office of the President. During the Clinton years, the most successful OWIO outreach initiative was a series of events called "At the Table." This program featured female Administration officials leading roundtable discussions

⁴¹⁸ Noelle Norton and Barbara Morris, "Feminist Organizational Structure in the White House: The Office of Women's Initiatives and Outreach," *Political Research Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2003).

to gauge the policy concerns of women constituents and to ensure that women's voices were heard.⁴¹⁹

The OWIO and "At the Table" hosted numerous events featuring First Lady Hillary Clinton. She hosted a series of roundtables around the country focusing on working women's issues. Hillary Clinton was the featured speaker at an OWIO Wyoming event in August of 1995 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of women's suffrage.⁴²⁰ In April of 1997, the OWIO sponsored the Women's Economic and Leadership Summit at the White House, for which Hillary Clinton served as the Honorary Chair. She was also the featured speaker at an event co-sponsored by the OWIO and the Department of Health and Human Services' "Girl Power!" initiative, where she delivered remarks on the need for more programs and research directed at girls and their needs.⁴²¹ So, Hillary Clinton was the first First Lady since Rosalynn Carter to 'act for' women as a trustee by addressing their needs as constituents through her outreach work.

Hillary Clinton also conducted many women's outreach events through her East Wing office. As First Lady, she wanted to make it a priority to "speak out publicly...on issues affecting women, children, and families." So, many of her liaison activities were centered on this theme. For instance, in 1994, she decided that she would promote the largest survey of working women ever conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor. The survey revealed that the two dominant concerns of women were affordable quality child care and balancing work and

⁴¹⁹ Norton and Morris, "Feminist Organizational Structure in the White House: The Office of Women's Initiatives and Outreach."

⁴²⁰ Martin, *The Presidency and Women: Promise, Performance, & Illusion*, 256.

⁴²¹ <http://www.girlpower.gov/AdultsWhoCare/campinfo/newsletter/winter97/hillary.htm> (2/24/2006).

family life. So, Mrs. Clinton decided to meet with the women who had participated in the survey to learn more about their lives. As a result of her meetings, she convened two White House conferences, one on Early Childhood Development and Learning and another on Child Care. To promote women's retirement security, the First Lady chaired a panel at the White House Conference on Social Security in 1998 to explore the system's structural discrimination against women.⁴²² Her leadership and participation in these activities reveal the First Lady's trusteeship in the area of women, children, and family concerns. These initiatives reveal Hillary Clinton representing both traditional and working women's needs. In these events, she focused attention on working women's issues but also demonstrated her concern for the well-being of children.

While her role as a liaison to American women was extensive, Hillary Clinton also made a special effort to reach out to women abroad. Her women-centered diplomatic efforts will be covered extensively in Chapter Five. But it is essential to note that this constituted a major part of her outreach role. After her famous international women's rights speech at the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women's Rights in Beijing China in 1995, Hillary Clinton noted, "my visibility around the world had dramatically increased, and my office was bombarded with requests for me to make speeches and attend meetings on my own to discuss issues affecting women in the countries we visited." As she described her role on international trips:

I usually branched off from Bill's official delegation to meet with women in their homes and workplaces, tour hospitals that used innovative approaches to expanding health care to children and families and visit schools, especially those educating

⁴²² Clinton, *Living History*, 380-82, 85.

girls. In these settings, I learned about the local culture and reinforced the message that a nation's prosperity is linked to the education and well-being of girls and women.⁴²³

Her public diplomacy further reveals her trusteeship, as she made a special effort to connect with girls and women abroad. Also, Hillary Clinton mentions that she would "branch off" from the presidential delegation to learn about the conditions of women, illustrating a possible gendered division of labor in their international outreach roles.

When George W. Bush entered office, he did not reinstitute the equivalent of the OWIO, but he also did not neglect women's outreach. Rather, for the first time since the Johnson years, the First Lady's office became the only White House body for women's outreach. As scholars have observed, Laura Bush "is the woman who most frequently represented the administration on women's issues" and is its "primary female spokesperson for women's rights."⁴²⁴ Some have speculated that the selection of Laura Bush as a women's representative was a strategic move because "she seems comparatively nonthreatening as an advocate of women's rights since her personal choices to date seem to correspond with relatively traditional gender roles."⁴²⁵ Thus, since people view her as 'standing for' traditional women, she is more able to evade criticism if she substantively represents women's rights through her liaison work.

As First Lady, Laura Bush serves as the Bush Administration's "advocate of women's health," and she has adopted women's health and wellness as one of

⁴²³ Clinton, *Living History*, 386-88.

⁴²⁴ Michael L. Ferguson, "'W' Stands for Women: Feminism and Security Rhetoric in the Post-9/11 Bush Administration," *Politics & Gender* 1, no. 1 (2005): 18.

⁴²⁵ Ferguson, "'W' Stands for Women: Feminism and Security Rhetoric in the Post-9/11 Bush Administration," 19.

her major outreach initiatives. Her White House profile reads, "As a wife and mother, Mrs. Bush recognizes the urgency for women to make a commitment to a lifestyle that promotes lifelong health, not only for every woman's own benefit but also for the benefit of family and loved ones." Laura Bush has worked to educate women about the risks of heart disease, the number one killer of women in the U.S. She serves as a spokesperson for The Heart Truth campaign's Red Dress Project, a federal initiative housed within the Department of Health and Human Services. Laura Bush's 'acting for' women by looking after their health and well-being illustrates her trusteeship.

President Bush has recognized Laura Bush's trusteeship in behalf of women's health. Each year since 2001, President Bush has signed a presidential proclamation declaring each February American Heart Month. In his 2006 proclamation, he noted, "First Lady Laura Bush helps lead 'The Heart Truth' campaign through her Women's Health and Wellness Initiative."⁴²⁶ The campaign pairs its message with the visual image of the Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease to help raise awareness.

⁴²⁶ A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America, February 1, 2006
<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/02/20060201-9.html>> (2/22/2006).



Laura Bush participates in a roundtable with Delphia Daniel, heart disease survivor, and Dr. Paul Colavita, Cardiologist, Sanger Clinic, at Carolinas Medical Center Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2006, in Charlotte, NC, to promote heart disease awareness, education and prevention. White House photo by Shealah Craighead. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/firstlady/women.html>> (2/22/2006)

Mrs. Bush helped debut The Red Dress Project at the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in New York on February 14, 2003. She also participated in morning show interviews in front of a collection of nineteen red dresses from America's top designers. In February of 2005 at the Kennedy Center, she and Nancy Reagan unveiled the First Lady's Red Dress Collection. Laura Bush remarked, "We've all made good use of our red dresses, and now we're using them to promote our common interest in women's health."⁴²⁷ Laura Bush has also highlighted The Heart Truth events around the country. In 2003, she visited the Women's Cardiac Center of St. Luke's Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri and Sentara Norfolk General Hospital in Virginia to promote the fight against heart disease and to urge women to take their health seriously. While these examples further illustrate Laura Bush's trusteeship in looking after women's health concerns, the 'dress'

⁴²⁷ Laura Bush Remarks at Unveiling of First Ladies Red Dress Collection, May 12, 2005, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/05/20050512-1.html>> (2/21/2006)

imagery also highlights her femininity and the feminine character this particular outreach role.

Though this type of outreach was primarily feminine, the Administration made an effort to point out how Laura Bush's focus on women's health impacted the Administration's policy priorities. For instance, the Bush White House released a statement on how the "2004 budget reflects Mrs. Bush's commitment to heart disease awareness and research." The statement pointed out, for example, that the budget for the CDC and NIH provides over \$382 million for cardiovascular/pulmonary prevention activities and research related to women. It also noted that the budget includes \$12 million for the CDC's WISEWOMAN program, providing women with screenings for high blood pressure and cholesterol to help prevent cardiovascular disease.⁴²⁸

To summarize, the above examples illustrate Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush's trusteeship, reaching out to women and looking after their interests as citizens. Beyond this, it is important to emphasize how both of their offices were the primary White House institutions to undertake women's representation, providing further evidence for a gendered division of labor in the Executive Branch.

⁴²⁸ <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/firstlady/initiatives/womenandheartdisease6.html>> (2/21/2006).

Conclusion

This chapter began by identifying the First Lady as a public liaison. The preceding discussion provided evidence for how building relationships with women's groups, communicating with female constituencies, promoting female appointments, and generally looking after the needs and interests of women have been some of the First Lady's most important representative tasks. This chapter also set out to identify the conditions under which certain First Ladies have been the sole or primary liaisons to women within their administrations.

The outreach roles of Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush indicate that the East Wing is once again becoming the primary, or even sole, White House institution to focus on representing women. The only other time in history this happened was during the Johnson years. One condition these two periods have in common is the absence of any other prominent institution to deal with these issues, such as the partisan Women's Divisions of the 1930s through the 1950s and the White House women's affairs offices of the 1970s. Thus, it may be said that when another formalized women's affairs office is not connected to the Executive Branch, it falls to the First Lady, as a prominent feminine space within the presidency, to handle this role. When such institutions have existed, they have largely facilitated and set priorities for the First Lady's liaison role.

Beyond the absence of a formalized women's outreach institution, presidential political ideology is another important factor in determining whether and how First Ladies prioritize women's outreach. In the Reagan and Bush I era, conservative ideology and family values prohibited reaching out to activist

women and viewed courting women as a special constituency as having the trappings of feminism. However, the political ideologies of the Johnson and Clinton Administrations did not prevent such outreach to women. And, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Bush II Administration more closely resembles Johnson and Clinton than Reagan and Bush I in terms of women's political representation.

Another contributing factor is that both the President and the First Lady must also both be willing to reach out to women, as were the Johnsons, Clintons, and Bush IIs. Jackie Kennedy's role was limited because she was fundamentally disinterested in building ties to women. Nor did JFK think that this was an important enough role for the First Lady to undertake. So, even though conditions were ripe in the Kennedy Administration for the East Wing to serve as the locus of women's outreach, with no other women's office being influential at this time, she forfeited the liaison role. Though it is unclear where the actual impetus came from for First Ladies from 1921 through 1933 to serve as liaisons, it is evident that they were interested in promoting women's civic engagement.

There are some patterns of representation that have generally persisted from 1920 through the present. As liaisons, most First Ladies have 'acted for' women by reaching out to them. However, the types of women to whom they reached out differed by era. First Ladies from 1921 through 1933 advanced women's civic engagement and political activism. From 1933 through 1961, First Ladies primarily reached out to party and club women, and ER was particularly notable for her patronage role. Lady Bird Johnson's office reached out to women

doers, as well as advanced women's appointment. First Ladies of the 1970s made a special effort to form ties with women's rights groups. While First Ladies of the Reagan-Bush era shied away from women's groups, Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush reassumed an active role in reaching out to women, though not necessarily feminist women.

Oftentimes, and especially through their patronage work, First Ladies resembled trustees in their 'acting for' women. Oftentimes, First Ladies initiated the liaison activities. Even when the initiative was not their own, the women with whom First Ladies liaised were given the impression that they were acting in their interests. The connections they were able to make with women were impression were part of their symbolic representative role, as their liaison activities were designed to stimulate feelings of appreciation, friendship, excitement, and inspiration within female constituents. Yet, controversy sometimes arose surrounding their roles as descriptive representatives, particularly beginning around the dawning of the second wave of the feminist movement. From Lady Bird Johnson onward, First Ladies were confronted about what notion of cultural womanhood they would 'stand for,' liberated womanhood or traditional womanhood.

These representative roles also have implications for regendering and transgendering. A transgendered political system is one in which the actors at all levels perform roles that are seen as appropriate regardless of sex. On one level, First Ladies have worked toward drawing women into the political system, promoting their appointment to federal office and according them governmental

recognition just as men are given recognition. Thus, First Ladies through their liaison roles have advanced women's citizenship. However, amidst this democratic advancement, regendering is very apparent. The passing off of responsibility for women's outreach from the President and his staff to the First Lady and her staff was evident throughout all eras. This created a gender-based division of labor and strengthened the operation of a 'girls' network' which operated in an orbit outside of the President's inner circle. This 'girls' network' included and was reinforced by the partisan Women's Divisions and White House women's affairs offices when they existed.

The patterns in the First Ladies' political representation of women detailed in Chapters One and Two are also evident in their policy work. As the next chapter will demonstrate, First Ladies' policy work in behalf of women and the 'domestic' economy, with a focus on women as housewives and consumers, further reveals how they perform gender through their political representation.

~Chapter Three~

First Housewives and the 'Domestic' Economy

The first public policy role for which American First Ladies assumed responsibility concerned women and the 'domestic' economy. The choice of the term 'domestic' to describe their economic activity is purposive. Within the realm of national economic policy, First Ladies narrowly focused on issues related to women's domesticity. In particular, through their work in economic policy, First Ladies represented the American housewife, emphasizing her role as a consumer.

This chapter will show how First Ladies' representative roles have definite implications for regendering. In framing women's policy interests around their roles as housewives, First Ladies explicitly reenact and recognize women's domesticity, which is the essence of regendering. But it is also necessary to acknowledge how First Ladies have advanced women's "economic citizenship," thereby according to them a measure of political power. Alice Kessler-Harris defines "economic citizenship" as "the achievement of an independent and relatively autonomous status that marks self-respect and provides access to the full play of power and influence that defines participation in a democratic society." This may tend toward the transgendering end of the continuum, as women's economic citizenship provided "the respect and the resources necessary to define a person as a competent actor in the public arena."⁴²⁹

⁴²⁹ Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 12-13.

To further explain the transgendered implications, in the early to mid twentieth century, women's roles as home economists and consumers constituted one way in which they could be defined as competent actors in the public sphere. During this time, the rise of home economics as a discipline "represented one of the ways by which women attempted to carve out a place for themselves in the male-dominated world of work."⁴³⁰ Women's role as home economists translated into consumer power. The emergence of "woman-as-consumer," which coincided with the rise of home economics, actually resulted from "a potent drive to give voice to a strong American ideology of equality..." For, the recognition of women as both homemakers and consumers "granted for them a legitimate...position as 'workers' within the new economic regime."⁴³¹ Just as the emergence of the woman-as-consumer and home economist helped women achieve the status of legitimate economic actors, the First Ladies' representation of the woman-as-consumer and home economist accorded to them the status of important actors in 'domestic' economic policy, potentially increasing their political power.

The First Lady's representation of women in the domestic economy reveals her trusteeship in terms of substantive representation, as informing, guiding, assisting, and looking after women were instrumental to her 'acting for' them. However, in this chapter, the First Lady's role as a symbolic representative is especially important. The First Lady has served as an important gender role

⁴³⁰ Glenna Matthews, *"Just a Housewife": The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 157-59.

⁴³¹ Martyn J. Lee, *Consumer Culture Reborn: The Cultural Politics of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1993), 91.

model, as she has embodied the ideal housewife and set an example for the women of the country in how to carry out their own domestic roles. As the nation's First Housewife, she has also inspired and motivated women to become involved in 'domestic' economic policies and programs, revealing the power expressed through her role as a symbolic representative.

As noted above, the domestic economy was the first policy realm in which First Ladies had a role. Based on the existing historical record, it is apparent that Lou Hoover was the first First Lady to reach out to women as homemakers and consumers on a policy level. Yet, not every First Lady had a role in the domestic economy and there is little evidence that this role has persisted through the present day. Rather, this representative role was undertaken by certain First Ladies from the late 1920s through the mid 1970s. Betty Ford was the last First Lady to represent the woman-as-consumer and housewife.

Why is the First Lady's representative role in relation to the 'domestic' economy confined to this historical period? As demonstrated below, the First Lady's initial role in the domestic economy was spurred by the greatest financial crisis in American history, the Great Depression, in response to women's need for help and guidance in how to carry out their domestic roles. The cessation of this role can best be explained by changing demographics of the workforce and family. In the late 1970s, "women who were employed had become the majority and women without jobs a minority," and it was not until the late 1970s that "the progressively greater numbers of employed women started drawing public

attention.”⁴³² This trend continued through the proceeding decades. By the year 2000, census figures revealed that the traditional family model made up of two parents, a male breadwinner, and a stay-at-home mother characterized less than a quarter of all U.S. households, while the most common type of household had become the two-wage-earning couple with or without dependents.⁴³³ These changing demographics show how women since the late 1970s began to interact directly with the economy just as men did. In other words, their economic roles were less filtered through the family as they became integrated into the workforce. Thus, it may not have been politically expedient for First Ladies since the late 1970s to focus their attention on women as housewives, as they had become a minority. The First Ladies of the late 1970s, Rosalynn Carter in particular, did sometimes address economic issues, just not always those unique to housewives. Instead, the issues they worked on were now more feminist in nature, such as child care for working mothers and “displaced homemakers,” which had implications for men’s and women’s equal treatment in the workplace. Chapter Four will also show how, during the 1970s, First Ladies addressed women’s economic roles through the ERA.

Also, unlike the campaign and liaison roles outlined in the previous two chapters, not every First Lady from the 1920s through the 1970s actively promoted presidential economic programs targeted at women. This chapter focuses on the representative work of Lou Hoover, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mamie

⁴³² Barbara Bergmann, *The Economic Emergence of Women*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 11-12.

⁴³³ Lynne E. Ford, *Women and Politics: The Pursuit of Equality*, 2 ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), 285.

Eisenhower, Lady Bird Johnson, and Betty Ford. Thus, the omission of Florence Harding, Grace Coolidge, Bess Truman, Jacqueline Kennedy, and Pat Nixon must be justified. There are several potential explanations for these First Ladies' non-involvement in 'domestic' economic policy: the absence of serious economic crisis or concern, the lack of women-centered programmatic institutions to help along the First Lady's representative role, and individual inclination.

The Great Depression thrust Lou Hoover and Eleanor Roosevelt into economic representative roles, while LBJ's concern for women being taken advantage of as consumers spurred Lady Bird Johnson's representative role. Inflationary pressures led Betty Ford to address women in the 'domestic' economy. So, relatively favorable economic conditions can perhaps in part explain Florence Harding and Grace Coolidge's lack of policy advocacy. Both women served during a time when the health of the national economy was seemingly not a major concern. During the 1920s, the economy was "roaring." America was a "country tired of sacrificing for war" and reverted to ways "that emphasized personal comfort and national isolation."⁴³⁴ By the time World War II ended, America's time of economic hardship had passed. The economy was rather stable throughout the 1950s and 1960s, which could in part explain Bess Truman and Jackie Kennedy's lack of involvement.

Another determining factor is the existence of women-centered programmatic institutions within the Executive Branch with directors who proactively encouraged First Ladies' policy participation. For example, the Women's Division of the Treasury Department induced Mamie Eisenhower's

⁴³⁴ Caroli, *First Ladies*, 153.

representative role. The Women's Division of the PECE provided Lou Hoover with support for her relief work. Lady Bird Johnson had Esther Peterson to help arrange activities for her, just as Eleanor Roosevelt had Hilda Smith and Ellen Woodward. It is not evident that Jacqueline Kennedy or Bess Truman had similar working relationships with any female-centered institution in the presidential branch. As demonstrated in previous chapters, the Nixon Administration's primary women's outreach officials were greatly concerned with appeasing the feminist movement, so having Pat Nixon focus on housewives would have counteracted these efforts. Whereas, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, Betty Ford's staff arranged homemaker-focused activities for her in order to counteract the fallout from her women's rights activism.

Another factor that can explain the variance in First Ladies' economic policy roles is individual inclination. Though this may not be a social scientifically satisfying explanation, it cannot be ignored as a determining factor in some cases. It cannot be denied that Bess Truman and Jacqueline Kennedy strongly resisted engaging in politics. Out of all of the twentieth century First Ladies, these two were by far the most averse to performing public activities.

The First Lady's assumption of a role in economic policy must also be traced to developments within the modern policy-oriented and plebiscitary presidency. As policy leaders, Fred Greenstein points out that all modern Presidents have a duty to "regularly initiate and seek to win support for legislative action" and "engage in direct policy making through executive orders and other

actions not formally ratified by Congress."⁴³⁵ Presidents must propose and implement comprehensive legislative agendas, such as FDR's New Deal and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society.

In the realm of economic policy in particular, modern Presidents must assume the role of "Manager of Prosperity."⁴³⁶ First Ladies have helped the President fulfill the roles of economic policy leader and "Manager of Prosperity." Within the plebiscitary presidency, the Chief Executive is "expected to be the chief spokesperson for the political and economic system..."⁴³⁷ The American people look to the President to cure and prevent economic depression, alleviate hardship, generate growth, and remedy unjust business practices. Thus, there is a consequent necessity that the President form a direct link with the people regarding their economic concerns. As the following chapter will show, the First Lady has served as the representative of American women within the 'domestic' economy by relating presidential economic policies to their roles as consumers and housewives.

Lou Hoover and Women in the Great Depression

Within several months of Herbert Hoover's inauguration in 1929, the American economy collapsed. Stock values dropped, unemployment rose, and banks faltered. The Great Depression had begun, and the American people looked

⁴³⁵ Greenstein, "Change and Continuity in the Modern Presidency," 46.

⁴³⁶ Clinton Rossiter, *The American Presidency* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 22-24.

⁴³⁷ Rimmerman, *Presidency by Plebiscite: The Regan-Bush Era in Institutional Perspective*, 2, 38.

to their President to spark the economy and alleviate the tremendous poverty plaguing the population.

It took this economic crisis to thrust First Lady Lou Henry Hoover into an economic leadership position. While President Herbert Hoover agonized over how to boost farm prices, fix the banking system, and generate stock market recovery, Lou Hoover instructed American women about their role in the Depression and helped organize relief efforts directed toward women. Though her role in economic relief is remarkable, it has been eclipsed in the American memory by the persona of Eleanor Roosevelt.⁴³⁸ Lou Hoover, not Eleanor Roosevelt, was the first First Lady to draw upon a network of female government employees and friends for relief work, to deliver public radio addresses on the national economy, and to have her relief activities be the subject of Administration press releases,⁴³⁹ most of which served to guide and instruct women on how to behave as housewives and consumers through the Depression.

In response to the unemployment crisis, in 1930 President Hoover created the President's Emergency Committee for Employment (PECE), which from the outset had a Women's Division. Until the creation of this agency, "few channels in her husband's administration were open to [Lou Hoover]." Dr. Lillian Gilbreth was appointed head to the PECE's Women's Division, and Alice M. Dickson was selected as her assistant. These two women, along with Louise Stanley of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Home Economics and Mary Anderson of

⁴³⁸ Martha H. Swain, "Prelude to the New Deal: Lou Henry Hoover and Women's Relief Work," in *Uncommon Americans: The Lives and Legacies of Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover*, ed. Timothy Walch (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 151.

⁴³⁹ Swain, "Prelude to the New Deal: Lou Henry Hoover and Women's Relief Work," 163.

the Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor, allied with Lou Hoover in handling her overwhelming requests for assistance and in helping struggling homemakers manage their limited budgets.⁴⁴⁰ There is much evidence that Mrs. Hoover worked closely with this network of women to come up with concrete solutions to the innumerable requests that flooded her office. In fact, so many women barraged the First Lady with requests for assistance that her personal secretary could not handle all of them. As a solution, some of the correspondence was transferred to Gilbreth's office for the Women's Division to handle.⁴⁴¹ This shows how a 'girls' networks' was operating within relief work and that the First Lady was a key actor within this network. It also reveals how the women of the country looked to the First Lady for representation during this time of crisis, as well as how Mrs. Hoover exercised trusteeship in answering their requests for assistance.

Lou Hoover delivered numerous public addresses on women and the economic crisis. In March of 1931, she delivered a nationwide radio address on "the part that women can play in unemployment relief." As one newspaper article summarized the purpose and origin of her speech,

In making the address, Mrs. Hoover will be furthering the relief program which her husband created. She will be speaking under the auspices of the women's division of the President's Emergency Committee for Employment...Mrs. Alice Dickson and Mrs. Lillian Gilbreth...arranged the details of Mrs. Hoover's program.⁴⁴²

In her address, the First Lady promoted the Administration's work in behalf of women and unemployment relief, bolstered the role of women in the current

⁴⁴⁰ Swain, "Prelude to the New Deal: Lou Henry Hoover and Women's Relief Work," 153-55.

⁴⁴¹ Swain, "Prelude to the New Deal: Lou Henry Hoover and Women's Relief Work," 154.

⁴⁴² Press Clipping, "First Lady's Radio Talk to be Fourth," *The Washington Star*, 3/22/31, "Clippings, 1931, Radio Addresses and Voice Tests" folder, Box 46, LHH Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

economic situation, and related a message of appreciation to them from the

President:

I have heard very much in past weeks, yes, even through past months, of the work the American women have been doing, of the splendid spirit they have been showing and encouraging. I am only too glad to be the one asked to express this general appreciation to all the women and girls in the country who have been participating generously. The President, I know, is most appreciative of the achievement of the organization with which you are cooperating, the Women's Division of the President's Emergency Committee for Employment. He said, as the coming clouds of depression threatened, that a very large proportion of the work and of the spirit that would make the storm pass without consummate destruction would be due to the way in which the women met it....The President will want to express his appreciation for your cooperation with him, and with all the rehabilitating agencies in his own way and time,--but I do know that he is most appreciative.⁴⁴³

Here, Mrs. Hoover seems like a delegate in terms of substantive representation, as she is representing the President to women of the country by carrying message from him to them. Her comment that "I am only too glad to be the one asked to express this general appreciation of women..." also reveals that there was some "passing off" of responsibility for women's policy outreach to the First Lady.

Lou Hoover specifically addressed women's roles as homemakers and consumers in the Great Depression in an address to a Girl Scouts Convention in Buffalo, New York. As one newspaper article entitled, "Mrs. Hoover, Economist" contextualized her speech,

American women do most of the buying. This has long been accepted as a fundamental truth by those who sell. Even if the husband writes the check, it is the wife to whom the alert seller makes his strongest plea. Mrs. Herbert Hoover is well aware of this fact. She knew she was talking to the buyers when she preached a simple lesson of good citizenship in time of depression...⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴³ LHH Speech, NBC Radio, March 23, 1931, "Articles, Addresses, & Statement, 1931 March 23, PECE, Washington, D.C.," Box 6, LHH Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

⁴⁴⁴ Press Clipping, "Mrs. Hoover, Economist," *Messenger, Devonshore, KY*, October 20, 1931, "Girl Scouts Convention Address, Buffalo, New York," Box 6, LHH Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

Lou Hoover told American women that the best way they could help alleviate the economic crisis is to “keep on living a normal life.” She encouraged them to “not curtail too many of your activities that are essential” and cautioned, “If we all stopped buying...more things than we have to have to keep life and soul together, employment would drop tremendously.” She told the women to “keep on spending money as a people.”⁴⁴⁵ This clearly illustrates Mrs. Hoover’s role in affirming the power of women as consumers, as well as her gender role modeling. Her speech also linked women’s role as home economists to the national crisis, showing them how their actions as consumers could greatly impact the economy. Her rhetoric was specifically for the benefit of women, illustrating her trusteeship.

Lou Hoover gave another address entitled “The Women’s Place in the Present Emergency” via a nationwide radio broadcast. In this speech, she made a plea for individual giving and generosity. To American women she importuned,

Look about you. Find out whether Mrs. Neighbor who is keeping up such a brave front, though her husband has been out of work for months, is really as assured as she seems...Some one should know every soul in every neighborhood, and its pressing needs for this winter,--and where they can be supplied.⁴⁴⁶

These remarks again illustrate Lou Hoover’s trusteeship, as her words directing women to look after the material needs of their female neighbors are specifically intended for their well being. The title of her address, “The Women’s Place in the Present Emergency,” also reveals how she elevated women’s power as consumers and linked their power to realm of national policy.

⁴⁴⁵ Press Clipping, “Something for the Scrapbook,” *Transcript: Holyoke, Mass*, October 15, 1931, “Girl Scouts Convention Address, Buffalo, New York,” Box 6, LHH Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

⁴⁴⁶ LHH Remarks, “The Women’s Place in the Present Emergency,” November 27, 1932, Box 6, LHH Subject File, LHH Papers, HH Library; Swain, “Prelude to the New Deal: Lou Henry Hoover and Women’s Relief Work,” 163.

Mrs. Hoover also served as the Honorary Chair of the National Women's Committee on Welfare and Relief Mobilization of 1932. The women who founded the committee believed that the only way they could convince reluctant male community leaders to continue welfare programs was to mobilize women to overcome the men's resistance. When asking Mrs. Hoover to serve as Honorary Chair, the founders told her that such a committee would be "assured success" if the First Lady were to accept the position. In accepting the invitation, Mrs. Hoover said that she had little time to devote to the Committee's day-to-day operations, but she noted that her position would be important in that it would serve "to show...the continued interest of the President in the work." Despite Mrs. Hoover's self-proclaimed minimized role, she was instrumental in recruiting other high-profile women to join the Committee and issued many important statements in her name on behalf of the organization.⁴⁴⁷ This again illustrates Mrs. Hoover's trusteeship, as she is 'acting for' women by helping to ensure the continuance of their welfare programs. It also shows how the First Lady could exercise her symbolic power to bolster the work of 'girls' networks' that were disadvantaged by male community leaders.

The above examples clearly illustrate Mrs. Hoover's trusteeship as a substantive representative. In her many speeches and deeds, she was clearly acting for the benefit of women affected by the Great Depression. In her 'domestic' economic policy role, Mrs. Hoover specifically targeted women as

⁴⁴⁷ Mrs. Baker to Mrs. Hoover, September 17, 1932; Mrs. Hoover to Mrs. Baker, September 22, 1932; Edgard Rickard to Mrs. Hoover, October 14, 1932; Louise Franklin Bache to Mildred Hall, October 19, 1932; "Welfare and Relief Mobilization Correspondence, 1932-33" folder, Box 56, Girl Scouts and Other Organizations File, LHH Papers, HH Library.

housewives and consumers because she was affirming their gender-specific roles. Yet, also as part of her trusteeship, she linked women's power as consumers to their role in national economic policy, bolstering their economic citizenship or their actions within the masculine realm of economic policy, thus veering slightly toward transgendering. The First Lady's role in behalf of women in the Great Depression continued during the Roosevelt Administration.

Eleanor Roosevelt and Women in the New Deal

Women played an important role in planning and carrying out the Roosevelt Administration's New Deal social programs. Susan Ware details the development of a women's network of friendship and cooperation in New Deal politics that helped to maximize their influence in government. Included within this network were Hilda Smith, Director of the Workers' Service Program within the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and Works Projects Administration (WPA), Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, DNC Women's Division Chair Molly Dewson, and Ellen Woodward, Director of the Women's Division of FERA and later Director of Women's and Professional Projects within the WPA.⁴⁴⁸

But above all of these women, "Eleanor Roosevelt was the foremost member of the women's network in the 1930s." As First Lady, she "occupied a strategic position in the Washington community," and she was the only individual directly inside the White House who worked on women's New Deal issues. "Her

⁴⁴⁸ For a complete list of the members of the New Deal women's network see Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 12.

institutional role as First Lady, her willingness to use her public position to push for reform, and her ability to inspire loyalty in friends and colleagues" placed her at the apex of the women's network. Indeed, "It is difficult to imagine the progress that occurred for women in the 1930s without Eleanor Roosevelt in the White House."⁴⁴⁹

ER endeavored to extend the New Deal to American women in a variety of ways. She provided "White House access to women administrators who had a program or idea that they wanted brought to the attention of the president or his aides." If a women's program was stalled, she would hold a White House conference that "magically broke the bureaucratic logjam." She supported women administrators by inviting them to her press conferences to promote their programs. And she frequently mentioned women's New Deal initiatives in her "My Day" column and in her many other speeches and writings.⁴⁵⁰ So, as in her outreach role, ER served as a gatekeeper between the 'girls' network' and the presidency, providing them access and support when they were in need. This also demonstrates her trusteeship, acting in behalf of women by making sure their programs progressed.

The following paragraphs discuss ER's involvement in the most important New Deal agencies directed at women, which were housed in the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and then the Works Projects Administration, as well as her working relationships with two of the most important female New

⁴⁴⁹ Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal*, 7.

⁴⁵⁰ Susan Ware, "Women and the New Deal," in *The Eleanor Roosevelt Encyclopedia*, ed. Maurine H. Beasley, Holly C. Shulman, and Henry R. Beasley (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 573.

Deal administrators, Ellen Woodward and Hilda Smith. It is within these 'girls' networks' and women-centered relief programs that ER's trusteeship or her acting in behalf of women through the New Deal is most evident.

Ellen Woodward witnessed first hand Eleanor Roosevelt's symbolic ability to empower a program from her position as First Lady. In the fall of 1935, after the WPA had replaced FERA, Woodward wrote to ER's secretary asking whether it would be possible for ER, on her upcoming trip to the American West, to arrange a visit with Dorothy B. Nyswander, the WPA's Regional Director of Women's Activities for the western states. Woodward wrote,

[I]n addition to the inspiration and help she would receive for her work from a contact with Mrs. Roosevelt, the fact that Mrs. Roosevelt would grant her a brief audience would also call to the attention of other women the fact that Mrs. Roosevelt thinks the work important to give a little time to the discussion of it. You know when Mrs. Roosevelt thinks a work is important and worth while the women all over the country think likewise and they will follow along and get something accomplished.⁴⁵¹

Woodward's comment reveals ER's tremendous power as a symbolic representative, as she acknowledges the First Lady's ability to highlight an issue and to inspire and motivate women to follow her lead in relief work.

The main reason women were given "the measure of equity...in successive relief administrations since their inception in 1933 was due primarily to the fact that Eleanor Roosevelt had cared very much about women when the New Deal began." It was ER who convinced FERA head Harry L. Hopkins to include programs and activities for women in the form of a special women's division within FERA. Then, "Having taken the initiative to inaugurate a

⁴⁵¹ Ellen Woodward to Malvina Schneider, September 26, 1935, "Woodward, Ellen" folder, Box 293, ER Papers, FDR Library.

women's program, the first lady continued to nurture it. In essence, she became a self-appointed chief adviser to Woodward's division."⁴⁵² Her caring and initiative in ensuring women were not ignored by this federal economic program again illustrates her trusteeship as a substantive representative.

When First Ladies have wanted to draw attention to or promote a particular program or initiative, one of the main techniques they have used has been to hold or participate in a White House conference on the topic. Eleanor Roosevelt set the precedent for First Ladies holding such events for political purposes. In November 1933, she convened the White House Conference on the Emergency Needs of Women. The purpose of the conference was to focus the attention of leaders of women's organizations on the new program for jobless women. The conference "proved to be a stimulating forum where women from every part of the country exchanged information on the extreme difficulties women faced in finding work."⁴⁵³ In addition, it was only after ER hosted the conference that federal relief agencies began to seriously take the needs of women into account,⁴⁵⁴ further illustrating her symbolic power.

One of the most important tasks that Ellen Woodward and the Women's Division of the FERA performed for ER was to handle her mail, particularly those pieces asking for some sort of aid or relief. Perhaps because of the care she evidenced for the economic plight of women, the women of the country constantly looked to ER for help and assistance. Throughout the 1930s, women

⁴⁵² Martha H. Swain, "Er and Ellen Woodward: A Partnership for Women's Work Relief and Security," in *Without Precedent: The Life and Career of Eleanor Roosevelt*, ed. Joan Hoff-Wilson and Marjorie Lightman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 135-38.

⁴⁵³ Swain, "Er and Ellen Woodward: A Partnership for Women's Work Relief and Security," 138.

⁴⁵⁴ Ware, "Women and the New Deal," 574.

wrote to ER to ask her for any "funds, encouragement or intercession that she could offer."⁴⁵⁵ The White House would forward ER's mail to the Women's Division, and the Women's Division, in turn, would refer requests to the appropriate agency. The Women's Division made an effort to ensure that each person who wrote to ER received information that would be of assistance to her in securing aid or employment. The Women's Division would also report back to ER on the number of types of requests that she was receiving. So, just as in the Hoover Administration, the First Lady worked in conjunction with a network of women to help answer relief requests from the women of the country.

For example, in April of 1936, Woodward wrote to ER, "Your mail, that we are proud to be answering in the Women's Division, has recently taken interesting and significant new trends..." Woodward related to ER that her mail had increased not only in volume (to about 400 a month) but also in the number of problems raised. The problems included women experiencing delays in being assigned to WPA programs, women being ineligible for the WPA because of age and disability, women losing WPA employment because quotas for women employees had been reduced, and single women being resentful of the fact that married women were working.⁴⁵⁶ This illustrates how women of the country looked to the First Lady to represent their interests in the economic realm during the Depression. They viewed her as a trustee and believed she would open up access to or arbitrate disputes about federal programs from which they had been

⁴⁵⁵ Swain, "Er and Ellen Woodward: A Partnership for Women's Work Relief and Security," 144.

⁴⁵⁶ Ellen Woodward to ER, April 6, 1936 and Memorandum, Ellen Woodward to Harry Hopkins, April 6, 1936, "Woodward, Ellen" folder, Box 307, ER Papers, FDR Library.

shut out because of their sex. In other words, they believed that she would further regendered programmatic practices through her trusteeship.

ER would often use her platform as First Lady to publicly address issues related to the New Deal about which women would write her. For instance, she felt that since she had been asked about the issue of married women working during the Depression so frequently that she should give a radio broadcast on the topic. She told her listeners, "In the present depression it may be necessary for a married woman who is working, to voluntarily give up her job in order that some other family may have her salary but from my point of view, this should not be done as a matter of law because legislation can not take into account individual situations." She said that she has known families in which both the husband and wife had to work, since neither one of their incomes could alone support their families. In such situations, she felt it would not make sense for the government to require married women not to work.⁴⁵⁷ Her views about married women working illustrate broader points about the gendered nature of her activities. ER is an exception to all other First Ladies involved in 'domestic' economic work because she did not confine her activities to addressing the needs of the housewife-as-consumer. She did draw women into the economic policy realm, but oftentimes as workers outside of the home, one of the effects of the Great Depression. Thus, her representative role did not have as strong of implications for regendering, as had First Ladies' roles before and since.

⁴⁵⁷ "Married Women Working" Radio Address Transcript, February 24, 1933, Box 3024, Speech and Article File, ER Papers, FDR Library.

The practice of giving Mrs. Roosevelt summary reports of her mail was continued by Florence Kerr when she took over the Women's Division of the WPA. For instance, Kerr gave ER a report of all of the mail that the Women's Division had handled from February 1st through March 31st, 1939. All of the 1,493 letters were written by women or were concerned with women's problems. Kerr reported,

Over half of the letters (850) pertained to employment. When they related to WPA employment...they were referred to the State Works Progress Administrations and also to the State Directors of Professional and Service Projects...in an effort to bring them to the attention of all WPA state officials who might be helpful....

Among the 363 letters from women requesting assistance in securing direct relief or in having their allowances increased, a noticeable number requested hospitalization. Copies of these letters were referred to the appropriate relief agencies...

When the writers' requests related to matters outside the jurisdiction of the [WPA], every effort was made to bring them to the attention of appropriate agencies...

There were over 100 letters requesting Mrs. Roosevelt to donate or lend money, to send discarded wearing apparel, to provide hope chests, to purchase or assist in the sale of hand-work, and to advise in regard to personal problems, usually concerning broken homes.

These women wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt about their ailments because they truly believed that she cared and wanted to help. As Kerr concluded her report, "In appealing to Mrs. Roosevelt for aid many women expressed heartfelt appreciation of, and confidence in, her interest in their problems. As one young Negro woman of Atlanta, Georgia, put it, 'Even through I may never have word of any sort from you, I wish to thank you for showing those of us who are coming along the way in these bewildering times, how fine a woman can be.'⁴⁵⁸ Clearly, ER's trusteeship was recognized by many, as women across the country put their hope in her concern for their economic problems.

⁴⁵⁸ "Report on the Handling of Mrs. Roosevelt's Mail," "Kerr, Florence" folder, Box 331, ER Papers, FDR Library.

Another example of ER's influence in the New Deal for women was her effort to implement camps for unemployed women under the FERA. The camps were to serve purposes similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps, a federal program that employed men in outdoor projects such as reforestation, land reclamation, and restoration. Criticizing the CCC's male-only policy, some female administrators began to fight for the establishment of similar "she-she-she" camps.⁴⁵⁹ Her work toward the implementation of female CCC camps shows how the First Lady pushed for women's inclusion in federal programs on a more equal basis with men. However, that men's and women's camps would be separate and that their initiation came from the First Lady's not the President's office still points toward regendering at the programmatic level.

Hilda Worthington Smith helped ER lead the charge for camps for unemployed women. As a specialist in Workers' Education at the FERA, Smith had drawn up a proposal for the women's camps in late 1933. Her plan for the camps provided for the emergency needs of women by giving them food and shelter, as well as educational opportunities, vocational training, and the chance to experience communal living. But when her plan received little attention in the months following, Eleanor Roosevelt "broke the bureaucratic impasse" by hosting the White House Conference on Resident Schools and Educational Camps for Unemployed Women on April 30, 1934.⁴⁶⁰ Mrs. Roosevelt presided over the conference and delivered the opening remarks in which she spoke of the need for

⁴⁵⁹ Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal*, 111.

⁴⁶⁰ Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal*, 112.

a more extensive plan for unemployed women.⁴⁶¹ The Conference on Camps for Unemployed Women was similar to the Conference on Emergency Needs for Women in its effect. In both cases, "Eleanor Roosevelt's offer to sponsor a White House conference gave important outside support to programs at crucial times. Eleanor Roosevelt's intercession (and the clout that White House support commanded) ended a bureaucratic stalemate and got the programs moving again."⁴⁶² This again reveals ER's symbolic power as expressed through her ability to advance a program by drawing attention to it.

And it was Eleanor Roosevelt who finally interceded with Harry Hopkins to get final approval for the camps for unemployed women. Hilda Smith wrote to her, "I was glad to receive word...that you and Mr. Hopkins had had a chance to talk over the question of women's schools and camps....I feel every day that we should go ahead on this program as we keep getting requests from various States asking that something be done immediately." Soon thereafter she followed up, "You will be glad to know I am sure that the plan for educational camps for women has been approved, and that the states are moving rapidly in making their local plans...Thank you again for all you have done to make this plan possible."⁴⁶³ Thus, even though these camps had regendered implications, ER still worked to promote the economic citizenship of women, acting in their interests by making certain they were not ignored by the larger New Deal.

⁴⁶¹ Minutes of the Conference, "Workers' Service Program WPA, Schools for Women 1934" folder, Box 13, Hilda Smith Papers, FDR Library.

⁴⁶² Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal*, 112-13.

⁴⁶³ Hilda Smith to ER, June 19, 1935 and Hilda Smith to ER, August 2, 1935, "Smith, Hilda 1935" folder, Box 290, ER Papers, FDR Library.

There is evidence that the women's camps were a success. In an article ER wrote about the camp in Bear Mountain Park in New York State, she related the positive, concrete outcomes resulting from her 'acting for' women. ER stated that there were counselors "who have given lessons in typing and stenography and hand work, such as sewing and leather work, carving, block printing, etc....Many of [the participants] have gained pounds since their arrival and I think none of them have gone back to new jobs which already have been found, or to look for work without feeling greater strength physically and a new spirit of hopefulness."⁴⁶⁴ Thus, ER's representative work did have the ultimate effect of enhancing the well being of women and their standing within the economic realm.

It is evident from the above account that ER served as a trustee in making sure women's interests were not ignored within the New Deal. She, along with her 'girls' network', assumed responsibility for representing women, as there is evidence that the Administration did not otherwise prioritize the economic needs of women during the Great Depression. Though ER focused her attention on integrating women into economic policy on a more equal basis with men, thus furthering transgendered practices, her policy role still had implications for regendering. Many of the programs dealing with women were separate from male-oriented programs, thus increasing the likelihood that they would be accorded less importance and that women would be marginalized. Eleanor Roosevelt also demonstrated great power as a symbolic representative, especially

⁴⁶⁴ ER, "Camps for Unemployed Women," *Britannica Bulletins*, September 1933, Speech and Article File, ER Papers, FDR Library.

in that she was able to move forward the progress of women's programs by using her position as First Lady to draw attention to them.

Mamie Eisenhower and Post-War Economic Security

At the onset of World War II, the U.S. Treasury Department initiated the Defense Savings program, an effort to generate revenue by selling bonds and stamps and to "strengthen national morale and contribute to the efficient functioning of the national economic life."⁴⁶⁵ As Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau told Congress during his testimony asking members to authorize the program, "We ought to give them a sense of personal participation beyond that which comes from doing their daily job...."⁴⁶⁶ The Defense Savings program continued beyond the end of the War and into peacetime, and there was a major publicity effort to promote Defense Savings bonds to female citizens. Mamie Eisenhower had a role in this publicity effort by promoting government savings bonds to women, thereby affirming their economic citizenship through furthering their "sense of personal participation" in national economic security.

During the Eisenhower Administration, the Bond-a-Month campaign, sponsored by the U.S. Treasury Department, was designed to encourage systematic saving for the future of America and its families. The government enlisted national women's organizations to spearhead the promotional effort, and it was coordinated by the Treasury Department's Director of Women's Activities

⁴⁶⁵ Peter H. Odegard and Alan Barth, "Millions for Defense," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1941): 400.

⁴⁶⁶ Henry Morgenthau before the House Ways and Means Committee, January 29, 1941, qtd. in Odegard and Barth, "Millions for Defense," 400.

Nancy C. Robinson.⁴⁶⁷ In January of 1953, Mrs. Robinson extended an invitation to Mamie Eisenhower to serve as Honorary Chairman of the National Women's Advisory Committee for United States Defense Bonds. The Committee was composed of women in government, business, and the professions, and it was operated by the Women's Section of the United States Savings Bonds Division of the Treasury Department. Though active participation in day-to-day operations was not required of the Honorary Chairman, Mrs. Robinson encouraged Mrs. Eisenhower's acceptance of the position because of the symbolic weight the First Lady's support would carry with American women. Nancy Robinson wrote, "It is of the greatest value in the work of the whole Savings Bond Division and particularly to the Women's Section to have this evidence of the First Lady's support and approval."⁴⁶⁸ Robinson's plea reveals the First Lady's power as a symbolic representative. The implication was that if the First Lady supported the effort, she would be able to inspire and motivate women citizens to lend their support as well.

Nancy Robinson was more expansive with Mary Jane McCaffrey, Mamie Eisenhower's Secretary, about her expectations for the First Lady's role in this "patriotic thrift activity," as she described it:

Then in connection with the spring campaign—the first peacetime drive to be entrusted entirely to the women—we hope for her cooperation in receiving representative volunteer workers during the Women's Conference here, as well as in sending them a message of welcome and support for the opening session. (This, of course, we will prepare for her.) Also we wish permission to use her signature as Honorary Chairman on a number of pieces of campaign literature... Several pieces of

⁴⁶⁷ "Fact Sheet: Bond-a-Month Campaign, April 1953," "2/16/53 National Women's Advisory Committee on U.S. Savings Bonds," Box 1, A.B. Tolley Files, Eisenhower Library.

⁴⁶⁸ Nancy Robinson to Mrs. Eisenhower, January 2, 1953, "2/16/53 National Women's Advisory Committee on U.S. Savings Bonds," Box 1, A.B. Tolley, Social Office Files, Eisenhower Library.

printed material are now ready for production, and we therefore need this permission and a signature to be reproduced, immediately...⁴⁶⁹

Mrs. Eisenhower did cooperate with many of the Treasury Department's suggestions for her participation. On February 16, she received more than 100 members of the National Women's Advisory Committee on U.S. Savings Bonds at the White House for the group's two-day planning conference. Here, she presented a copy of her first public service statement to promote the Bond-a-Month program to Mrs. George M. Humphrey, wife of the Secretary of the Treasury.⁴⁷⁰ Her announcement read,

I am very proud to have this opportunity to urge the women of America to use their great influence to increase the sale of Defense Bonds.

During April we will conduct a nation-wide campaign based on the extension of the Bond-a-Month Plan to all families not now participating in it. We hope also that a great many families will expand their current programs of regular savings through bonds as a result of our efforts.

The women of American have never failed to respond to their country's call and I am sure they will join in making this campaign a success. By buying and inducing others to buy more bonds we are helping to build a more secure future for ourselves and our families.⁴⁷¹

Mrs. Robinson certainly was correct in her estimation of the symbolic value of having Mrs. Eisenhower participate in the campaign. To illustrate, the President of the Association of Bank Women wrote to the First Lady after meeting her at the White House, "I hope you understand...what it means to the members of our Association, who are hard working women bank executives, to know that the wife of the President...received their representative at the White House. Your courtesy

⁴⁶⁹ Nancy Robinson to Mary Jane McCaffrey, January 9, 1953, "2/16/53 National Women's Advisory Committee on U.S. Savings Bonds" folder, Box 1, A.B. Tolley, Social Office Files, Eisenhower Library.

⁴⁷⁰ Press Release, U.S. Savings Bonds Division, Treasury Department, February 16, 1953, "2/16/53 National Women's Advisory Committee on U.S. Savings Bonds," Box 1, A.B. Tolley, Social Office Files, Eisenhower Library.

⁴⁷¹ "A Message from Mamie Doud Eisenhower," "2/16/53 National Women's Advisory Committee on U.S. Savings Bonds," Box 1, A.B. Tolley, Social Office Files, Eisenhower Library.

to us was the high point of our visit to Washington, and I am sure that because of it we will all sell more bonds than we had believed possible before."⁴⁷² And Mrs. Robinson wrote to Mary Jane McCaffree that after meeting Mrs. Eisenhower, the delegates "went home fired up with enthusiasm and patriotism, ready and eager to plunge into the campaign with renewed belief in its aims because of the stirring message given by their Honorary Chairman."⁴⁷³ Considered along with Nancy Robinson's previous statements, this letter reveals that the value of Mrs. Eisenhower's participation in the Bond-a-Month campaign was primarily symbolic. That the delegates were "fired up with enthusiasm" and "ready and eager to work" illustrates the emotive effect that a meeting with the First Lady can have on American women.

Mrs. Eisenhower also complied with Nancy Robinson's request to issue another public service announcement in conjunction with the Treasury Department Women's Division's fall 1953 bond drive:

Last spring, American clubwomen responded with enthusiasm to their country's call to participate in the Women's Crusade for Security. As Honorary Chairman of this national effort to increase the sale of United States Savings Bonds, I wish to congratulate the members of every participating organization for their fine achievements. But there is still much to be done. I hope you will continue signing up new people in the Bond-a-Month Plan, as well as encouraging individual savings bond sales. In this way we not only encourage good habits of thrift and systematic savings, but we also make our contribution to a sound national economy.⁴⁷⁴

The above statement, considered along with the other evidence provided in this section, reaffirms that Mamie Eisenhower's representative role in the

⁴⁷² Catherine B. Cleary to Mrs. Eisenhower, February 20, 1953, "2/16/53 National Women's Advisory Committee on U.S. Savings Bonds," Box 1, A.B. Tolley, Social Office Files, Eisenhower Library.

⁴⁷³ Nancy Robinson to Mary Jane McCaffree, February 25, 1953, "3-30-53 Mary Pickford-Tea and Movie" folder, Box 4, A.B. Tolley Records, Social Office Files, Eisenhower Library.

⁴⁷⁴ Public Service Statement, July 29, 1953, "Statements (Public Service)" folder, Box 41, MDE Papers, Eisenhower Library.

Bond-a-Month campaign was primarily symbolic. Her remarks and meetings were designed primarily to inspire patriotic activity among female citizens, and there is evidence that her activities did have this effect. Her remarks and activities also served to make national economic policy relevant to women. By encouraging their participation in the program, she was in effect conferring upon them the status of important economic actors. Though none of the above statements specifically target women as homemakers, this can be inferred. The fact that the Bond-a-Month campaign was conducted by club women to evidently target other club women demonstrates that middle and perhaps upper class women, who were mostly housewives, were the main focus of this project.

Lady Bird Johnson, Women as Consumers, and the Great Society

To LBJ, consumer protection was one of the most important 'quality of life' issues in his Great Society program. Shortly after taking the oath of office, LBJ established by executive order the President's Committee on Consumer Interests and the Consumer Advisory Council. He appointed Esther Peterson, who was also the Assistant Secretary of Labor, as Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs and as Chairman of the newly established President's Committee. In 1967, Peterson would be replaced by Betty Furness, a former television personality. Throughout the entire Johnson Administration, and for the first time in history, American consumers had direct representation in the White House.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁵ John A. Andrew, *Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1998), 163-68.

The 1963 report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, of which Peterson served as Executive Vice Chairman, stated, "Most of the buying done by American families as consumers is done by women." It went on to note that women lacked sound training and judgment in budgeting, the use of credit, and "in selection among bewildering varieties of goods."⁴⁷⁶ Perhaps in response to this problem, Lyndon Johnson stated that Esther Peterson's mission was to "lead the campaign of America's homemakers" against those who seek to defraud the consumer and impose unfair price increases, as well as to help guarantee consumer rights, including "the right to safety; the right to be informed; the right to choose; the right to be heard."⁴⁷⁷ As Esther Peterson would later recall, "the one instruction that LBJ had given me when I took the job was, 'Esther, I want every housewife in this country to know that I'm in her corner.'"⁴⁷⁸ Esther Peterson took this to mean, "I've got to identify myself with the housewife and her problems. I've got to identify myself with the problems so that the people in the White House are also sensitive to these problems."478

Though she sought to ensure that the President's staff cared about women as consumers, she came to believe that consumer issues were actually not among the top priorities of the President and his staff. So, she wrote to Lady Bird Johnson about one year after LBJ had initially outlined his consumer program, "I would appreciate an opportunity to talk to you a few minutes about the progress

⁴⁷⁶ Margaret Mead and Frances Balgley Kaplan, eds., *American Women: The Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), 41-42.

⁴⁷⁷ Press Release, January 3, 1964, "Consumer Program" folder, Box 70, Liz Carpenter Subject Files, LBJ Library.

⁴⁷⁸ Esther Peterson Oral History Interview II, p. 25, October 29, 1974, LBJ Library.

that is being made on the President's programs for the advancement of women and for the consumer." She requested this meeting with the First Lady because, while she knew that consumer issues were important to the President, she also knew "that they do not compare in importance with some of the problems with which he has to deal." Thus, she gravitated to the First Lady for help with women's consumer issues. As Esther Peterson phrased Mrs. Johnson role, "I would appreciate an opportunity to spend a few minutes with you since you are such an able eyes and ears for him and such a splendid spokesman for his program."⁴⁷⁹ Mrs. Johnson complied with Peterson's request for a meeting. Her willingness to serve as a spokesperson for this program indicates that she too was concerned about housewives and consumer issues. It also indicates that Peterson viewed the First Lady as a channel through which she could potentially access the President or as a mechanism through which she could further her consumer program. In this manner, Lady Bird Johnson functioned much like Eleanor Roosevelt.

On February 6, 1968, President Johnson delivered a message to Congress on protecting the consumer interest, in which he outlined his legislative agenda. He stated,

Most of the people depend on the President of the United States to represent their interests...In the case of consumer protection...the President—and the Congress—speak for every citizen...It is the government's role to protect the consumer—and the honest businessman alike—against fraud and indifference. Our goal must be to assure every American consumer a fair and honest exchange for his hard-earned dollar.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ Memorandum, Esther Peterson to Lady Bird Johnson, January 15, 1965, "Consumer Program" folder, Box 70, Liz Carpenter Subject Files, LBJ Library.

⁴⁸⁰ Press Release, "To Protect the Consumer Interest," Message to the Congress of the United States from LBJ, "Women Doers Luncheon 2/19/68, The Consumer is You" folder, Box 46, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

His statement illustrates the plebiscitary, as well as policy-focused, duties of the modern presidency. Lady Bird Johnson's role in consumer affairs helped the President fulfill his plebiscitary obligations. Several days after the President delivered this message to Congress, Lady Bird Johnson hosted a Women Doers Luncheon entitled, "The Consumer Is You," which was intended to highlight the President's consumer message. The speakers, along with Mrs. Johnson, included Dr. Persia Campbell, who served as Consumer Counsel to Governor Harriman of New York State and Betty Furness. The fifty luncheon guests included representatives of consumer voluntary organizations and housewives.⁴⁸¹ In Lady Bird's remarks to the luncheon, she highlighted the importance of her own role and American women's roles as consumers within the changing marketplace and the need for consumer protection, as proclaimed by President Johnson:

If anyone asked me over the past thirty years, what did you do? My answer would be, I was purchasing agent for a family. I wrote out little slips of paper of everything the occupants of my house ate or wore. So it is a matter of first interest, of primary importance to every American woman to fill this role with as much knowledge and wisdom as we can afford...As our civilization grows more complex—as our marketplace grows larger—the consumer is faced with decisions unknown to other generations. Our great American technology has created things of which our grandmothers never dreamed. I often wonder what the pioneer women, who made their own soap, would think if they could see a modern cosmetic counter with scented soaps by the hundred, or what the sturdy woman who pulled her water up from the well by the bucket and then heated it on the wood-burning stove would think of an electric dishwasher. But as things get easier they get harder too—harder to choose, harder to understand. So it's for that reason there is a rising need for consumer protection. We are grateful for all the wonderful time savers and new technical developments, but we need to know more to enable us to make a wiser choice. We need to be consumer-educated.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸¹ Press Release, Office of the Press Secretary to Mrs. Johnson, February 10, 1968, "Women Doers Luncheon 2/19/68, The Consumer Is You" folder, Box 46, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

⁴⁸² "Remarks of Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson at the Women-Doers Luncheon-'The Consumer Is You'" February 19, 1968, "Women Does Luncheon 2/19/1968 'The Consumer Is You' folder, Box 46, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

In this Women Does Luncheon, Mrs. Johnson seems to be more like a delegate than a trustee in terms of substantive representation. The event was scheduled soon after the President's address on consumer protection specifically so that the First Lady could highlight his message. Only it was Mrs. Johnson's special responsibility to make the President's program relevant to women. By specifically drawing upon her own role as a housewife / consumer, thus gender role modeling, she was able to effectively instruct women about the importance of making educated decisions in carrying out their own domestic roles.

Mrs. Johnson continued her role in consumer education through participating in events arranged by the federal bureaucracy. The Department of Agriculture housed many consumer services and sponsored numerous consumer educational activities. For instance, from April 14-30, 1964, the Agriculture Department hosted a Food and Home Fair for Consumers. The Fair featured exhibits and demonstrations on nutrition, food inspection and grading, new and better food and fabrics, shopping and budgeting tips, home gardening, and time and energy saving ideas for homemakers. It also featured Mrs. Johnson, who officially opened the Food and Home Fair.⁴⁸³ Just as in her remarks to the Women Does Luncheon, she served as a gender role model by discussing her own experiences as a housewife and consumer, but the major part of her message served to highlight the numerous USDA services available to help American housewives:

⁴⁸³ Harold R. Lewis, USDA Director of Information to Simone Poulsin, President of American Women in Radio and Television, Undated, "Food and Home Fair, April 14, 1964," Box 3, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

Listening to Secretary [Orville] Freeman, I am impressed again with the number of services this Department...provides for the public. Much of my own life, and much of the life of any homemaker, is devoted to the task of being purchasing agent for the family. In providing food, clothes, and a more attractive shelter for our families, we want the most and the best for our money. Our task is made easier all the time because of this Department which serves, not only as safety-check, but as research scientist for us. Through the years we have come to expect not just that the meats we have bought are inspected and graded—stamped USDA—but that we have potatoes without spots, good eggs, crisp lettuce, and frozen orange juice and vegetables. I am constantly amazed at the long shopping list of information available at the Department: Facts about low-cost food budgets, step-saving kitchens, wash-and-wear cottons, even farm vacations. Mr. Secretary, every housewife owes a debt of gratitude to you and your employees for closing the gap between the 3 ½ million American farm families and 190 million American consumers.⁴⁸⁴

Mrs. Johnson also provided the USDA with her recipes for Spinach Parmesan, Turkey Dressing, and Pedernales River Chili to share with the Consumer Fair's attendees.⁴⁸⁵ Her participation in and remarks at this event have implications for symbolic representation. Mrs. Johnson's self-description as a "purchasing agent" conveys her power as a consumer, which was perhaps intended to highlight the importance of women's economic activities. However, her provision of recipes amidst her programmatic discussions also reveals how she was still serving as the model housewife.

In September of 1965, Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman wrote to Liz Carpenter asking if Mrs. Johnson could participate in a ceremony unveiling the USDA's "Consumers All" publication, which provided information about "the myriad of services available in the Department of Agriculture to the homemaker." Secretary Freeman's soliciting Mrs. Johnson's participation was one of his "vigorous steps" for bringing the publication to the attention of the average

⁴⁸⁴ Remarks by Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson, Opening Food and Home Fair for Consumers, April 14, 1964, "Food and Home Fair, April 14, 1964" folder, Box 3, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

⁴⁸⁵ Press Clipping, Marjorie W. Young, "Mrs. Johnson's Recipes Feature in Food Fair," "Food and Home Fair April 14, 1964" folder, Box 3, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

homemaker. He decided to ask Mrs. Johnson to participate in this USDA event because the response to her participation in the Consumers Fair was so "tremendous." Freeman told Liz Carpenter, "We still hear about her performance at the Home and Food Show." He continued, "We know it's the kind of thing she does very well, and we also know it would be a big assist in the consumers field." Freeman expected the publication "to become as important to the average homemaker as her favorite cookbook" because it related important how-to facts on housing, food, nutrition, clothing, and lawns and gardens. Mrs. Johnson agreed to participate in the ceremony, in which Secretary Freeman presented her with the very first copy of "Consumers All" before an audience of Congress members, representatives of consumer and women's organizations, and representatives of the news media whose columns focused on the home, clothing, and gardening.⁴⁸⁶ Mrs. Johnson was featured in another ceremony unveiling an improved edition of "Consumer Information," the federal government's listing of consumer publications, which covered "everything from how to guard against fakes and swindlers in the health field to helpful tips to new brides on how to prepare wholesome meals and get the most for their money." The publication was compiled by the Government Printing Office in conjunction with the President's Committee on Consumer Interests. James Harrison, the Public Printer, presented Mrs. Johnson a copy of this publication in a ceremony at the White House.⁴⁸⁷ As indicated by Secretary Freeman's comments, Mrs. Johnson's main form of

⁴⁸⁶ Orville Freeman to Liz Carpenter, September 13, 1965, "Consumer Information Ceremony," Box 19, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

⁴⁸⁷ Press Release, Office of the Press Secretary to Mrs. Johnson, December 6, 1965, "Consumer Information Ceremony," Box 19, Liz Carpenter Files, LBJ Library.

representation was symbolic. By attaching her support to an economic initiative, she could prioritize it and energize women consumers to participate in these federal programs. In this way, her representative role in the 'domestic' economy more closely resembled Mamie Eisenhower's than Lou Hoover and Eleanor Roosevelt's.

With Mrs. Johnson, there is a continuation of the trend of the First Lady addressing women as housewives / consumers. This has obvious regendered implications, as in doing so she was affirming women's traditional roles. Yet, in her remarks on consumer issues, she consistently described herself as a "purchasing agent," revealing her power as a symbolic representative. Her self-description indicates that she wanted to convey to women a sense of their own power. She also helped to link women to government on a programmatic level, making federal policies more relevant to their lives and representing her husband's economic policies to them. This bolstering of women's economic citizenship pulls her representative role slightly back toward transgendering on the continuum.

Betty Ford and the Fight against Inflation

When Richard Nixon resigned from office, he "bequeathed to Ford an economy in which inflation had run amok." In August of 1974, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) had risen 1.3 percent from the previous month. And on the day that Ford was inaugurated, it was announced that the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) for the month of July had risen 3.7 percent, which was the second largest

increase since 1946.⁴⁸⁸ In his first address to Congress as President, Ford declared that inflation was "'domestic enemy number one.'" To help control consumer spending, Ford formed a national volunteer organization called Whip Inflation Now, popularly known as WIN, which was charged with finding ways to keep prices down.⁴⁸⁹ As the nation's First Housewife, First Lady Betty Ford played an important role in the WIN campaign by participating in conferences and ceremonies and by setting an example for housewives by the way she ran the White House.

One of the first official actions that President and Mrs. Ford took to stop inflation was to sign the Consumer's Pledge, prepared by WIN. The pledge read, "I pledge to my fellow citizens that I will buy when possible only those products and services priced at or below present levels. I also promise to conserve energy, and I urge others to sign this pledge." At the White House signing ceremony, President Ford said that he would set an example by carefully monitoring his own purchasing and also stated that Mrs. Ford "has pledged to me as well as here she will do the same."⁴⁹⁰ President Ford's remarks here reveal that Mrs. Ford's role in the 'domestic' economy was likely to be a symbolic one, as her role was to center on setting an example as the nation's First Housewife.

Further illustrating this point, an article in *U.S. News & World Report* commented, "First Lady Betty Ford is trying in many ways to set an example for

⁴⁸⁸ John Robert Greene, *The Presidency of Gerald R. Ford* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 67.

⁴⁸⁹ Greene, *The Presidency of Gerald R. Ford*, 71-72.

⁴⁹⁰ Press Release, "Remarks of the President at the Signing of the WIN Consumer Proclamation," November 13, 1974, "Betty Ford—WIN Program" folder, Box 39, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

the nation in the battle against inflation." Regarding spending, the article said that she ordered the White House staff "to shop as carefully as they would for their own families." Mrs. Ford's staff also fed reporters information on the ways she cut the Ford family's budget. On the subject of preparing meals, it was well publicized that Mrs. Ford frequently served casseroles and limited desserts because the President was particularly concerned about the high prices of meat and sugar. Regarding her attire, Betty Ford made it known that she bought evening shoes in a white fabric and had them re-dyed to save money and advocated repairing and resoling shoes instead of buying new ones.⁴⁹¹ These examples illustrate that, in terms of symbolic representation, Betty Ford made a purposive effort to embody the ideal housewife / consumer in a time of economic concern and to convey this ideal to housewives for them to emulate.

As part of the WIN campaign, Russell Freeburg, the White House WIN coordinator, arranged for the First Lady to participate in the American Home Sewing Council's "Join the Inflation Fighters: Sew & Save" campaign. After the Home Sewing Council's Director Christopher Cross contacted Freeburg about using the White House to draw the people's attention to how home sewing can fight inflation, he appealed to Mrs. Ford's staff for her participation. Sheila Weidenfeld then suggested various ways in which Mrs. Ford could launch the program. Cross wrote back to her,

Your idea to arrange...a tea to which would be invited women in the White House who sew along with selected women's interest reporters and editors in Washington seems like a meaningful way to launch the program....We would bring an attractive,

⁴⁹¹ Press Clipping, "From Betty Ford: Tips on Fighting Inflation," U.S. News & World Report, December 23, 1974, "Betty Ford—WIN Program," Box 39 Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

typical homemaker for whom sewing is an important way to contend with inflation. She would present the official poster.⁴⁹²

Another highly publicized example of Betty Ford as the model inflation-fighting housewife was when she hosted the Republican Congressional Wives Club for an outdoor gathering at the White House. On the invitation, she noted, "Bring your brown-bag lunch." Newspaper coverage of the event read,

No reason why this jolly, economical way of entertaining...cannot be transferred indoors. A bridge party, a sewing bee or just a friendly gathering of your old school chums could be accomplished with a minimum of time and money if you borrow the 'brown bag' theme from Betty Ford.⁴⁹³

In these instances, her example setting also took the form of gender role modeling, as her activities were primarily intended to display the habits of the ideal inflation-fighting housewife / consumer. So, in assuming these symbolic representative activities, she was also performing gender.

At a press conference shortly after her husband took office, Betty Ford noted that all of the White House entertaining "will be keyed to the problems of inflation...There will be certain things we will have to do to cut down." This illustrates the connection between 'domestic' economic policy and the First Housewife's responsibility for entertaining. At this press conference, the First Lady also mentioned how she would be setting a clothes budget for herself: "I know certain things are expected of the wife of the President...but I think I can do without buying expensive designer clothes."⁴⁹⁴ Mrs. Ford's publicizing how she

⁴⁹² Russell Freeburg to Sheila Weidenfeld, December 3, 1974; Christopher Cross to Sheila Weidenfeld, December 10, 1974, "Betty Ford—WIN Program," Box 39 Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁴⁹³ Press Clipping, Dorsey Connors, "Borrow Party Idea," *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 4, 1975, "Betty Ford—Gardening" folder, Box 38, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁴⁹⁴ Transcript, First Lady's Press Conference, September 4, 1974, "9/4/74 Mrs. Ford's Press Conference," Box 1, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

cut back on clothes again illustrates her gender role modeling for the women of the country within the context of contributing to the stability of the national economy.

Her office also made public the ways in which she cut corners for a state dinner honoring the Prime Minister of Great Britain. "Even tho [sic] state dinners are paid for by the government, the President's wife watches Uncle Sam's money as if it were her own." Here again, Mrs. Ford is portrayed as the First Housewife and as a responsible steward of public finances, illustrating her gender role modeling. First, she substituted soup for the traditional fish course. She reportedly told her staff, "Soup is less expensive and will cut the cost considerably." Second, she ordered the White House chef to "cut the squab into halves so that those who wanted less could take less and not leave half a portion on their plates to be thrown out." Newspapers also publicized the general instructions Betty Ford gave to the White House chef: "Use fresh vegetables in season, which are much less expensive than frozen foods or out-of-season foods flown great distances; Use American rather than imported wines; Make portions small and let people take what they want; Use all leftovers."⁴⁹⁵ The above examples portray Mrs. Ford in the First Lady's most traditional role—that of White House social entertainer. Again, gender role modeling is evident, as the underlying message is for women of the country to emulate Betty Ford's White House entertaining in their own domestic practices.

⁴⁹⁵ Press Clipping, Frances Spatz, "Economic Edibles from Betty Ford," Chicago Tribune, April 27 1975, "Betty Ford—Food—Family Recipes" folder, Box 38, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

In a similar East Wing publicity effort, the White House released to the press several of Betty Ford's inflation-fighting recipes. As one newspaper described the effort, "To show her interest in the national economy, Betty Ford has agreed to share some of her favorite low-budget recipes...[T]he White House released three inflation-fighting recipes as an example of the everyday fare whipped up by chef Henry Haller."⁴⁹⁶ These included Curry of Lamb with Rice, Tuna Fish and Noodles, and Baked Ham, Potatoes and Onions. Again, the purpose of publishing the recipes was to provide to homemakers an example of how they could help solve the country's economic crisis by emulating the First Lady, providing even more evidence for her gender role modeling.

Though Betty Ford's leading housewives by example into economic prosperity was well-intentioned, sometimes her advice backfired. When a reporter asked her about the ways in which she was cutting back on the White House food budget, she remarked that her family has been eating much less steak and roast beef.⁴⁹⁷ And at the D.C. Mayor's Consumer Food Dollar Conference in September of 1974, she stated that her family was eating more fish and casseroles and less beef to help combat inflation. These remarks turned into a flap, and the Ford Administration then had to make peace with the cattle industry. For instance, Illinois Congressman Paul Findley wrote to the President complaining about how the First Lady's remarks had "started a stampede of livestock producers who phoned their beef to me." He also expressed concern that if her "eat-less-meat"

⁴⁹⁶ Press Clipping, Gail Perrin, "Betty Ford's Recipes—Yes, No and Maybe," *The Boston Evening Globe*, April 2, 1975, "Betty Ford—Food—Family Recipes" folder, Box 38, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁴⁹⁷ Transcript, First Lady's Press Conference, September 4, 1974, "9/4/74 Mrs. Ford's Press Conference" folder, Box 1, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

theme catches on, it could be devastating to livestock producers in his district. He ended his letter, "I know you have to pick the right moment, Mr. President, but please pass the word to Betty that beef is still a good buy, and getting better all the time."⁴⁹⁸ This incident demonstrates that, through the First Lady's gender role modeling, she could actually exercise a substantial amount of influence on the economy.

A good deal of news coverage was generated when a group of Texas ranchers decided to send the First Lady a fattened calf to get their message across to American women that beef can be inexpensive when middlemen are eliminated. They wrote to her, "Since you are the First Lady of the United States, we must assume also that you are the First Housewife, and we would like to begin by selling you on the fact that our beef is a real bargain...[I]f we can sell you on our product, then we may have a chance with the other housewives of the United States." They asked her to convey the message "to every housewife in the United States" that ranchers who work long, hard hours to produce beef are rapidly going broke because of the current economic situation.⁴⁹⁹ As a result, Mrs. Ford's staff had to strategize about how to downplay the incident and "regain some of the ground we lost with the ranchers."⁵⁰⁰ The ranchers recognized that other housewives emulated the First Lady's consumer habits, thus affirming her power as a symbolic representative. Her symbolic power translated into economic

⁴⁹⁸ Paul Findley to Gerald Ford, September 27, 1974, "Ford, Betty 11/1/74-12/4/74" folder, Box 3, PP5-1, WHCF, Ford Library.

⁴⁹⁹ Texas Ranchers to Betty Ford, November 5, 1974, "Betty Ford—Beef Prices" folders, Box 38, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁰⁰ Memorandum, Patti Matson to Sheila Weidenfeld, "Betty Ford—Beef Prices" folder, Box 38, Shelia Weidenfeld Files.

power, as she was able to affect the fortunes the cattle industry, a large sector of the economy.

There were numerous other efforts by individuals within and outside of the Administration to try to get Mrs. Ford to publicize inflation-fighting techniques. The WIN committee, along with private citizens and gardening groups, tried to persuade Mrs. Ford to use a portion of the White House grounds to plant a vegetable garden to use as an example to American citizens about how they can save money and fight inflation. Though the First Lady's staff announced that this garden would materialize, the WIN committee ultimately decided to drop the project because of a lack of funds and staffing.⁵⁰¹ Also, Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) suggested to the President that Mrs. Ford participate in a ceremony to commemorate his proposed "Bake and Take Day." There had been a request made that Ford sign a Presidential Proclamation designating March 22, 1975 as National Bake and Take Day. Dole reasoned with the President, "Home baking is an excellent and pleasing approach to voluntarily counter inflation. Sharing baked goods with those less fortunate helps strengthen the national spirit we must depend on during these days of severe economic and energy problems..."⁵⁰² These examples reveal how others believed the First Lady as First Housewife could exercise economic power through her gender role modeling.

⁵⁰¹ Press Clippings, "White House Garden," *Associated Press*, March 6, 1975 and "Ford Not Taking Own Advice—No Vegetable Garden for Him," April 20, 1975, *Los Angeles Times*; Form Letter from Richard Krolik, White House Liaison to the WIN Committee, April 18, 1975, "WIN Garden" folder, Box 46, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁰² Bob Dole to President Ford, February 26, 1975, "Ford, Betty 2/1/75-4/17/75" folder, Box 3, PP5-1, WHCF, Ford Library.

The most highly publicized inflation-related event in which Mrs. Ford participated was a White House economic briefing for representatives of national women's organizations. Mrs. Ford's appearance was initiated and coordinated by Anne Armstrong's office. Armstrong stated that the purpose of the meeting was "to affirm the important role of women in the current economic situation" and to "involve organizations in the WIN Program and give these organizations insight into the national effort towards a sound economy."⁵⁰³ This statement shows how Mrs. Ford's appearance was specifically intended to affirm women's economic citizenship, conveying to them how they were economically relevant actors. As one of Mrs. Ford's staff members, Patti Matson, wrote to her, "Anne Armstrong's office feels it's important to stress that women are very important in this effort; that each of them individually are crucial to making WIN work and in fighting inflation....They feel it was important to have your visit as an endorsement of the importance of this meeting."⁵⁰⁴ Matson was basically saying that the First Lady's endorsement of the WIN program carried a great deal of symbolic weight, as she was in the unique position to be able to confirm the worth of the program in the minds of American women.

Betty Ford did deliver remarks at the conference on the role of women in the current inflationary situation. She related to the women gathered there how important her husband believed it was for them to get their organizations involved in the fight against inflation. She said,

⁵⁰³ Memorandum from Anne Armstrong, November 7, 1974, "Ford, Betty 11/1/74-12/4/74," Box 3, PP5-1, WHCF, Ford Library.

⁵⁰⁴ Patti Matson to Betty Ford, "Background on Economic Meeting," "11/20/74 Women's Economic Conference (1)," Box 2, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

It is important that we, as women, take a lead in this fight because we are the consumers, we are the people who decide how our families spend their money. We feel the pinch perhaps more acutely than any other member of our family, and we need to be as knowledgeable of every respect of the economy as possible."⁵⁰⁵

Her remarks were clearly intended to inspire women to work toward fighting inflation by calling their attention to their power as consumers. And though her remarks have obvious regendered implications, she was also encouraging their involvement as informed and relevant actors within an important federal economic program.

As with Mamie Eisenhower and Lady Bird Johnson, Betty Ford's representative role within the context of the 'domestic' economy was primarily symbolic. Mrs. Ford's symbolism was evident along two different dimensions. First, it is evident that her appearances were designed to inspire female citizen's active participation in economic recovery. Second, as First Housewife, she was the chief example-setter for other women on how to behave as consumers through a time of high inflation. In her embodiment of the ideal housewife, it is evident that she was furthering regendered practices. Yet, in her performance of gender, tremendous power was also evident on two levels. First, the above examples illustrate that her symbolic activities could have a tremendous economic impact. Second, through her symbolic representation, she also helped other women become aware of their power as consumers, bolstering their sense of economic citizenship and drawing them into the policy process, which has transgendered implications.

⁵⁰⁵ Press Release, November 20, 1974, "11/20/74 Women's Economic Conference (1) folder, Box 2, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the First Lady's substantive and symbolic representation of women through her policy roles in the 'domestic' economy. With Lou Hoover and Eleanor Roosevelt, the character of their representative roles was primarily substantive. Simply stated, they 'acted for' women as trustees by making sure their material needs were addressed during the Great Depression. They were also instrumental in breaking impasses that arose when women's programmatic needs were not being addressed by their husbands' administrations. On the other hand, Mamie Eisenhower, Lady Bird Johnson, and Betty Ford primarily served as symbolic representatives. On one level, they were instrumental in evoking feelings of inspiration and motivation within women to become active participants in whatever policy or program they were promoting. On another level, they embodied or symbolized the ideal housewife, whom women of the country were to emulate during times of economic concern.

First Ladies' substantive and symbolic representative roles have implications for regendering. That is, in performing the role of housewife and consumer, First Ladies were also performing gender. However, the First Lady's power is also evident through her symbolism. The above examples illustrate how, through her symbolism, the First Lady had the power to bring about economic change, as well as the power to inspire other women to bring about economic change. The First Lady was instrumental in linking women to national economic policy, albeit in a way that contributed to regendering. Still, she was able to make

them more civically engaged and politically aware, further illustrating her power and the transgendering effects of her role.

The first three chapters show how a blend of transgendering and regendering is evident through the First Lady's representative roles. Chapters One and Two also indicated that, out of all the eras studied, regendering was least evident during the 1970s, the height of the second wave of the feminist movement. Chapter Four centers on First Ladies of this decade and their ERA activism, which is the second major policy role they assumed. First Ladies of the 1970s, through their ERA activism, fought for men's and women's equal treatment in politics, economics, and in all other levels of society. Moreover, the push for ERA ratification was mainly driven by a movement that was rooted in the belief that women's domestic roles were oppressive, a theory famously expressed in Betty Freidan's influential *Feminine Mystique*. Thus, it is likely that out of all of the First Lady's representative roles, regendering would be least evident through her pro-ERA work. The next chapter explores this possibility.

~Chapter Four~

First Ladies and the Fight for the Equal Rights Amendment



**Lady Bird Johnson, Rosalynn Carter, Betty Ford and Bella Abzug Grasping the
ERA Torch at the IWY Houston Conference, November 1977.**

Source: *C.A.L.L. TO ACTION*, A Publication of Christian American Liberties League for Christian Cause, April 1978, "National Women's Conference in Houston, Box 3, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.



Phyllis Schlafly in Washington at a Demonstration against the ERA, 1977.

Source: Eagle Forum Website, <<http://www.eagleforum.org/era/index.html>> (7/5/2006)

Introduction

During the 1970s, the debate over gender roles came to a head in the fight for and against the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Over and above any other

issue, the ERA “dominated the national discourse over women’s rights.”⁵⁰⁶ The White House recognized the need to support the ERA in order to appease the demands of women constituents, and the newly powerful feminist movement needed allies in the White House to move their ratification efforts forward. Without the support, leadership, and power of the presidency, an effort to amend the Constitution—requiring approval of three-fourths of the states plus both houses of Congress—would be seriously hampered.

During the height of ratification efforts, it was very important for the most visible woman in the White House, the First Lady, to support the ERA. Because the ERA would affect her as a woman, the First Lady could speak with legitimacy and authority on the need for its ratification. If the President’s wife failed to champion the cause of equality, then the President’s commitment to equal rights for women would be called into question. If she failed to participate in the debate over the ERA, then her silence could be interpreted as submissiveness, suggesting her, and by extension the President’s, opposition to women’s equality.

The plebiscitary character of the presidency is readily apparent in the First Lady’s ERA work. As the following chapter will show, First Ladies’ ERA activities were focused on changing public opinion in the states, as well as changing the votes of state legislators through their lobbying efforts. That a national figure tried to influence state-level politics and public opinion illustrates the extent to which the modern presidency “draws much of its power and legitimacy from the popular support of the citizenry, support grounded in the development of the rhetorical presidency and the exalted role of the presidency in

⁵⁰⁶ Wolbrecht, *The Politics of Women’s Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change*, 5.

the American political culture.”⁵⁰⁷ Though the President has no formal role in the Amendment process, the Executive Branch was nevertheless expected to take a leadership role in ratification efforts.

Besides lobbying legislators, First Ladies gave speeches to educate the public about the positive effects of the Amendment, met with feminist groups at the White House, and participated in internal strategy meetings on ratification efforts in the states. These activities again reveal the First Lady’s substantive representation of women’s policies and interests. This chapter will also show how, in their ERA policy activities, First Ladies acted as both trustees and delegates. That is, they both represented women to the President and the President to women and those in charge of women’s issues. The delegate form of substantive representation is more evident here than in their campaign, liaison, and ‘domestic’ economic roles.

Also more evident in this chapter than in any other thus far is more transgendering than regendering. The ERA was fundamentally about gender construction. Women’s liberation forces believed that the ERA would help to bring about a greater blending of men’s and women’s functions or transgendered societal roles. Conservative forces, on the other hand, opposed the ERA based on the belief that it would rob women of their traditional role as wives and mothers, thereby contributing to the breakdown of the nuclear family. So, it can be said that anti-ERA forces supported regendered societal roles for men and women. Insofar as First Ladies sided with pro-ERA forces, their activities could be interpreted as furthering transgendered societal roles.

⁵⁰⁷ Rimmerman, *Presidency by Plebiscite: The Regan-Bush Era in Institutional Perspective*.

Within the ERA controversy, the First Lady's status as a political representative was called into question. Her substantive work caused members of the public to challenge the cultural notion of womanhood she 'stood for' as a descriptive representative. Though the First Ladies of the 1970s clearly believed that they were acting in the interests of women through their ERA advocacy, conservative forces believed they were acting against women's interests. The tremendous opposition to First Ladies' pro-ERA efforts raises the question whether they were actually committing political representation in this role. The First Ladies' representational discordance is a theme throughout this chapter, and this question will be explored further in the conclusion. However, at this point it is useful to reiterate that political representation means "acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them."⁵⁰⁸ If these First Ladies were truly being "responsive" to the represented, then it would seem that there would not be the tremendous and extended uproar surrounding their activities.

The following chapter focuses on the work of First Ladies Pat Nixon, Betty Ford, and Rosalynn Carter in behalf of ERA ratification. However, it is important to acknowledge that the ERA's existed as a political issue before well before the 1970s. The following section provides a brief overview of and explanation for First Ladies' lack of involvement in ERA ratification efforts from the 1920s through 1960s.

⁵⁰⁸ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 209.

Women and the Constitution: Post-Suffrage

After the ERA was first introduced in Congress in 1923, it came under vehement opposition from Progressive organizations and labor unions. "And although the Amendment was introduced in every subsequent Congress for the next twenty years, opposition from this coalition and from most conservatives ensured its repeated defeat."⁵⁰⁹ Within the Democratic Party, Eleanor Roosevelt was among the most prominent women who stood in opposition to the ERA. During FDR's years in New York State politics, ER made strong alliances with labor organizations, particularly the Women's Trade Union League, under the leadership of Rose Schneiderman. "The disregard for workers' needs and the ordinary dignity of working people, women especially, moved ER to support the activities and principles of the Women's Trade Union League."⁵¹⁰ ER continued to take cues from Schneiderman, an ardent ERA-opponent, after FDR took office.

As FDR's political power increased, so did ER's ability to protect women's interests and better the plight of women workers. For example, she exercised this power to keep the ERA off of the Democratic platform in 1940. Even her actions against the ERA reveal her trusteeship in terms of substantive representation.

In the days before the 1940 convention, Dorothy McAllister, Chair of the DNC Women's Division, wrote ER an urgent telegram, saying, "WOULD LIKE VERY MUCH TO HAVE A STATEMENT FROM YOU IN REGARD TO THE DAMAGING EFFECT OF EQUAL RIGHTS AMMENDMENT [SIC] TO USE

⁵⁰⁹ Jane Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 9.

⁵¹⁰ Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: 1884-1933*, 361.

IF NECESSARY BEFORE THE ADVISORY PLATFORM COMMITTEE OR THE REGULAR PLATFORM COMMITTEE IN CHICAGO.”⁵¹¹ Thus, there must have been significant pressure within the Democratic Party to stay on par with the Republicans by adopting the ERA. So, McAllister turned to ER, who, as the wife of the President, could speak with the power and authority needed to keep the ERA off of the platform. ER sent an immediate response, stating,

I feel about the equal rights amendment just as I have always felt, namely, that until women are unionized to a far greater extent than they are at present, an equal rights amendment will work great hardship on the industrial group which is, after all, the largest group of wage-earning women. Therefore, at the present time for us as a party interested in the well-being and protection of the workers, to put into our platform an equal rights amendment, would be a grave mistake and in this I think all the leaders of the workers would concur.⁵¹²

ER’s statement must have had some influence, as the ERA was ultimately excluded from the 1940 Democratic platform, despite the fact that many prominent Democratic women, including Emma Guffey Miller, lobbied hard for the ERA’s inclusion. Miller believed that inclusion of the ERA in the Democratic platform would win many votes for the Party and also “rob the Republican Party of an issue.”⁵¹³ After the official platform had been adopted without the ERA, McAllister wrote ER a celebratory letter, pointing out particularly the section on “Industry and the Worker” that the committee had adopted:

The Democratic Party will continue its efforts to achieve equality of opportunity for women and men without impairing the social legislation which promotes true equality by safeguarding the health, safety, and economic welfare of women workers. The right to work for compensation in both public and private employment

⁵¹¹ Telegram, Dorothy McAllister to ER, July 9, 1940, “McAllister, Mrs. Thomas F.” folder, Box 721, ER Papers, FDR Library.

⁵¹² ER to Dorothy McAllister, “McAllister, Mrs. Thomas F.” folder, Box 721, ER Papers, FDR Library.

⁵¹³ Telegram, Emma Guffey Miller to FDR, July 14, 1920, “Equal Rights for Women” folder, Box 120a, FDR Official File, FDR Library.

is an alienable privilege belonging to women as well as to men, without distinction as to marital status.⁵¹⁴

Before the 1944 convention, there was again a good deal of buzz surrounding whether the Democrats would add the ERA to their platform. And again, prominent women wrote to ER asking for her input on the matter. After a woman from the National Consumer's League wrote Molly Dewson inquiring after the ERA's chances, Dewson wrote to ER, "I know Franklin has always been against this hot air equal rights bill which the lawyers tell us will be very confusing and which will kill the protection of women [in] state local and service industries. What do you advise?"⁵¹⁵ ER responded optimistically and jokingly, "I do not think the Democratic platform will include an Equal Rights Amendment. There is a lot of agitation and I have many letters protesting my stand on the subject. If the Republicans win, all of us sixty and over are evidently going to be banished from active life!"⁵¹⁶

In 1944, while ER maintained her opposition to the ERA, she had devised a way for protective laws to be preserved while at the same time achieving equal rights for women. She wrote to Rose Schneiderman and Francis Perkins,

To tell you the truth, I do not think it matters even if both political parties endorse the Equal Rights Amendment. It will take a long time to get it through. However, I feel we must do a lot more than just be opposed to an amendment. I believe we should initiate through the Labor Department a complete survey of the laws that discriminate against women and the laws that are protective; that we should then go to work in every state in the Union to get rid of the discriminatory ones and to strengthen the protective ones....If we do not do this, we are not in a good position to fight the amendment....I think the work should be started as soon as possible.

⁵¹⁴ Dorothy McAllister to ER, July 30, 1940, "McAllister, Mrs. Thomas F." folder, Box 721, ER Papers, FDR Library.

⁵¹⁵ Handwritten note: Molly Dewson to ER, July 3, 1944. See Elizabeth S. Magee to Molly Dewson, June 14, 1944, "1944 Dewson, Mary" folder, Box 802, ER Papers, FDR Library.

⁵¹⁶ ER to Molly Dewson, July 3, 1944, "1944 Dewson, Mary" folder, Box 802, ER Papers, FDR Library.

Women are more highly organized, they are becoming more active as citizens, and better able to protect themselves, and they should, in all but certain very specific cases which are justified by their physical and functional differences, have the same rights as men.⁵¹⁷

In the above statement, ER reiterates that her main reason for opposing the ERA was to preserve protectionist labor legislation for women, thus indicating her trusteeship.

Recognizing Mrs. Roosevelt's influence among Democratic women, the National Woman's Party lobbied ER to change her stance in time for the 1944 convention season. In January of 1944, ER had given a press conference in which she reiterated her opinion about the harmful effects the ERA would have on labor women.⁵¹⁸ In response to the First Lady's press conference, Mrs. Anita Pollitzer, New York City Chairman of the NWP, requested a meeting with ER and some industrial workers to try to convince them of the merits of the ERA. ER arranged for them to come to her New York City apartment, along with Rose Schneiderman and some other labor women opposed to the ERA.⁵¹⁹ According to a *New York Times* story on the meeting, after both sides presented their case to Mrs. Roosevelt, she gave her verdict: "'Appeal not granted' was its substance as she reaffirmed her previous stand."⁵²⁰

Yet, it is important to note that during the 1940s and 1950s, "neither party actively championed women's rights," and presidents from both parties only

⁵¹⁷ ER to Rose Schneiderman and Frances Perkins, February 11, 1944, "Schneiderman, Rose" folder, Box 814, ER Papers, FDR Library.

⁵¹⁸ "First Lady Fights Equal Rights Plan; Would End Discrimination against Women, but Not Wipe Out 'Good' in the Laws," *The New York Times*, 2/1/1944.

⁵¹⁹ ER's office to Rose Schneiderman, January 29, 1944, "Schneiderman, Rose" folder, Box 814, ER Papers, FDR Library.

⁵²⁰ Press Clipping, "Friends, Foes of Equal Rights for Women Get Hearing in First Lady's Apartment," *The New York Times*, February 10, 1944, "Schneiderman, Rose" folder, Box 814, ER Papers, FDR Library.

made "occasional weak statements in support of women's rights."⁵²¹ President Truman did not appear to take the ERA seriously. When pro-ERA Democratic activist Emma Guffey Miller wrote to Truman regarding the merits of the proposed Amendment, he returned this facetious response: "I read your letter...with a great deal of interest and appreciate very much your continued interest in the equality of men and women. It has been my experience that there is no equality—men are just slaves and I suppose they will always continue to be."⁵²²

Women's organizations continued their ratification efforts through the Eisenhower Administration. There is even evidence that they targeted First Lady Mamie Eisenhower in their lobbying efforts. The National Woman's Party met with Mrs. Eisenhower at the White House. Before the group's visit, Helen Cann Janne, Chairman of the NWP's Maryland Branch, sent a packet of information to Mrs. Eisenhower's office on the proposed ERA, which was presumably intended to draw the First Lady's attention to the Amendment.⁵²³ However, there is no evidence that Mamie Eisenhower had anything to do with the ERA.

John F. Kennedy's most celebrated contribution to women's rights was his establishment of the President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW). Yet, it is also known that JFK was not personally a strong proponent of women's rights. Esther Peterson has portrayed Vice President Lyndon Johnson as the

⁵²¹ Wolbrecht, *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change*, 5.

⁵²² Harry Truman to Emma Guffey Miller, August 12, 1950, "[6 of 18]" folder," Box 40A, Student Research File: President Truman's Response to Women's Issues," HST Library.

⁵²³ Helen Cann Janne to Mary Jane McCaffree, March 12, 1953, "National Woman's Party" folder, Box 5, A.B. Tolley Records, Social Office Files, DDE Library.

driving force behind women's rights during the Kennedy Administration.⁵²⁴

Eleanor Roosevelt passed away before the final report of the PCSW was issued in 1963. But, given her previously strong opposition to the ERA, it may have been partially because of her influence that the report concluded, "'a constitutional amendment need not be sought in order to establish this principle' [equal rights for women]."⁵²⁵

Despite the PCSW's conclusion, pro-ERA women's organizations remained undeterred. After LBJ assumed the presidency and before he officially clarified his own position on the ERA, pro-ERA women's organizations wrote to Esther Peterson asking for LBJ's endorsement of the Amendment. Because of their incessant lobbying, Peterson decided to draft a memo to Administration officials stating that it was time for LBJ to explain his official position on the ERA, noting, "I think it is important that the President hold to the position taken by the President's Commission on the Status of Women."⁵²⁶ Based on Peterson's suggested wording, Deputy Special Counsel to the President Myer Feldman used a response letter to the Lucy Stone League, which had written to request LBJ's endorsement of the ERA, to do just that:

The President's Commission on the Status of Women gave careful consideration to various proposed methods of achieving equality of rights under the law for all persons, men or women, including the proposed Equal Rights Amendment. It held an opened hearing and sought and obtained technical legal advice from experts in the field. It was the Commission's thoughtful conclusion that 'the U.S. Constitution now embodies equality of rights for men and women' and that 'a constitutional amendment need not now be sought in order to establish this principle.' The Commission urged interested groups to give high priority to bringing under court review cases involving laws and official practices which discriminate against

⁵²⁴ Esther Peterson Oral History, Interview II, October 29, 1974, LBJ Library.

⁵²⁵ Qtd. in Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the Era*, 10.

⁵²⁶ Esther Peterson to Myer Feldman, December 31, 1963, "LE/HU3" folder, Box 72, LE/HU, WHCF, LBJ Library.

women. The President is deeply impressed by the Commission's conclusion and believes that this approach should be explored before considering a new constitutional amendment on this subject.⁵²⁷

The above section demonstrates that, even though the ERA existed as a political issue from the 1920s through the 1960s, First Ladies did not work toward its ratification mainly because it was a very low priority for their husbands' administrations. Only Eleanor Roosevelt demonstrated trusteeship as a substantive representative by actually working against ERA ratification, as she believed that her opposition would help protect female laborers. As the following section shows, it would take the rise of the second wave women's movement to get presidential administrations to prioritize the ERA and, thereby, spur First Ladies' ratification efforts.

1970-1980: First Ladies and the Fight for the ERA

In a 1971 memo by Barbara Franklin analyzing the potential impact of feminism on the 1972 election, she noted that the Administration needed to take a stronger public posture on the ERA. She stated, "This proposed amendment to the Constitution, which has been repeatedly introduced in Congress for the past several decades, has now become an emotional cornerstone of the Feminist cause, and has received widespread support from women's groups representing all shades of political philosophy."⁵²⁸ The rise of the second wave also compelled the Administration to consider Pat Nixon's role in the debate over women's rights.

⁵²⁷ Myer Feldman to Jane Grant, President of the Lucy Stone League, December 31, 1963, "LE/HU3" folder, Box 72, LE/HU, WHCF, LBJ Library.

⁵²⁸ Memorandum by Barbara Franklin and Jean Spencer, October 1971, "Women-Memos" folder, Box 28, CFOA 330, Robert Finch Papers, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

An influential memo titled "Women in Government and the Nixon Administration" by Helen Delich Bentley, Chair of the Federal Maritime Commission, to the President also analyzed the political power of the new women's movement, as well as the First Lady's place in it:

Growing economic affluence and the rising level of education among women have served to bring [sex-based discrimination] more immediately and compellingly to the attention of women. Several new national women's organizations have been formed in recent years. A growing militancy among women has been widely reported. Women generally are protesting the lack of action by the present Administration on a wide range of women's problems. Republican women have frequently and loudly complained about the lack of appointments by the Administration to positions of responsibility. Democratic women point to the demonstrably superior records of the Kennedy and Johnson Administration in the area of women's interests, and promise to make this a major political issue—and at a time when women voters outnumber men."⁵²⁹

Bentley's statement, along with pointing out the need for the Nixon Administration to give heightened attention to the needs of women constituents, also exemplifies how equality and economic issues had become intertwined by the 1970s. In this way, First Ladies' work on behalf of equality can also be viewed as a continuation of their work for women's economic interests.

Bentley went on to note that the top men in the Nixon Administration, unlike in the Johnson Administration, did not have wives who worked like Lady Bird Johnson did. She recounted that this was a liability for the Republicans, as many women were beginning to believe that the Nixon men did not regard their wives as equals. Here, she was implying that Pat Nixon, though she did hold a job in her younger years, did not descriptively represent working women, which may have been hurting the President's reputation on women's rights.

⁵²⁹ Memorandum, Helen Delich Bentley to The President, Undated, "Women and the Administration" folder, Box 28, Robert Finch Papers, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

However, Pat Nixon did play an important role in the Nixon Administration's plans to take a stronger public posture on the ERA. In response to criticism Republicans had been receiving for being weak on women's rights, Mrs. Nixon took the lead in promoting the historical Republican support of the ERA. The First Lady believed that it was very important for the Nixon Administration to emphasize that the Republican Party supported the ERA first in 1944, four years before the Democrats. She also wanted to get the point across that her husband had supported the ERA before it was fashionable to do so, in 1951 when he served in the U.S. Senate. She instructed Constance Stuart, her Staff Director, to notify the East Wing staff that they should be sticking to these points in their public and private remarks and discussions. Stuart's memorandum read:

Mrs. Nixon has asked me to prepare the attached material and bring it to your attention. In response to the criticism about what the Republican Party or this President has done for women's rights, we should point out that the Republican Party adapted [sic] the Equal Rights Amendment as part of the party platform 4 years before the Democratic Party. President Nixon as Senator co-sponsored the Amendment on the floor of the Senate in 1951 and as President has appointed more women to high government positions than any other President.⁵³⁰

Attached to Stuart's memo was a timeline she had compiled for Mrs. Nixon detailing important dates in the Republican Party's and Richard Nixon's historical ERA advocacy. This memorandum points to the First Lady's active, behind-the-scenes role in representing women's interests through her work on the ERA. On the one hand, her initiative demonstrates her trusteeship because, through her ERA advocacy, she was working in behalf of women's citizenship interests. Yet,

⁵³⁰ Memorandum, Constant Stuart to Pat Nixon's Staff, February 8, 1972, "Republican Campaign" folder, Box 11, Susan Porter Files, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

in another sense, her work resembles that of a delegate, as her goal was to promote her husband's record on the ERA to the public.

These themes were echoed in a statement Pat Nixon gave to the delegates of the 1972 Republican Convention, in which her main role was to promote the Party platform and, in particular, her husband's record on women's rights. In a message to the convention, she stated,

It is a special pleasure to greet the convention delegates as you embark on the historically significant sessions and decisions in the days ahead. This gathering of Republicans and concerned Americans gives us an opportunity to reflect with pride upon the progressive path our country has pursued in the past three and one-half years. Among these great strides forward, America has experienced greater legal and social encouragement of equal opportunity for women.

The Republican Party, having led the fight for women's suffrage in the 1900's, was the first national party to endorse the Equal Right Amendment in 1940. Since that time, professional women in our federal government have been playing an increasingly important role in our national development through their...talents and innovative contributions. The enthusiasm expressed by our Republican leaders has helped to set the stage for greater national acceptance of career women in a variety of fields and professions.

The President has given special support to this effort, setting new precedents in the hiring of women for positions in the federal government. During this Administration more women have been appointed or promoted to high-level government positions than ever before in history. During the past year alone, the number of women in top government posts has more than tripled, and more than 1,000 women have moved into middle-management jobs.⁵³¹

This support of equal opportunity for women is a substantive reflection of the Republican Party's blending of the precious ideals conceived by our forefathers with contemporary values flexible enough to adjust to the continually changing needs and demands of our maturing society. It is through this intense dedication to America's strongest and most meaningful traditions that we have willingly met the unprecedented international and domestic challenges that face us as a nation. We believe that this same indomitable spirit reflects the intrinsic mood of the American people and will lead us to a successful and rewarding campaign in 1972....(signed Patricia Nixon)

In her convention statement, Mrs. Nixon seems more like a delegate in terms of substantive representation, as she is representing the President to women by

⁵³¹ Statement by Patricia Nixon, 1972 Republican National Convention, "Mrs. Nixon Equal Rights Statement," Box 7, Gwendolyn B. King Files, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

promoting his record on women's appointments and commitment to women's rights. Her reference to "career women" further illustrates how economics and equality had become intertwined by the 1970s. It also illustrates how her representative role had implications for transgendering in the midst of societal change, as she was advancing the "greater national acceptance of" women in the professions.

During the 1972 election year, Mrs. Nixon also played an instrumental role in reaching out to and maintaining good relations with feminist organizations. The National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), founded in 1971 by a group of feminists including Betty Friedan, Bella Abzug, and Gloria Steinem, had a significant impact on the political parties. The influential NWPC, founded as a bipartisan organization, "was created to advocate the election and appointment of women to office and the representation of women's interests by the political system, including the political parties."⁵³²

Anne Armstrong's papers within the Nixon Presidential Materials contain a notable letter from Mrs. Nixon to Lorraine Beebe of the NWPC. Perhaps because she believed it would be politically advantageous to foster an amicable relationship with the President's wife, Ms. Beebe had written to the First Lady to inform her of the "accelerating role of the National Women's Political Caucus in the political field." In her congratulatory, and rather progressive, response to the newly influential organization, Mrs. Nixon wrote,

I am happy to have the opportunity to commend the goals and activities of the Caucus for they do indeed represent a significant movement in our Nation's social and political trends. With the rapidly changing concepts of women's challenges,

⁵³² Wolbrecht, *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change*, 35.

privileges and potentials, women are becoming increasingly more influential in the determination of our national destiny.

It is of vital importance that this activism be channeled into areas which have the capacity to develop to the fullest this priceless potential. Innovative thought, intense dedication to personal convictions and cooperative action are all proven characteristics that qualify women for involvement in politics at all levels...No matter what role a woman may choose, her ability to attain her personal goals depends not only upon her individual will but also upon society's responsiveness to her immeasurable contributions.

Through dissemination of information, programs of education, and practical demands accompanied by constructive action, organized women's groups such as yours are setting the pace for the ever-growing and enthusiastic acceptance of women in fields heretofore traditionally exclusive to men.

The National Women's Political Caucus is to be applauded for vigorously implementing its recognition that this fast emerging philosophic transition is of vital importance in the political sphere.

With appreciation and best wishes...(signed, Pat Nixon)⁵³³

Here, Mrs. Nixon is affirming her support as First Lady for the goals of the feminist movement and for the government's responsibility to ensure that women are able to attain equal opportunities as citizens. Also notable are the transgendered undertones of her message, particularly her references to helping women develop their fullest potential, incorporating them into all levels of government, and integrating them into professions that have been previously open exclusively to men.

Pat Nixon drafted the letter to the NWPC shortly after the ERA had been passed by the U.S. House and Senate in March of 1972. The ratification by the U.S. Congress began a long, difficult struggle for the ERA that would last the rest of the decade. As a demonstration of the salience that the ERA had taken on, the press regularly asked Mrs. Nixon for statements on the issue. When Constance Stuart was asked at East Wing press conferences what the First Lady thought

⁵³³ Pat Nixon to Lorraine Beebe, April 17, 1972, "National Women's Political Caucus" folder, Box 65, Outside Women's Organizations File, Anne Armstrong Papers, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

about the ERA, she stuck to the themes that Mrs. Nixon had reiterated throughout her tenure. For instance, at one press conference, Stuart replied to an ERA-related question, "Mrs. Nixon, of course, supports the amendment. As she indicated to me, every Republican convention has supported an amendment since 1940...and that her husband supports it and that she supports it. Mrs. Nixon does not believe in discrimination of any kind."⁵³⁴ Recognizing the importance of the President's wife's support for women's equality, Mrs. Nixon and her staff were very careful to condemn discrimination, in order to demonstrate the First Lady's adherence to feminist ideals.

Despite their relatively consistent message on Pat Nixon's position in the women's rights debate, the First Lady did make some missteps. The largest and most notable occurred in May of 1969, before the Administration began to really demonstrate a heightened sensitivity to the emerging feminist movement. Before the First Lady was to receive the State Status of Women Commissions at the White House, Mrs. Nixon remarked to reporters, "I really feel women have equal rights if they want to exercise those rights. The women I know, who are really interested in going out, pitch in and do good. I don't think there is any discrimination. I have not seen it. I know my husband doesn't feel that way."⁵³⁵ Pat Nixon's remark about women already having equal rights implied that there was not really a need for the ERA. As demonstrated above, this statement was quite out of synch with her later statements and work in behalf of women's

⁵³⁴ Transcript, White House Press Briefing by Constance Stuart, May 4, 1970, "Women's Rights" folder, Box 30, CFA 330, Robert Finch Papers, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

⁵³⁵ Elizabeth Shelton, "Mrs. Nixon: 'We're Already Equal,'" *The Washington Post*, May 8, 1969.

equality. This particular remark can most likely be explained by a general lack of awareness in the early Nixon Administration about the power of the emerging women's movement, as noted in the previously cited memo by Helen Bentley. It also shows that Pat Nixon was likely not one of the initial driving forces for feminism within the Administration and that she, just like other members of the Nixon Administration, had to initially be educated on the importance of women's rights. Perhaps this instance served such an educative function, as the negative response to her comment was quite pronounced.

The First Lady's comment prompted an outcry from women's organizations and private citizens alike. For example, it "provided grist" for a group of feminists under the leadership of Betty Friedan to picket the White House, "accusing the Nixon Administration of being unfair to women."⁵³⁶ Letters protesting Mrs. Nixon's comment poured into the First Lady's office.⁵³⁷ Women's organizations wrote to the President demanding clarification on his views of women's rights. NOW even went so far as to issue a harshly critical open letter to Richard Nixon and forwarded copies to newspapers, state governors, legislators, and women's groups. NOW's letter read,

Mrs. Nixon's May 7th statement that she (and you) do not 'feel there's any discrimination' against women greatly disturbed countless women throughout the nation. Her statement made to reporters while she entertained 88 Chairmen of state and city commissions on the Status of Women most certainly was an affront to these chairmen...[and] to the governors and mayors who appointed them; they were told, in effect, by the president and first lady that the purpose for the commissions does not exist!...

The National Federation of Business and Professional Women's May 8th telegram shows their alarm that Mrs. Nixon's statement will 'endanger' the 'court cases and legislative activities to eliminate discriminatory measures.'...

⁵³⁶ Elizabeth Shelton, "Mrs. Nixon: 'We're Already Equal,'" *The Washington Post*, May 8, 1969.

⁵³⁷ See Memorandum to Herb Klein, Undated, "6/30/69" folder, HU 2-5 Women, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Mr. Nixon, the women in this country are growing tired of second class citizenship! We believe that you will...take an active role in 'achieving Constitutional equality between the sexes'!⁵³⁸

This letter demonstrates that feminists viewed the First Lady as having tremendous symbolic power in the area of women's rights. If she issued an unsupportive statement from her First Lady pulpit, they believed others would inevitably listen and be persuaded to think that discrimination did not exist. NOW was also pointing out that Mrs. Nixon was a failure as a women's representative. They were essentially saying that in her words and deeds the First Lady did not substantively, symbolically, or descriptively represent the women of the 1970s.

In response to this outcry, the Nixon Administration was compelled to write to concerned women's organizations to clarify the President and First Lady's stances on women's rights. In such correspondence, the Administration noted that Mrs. Nixon's comments were misinterpreted and that she actually did not intend to convey that discrimination does not exist. The conciliatory letters affirmed that the President and Mrs. Nixon "have a keen appreciation of the long and valiant struggle for women's rights."⁵³⁹ Here, the Administration was undertaking an effort to reframe Mrs. Nixon as a representative of women's equality interests.

The general public also wrote to First Lady Pat Nixon about women's rights issues, particularly the Equal Rights Amendment. Members of the public wrote to the First Lady because they believed that, because of her attachment to

⁵³⁸ Jean Witter to President Nixon, Undated, "6/30/96" folder, HU 2-5 Women, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

⁵³⁹ John R. Brown, Staff Assistant to the President to Mrs. Hope Roberts, National President of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, May 24, 1969, "6/30/96" folder, HU 2-5 Women, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

the power of the presidency, she could do something to help or deter its passage. Many writers were women and appealed to the First Lady "as a woman" to try to get her to empathize with their feelings about the harm or good the ERA would bring. As indicated by NOW's letter and the letters of average female constituents, there seemed to be a tug of war going on amongst the citizenry in terms of defining what kind of woman the First Lady would substantively, descriptively, and symbolically represent. This debate was exacerbated by the fact that, in 1973, ERA proponents began to lose control of the ratification process. A rift between traditionalists and feminists began to emerge over the ERA.

"Traditionalists saw the 'women's libbers' both as rejecting the notion that motherhood was a truly important task and endorsing sexual hedonism instead of moral restraint."⁵⁴⁰ So, as the debate over gender construction grew more intense, the representative pressure placed upon the First Lady also grew.

Further exacerbating this rift was Phyllis Schlafly and her powerful STOP ERA advocacy group, which "helped to bring together fundamentalist Christians, Catholics, homemakers, and others into a powerful and well-organized opposition to feminism."⁵⁴¹ Women around the country were being swayed by Schlafly and traditionalist arguments against the ERA. Schlafly's influence is evident in the letters Mrs. Nixon received during this period. For instance, one homemaker who wrote to the First Lady included with her letter a copy of the *Phyllis Schlafly Report* for the First Lady to read. This particular issue highlighted the influential argument that the ERA was not necessary because of all of the country's current

⁵⁴⁰ Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the Era*, 13.

⁵⁴¹ Wolbrecht, *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change*, 40.

laws that prohibit discrimination against women. Reflecting Schlafly's focus on the changes in women's lifestyles the ERA would impose, the homemaker wrote, "I was absolutely horrified to see what the ERA will do to the family. It is so all encompassing!...I interpret my Bible to say that God's order for the family is God, Christ, husband, wife, children, and then others. I feel this ERA affects that order for the family and this upsets me." Furthermore, the woman wrote that she feared the ERA would mandate "that women are 50% responsible for the family income" and that it therefore would force women out of the home and into the workforce. This woman's concerns reflect Phyllis Schlafly's persuasive argument, promoted within her *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, that the ERA will abolish laws "which impose the obligation on the husband to support his wife." Targeting the average homemaker, Schlafly's report stated, "These laws are fundamental to the institution of the family. They give the wife her legal right to be a fulltime wife and mother, in her own home, taking care of her own babies."⁵⁴² The citizen concluded her letter to the First Lady with a plea for help, "Please, Mrs. Nixon, help us save the family units by allowing we full-time homemakers to stay home if we wish. I have faith in you and Mr. Nixon as the leaders of our country. I do not know what you can do about the situation, but I did wish for you to be aware of the feelings, heartaches, and concerns of one wife and mother."⁵⁴³ Here, the writer is urging Mrs. Nixon to substantively and descriptively represent the traditionalists in the battle over the ERA.

⁵⁴² *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, August 1973, Vol. 7, no. 1, "Schlafly, Phyllis" folder, Box 336, Name File, Social Files, WHCF, Ford Library.

⁵⁴³ Mrs. Frank Hershman to Patricia Nixon, April 16, 1973, "Letters to Mrs. Nixon-Anti-ERA" folder, Jill Ruckleshaus, Patricia Lindh, and Jean Spencer File, Anne Armstrong Papers, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

The voices of homemakers were indeed essential to the surge of anti-ERA sentiment that began pervading the political scene in 1973. As one citizen rather accurately captured the women's rights political climate in a letter to Mrs. Nixon,

The upswelling opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment has apparently been a great surprise to legislators. It has welled up from the non-political women: homemakers and would-be homemakers and working mothers who wish they could be full-time homemakers. A new voice of a new coalition is speaking—the voice of women who are proud of their domestic role...

Like many other letter-writers, she ended her correspondence to the First Lady with an appeal: "As one homemaker to another...I ask your intercession with the President about the ERA. If a reversal of position is not feasible, perhaps a moderated restatement of position might help the restoration of better feelings and calmer tempers."⁵⁴⁴ Here again, the writer is urging the First Lady to substantively and descriptively represent traditional women in the battle over gender roles that the ERA encapsulated.

Another prevalent anti-ERA argument was that the feminists who advocated for the Amendment were outside of the mainstream and that they did not represent the views of the majority of the American women. As another citizen wrote to Mrs. Nixon,

I am appealing to you as a woman, and a mother of two lovely girls, to look into the situation surrounding the Equal Rights Amendment, that your husband has endorsed. I cannot believe that after researching the legislation...that you won't come to the same conclusions as most God fearing women...have, that this is an unnecessary and chaotic stand....The majority of women don't want it! A radical few are trying to impose their will on millions of others....Someone has to listen to the majority. Maybe you will...Gloria & Bella & Betty are not our barometers, and I'm sure that they're not yours either.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁴ Mrs. Jean Patton to Mrs. Nixon, April 26, 1973, "Letters to Mrs. Nixon-Anti-ERA" folder, Jill Ruckleshaus, Patricia Lindh, and Jean Spencer File, Anne Armstrong Papers, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

⁵⁴⁵ Susan B. Tovey to Mrs. Nixon, Undated, "Letters to Mrs. Nixon-Anti-ERA" folder, Jill Ruckleshaus, Patricia Lindh, and Jean Spencer File, Anne Armstrong Papers, SMOF, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

This letter again illustrates the tug of war concerning descriptive representation and cultural notions of womanhood that was occurring through the First Lady's position.

Pat Nixon, despite some early missteps, substantively and descriptively represented women through her work for the ERA. She mainly resembled a delegate, as she helped bring the President's message about the ERA to the women of the country. Her substantive representation of women also illustrates how she promoted transgendered societal roles. Her rhetoric about women's rights and the ERA emphasized equal access to political and economic opportunity for women and promoted the acceptance of women in roles and occupations previously open only to men. And as exemplified through the correspondence of feminist organizations and female citizens regarding the ERA, there was a debate surrounding what cultural notion of womanhood the First Lady represented. However, as Mrs. Nixon typically took the side of ERA advocates, in this descriptive representative role it can be said that she 'stood for' a more liberated notion of womanhood, as opposed to traditional women's roles, which provides further evidence of transgendering.

Organized opposition to the ERA was solidified by the time Richard Nixon resigned from office. But when Gerald and Betty Ford moved into the White House in August of 1974, ERA advocates gained a President and in particular a First Lady more actively supportive of women's rights than any other presidential couple before them. Mrs. Ford believed sincerely in the power of the ERA to better women's lives. So, even though the nation was divided over the

ERA, in her substantive representation on this issue, Mrs. Ford was acting as a trustee, because she believed that she was acting in the best interests of women.

At the beginning of the Ford Administration, Betty Ford announced that she would substantively represent women's interests through ERA ratification work. In her first press conference as First Lady, Betty Ford stated that she would play a role in pushing for the passage of the ERA in the states that had yet to ratify the Amendment.⁵⁴⁶ This illustrates her work in the plebiscitary presidency, as she tried to increase support for a presidential initiative by changing public opinion in the states. After Mrs. Ford made the announcement that she would be using her platform as First Lady to campaign for ERA ratification, her office and Anne Armstrong's office began to receive numerous requests for her appearance at pro-ERA events in unratified states. This shows that activists believed that the First Lady's political prominence and visibility could be a great asset to their cause. Thus, very soon after Ford took office, the First Lady's staff and Anne Armstrong's staff began to work closely together to strategize about Mrs. Ford's participation in ERA ratification.⁵⁴⁷

Early in 1975, Mrs. Ford took the initiative to educate members of the White House staff on the ERA. She believed that the upcoming year was important to the ratification of the ERA and thought it was vital to both men and women who worked at the White House to have a clear understanding of the legislation. She issued a memorandum to all members of the White House staff

⁵⁴⁶ Transcript, "First Lady's Press Conference," September 4, 1974, "9/14/74 Mrs. Ford's Press Conference" folder, Box 1, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁴⁷ Memorandum, Karen Keesling to Anne Armstrong, September 26, 1974, "Ford, Betty 8/9/74-9/20/74" folder, PP5-1, Box 3, WHCF, Ford Library.

urging them to attend a presentation on the amendment that she was sponsoring. It is remarkable that the initiative came from the East Wing, rather than the West Wing, as it demonstrated that a heightened concern for and representation of women's rights was coming from the feminine part of the White House. In her memorandum, Mrs. Ford wrote,

I hope you will reserve a half hour tomorrow (Friday, February 7) at either 11:00 a.m. or 11:45 a.m.—and plan on joining me in the Family Theater of the White House for an update on what is happening with the Equal Rights Amendment.

An excellent slide presentation on the ERA has been made available to us. Two experts on the subject—John Deardourff and Doug Bailey—will bring us up to date on the Amendment's status and are well equipped to answer our questions.

I plan to be on hand to meet you and hope you will bring co-workers for this important briefing...⁵⁴⁸

Mrs. Ford also met with prominent pro-ERA groups at the White House. The First Lady used these opportunities to demonstrate her support for ERA ratification, while the organizations used these meetings as opportunities to try to persuade Mrs. Ford to participate in activities that would further their cause. For example, in February of 1976, she met with representatives from ERAmerica. Because of their meeting, Mrs. Ford agreed to allow the group to use her endorsement of their activities in their advertisements. She agreed to call Nelson Rockefeller to ask for his help and backing, as well as to call Mamie Eisenhower, Jackie Kennedy, Lady Bird Johnson, and Pat Nixon to ask for their personal endorsement of the ERA. After the meeting was over, ERAmerica wrote to the First Lady's staff, "We are so appreciative of your cooperation and support in our meeting today with Mrs. Ford. It was a tremendous shot in the arm for ERAmerica and for us

⁵⁴⁸ Memorandum, Mrs. Ford to All White House/EOB Staff, February 6, 1975, "Betty Ford—Equal Rights Amendment" folder, Box 37, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

personally.”⁵⁴⁹ This last statement illustrates the First Lady’s power as a symbolic representative to motivate and inspire female members of the citizenry and bolster a cause by affiliating herself with it. And her initiative in setting up White House information sessions, meeting with feminist organizations, and placing phone calls illustrates her trusteeship in the ERA ratification effort.

One of the activities in which ERAmerica asked Betty Ford to participate was the Helen Reddy Concert on March 27, 1976 at the Daughters of the American Revolution’s Constitution Hall. Reddy won a Grammy Award for her song “I Am Woman,” which was adopted by the United Nations as the theme song for International Women’s Year. The concert was sponsored by ERAmerica and all of the proceeds from the performance were given to the organization.⁵⁵⁰ Mrs. Ford’s attendance at the concert did attract press coverage for the event. Reddy and the First Lady had gotten to know each other when the singer had performed at a previous White House state dinner. Liz Carpenter, Lady Bird Johnson’s former East Wing staffer who was then head of ERAmerica, told the press after the concert, “It was great of Mrs. Ford to help. We feel that she was part booking agent because of her rapport with Helen.”⁵⁵¹ The First Lady’s ability to attract press attention for an ERA event and increase its prominence illustrates her power as a symbolic representative, while her service as a ‘booking agent’ points to her trusteeship in behalf of pro-ERA organizations.

⁵⁴⁹ Memorandum from Liz Carpenter and Elly Peterson of ERAmerica to Sheila Weidenfeld, Pat Lindh and Susan Porter, February 17, 1976, “Ford, Betty—Equal Rights Amendment,” Box 21, Lindh/Holm Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁵⁰ Press Release, Office of the Press Secretary to Mrs. Ford, Mary 24, 1976, “3/27/76 Helen Reddy Concert” folder, Box 9, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁵¹ Press Clipping, Jacqueline Trescott, “Reddy for ERAmerica” *The Washington Post*, 3/29/1976, “3/27/76 Helen Reddy Concert” folder, Box 9, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

Further illustrating her trusteeship and power as a symbol, because of all of Mrs. Ford's pro-ERA efforts, feminist groups were anxious to heap praises and honors on the First Lady for her work in behalf of women's rights. For example, the NWPC wanted to present her with an ERA pin to recognize all that she had done to encourage the passage of the Amendment. As the NWPC's Director of Development noted, "There are many women in both parties who have tremendous respect for Mrs. Ford, and it would seem very appropriate to have a bi-partisan gathering for her."⁵⁵² In addition, Betty Ford hosted the National Woman's Party at the White House. They designated the First Lady as the recipient of their first Alice Paul Award, in honor of her effort for the ERA.⁵⁵³ However, when the NWP wanted to honor her for her ERA efforts in the fall of 1975, the First Lady's staff recommended that she decline the invitation under the pretense of having a busy schedule. In reality, her staff urged her to decline because of the recent national controversy following her *60 Minutes* interview. Therefore, her staff was conscious to curtail the First Lady's controversial ERA activities.⁵⁵⁴ This particular incident reveals how Mrs. Ford's staff had to carefully construct which cultural notion of womanhood she 'stood for' as a descriptive representative. While Mrs. Ford personally sided with ERA proponents, the message that it sent—that she was opposed to traditional women's roles—potentially served to alienate a large segment of conservative women.

⁵⁵² Lael Stegall to Susan Porter, October 6, 1976, "Photo Opportunity—National Women's Political Caucus" folder, Box 3, Susan Porter Files, Ford Library. See also Memorandum to Mrs. Ford, "Photo Opportunities—National Woman's Party" folder, Box 2, Susan Porter Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁵³ Memorandum to Mrs. Ford, January 10, 1977, "Photo Opportunities—National Woman's Party" folder, Box 2, Susan Porter Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁵⁴ Memorandum, Susan Porter to Mrs. Ford, Undated, "Photo Opportunities—National Woman's Party" folder, Box 2, Susan Porter Files, Ford Library.

And while Mrs. Ford welcomed many pro-ERA groups inside the White House, she also took care to send messages to those on the outside—that is, to groups who demonstrated for the ERA outside the White House gates. In August of 1976, to a group of ERA proponents holding a vigil outside the White House, she sent the following message upon their request: “I wanted you to know I’m ‘shoulder to shoulder’ with you in spirit. I admire your diligent vigil for the Equal Rights Amendment. As your vigil outside the White House ends, I assure you mine inside the White House continues.”⁵⁵⁵ Mrs. Ford’s acknowledgment that she was holding her own ERA vigil inside the White House again points to her trusteeship in this issue.

While ERA ratification efforts were strong during the Ford Administration, actual ratification by the states came to a near standstill. In 1974, three states ratified the ERA. Only one, North Dakota, did so in 1975, bringing the total of states that had ratified the ERA to 34 of the required 38 states. No states ratified in 1976. Thus, by the end of the Ford Administration, sixteen states had not yet ratified. These included Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah, and Virginia. And though ratification efforts remained intense throughout the rest of the 1970s, only one state, Indiana, would go on to ratify the ERA in 1977, becoming the 35th and last state to ever do so.

⁵⁵⁵ Betty Ford to Carol Pudliner-Sweeny, August 27, 1976, “ERA Vigil Telegram, August 27, 1976,” Box 2, Frances Pullen Files, Ford Library.

Mrs. Ford lobbied the state legislatures for ERA ratification. Members of the White House staff and women's groups often encouraged her to make such calls, and the First Lady often obliged. They believed that the First Lady, speaking from the heart about how important she felt the legislation was, could persuade ambivalent legislators to vote for the ERA. Receiving a personal call from the First Lady was also a rare privilege, and this alone may have been enough to sway some votes. While the President also made ERA lobbying phone calls, the First Lady could add a personal element that the President could not. Some also believed that a call from the First Lady would give legislators the confidence to vote 'yes' for ERA, as this would remind them that they had her backing, as well as the support of the Ford Administration, illustrating her role in the plebiscitary presidency. Therefore, it was believed that Mrs. Ford could exercise great symbolic power, as a few words of personal encouragement from the First Lady could potentially have the power to change votes.

In the critical state of Illinois, Betty Ford placed numerous phone calls to key legislators encouraging them to pass the ERA. She called Illinois Senate Minority Leader William C. Harris (R-Pontiac) to lobby his support. Harris welcomed the First Lady's lobbying efforts, saying, "I must in all candor say I was taken aback and impressed." Harris also recounted that his own wife told him, "You're going to have a chance to choose up sides between the First Lady and your wife." Harris ended up voting against the ERA, not because of wifely pressures, but because he believed the Constitution "should not be cluttered up

with amendments.”⁵⁵⁶ Despite Harris’ ‘no’ vote, the ERA did go on to pass in the Illinois Senate.

Republican political consultants Doug Bailey and John Deardourff urged the First Lady to call Illinois State Senator John Nimrod (R-Chicago Cook County) and get him to assure her that he would be present for the vote and also vote ‘yes’ for ERA ratification. Nimrod had gone back and forth in his prior support of the ERA, but was receiving strong pressure for the Republican organization in his district to “take a walk” during the vote or vote ‘no.’ As Bailey and Deardourff related to the First Lady’s staff, “Senator Nimrod knows he should vote for it, and a call would probably give him the confidence to do so.”⁵⁵⁷

Mrs. Ford also put in a call to Bud Washburn, the Republican leader in the Illinois House, to urge him to support a rules change so that it would take 89 votes to pass ERA instead of 107. He agreed to go along with Mrs. Ford’s suggested plan, and the First Lady then sent him a follow-up letter to remind him of the pledge he made to her.⁵⁵⁸ In May of 1975, however, the Illinois House voted against ERA ratification by a vote of 113 to 62.

Some members of the Illinois General Assembly, however, were not so receptive to the First Lady’s lobbying efforts. Illinois State Representative Donald E. Deuster (R, Mundelein), for example, wrote Betty Ford a very long and very

⁵⁵⁶ Press Clipping, John Camper, “Betty Ford Fails to Woo Sen. Harris; ERA Bill Passes First Test Anyway,” Source Unknown, “Women-Clippings (3)” folder, Box 47, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁵⁷ Memorandum, Doug Bailey and John Deardourff to Sheila Weidenfeld, March 2, 1975, “6/11/76—Equal Rights Amendment, State Legislatures,” Box 47, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁵⁸ Memorandum, Doug Bailey and John Deardourff to Sheila Weidenfeld, April 15, 1975, “6/11/76—Equal Rights Amendment, State Legislatures,” Box 47, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

critical letter urging her to put an end to her ERA advocacy. He wrote, "I hope you will accept my respectful request that you immediately desist in your long-distance telephone lobbying campaign, and that you refrain from using the prestige of the White House and your position as First Lady of the Land to promote adoption of this extremely controversial, comprehensive and emotionally charged Amendment..." Representative Deuster went on to invite the First Lady to come to Springfield to testify before the State Legislature so that "all Members may then have an opportunity to hear the depth of your thoughts and convictions on this significant subject."⁵⁵⁹ Representative Deuster's request that Mrs. Ford end her lobbying efforts reveals several aspects of the First Lady's representative role. First, Deuster acknowledges the symbolic weight and power of her position as First Lady, which stems from its attachment to the "prestige" of the presidency, in influencing the votes of legislators. Additionally, he is implying that her lobbying role is an inappropriate one for the First Lady to be undertaking, perhaps because of her gender, but probably more so because of the divisiveness of the ERA. So, he is saying that Mrs. Ford as First Lady should retain a representatively neutral posture so that the issue can more fairly be debated within the states.

Mrs. Ford also lobbied members of the Oklahoma legislature. This greatly angered those in the Oklahoma Republican Party who were opposed to the ERA. A group of female officials from the Republican State Committee wrote to Mrs. Ford to say that "the news that you are actively urging ratification of the Equal

⁵⁵⁹ Donald E. Deuster to Mrs. Ford, February 6, 1975, "6/11/76 Reagan—Anne Armstrong Samples of Public Mail," Box 47, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

Rights Amendment is very disturbing to us..."⁵⁶⁰ They requested that she reconsider her support because they subscribed to the belief that the ERA would do such things as force homemakers into the workforce and mandate women be drafted into the armed services. These same Oklahoma women wrote to Mary Louise Smith, Chair of the Republican National Committee, asking for her help in convincing Mrs. Ford to refrain from campaigning for the ERA. However, Smith's reply letter, while acknowledging the divisions within Republican Party over the ERA, defended Mrs. Ford's lobbying efforts:

As you know there are wide variations of opinion, even within our own Party, in regard to the Equal Rights Amendment....I believe that the Republican Party is broad enough and strong enough to encompass different views on specific issues within the framework of our basic principles. In this context I think it is proper for everyone, including President and Mrs. Ford, to enjoy the privilege of expressing a personal point of view....I believe that Mrs. Ford is very much aware of expressions for and against the stand she has taken in regard to ERA. I will, however, take steps to call her particular attention to your letter.⁵⁶¹

So, Smith is asserting the opposite position from Representative Deuster, which is that the First Lady should be allowed to represent one or the other side of the ERA debate. However, the Republican Convention of Oklahoma, which had passed a resolution opposing the ERA, also passed a resolution "requesting that the family of elected officials abstain from using their spouses' office in an attempt to influence legislation."⁵⁶² This resolution was clearly directed at ending Mrs. Ford's lobbying efforts in the State of Oklahoma. These letters and the resolution further indicate how the divisiveness of the ERA complicated the First

⁵⁶⁰ Grace Boulton, Helen Salmon, and Edwina Mizer to Mrs. Ford, February 14, 1975, "6/11/76—Equal Rights Amendment, State Legislatures," Box 47, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁶¹ Mary Louise Smith to Grace Boulton, February 26, 1975, "6/11/76—Equal Rights Amendment, State Legislatures," Box 47, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁶² Telegram, Mrs. Arthur Maddox to President Ford, Undated, "6/11/76—Equal Rights Amendment, State Legislatures," Box 47, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

Lady's representative role, as many disagreed with her 'standing for' liberated women. These disagreements also raise the possibility of a societal expectation that the First Lady should be a kind of cultural 'everywoman.'

Republican defection from supporting the ERA is evident in the events surrounding ERA Indiana's desperate request to Mrs. Ford to call the State's Republican Governor Bowen to urge him to encourage legislators to support ERA. Regarding ERA Indiana's request, the First Lady's staff wrote to Mrs. Ford,

The counts in the Republican House and Senate are one short of what are needed for passage. No Republican of statewide stature has made a strong public effort for ERA.

The legislative coordinator believes that you could make the difference in Indiana by urging Governor Bowen to help persuade individual legislators. Although the Governor has expressed support for ERA, he has not done any lobbying to help.

Since this is the first state legislature this year to consider ERA, defeat this early might be the death blow to the Amendment.⁵⁶³

Mrs. Ford's lobbying efforts in this State may have been effective, as Indiana did go on to ratify the ERA, though it would become the last state to do so. This plea clearly illustrates the symbolic power attached to the First Lady's position, as indicated by the statement that her call "could make the difference" in the ERA's fortunes in the State.

The First Lady also included Nevada and Arizona in her campaign for ERA ratification. She had been in touch with three State legislators from Nevada. She had even telephoned Senator Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) to express her views, even though Goldwater opposed the ERA. The Amendment, however, ultimately failed in both States.⁵⁶⁴ In addition, Mrs. Ford lobbied Missouri State legislators

⁵⁶³ Memorandum, Susan Porter and Kaye Pullen to Mrs. Ford, January 5, 1977, "East Wing 3/1/76-1/20/77" folder, Box 11, Susan Porter Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁶⁴ Press Clipping, "Mrs. Ford Widens Her Campaign," Associated Press, 2/12/1975, "Ford, Betty—Equal Rights Amendment" folder, Box 21, Lindh/Holm Files, Ford Library.

to ratify the ERA. She placed phone calls to a couple of State Representatives just before the final favorable vote. The ERA, however, was defeated in the Missouri State Senate. And the First Lady also corresponded with legislators in North Dakota when the State was considering the ERA.⁵⁶⁵

In Florida, the State House passed the ERA by a very close vote of 61-58. Mrs. Ford was once again called upon to lobby the State's senators for ERA passage because support among the Republican senators was lacking. The White House strategized about what she should say in her phone calls. They assembled a list of points for the First Lady to make, believing her conversations would be effective if she could give:

1. An expression of how strongly Mrs. Ford feels personally about ERA.
2. A clear indication that she is not calling to tell them how to vote, or even to ask how they may vote, but rather to indicate her deep personal commitment.
3. An indication, if it fits in the conversation, that the National Republican platforms of both 1968 and 1972, adopted at Miami Beach support ERA, and that Republican support cuts across the political spectrum...⁵⁶⁶

The ERA lost in the Florida Senate, however, by a vote of 21 to 17 in April of 1975. And phone calls from the First Lady were not enough counter the strong anti-ERA sentiment that was sweeping through Florida. Senator Warren Henderson (R-Sarasota) said of his talk with Mrs. Ford, "I had a very congenial talk with a very committed lady...and I told her I'm still not voting for the thing." Anti-ERA Senators Jim Glisson (R-Eustis), Walter Sims (R-Orlando), and Chester Stolzenburg (R-Fort Lauderdale) also received calls from Betty Ford when they were out to lunch, but they decided not to return them. Senator

⁵⁶⁵ Press Clipping / News Summary, "Mrs. Ford Gets Missouri Vote," Associated Press, February 6, 1975, "Ford, Betty—Equal Rights Amendment" folder, Box 21, Lindh/Holm Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁶⁶ Memorandum, "ERA Calls in Florida," Unsigned, Undated, "6/11/76—Equal Rights Amendment—State Legislatures" folder, Box 47, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

Glisson, once an ERA supporter, saw no point in returning the First Lady's phone call. He said that mail from his constituents was so strongly anti-ERA that he could not vote for it, even though he favored the Amendment philosophically. Senator Sims said, "I wrote her a letter once and told her she should mind her own business and quit spending the tax money to push her political philosophy."⁵⁶⁷ In this statement, the Florida senator was implicitly challenging the First Lady's role as a political representative by implying her views on the ERA were merely personal, not those having the weight of an Executive Branch official, and therefore were unable to justify taxpayer support.

As noted above, the rise of this kind of conservative opposition to the ERA was due in large part to the influence of Phyllis Schlafly and her persuasive arguments concerning how the ERA would force changes in women's roles. As the leader of a highly organized, highly effective anti-ERA force, there was no high-profile pro-ERA activity that went unaddressed by Schlafly. And since the First Lady is one of the most high-profile women in the country, Schlafly and her STOP ERA organization naturally took issue with Betty Ford's pro-ERA activities.

Soon after Betty Ford gave her first press conference, in which she stated that she would use her platform to work toward ERA ratification, Schlafly sent a very polite letter to the First Lady asking for an audience with her so that she could present her opposing viewpoint. Schlafly wrote,

We have heard your statements on television that you are opposed to discrimination against women, and noted that you have met with women's groups representing

⁵⁶⁷ Press Clipping, "ERA Loses in Senate by 21 to 17," *Fort Lauderdale News*, April 25, 1975, "Ford, Betty—Equal Rights Amendment" folder, Box 21, Lindh/Holm Files, Ford Library.

various minority points of view. We hope you will not discriminate those of us who hold a contrary view, but will grant us equal rights of visiting with the First Lady.

Schlaflly invited Mrs. Ford to be the honored guest at a meeting in St. Louis of the state chairmen of the STOP ERA committee, noting "all our state chairmen would welcome the pleasure and privilege of meeting with you." However, on behalf of Mrs. Ford, Susan Porter phoned to regret the invitation.⁵⁶⁸

Later that fall, as Mrs. Ford continued her ERA ratification efforts, Schlaflly sent the First Lady a packet containing numerous issues of her *Phyllis Schlaflly Report*, encouraging Mrs. Ford to read them and consider her arguments about the negative effects of the ERA. One of Mrs. Ford's staff members wrote Schlaflly a very brief note in reply, saying, the First Lady "appreciates having the benefit of your views and she most certainly will keep your concerns in mind."⁵⁶⁹

Then in February of 1975, Schlaflly became outraged after she learned of the First Lady's above-mentioned meeting with the White House staff, which Mrs. Ford initiated in order to educate members of her husband's Administration on pro-ERA arguments and strategies. This meeting prompted Schlaflly to send Mrs. Ford another letter asking for equal time to present her argument to the White House staff. She also objected to the staff meeting because it was held during working hours. She also requested an accounting of "how much federal money has been spent by you and other White House personnel in making long

⁵⁶⁸ Phyllis Schlaflly to Mrs. Ford, September 16, 1974, "Schlaflly, Phyllis" folder, Box 336, Name File, Social Files, WHCF, Ford Library.

⁵⁶⁹ Nancy Howe to Phyllis Schlaflly, November 4, 1974, "Schlaflly, Phyllis" folder, Box 336, Name File, Social Files, WHCF, Ford Library.

distance calls to legislators, and how much federal money has been spent on salaries of federal employees working for ratification of ERA.”⁵⁷⁰

After the story of Schlafly's request to Mrs. Ford began to receive attention by the press and public, the First Lady's staff responded to Schlafly, but they still did not concede to her request for a meeting:

Mrs. Ford has asked me to thank you for sharing your views on the Equal Rights Amendment. Unlike most issues before the state legislatures, an Amendment to the Constitution is national in scope, since it will affect all Americans. In addition, the First Lady recognizes that every citizen is entitled to discuss what should or should not be the law of the land. Accordingly, she expressed her opinion, just as you did in conveying your thoughts to her. Please know that Mrs. Ford is grateful for this exchange of ideas...She admires your commitment and encourages your participation in the legislative process.⁵⁷¹

Schlafly and her STOP ERA organization were outraged about the First Lady's refusal to meet with them. Schlafly's own publicity tactics against the First Lady filtered down from the STOP ERA national committee to the highly mobilized STOP ERA state organizations. For example, the head of STOP ERA New York published the following message in one of its newsletters:

Mrs. Ford has refused to meet with ANY of the LEADERS (other than those who are part of International Women's Year and Women's Lib groups!) These women only represent a small number of voters of this state and nation. I personally have written to Mrs. Ford on three occasions, and to date have not had even the courtesy of an answer! I have constantly requested a meeting with her, and her silence has been my answer, and the answer to the many, many leaders who have attempted to speak with her...WE DEMAND that the wife of the President of our nation MEET WITH US, THE RESPONSIBLE WOMEN WHO ARE THE MAJORITY IN OUR NATION...

The newsletter went on to accuse Mrs. Ford of supporting drafting women into combat roles, ending women's protective rape laws, removing women from being covered under their husbands' social security earnings, loss of a husband's right

⁵⁷⁰ Press Clipping, "Alton's Own Challenges Betty on ERA," Chicago Tribune, February 11, 1975, "Ford, Betty—Equal Rights Amendment" folder, Box 21, Lindh/Holm Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁷¹ Nancy Howe to Phyllis Schlafly, February 27, 1975, "Schlafly, Phyllis" folder, Box 336, Name File, Social Files, WHCF, Ford Library.

to support his wife and children, and shutting the doors of female colleges such as Smith and Wellesley.⁵⁷²

All of the above statements by Schlafly and her STOP ERA organization have implications for the First Lady's role as a representative. By rebuffing Schlafly and her organization, while embracing pro-ERA groups, Betty Ford was in effect designating the women who she 'stood for' as a descriptive representative. STOP ERA interpreted her continually ignoring them as a signal that she did not regard them as part of her constituency. However, the traditionalists believed that as the wife of the President, she should represent their interests as well. All of the above correspondence illustrates the sentiment that the First Lady should be a cultural 'everywoman.'

Since the First Lady's ERA activities had so much press attention, it is no surprise that she received large amounts of public mail on the subject. Some of the letters applauded Mrs. Ford for her women's rights crusading, while others, echoing Phyllis Schlafly, were extremely critical. During the height of Mrs. Ford's lobbying state legislators in the early months of 1975, the East Wing was flooded with public mail concerning the Equal Rights Amendment. The East Wing staffers attempted to keep a rough tally of the number of letters they received and whether they were for or against the ERA and Mrs. Ford's activities. In late February, Mrs. Ford's press secretary announced that the First Lady's mail was running 3-1 against her outspoken support for passage of the ERA, with 360

⁵⁷² Newsletter, STOP ERA New York, March 11, 1976, "3/20/76 New York City—Women's National Republican Club" folder, Box 23, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

letters in praise of Mrs. Ford's efforts and 1,128 against.⁵⁷³ However, just weeks later, Sheila Weidenfeld reported that Mrs. Ford's ERA mail count had dramatically reversed and was now running 3-1 in favor of the ERA. Weidenfeld reported that the First Lady had received 6,412 letters in favor of her activities furthering the ERA and 2,729 against.⁵⁷⁴

On the favorable side, for instance, Mrs. Ford received a letter on behalf of all of the female staff members of the Oakland Tribune in Oakland, California, expressing gratitude and admiration for her forthright stand on the ERA. They wrote, "If your stand helps the Amendment pass you have done more for women of America and the future of women than anyone."⁵⁷⁵ It is no surprise, however, that women in the professions would be supportive of the First Lady's ERA ratification efforts.

Other letters, however, were not so favorable. For instance, one self-described "Precinct Committeeman of long standing and President of a Republican Women's Club" in Indiana, wrote to Betty Ford's press secretary,

Please relate to Mrs. Betty Ford that she is making herself very unpopular in Republican womens' [sic] ranks in Indiana due to her activities on behalf of ERA and also she is losing votes for her husband right and left...It is really too bad that she should involve herself in a cause so dear to the hearts of liberal Democrats, Women's Libbers, the Ms. Organization and individuals of that cult.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷³ Press Clipping, "Mrs. Ford's Mail 3-1 against ERA," *The News* (Mexico City), February 21, 1975, "Ford, Betty—Equal Rights Amendment" folder, Box 21, Lindh/Holm Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁷⁴ Press Clipping/ Wire Report, "Mrs. Ford Happy over Change in Mail," United Press International, March 3, 1975, "Ford, Betty—Equal Rights Amendment" folder, Box 21, Lindh/Holm Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁷⁵ Doris Hjorth to Mrs. Ford, February 21, 1975, "6/11/76—Reagan—Ann Armstrong—Samples of Public Mail" folder, Box 47, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁵⁷⁶ Mrs. Aretta Hartman to Sheila Weidenfeld, February 24, 1975, "6/11/76—Reagan—Ann Armstrong—Samples of Public Mail" folder, Box 47, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

This letter basically accuses Mrs. Ford of failing to descriptively represent women of her own Republican Party and for wrongly 'standing for' "liberal Democrats" and other feminist organizations.

All of Mrs. Ford's pro-ERA activities reveal the complications associated with the First Lady 'acting for' and 'standing for' one side of a very divisive women's political issue. Some of the main ways Mrs. Ford 'acted for' women's interests were by endorsing pro-ERA events, meeting with leaders of feminist organizations, and lobbying state legislators for the ERA's passage. Mrs. Ford personally believed that the ERA would benefit all women, so from her perspective, her ERA advocacy was a form of trusteeship. In her substantive representation, she also resembled a delegate, as she was often sent out as an emissary of the plebiscitary presidency to try to shape public opinion and influence the decisions of legislators. However, her 'acting for' women's interests had insinuations for the types of women she 'stood for' as a descriptive representative, thereby implicating the First Lady in the culture war over the proper notion of womanhood. Within this cultural war, Betty Ford appeared to stand with the "libbers" and against the traditionalists. This greatly angered conservatives, who challenged Mrs. Ford's role as a representative of women based on the fact that she did not represent all women, but only a radical faction. Furthermore, Betty Ford's work to promote the ERA probably contributed to transgendering more than regendering, as those who favored the ERA believed that it would integrate women into all levels of government and society on an equal basis with men.

Although women's rights became more controversial between 1976 and 1980, and the chances of the ERA becoming a permanent part of the U.S. Constitution became less and less, the next occupants of the White House, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, still truly believed that it could be ratified. As the 1970s came to a close, the bipartisan spirit that led the ERA to many early victories was rapidly evaporating, as the feminist movement became increasingly aligned with the Democratic Party. The Republicans increasingly distanced themselves from the feminist agenda, evidenced by their 1976 platform calling for a constitutional amendment to protect the rights of the unborn. In 1976, both parties continued their support of the ERA, but support among Republicans weakened. Ford's loss in the general election to Jimmy Carter ensured that a party unified behind ratification of the ERA would occupy the White House during the years that would be crucial to its chance for passage.

As President, Jimmy Carter supported the women's rights agenda. He promoted ERA ratification, but it was First Lady Rosalynn Carter who did the bulk of work, both public and behind-the-scenes, on behalf of the Amendment. An internal White House memorandum gave an overview of the First Lady's ERA activities:

Since she was First Lady of Georgia, Mrs. Carter has actively supported the ERA. In public speeches, at fund-raisers and press conferences across the nation, she has emphasized the urgent need to ratify the ERA.

At the White House she gives public visibility to the issue by receiving organizations ranging from the Coalition of Labor Union Women to the League of Women Voters and the Religious Committee for the ERA.

Mrs. Carter regularly discusses the ERA with key legislators from unratified states at the White House and often telephones state legislators and elected officials to enlist their support for the ERA.

Mrs. Carter also participates in strategy sessions at the White House with political consultants, ERA supporters and others to help organize campaigns in unratified states.⁵⁷⁷

These dimensions of her representative role will be explored below. However, this overview indicates how Mrs. Carter would continue the types of 'acting for' Pat Nixon and Betty Ford engaged in: speaking on the ERA's behalf, giving the issue heightened visibility, lobbying legislators and strategizing behind the scenes for its passage.

A couple of months after Carter's inauguration, the First Lady gave an inaugural speech of her own to the Women's National Democratic Club (WNDC), in which she outlined her agenda as First Lady. She highlighted ERA ratification as one of her policy priorities and was optimistic about its chances for passage, despite the challenges posed by the highly effective opposition.

I support the Equal Rights Amendment, and I will continue to work with Jimmy to insure the passage of the ERA. We've had some disappointments this year, but I really believe that it will eventually pass and will not even be controversial when people realize that the opposition is distorted and that the Equal Rights Amendment simply means equal rights for us all. I really believe that the controversy will go away.⁵⁷⁸

Mrs. Carter believed that she could help the controversy go away by educating people about what she believed the ERA would and would not do. The First Lady's staff and Sarah Weddington's staff held strategy meetings about Mrs. Carter's role as an ERA educator:

As per our conversation the other day...I went ahead and set up a meeting with you and Sarah to discuss a strategy for serving as an 'educator' in the forthcoming ERA campaign. It seems to me that you could take a valuable visible leadership role by carrying a simple message about ERA, and that this role should be clearly

⁵⁷⁷ Information Sheet, "Passage of the ERA: A Summary of the Efforts of Jimmy Carter," "ERA-President Carter's Efforts" folder, Box 17, Kathy Cade Files, Carter Library.

⁵⁷⁸ Transcript, Rosalynn Carter's remarks to the WNDC, April 5, 1977, "Women's National Democratic Club April 5, 1977" folder, Box 2, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

understood by other ERA activists and by the press. I think this would be much more effective than being involved in the many sundry ERA events in which you are asked to play a more passive role...⁵⁷⁹

Mrs. Carter explained her educative role to the attendees of the Senate Wives Luncheon, saying that she was continually "searching for new ways to explain what [ERA] means to those women who still doubt or fear equal rights under law" and "doing everything" she could to "help educate those who are timid or ill informed."⁵⁸⁰ Her role as a public educator shows how she operated in the context of the plebiscitary presidency as a delegate in terms of substantive representation. Her above statements also reveal how she, like Betty Ford, truly believed that the ERA would help, not harm, all women. Even though conservative women did not buy into this argument, Rosalynn Carter believed she was acting in the interests of the represented as a trustee.

In a major address to New York Women in Communications, she stated that she believed it was her responsibility to educate Americans about the positive benefits of the ERA. Because of the symbolic power she possessed as the President's wife, Rosalynn Carter believed she could change people's attitudes regarding the ERA. She concluded her speech, "I came here today hoping to wield some First Lady influence...in encouraging women throughout the country to have the self-confidence to ask for nothing less than full equality."⁵⁸¹ To counter the image that ERA supporters were radicals, Mrs. Carter stated, "I feel it is especially important to explain that women like me support the ERA. I am a

⁵⁷⁹ Memorandum, Mary Finch Hoyt to Rosalynn Carter, 10/13/1978, "ERA Issues" folder, Box 31, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁵⁸⁰ Transcript, Rosalynn Carter's Remarks to the Senate Wives Luncheon, May 15, 1978, "Senate Wives Luncheon" folder, Box 4, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁵⁸¹ Newsletter/Speech Transcript, April 26, 1979, "Women and America: Rosalynn Carter Challenges Communicators" folder, Box 44, Sarah Weddington Files, Carter Library.

relatively traditional person. I enjoy my roles as wife, mother, partner, and businesswoman. I care how I look—and what I think...” This statement reveals that Mrs. Carter, as a descriptive representative, was trying to show how she ‘stood for’ all women, both traditional and liberated, through her ERA advocacy.

However, much of her ERA advocacy work had the effect of linking her to the “libbers.” For example, the major ERA event during the first year of Carter’s Administration was the National Woman’s Conference held at the Houston, Texas Coliseum, as part of International Women’s Year (IWY), which had adopted a feminist agenda.⁵⁸² The U.S. Congress authorized millions of dollars in funding for state and national IWY conferences. And the national conference was held in Houston from November 18th through 21st, 1977. To draw attention away from the National Woman’s Conference, a group of conservative organizations, including Phyllis Schlafly’s STOP ERA, organized a coinciding Pro-Family rally held across town at the Houston Astro Arena. The two conferences, and the clash in morals and ideologies that the events highlighted, drew much attention and reaction from the press and public. Part of the reason the Houston conference was so high-profile was that it featured three First Ladies as part of its program: Rosalynn Carter, Betty Ford, and Lady Bird Johnson. Mrs. Carter said that the significance of the three First Ladies appearing on the same platform together at the conference was “to affirm the continuity in our government’s efforts to improve life for all.”⁵⁸³ It is significant that the Presidents’ wives, not the

⁵⁸² Chapter 6 provides an in-depth explanation of IWY.

⁵⁸³ Press Release, Office of the First Lady’s Press Secretary, “Rosalynn Carter’s Remarks at the National Women’s Conference,” November 19, 1977, “National Women’s Conference in Houston, TX” folder, Box 3, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

Presidents themselves, were sent as representatives of their particular administrations to the IWY conference. Since most of the conference's attendees were women, and it was a women-centered event, it may have seemed more fitting for the First Ladies to attend. These First Ladies had also served as the public faces of women's rights within each of their husbands' administrations, so, in this way, it was also more appropriate for them to serve as representatives of the government at the conference.

Mrs. Carter delivered several speeches to the conference. The First Lady's speechwriter, Coates Redmon, knew her speeches had to be carefully worded, in order to avoid her getting into trouble with the Pro-Family gathering. Redmon wrote to Mrs. Carter's press secretary, "I've been searching for a unique theme for RSC to use when she speaks to the National Women's Conference in Houston....Clearly, she can't step into any of the emotional areas of the ERA. She's got to be cool; this has every earmark of being a 'hot' conference. There may be demonstrations and there are bound to be disruptions from all I hear. American Nazi Party, Phyllis Schaffly [sic] & Co, etc..."⁵⁸⁴ So, the First Lady's staff was trying to lessen the dissension that was likely to result from the First Lady's 'standing for' and with the feminists at the Houston conference.

Mrs. Carter's message to the ERAmerica reception at the Houston conference was "short and simple," as she described it. The overarching point to bring to the American people, Mrs. Carter declared, was that "the Equal Rights Amendment is affirmation that every woman can live and work and learn as she

⁵⁸⁴ Memorandum, Coates Redmon to Mary Hoyt, November 7, 1977, "Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)-International Woman's Year Conference 11/18/77" folder, Box 16, Kathy Cade Papers, Carter Library.

chooses.”⁵⁸⁵ And her message to the general convention did not even mention the ERA specifically. Instead, her remarks generally praised the work of the conference and promoted Carter’s record on women, especially his appointments of women to high office, therefore avoiding any “hot button” issue the Pro-Family conference could latch onto. Mrs. Carter’s words were intended to diffuse criticism, educate the public, and hopefully advance her image as a more inclusive women’s representative.

Despite her toned-down rhetoric, the mere act of appearing at the conference fueled a tremendous amount of criticism. For instance, the Christian American Liberties League sent out a letter to its supporters with a pre-addressed postcard to Mrs. Carter enclosed. The postcards were to be sent to the White House in protest of Mrs. Carter’s appearance at the National Women’s Conference. The letter read,

As you probably know, Mrs. Carter...officially endorsed the International Women’s Year conference in Houston Texas.

And through her endorsement, dignity was lent and the official stamp of approval to the recommendations voted and passed at that conference.

Speaking for “all American women,” the IWY conference delegates voted to abort their children, approve homosexuality as a legitimate life style, and even approved adultery and prostitution....

I believe that the vast majority of Americans agree with you and me—
But the SILENT Majority can’t change one single thing.

We must be heard—we must protect our freedoms or we shall continue to lose them.

And this is why I’ve sent you a pre-addressed postcard—your opinion, along with thousands of others, can literally change our future.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁵ Press Release, Office of the First Lady’s Press Secretary, “Rosallynn Carter’s Remarks at the ERAmerica Reception,” November 18, 1977, “National Women’s Conference in Houston, TX” folder, Box 3, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers.

⁵⁸⁶ Letter by the Reverend Robert Grant, April 10, 1978, “National Women’s Conference in Houston, TX” folder, Box 3, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

This letter exemplifies the conservative movement's continued challenge to Rosalynn Carter's role as a descriptive representative of liberated women. The organization authoring the letter explicitly references that the IWY conference did not speak for "all American women," the implication being that Mrs. Carter took the side of those who advocated homosexuality and prostitution within the culture war over the construction of gender roles.

After the controversy over the Houston conferences had died down, the next major obstacle the Carter Administration had to overcome was getting the U.S. Congress to extend the ERA ratification deadline. After the ERA initially passed Congress on March 22, 1972, it was allotted a seven-year time limit for ratification, meaning that by that same date in 1979, it would have to have been ratified by three-fourths of the states. On October 20, 1977, a resolution was introduced in the House of Representatives (H.J. Res. 638) to extend the deadline for ratification to a "date not later than June 30, 1982." By this time in 1977, three states still needed to ratify the ERA. ERA supporters believed that there was a good chance for the ERA to pass in North Carolina, Illinois, Florida, and Georgia, and public opinion polls were still showing that a majority of Americans supported the ERA. But they did not want to risk introducing a resolution for extension too close to the March 1979 deadline.⁵⁸⁷

Before the House ultimately passed the resolution on August 15, 1978, there was a great deal of discussion about whether Rosalynn Carter should attend a House Judiciary Committee mark-up session on the extension. Members of the

⁵⁸⁷ Fact Sheet on ERA Extension, "ERA Issues" folder, Box 31, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

President's staff who worked on women's issues, including Midge Constanza, Valerie Pinson, and Anne Wexler, met with members of Congress regarding the Administration's strategy for the ERA extension. The Congress members strongly supported the idea of Mrs. Carter's attendance, believing it would be a highly effective strategy to help ensure the extension's passage. Mrs. Carter's participation was also urged because, given Betty Ford's continued activism for the ERA, there was "a growing perception among women that the Fords care much more about equal rights than the incumbent First Family. This is especially frustrating for Democratic women---could cause embarrassment for the Democratic Party and could cause a substantial fall-out not worth the risk."⁵⁸⁸ Therefore, Mrs. Carter's participation would help to signal that the Democratic Party represented women's rights more than the Republican Party. This points to her power as a symbolic representative, as does the fact that her mere attendance at the meeting had the potential to greatly bolster the cause, as well as reassure Democratic women.

Mrs. Carter very much wanted to go to the mark-up, but her staff ultimately dissuaded her from attending. In a memo to the First Lady, Kathy Cade reasoned that "as you said in the meeting yesterday, the most important role you can play is educating people so that we can really get ERA ratified. Going to the mark-up is not consistent with that strategy." Also, she reasoned that "it might be perceived as a publicity stunt and it is questionable what real impact it would

⁵⁸⁸ Memorandum, Valerie Pinson to Kathy Cade, July 12, 1978, "ERA Issues" folder, Box 31, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

have.”⁵⁸⁹ Instead, the First Lady conducted behind-the-scenes lobbying efforts for the ERA extension. For example, in a confidential memo to the First Lady’s Press Secretary Mary Finch Hoyt, Kathy Cade wrote,

FYI and not for public consumption. Congressman Don Edwards, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights of the House Judiciary Committee called and asked RSC [Rosalynn Smith Carter] to call Congressman Billie Lee Evans of Georgia about extension, which she did. Evans told her he was for ERA but not for extension because if it passed, an amendment to recognize rescission would probably also be attached and he thought that was a bad idea.⁵⁹⁰

After the resolution had passed the House, the First Lady’s staff in conjunction with Sarah Weddington’s staff held a meeting on the ERA extension in the East Room of the White House. According to internal White House memoranda, the purpose of the meeting was “to provide Mrs. Carter with the opportunity to express her support, and the support of the President and the Administration, for the ERA Extension legislation and for ratification of the ERA.” The meeting was also intended to “permit Members of the House to share with Administration women information concerning the Extension effort” and “to invite the participation of those attending in the further effort for Extension in the Senate.” Those invited to the meeting included Congress members who were active in promoting the extension, Administration women, presidential appointees to boards and commissions, and members of the National Advisory Committee on Women.⁵⁹¹ In her opening remarks, at Sarah Weddington’s suggestion, Mrs. Carter urged the Administration women to provide help and leadership in the fight

⁵⁸⁹ Memorandum, Kathy Cade to Rosalynn Carter, July 12, 1978, “ERA Issues” folder, Box 31, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁵⁹⁰ Memorandum, Kathy Cade to Mary Hoyt, Undated, “ERA Issues” folder, Box 31, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁵⁹¹ Memorandum, Fredi Wechsler to Mrs. Carter, Meeting on ERA Extension, September 18, 1978, “ERA Issues” folder, Box 31, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

for ERA extension passage in the Senate.⁵⁹² The First Lady's behind-the-scenes role illustrates her work as a substantive representative, as well as the potential power others believed she had to help reach a consensus on the extension. However, her staff believed that, in her public role, she would be more effective as an educator and that her symbolic role in attending the mark-up session would bring more harm than good to the cause.

However, Mrs. Carter did not cease to attend other ERA events that could have likewise been regarded as "publicity stunts." For example, when the ERA extension resolution did pass the Senate on October 20, 1978, Mrs. Carter participated in the signing ceremony at the White House. Directly after the signing ceremony, in another public event, Mrs. Carter addressed ERA get-out-the-vote postcards in the Roosevelt Room of the White House. The postcard campaign, sponsored by ERAmerica, urged support for ERA passage in the several states in which the Amendment was under consideration.⁵⁹³ Thus, it cannot accurately be said that her public representative role was limited to an educative function.

As noted above, part of the reason that ERA supporters lobbied so hard for the extension was that they believed the Amendment had a high chance for passage in several states. Mrs. Carter lobbied hard behind-the-scenes for ERA passage in all of the battleground states. However, the extension would prove to be the final victory for pro-ERA forces. The opposition's arguments about the

⁵⁹² Memorandum, Kathy Cade to Rosalynn Carter, September 18, 1978, "ERA Issues" folder, Box 31, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁵⁹³ Notice to the Press, Office of the First Lady's Press Secretary, October 19, 1978, "ERA Events, October 20, 1978" folder, Box 6, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

changes in women's societal roles that would be brought about by the ERA far overpowered Mrs. Carter's and others' educative efforts to debunk these claims.

Just one week after Jimmy Carter's inauguration as President, Kathy Cade wrote Mrs. Carter a memo telling her, "we have been deluged with requests for you to intervene on behalf of ERA in various states." Cade felt the need to set up a system through which requests for assistance with ERA ratification efforts should be filtered so that the First Lady would not be "at the mercy of very enthusiastic supporters of ERA who often have an unrealistic view of the situation in their own state and hope that you can accomplish a miracle." Cade suggested, and Mrs. Carter approved, that all requests should go through Cade and she would rely on the recommendation of experts with whom they had relationships, such as the leaders of ERAmerica, to determine which requests were worth pursuing.⁵⁹⁴ So, the First Lady's staff played an important gatekeeping role in deciding which groups and requests could reach her office.

Soon after Cade proposed this working relationship, she gave the First Lady a list of legislators from North Carolina to call on behalf of the ERA. The requests had originated from Barbara Dixon, who worked for Senator Birch Bayh (D-IN). The ERA was coming up for a full floor vote in the House that week, and ERA supporters in the state were optimistic about its chances for passage. In a note attached to the list, Cade acknowledged Mrs. Carter's desire to lobby behind the scenes. Cade wrote, "I have told Barbara that nothing should be said to the press either about the possibility of your making these calls or about the specific

⁵⁹⁴ Memorandum, Kathy Cade to Mrs. Carter, January 28, 1977, "Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)—Memos and Correspondence [1]" folder, Box 17, Kathy Cade Files, Carter Library.

legislators involved. I have told her that you prefer to demonstrate your support in a very private way.”⁵⁹⁵ Perhaps because of the public criticism surrounding Mrs. Ford’s publicized lobbying efforts, and the resultant controversies over who she ‘stood for’ as a descriptive representative, Mrs. Carter wanted to keep her own lobbying efforts quiet. As a result of her quiet lobbying, Mrs. Carter’s efforts did not receive the public attention that Mrs. Ford’s did and, correspondingly, did not call into question her role as a descriptive representative to the same extent. However, her behind-the-scenes lobbying still reveals the First Lady as a substantive representative, ‘acting for’ women as both a delegate and trustee, as does the continuance of her efforts to sway public opinion in the states.

The Carters believed that they could wield particular influence over ERA passage in their home state of Georgia, in which the ERA debate became heated in December 1979 and January 1980. In December of 1979, the First Lady had appeared at the Georgia Federation of Democratic Women’s Clubs breakfast to bolster ERA efforts in the state. After her visit, Joyce Parker, President of ERA Georgia, wrote to President Carter to recommend steps that he could take to help ERA ratification efforts, with an emphasis on placing calls to Georgia state legislators. Parker stated that chances for the ERA were improving daily in Georgia, and the opposition was relatively static, an estimation that would prove largely erroneous when the ERA came to a vote in January of 1980.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁵ Memorandum, Kathy Cade to Rosalynn Carter, February 1, 1977, “Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)—Memos and Correspondence [1]” folder, Box 17, Kathy Cade Files, Carter Library.

⁵⁹⁶ Memorandum, Kathy Cade to Mary Hoyt, January 21, 1980, “ERA-Georgia” folder, Box 16, Kathy Cade Papers, Box 16, Carter Library; Rep. Cathey Steinbert, Rep. John Hawkins, Joyce Dunaway Parker to President Carter, November 6, 1979, “ERA-Georgia” folder, Box 16, Kathy Cade Papers, Box 16, Carter Library.

However, the request to the President from ERA Georgia was passed off to Kathy Cade for the First Lady's office to handle. The First Lady initiated a meeting with Sarah Weddington to discuss how to proceed with the head of ERA Georgia's recommendations.⁵⁹⁷ Also, it was Mrs. Carter who responded to Joyce Parker's letter on behalf of her husband, writing that she would be discussing her recommendations with the President and Weddington and working with Parker to pass the ERA in Georgia.⁵⁹⁸ This incident points to the gendered division of labor between the President and First Lady that was evident in previous chapters, as well as to the First Lady's trusteeship in representing women's interests.

After the First Lady's staff and Weddington's staff had looked into the situation in Georgia in early January of 1980, they determined that Parker had overestimated the ERA's chances of passage in the state. Therefore, they decided to push for a House vote later in the legislative session, which would buy them more time to lobby the Senate. The First Lady's and Weddington's offices were caught off guard when they got word that the Senate would bring the ERA to a vote in less than a week's time. Mrs. Carter immediately called Georgia Governor Busbee to discuss the situation, and other members of the Administration were dispatched to Georgia to assess the ERA's prospects for passage, which they determined were grim. After a series of strategy meetings, the First Lady's staff, Weddington's staff and other Administration officials determined that they had to make an all out effort in the few remaining days before the vote. And Rosalynn Carter was called upon to place a barrage of phone calls to Georgia legislators and

⁵⁹⁷ Memorandum, Kathy Cade to Rosalynn Carter, Undated,

⁵⁹⁸ Rosalynn Carter to Joyce Dunaway Parker, December 19, 1979, "ERA-Georgia" folder, Box 16, Kathy Cade Papers, Box 16, Carter Library.

politicians.⁵⁹⁹ Her being sent out by the Administration, as on a mission, reveals the First Lady's role as a delegate, as she was 'acting for' or representing the presidency to members of the legislature.

The ERA ultimately failed in Georgia by a vote of 23 to 32. While Mrs. Carter could not muster enough votes for passage, she did sway some senators to vote 'yes,' illustrating the First Lady's symbolic power. Hubert Harris, of the Office of Management and Budget, told her, "your call to Senators Greene and Robinson was a prime factor in their final decision to support ERA." Harris and others ultimately placed blame on ERA Georgia for their premature efforts to bring the matter to a vote, but credited the White House with "being a positive factor in helping ERA move forward in Georgia."⁶⁰⁰

Pro-ERA forces were also optimistic about the chances of ERA's passage in the State of Illinois. In April of 1978, a short time before the ERA was to come to a vote in the Illinois legislature, Liz Carpenter, Co-Chair of ERAmerica, wrote to the President and Mrs. Carter, "Illinois—among all the unratified states—holds the key to ratification at this time. If the Illinois legislature ratifies ERA this spring, we believe the necessary two more states can be won following the November elections, and we will at last have this simple and long-overdue issue behind us." So, Liz Carpenter called upon the First Family for their help with lobbying in this state.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁹ Memorandum, Kathy Cade to Mary Hoyt, January 21, 1980, "ERA-Georgia" folder, Box 16, Kathy Cade Papers, Box 16, Carter Library.

⁶⁰⁰ Memorandum, Hubert Harris to Rosalynn Carter, January 25, 1980, "ERA-Georgia" folder, Box 16, Kathy Cade Papers, Box 16, Carter Library.

⁶⁰¹ Liz Carpenter to the President and Mrs. Carter, April 19, 1978, "ERA-Illinois" folder, Box 16, Kathy Cade Files, Carter Library.

As with her Georgia lobbying efforts, the First Lady was sent out as a delegate to promote the ERA's passage. Unlike Betty Ford's representative efforts, Mrs. Carter's continued to be mostly behind-the-scenes. For instance, Mrs. Carter made a trip to Chicago to attend the Polish Constitution Day festivities just before the ERA vote in the Illinois legislature was to take place. On the plane to Chicago, Mrs. Carter traveled with U.S. Representative John Fary from Illinois. She took this opportunity to recruit Representative Fary for his help in lobbying for ERA ratification. The content of their conversation is revealed in a letter from Fary to Mrs. Carter after the conclusion of their trip:

I should like to take this opportunity to write to you in connection with the conversation we had aboard the Presidential plane...when you expressed your profound concern in having Representatives of the Illinois State Legislature reconsider their votes for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Upon reviewing the list of those Illinois Representatives you presented to me, the majority of whom I am personally acquainted with, I indicated to you that I would be happy to contact them, stressing my personal interest in the passage of this legislation...

I would suggest that you call upon my close friend and Colleague, Representative Frank Annunzio, requesting he intercede with his friends in the Illinois State Legislature to vote for the passage of this legislation. I am confident if you can follow-up with a personal letter to each of the Illinois State Representative you will achieve your objective...⁶⁰²

Fary kept his promise to contact the representatives, and Mrs. Carter also kept her promise to Fary that she would follow-up with Illinois Democratic officials. She wrote to Representative Fary soon after their trip to Chicago, "Thank you so much for all your help with the ERA. I talked with Frank Annunzio today and he was very helpful. Also, tried to reach Richard Daley but haven't gotten him yet. I will

⁶⁰² Representative John Fary to Mrs. Carter, May 12, 1978, "ERA Issues" folder, Box 31, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

keep trying..."⁶⁰³ From her position as First Lady, Rosalynn Carter could certainly mobilize people to action.

In Florida, the ERA passed in the House in the 1970s. However, the Florida State Senate repeatedly defeated it, but by narrow margins. Thus, ERA supporters viewed Florida as one of states with the highest probability of passage. In February 1978, Mrs. Carter traveled to Florida to attend a Grand Celebrity Ball ERA fundraising event. The ball was sponsored by a coalition of organizations, including the AFL-CIO, Florida Women's Political Caucus, and the American Civil Liberties Union. The funds that were raised were used to help elect legislators who pledged support for the ERA in 1978 state office campaigns.⁶⁰⁴ Mrs. Carter also gave a speech at the ERA Ball. Again, her remarks focused on educating those who she believed had misconceptions about the effects of the ERA:

The facts are important. It's up to us to keep them straight. We must continue to educate those who are wavering or confused or ill-informed. As I said in Houston, when you think about the Equal Rights Amendment, think about yourselves. There is too much misinformation and misunderstanding about what ERA really means. And it is really so simple. The Equal Rights Amendment is affirmation that every woman can live and work...as she chooses.⁶⁰⁵

In this speech, Mrs. Carter reiterated her theme that the ERA is for "every woman," thus implying that she was representing all women through her advocacy work, not just the "libbers."

⁶⁰³ Rosalynn Carter to Representative John Fary, June 5, 1978, "ERA-Illinois" folder, Box 16, Kathy Cade Files, Carter Library.

⁶⁰⁴ Press Release, Office of the First Lady's Press Secretary, February 17, 1978, "Equal Rights Amendment—Dedication of Sculpture, Orlando and Tampa, Florida, 2/18/78" folder, Box 16, Kathy Cade Files, Carter Library.

⁶⁰⁵ Press Release, Office of the First Lady's Press Secretary, Rosalynn Carter's Remarks, February 18, 1978, "Equal Rights Amendment—Dedication of Sculpture, Orlando and Tampa, Florida, 2/18/78" folder, Box 16, Kathy Cade Files, Carter Library.

In May of 1979, the ERA was passed again by the Florida State House. However, the White House, particularly Sarah Weddington's office, was caught off guard when the ERA was soon thereafter defeated in the Senate by a vote of 19-21. The White House had little forewarning that it was going to be considered by the Senate. Weddington did not get word of the vote until the morning it was to take place. The First Lady and her staff were outraged about not being informed of this important vote because they believed that they could have been a great help in securing the few votes that were needed for passage. Kathy Cade wrote to the First Lady about her conversation with Sarah Weddington after she had heard of the vote, "I told her we would have been willing to help if we had known. She said that it all happened so fast and that it didn't appear that there was any way we might have been usefully involved. I asked that in the future, she let us know when these key votes were coming up."⁶⁰⁶ This instance reveals a discrepancy between the East Wing and West Wing in perceptions of the First Lady's effectiveness as a presidential representative on this issue. In this statement, Sarah Weddington seemed to believe that the First Lady was not a very useful delegate, whereas Rosalynn Carter did believe herself to be an influential presidential representative in the ERA ratification process.

Sarah Weddington evidently heard about how upset the First Lady was over not being kept informed of and involved in the ERA situation in Florida, so she wrote Mrs. Carter an apology letter:

I apologize for not calling your office last week about the ERA action in the Florida Senate.

⁶⁰⁶ Memorandum, Kathy Cade to Rosalynn Carter, May 23, 1979, "Inner-Office memos-1979 [2]" folder, Box 23, Kathy Cade Files, Carter Library.

I was using Phil Wise, who has the best knowledge of anyone in the White House I know about Florida, and he was in contact with Governor Graham's office...I was cooperating with ERAmerica.

It seemed that there were only three people we could call with even a faint hope of influence, and since it was the final vote, it seemed best to ask the President to make the calls. Perhaps others should also have been involved, but I asked for the action that seemed appropriate to me for such a high priority.

However, I obviously should have kept you and your office informed. I can only plead the pressure of other matters I was also trying to handle those days and promise to do better. I am sorry.⁶⁰⁷

This confirms that Mrs. Carter believed she had a tremendous persuasive influence over legislators who were ambivalent about the ERA and that Weddington believed her influence was more limited. By Weddington looking to the President in this situation, she was in effect sending the message that the First Lady could only exercise limited power through her representative role.

In addition to her behind-the-scenes lobbying efforts, Mrs. Carter hosted many public events at the White House for ERA ratification. All of these events reveal Mrs. Carter's role in the plebiscitary presidency, which requires that popular appeals be made and outreach be conducted to gather support behind a particular policy. In September of 1977, she participated in a ceremony in the Blue Room of the White House, in which she presented a check to representatives of the League of Women Voters. The check was her personal contribution toward the League's million-dollar fundraising campaign to get ERA ratified in the states.⁶⁰⁸ In October of 1978, she hosted the Coalition of Labor Union Women in the East Room of the White House, where she received an award from them for

⁶⁰⁷ Memorandum, Sarah Weddington to Rosalynn Carter, May 28, 1979, "Inner-Office memos-1979 [2]" folder, Box 23, Kathy Cade Files, Carter Library.

⁶⁰⁸ Press Release, Office of the First Lady's Press Secretary, September 8, 1977, "League of Women Voters Sept 8, 1977" folder, Box 3, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

her work on behalf of the ERA.⁶⁰⁹ Rosalynn Carter also welcomed the Religious Committee for the ERA to the White House. Mrs. Carter's presence at the reception was intended to spotlight the National Days of Prayer and Action for the ERA, which were to take place January 12 through 15, 1979.⁶¹⁰ And in October 1979, the President and Mrs. Carter hosted an enormous 'Salute to the ERA' reception at the White House, with approximately 500 individuals in attendance. The reception climaxed a "summit" meeting held earlier that day at the White House on ERA ratification.⁶¹¹ All of these representative activities are similar to those enumerated in the chapter focusing on First Ladies as public liaisons. However, these types of events are set apart in that they are ultimately designed highlight a women-centered policy.

In addition, the First Lady sat in on numerous strategy sessions with members of the White House staff, particularly Sarah's Weddington's office, on the ERA. For example, in December of 1978, Kathy Cade got in touch with Weddington's staff to say, "I have talked with Sarah Weddington and she is ready to discuss strategy with RSC on ERA. Will you...schedule a meeting as soon as possible. RSC mentioned to me the other day that she was eager to do this."⁶¹² This represents just one of many similar memos arranging strategy meetings between the First Lady's office and the White House staff. Notably, Mrs. Carter

⁶⁰⁹ Press Release, Office of the First Lady's Press Secretary, October 19, 1978, "ERA Events, October 20, 1978," Box 6, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁶¹⁰ Press Release, Office of the First Lady's Press Secretary, January 15, 1979, "ERA Religious Committee, 1/15/79" folder, Box 8, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁶¹¹ Press Clipping, Donnie Radcliffe, "The ERA Summit: Feminists and Friends Confer at White House," *The Washington Post*, October 24, 1979, "ERA Reception 10/23/1979" folder, box 10, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁶¹² Memorandum, Kathy Cade to Betty Ubbens, 12/13/78, "Inner-Office Memos, 1978" folder, Box 23, Kathy Cade Files, Carter Library.

was also secretly involved in setting up the The President's Advisory Committee for Women. However, when the word got out that the First Lady was involved, Mary Hoyt told Mrs. Carter, "I am being contacted by various factions of the women's movement with messages for you." Individuals were calling the First Lady mostly to attempt to influence the Committee's composition. For instance, Hoyt told the First Lady, "Now Gloria Steinam [sic] has called me several times to plead on behalf of Bella [Abzug]. Her group recommends that a minority vice chair be appointed who would take over after a year. She wanted to explain to you in person the importance of this."⁶¹³ Mrs. Carter's behind-the-scenes strategizing is indicative of her trusteeship, as she was an integral part of the process of ensuring a successful outcome.

And like First Ladies Pat Nixon and Betty Ford, Rosalynn Carter received a great deal of constituent mail at the White House both for and against the ERA. According to a confidential White House memo, she received 1,750 letters concerning the ERA in 1977; 2,170 in 1978; 555 in 1979; and 200 in 1980 (through August 1st of that year).⁶¹⁴ However, a White House analysis of her ERA mail concluded that most of it was unfavorable. According to an internal memorandum that analyzed her 1978 ERA mail, of the 2,170 letters she received, only 360 "expressed their support and urged the First Lady to continue her active participation in its passage." The other 1,810 letters "were opposed to the Amendment and expressed their concern over its far-reaching effects on our

⁶¹³ Memorandum, Mary Finch Hoyt to Rosalynn Carter, April 13, 1978, "Memos to RSC from Hoyt" folder, Box 31, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁶¹⁴ Memorandum, "First Lady's Activities 1/20/77-8/1/80," Undated, "Activities Report—Rosalynn Carter" folder, Box 1, Kathy Cade Papers, Carter Library.

society.”⁶¹⁵ Her letters, therefore, reflect the upsurge in opposition to the ERA that continued to grow through the late 1970s.

These opposition letters reveal that Mrs. Carter and certain members of the public did not see eye to eye regarding the extent to which the First Lady represented women's interests through her ERA advocacy. Mrs. Carter believed that she was a trustee, acting in the best interests of the represented, in promoting ERA ratification, as is evident in her educative role. However, traditionalists did not believe that the First Lady 'stood for' them as a descriptive representative, and they did not believe that she 'acted for' them as a substantive representative. Despite her representative role being called into question, the First Lady continued her fight for ERA ratification. As part of the plebiscitary presidency, she, like Betty Ford, exercised popular leadership by making personal appeals to the masses and to state legislators. In these activities, she seemed more like a delegate in terms of substantive representation, as she was being sent out on a mission to make connections, sway public opinion, and generally represent the presidency on the ERA. Finally, insofar as the ERA was seen as having the effect of overcoming traditional gender roles, the First Lady contributed to transgendering. But as long as she stood for and with the "libbers," traditionalists viewed the First Lady as part of the assault on the home, family, and the housewife. To them, transgendering was part of her representative failure.

⁶¹⁵ Memorandum, Hugh Carter to Rosalynn Carter, January 31, 1979, "Activities Report—Rosalynn Carter" folder, Box 1, Kathy Cade Papers, Carter Library.

1980 and Beyond

The fate of the ERA was essentially sealed with Ronald Reagan's election in 1980. That election year, the Republican and Democratic platforms took diametrically opposed positions on women's rights. The Democrats supported ERA ratification, but the Republicans failed to endorse it. The Democratic Party firmly established its pro-choice stance, while the Republicans endorsed a constitutional amendment banning abortion. Therefore, "Just as the outcome of the Republican convention had been interpreted as a sign of the increasing Republican opposition to feminism, the success of women's rights activists in achieving their goals at the Democratic convention was heralded as a sign of...the emergence of an independent feminist power base" within the Party.⁶¹⁶

The ERA ratification deadline of June 30, 1982 passed with the endorsement of three states still needed. By the mid-1980s, the ERA had ceased to be a salient political issue. As noted in Chapter Two, Nancy Reagan had publicly echoed her husband's opposition to the ERA. Barbara Bush, who was known to be quietly supportive of women's rights, especially reproductive rights, was almost completely silent on the subject during her husband's administration. The reason for their silence is not difficult to explain. To illustrate, Liz Carpenter once wrote a scathing critique of Barbara Bush as First Lady, saying that she was letting women down by not speaking out on the issues and not publicly disagreeing with her husband. Mrs. Bush recalls that she wrote a response to Liz Carpenter, which she never sent. The letter, reprinted in her autobiography, reflects Republican pro-family, anti-feminist priorities post-1980, which most

⁶¹⁶ Wolbrecht, *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change*, 46.

likely caused Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush's silence on women's rights.

Barbara Bush wrote to Carpenter, "Long ago I decided in life that I had to have priorities. I put my children and my husband at the top of my list. That's a choice that I never regretted....Abortion, pro or con, is not a priority for me. ERA is not a priority for me...I leave that for those courageous enough to run for public office."⁶¹⁷ In this letter, Barbara Bush listing feminist issues as low on her priority list and her family at the top indicates that her intention as First Lady was to descriptively represent the traditional woman.

Mrs. Bush's comment raises the issue of abortion rights, which has been omitted from this analysis. The role of First Ladies in the abortion debate is rather peculiar. While First Ladies willingly stepped into the political fray in the fight for the ERA, they have, with the exception of Betty Ford, been very reluctant to do the same with abortion rights. Since abortion became a salient political issue, all First Ladies' positions on the issue have been scrutinized by the press and public, perhaps because of concern that they might influence their husbands on this important issue. First Ladies have occasionally made brief statements on the topic. However, no First Lady, not even liberal Democratic ones, have campaigned for or spoken out extensively for or against abortion rights.

Pat Nixon was reluctant to enter the abortion debate, and she consistently told reporters who inquired that abortion was fundamentally a personal matter, that she was opposed to abortion-on-demand, and that the matter should be left up

⁶¹⁷ Bush, *Barbara Bush: A Memoir*, 291-92.

to the states.⁶¹⁸ Betty Ford was more vocal about her position on abortion rights than any First Lady before or since. Her statement during her controversial 60 *Minutes* interview that “I feel very strongly that it was the best thing in the world when the Supreme Court voted to legalize abortion, and in my words, bring it out of the backwoods and put it in the hospitals where it belonged” generated a great deal of controversy.⁶¹⁹ Comments such as these were isolated, however, and she did not take it upon herself to campaign for abortion rights or make reproductive freedom even a small part of her platform as First Lady. And the President and Mrs. Carter were both personally opposed to abortion rights, so they had to walk a fine line with the Democratic Party, which, by 1980, was decidedly pro-choice. When asked by reporters about her views on abortion, Mrs. Carter would say that she was personally opposed to abortion but that she was also opposed to a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion.⁶²⁰

Like her husband, Nancy Reagan was opposed to abortion. She once remarked, “It’s very difficult for me to get beyond the realization that you’re taking a human life. I don’t understand women who say they should have control over their own bodies. What about the body they are carrying?”⁶²¹ Occasional statements in response to press questions aside, she never actively campaigned

⁶¹⁸ Press Clipping, Donnie Radcliffe, “First Lady’s Campaign,” *The Washington Post*, 8/9/1972, “Women—Publicity and Public Debates” folder, Box 46, Barbara Franklin Reference File, Anne Armstrong Papers, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

⁶¹⁹ Campaign Book on Women’s Issues, “Campaign of 1976— Campaign issues Book on Women’s Issues (1)” folder, Box 7, Lindh/Holm Files, Ford Library.

⁶²⁰ Press Clipping, Susan Sward, “Abortion Topic Exasperates Mrs. Carter,” *St. Louis Slate-Democrat*, 9/16/1976, “Presidential Campaign Material Aug-Sept 1976” folder, Box 53, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁶²¹ Magazine Article, “The Next First Lady,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, July 1976, “July 1976 Journal” folder, Box 23, Betty Ford Papers, Ford Library.

against abortion. And, as noted above, even though Barbara Bush was known to be more sympathetic to reproductive freedom, she did not go public with her personal beliefs.

Hillary Clinton stated that she opposed efforts to criminalize abortion because she did not believe any government should have the power to dictate a woman's most personal decisions.⁶²² Though she was perhaps the most liberal of all recent First Ladies, she too refrained from making legalized abortion one of the causes she championed. The Clinton Administration's position was to make abortion "safe, legal, and rare," and the President and First Lady, when they did touch the abortion issue, worked to discourage the practice and promote alternatives such as adoption.⁶²³ Finally, Laura Bush generated a good amount of controversy when, in the days before her husband George W. Bush was inaugurated, she stated in an interview on the *Today* show that she did not believe *Roe v. Wade* should be overturned.⁶²⁴ Up until that point, Mrs. Bush had refrained from commenting on the topic, and after the flurry of news reports on her *Today* interview had died down, she rarely ventured into that debate ever again.

Though it is difficult to say why exactly First Ladies had been outspoken on the ERA but timid about the abortion debate, it is reasonable to conclude that having First Ladies enter the political fray on this issue would draw high profile attacks from either side of the abortion debate, attracting negative attention and providing unnecessary complications for presidential administrations. At the same

⁶²² Clinton, *Living History*, 355.

⁶²³ Clinton, *Living History*, 431.

⁶²⁴ Frank Bruni, "Transition in Washington: The Abortion Issue; Laura Bush Says *Roe v. Wade* Should Not be Overturned," *The New York Times*, January 19, 2001.

time, with the abortion issue, First Ladies were both compelled and constrained by partisan divisions. Though Barbara and Laura Bush may have had pro-choice leanings, they were very much out of line with the Republican Party's stand. And though Rosalynn Carter and Hillary Clinton's positions may have been more conservative than those of the Democratic base, they were compelled to recognize a woman's right to choose in some form. However, most First Ladies during this time opted to stay out of the abortion fray. This illustrates that they have a certain amount of representational discretion in deciding which women's issues they will 'stand for' and 'act for.'

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how First Ladies Patricia Nixon, Betty Ford, and Rosalynn Carter exercised their representational roles through ERA advocacy work. As delegates, they tried to educate the public about the ERA and lobbied state legislators for its passage, revealing their integral role in the plebiscitary presidency. They also met with ERA advocacy groups at the White House and participated in behind-the-scenes strategy sessions in an effort to move the Amendment through the states.

The First Ladies did view themselves as trustees, for they believed that by pushing for ERA ratification they were acting in the best interests of women. However, their roles as substantive representatives or their 'acting for' women had important and divisive implications for their roles as descriptive representatives. As previously noted, the ERA divided women along liberated and

traditional lines. Insofar as the First Ladies worked toward the ERA, they were seen as 'standing for' the transgendered societal roles that the "libbers" promoted and against traditional women's roles. This led to accusations among certain segments of the public that the First Ladies were not actually representing all women. Therefore, the First Ladies and portions of the public were very much out of accord about whether they represented women's interests, and the preceding discussion illustrated the extent of this disagreement.

The introductory section of this chapter posed the question: In their activities on behalf of ERA ratification, were the First Ladies serving as political representatives? To help answer this question, it is useful to look to Pitkin. After defining what political representation is, Pitkin goes on to define what it is not. In other words, she outlines what must *not* occur if political representation is to take place:

And, despite the resulting potential for conflict between representative and represented about what is to be done, that conflict must not normally take place. The representative must act in such a way that there is no conflict....He must not be found persistently at odds with the wishes of the represented without good reason in terms of their interest...⁶²⁵

In the case of the First Ladies' ERA activities, there was major, regular, and extended conflict between the representatives and the represented about what was to be done. While public opinion of men and women alike was more favorable than not favorable to the ERA during their tenures,⁶²⁶ the major difficulties and opposition they encountered in many states, plus the ERA's ultimate failure, indicates that their actions were at odds with the wishes of a great number of the

⁶²⁵ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 209.

⁶²⁶ See Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the Era*. She gives a detailed account of the public's attitude toward the ERA.

people. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that First Ladies in their ERA work did not meet Pitkin's definition of true political representation.

This raises some larger points about the First Lady's representative position. As arguably the most important female political actor within the one branch of government that is supposed to represent a national constituency, there is an expectation that the First Lady represent every woman. This chapter and previous chapters have illustrated that when First Ladies single out a particular segment of the female population to represent, especially when a broader cultural war is implicated in that representative selection, a public outcry will result. And when controversy over what kind of woman the First Lady 'stands for' arises on such an extended scale, it must be questioned whether her actions qualify as political representation at all.

This chapter revealed the controversy that ensued when First Ladies promoted women's rights through their ERA ratification efforts. However, the next chapter will show how First Ladies were able to promote the cause of women's rights without much criticism in an international context. Perhaps because their advocacy has been removed from the controversies surrounding American feminism, both Republican and Democratic First Ladies have been successful in representing the rights of women around the world.

~Chapter Five~

Representing Women Abroad: First Ladies and Public Diplomacy

In the realm of foreign policy, “the President alone has the power to speak or listen as the representative of the nation.”⁶²⁷ After World War II and with the onset of the Cold War, foreign affairs were given a heightened emphasis in U.S. policy, which contributed to the necessity that presidential surrogates such as the Vice President assist the President in these matters.⁶²⁸ The First Lady has served as one of these presidential surrogates to be sent out as a delegate on foreign diplomatic missions. Her representative role in public diplomacy has been largely centered on women abroad.

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, First Ladies have served as gender role models for American women. In their performance of public diplomacy, First Ladies have represented domestic constructions of gender roles to women abroad. When I use the term ‘domestic’ in this chapter, it typically means ‘of or pertaining to the United States.’ Also as in previous chapters, their gender role modeling in public diplomacy is directly related to their substantive and symbolic representation of women.

As noted above, the general character of the public diplomatic role suggests that First Ladies have served as delegates in terms of substantive

⁶²⁷ *United States v. Curtiss-Wright Export Corp.*, 299 U.S. 304 (1936), Qtd. in Wilfred E. Binkley, *The Man in the White House: His Powers and Duties* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1964), 215-16.

⁶²⁸ Paul Kengor, *Wreath Layer or Policy Player? The Vice President's Role in Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 21.

representation, as they have been sent out as on a mission to represent the President and the nation to the women of the world. Yet, elements of trusteeship are also present in their diplomatic roles. They have acted in behalf of women and in the interest of women abroad by attempting to impart American values of equality and liberty upon areas of world where political, social, and economic rights of women have been violated. This human rights focus has been a consistent theme in First Ladies' 'acting for' women through their public diplomatic efforts.

First Ladies have performed symbolic representative functions along several primary dimensions. The first relates to gender role modeling, as the President entrusting his wife with substantive foreign missions has served to represent the ideal of gender equality in the First Couple's marital relationship.

First Ladies have also presented the "spectacle of a high United States official as being interested in learning their problems...and winning their friendship."⁶²⁹ As symbols, they have demonstrated the ability to highlight or illuminate particular areas of the world where women's rights have been overlooked. Such spectacles can have an enlightening effect on those particular women and convey the message that the United States is interested in them, thus generating feelings of appreciation within women abroad and winning their friendship. This form of symbolic representation is illustrated in Lou Hoover's visit to Latin America, in which she accompanied her husband on a goodwill tour of the region. About the trip, Mrs. Hoover's secretary wrote,

⁶²⁹ Edward S. Corwin and Louis W. Koenig, *The Presidency Today* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 70.

Since our return I have been informed by a Latin American that an unexpected result of the visit has been an awakening of interest in and among the women. An amusing but indicative instance is the following: In one place, I was told that never before or seldom – had the picture of a woman appeared in the newspapers. Of course, the picture of the arrival of the party included Mrs. Hoover, and during the few days in this city more pictures of women (those who entertained her or called on her) appeared in the papers than had appeared during I forget how many past years!⁶³⁰

This “awakening” of and concerning women that Lou Hoover generated illustrates the First Lady’s symbolic power, as well as her symbolic function’s implications for transgendering and regendering.

Given the above discussion, it is most logical that First Ladies in the international context would contribute to transgendering more than regendering. If major parts of their roles focused on according universal human rights to women, re-presenting equality in their marital relationships, awakening the interests of women and inspiring them to undertake social roles from which they were previously excluded, then this is indicative that First Ladies have primarily furthered transgendering on an international scale.

The following chapter focuses on the work of Patricia Nixon, Betty Ford, Rosalynn Carter, Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush in representing women abroad. First, an overview of First Ladies’ early, limited diplomatic roles is necessary in order to show how the First Ladies’ public diplomacy became prominent, consistent, and focused on women’s rights because of the influence of the second wave of the women’s movement.

⁶³⁰ Secretary to Mrs. Hoover to Mrs. R.M. Phillips, October 16, 1929, “South American Trip Impressions Recorded by Secretary,” Box 109, Subject File, Lou Henry Hoover Papers, Hoover Library.

First Ladies and Public Diplomacy Prior to the Second Wave

Though Lou Hoover did once travel to Latin America, this kind of public diplomacy was not typical for early First Ladies. Before the 1970s, "presidential wives had typically represented their husbands on ceremonial and fact-finding international missions." However, "none had claimed to work out policy. Eleanor Roosevelt's trips across both the Atlantic and Pacific during the war and Lady Bird Johnson's attendance at the funeral of Greece's king had underlined the surrogate role some First Ladies took, but neither claimed to make decisions."⁶³¹

After Eleanor Roosevelt, Jacqueline Kennedy was the next First Lady to travel abroad extensively during her husband's administration. Though some of her travels were official, goodwill trips, many were actually extensive, private vacations. Perhaps her most famous "semi-official" solo trip is the one she made to India and Pakistan in March of 1962. While in the region, she met with leaders of both countries, President Ayub Khan and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. As Barbara Perry recounts, she "charmed each man, and his countrymen—and women, equally."⁶³² After her trip, Walter P. McConaughy, who was a member of the Foreign Service and working at the American Embassy in Karachi, Pakistan, wrote to a member of President Kennedy's press staff,

Now that Mrs. Kennedy's visit is over, it is increasingly clear that it was strikingly successful both in bringing to Pakistanis generally a new insight into the American character, and in presenting a vivid picture of Pakistan to the American public. I was especially impressed by the way Mrs. Kennedy's personality and charm evoked a warm response from Pakistani women.⁶³³

⁶³¹ Caroli, *First Ladies*, 266.

⁶³² Perry, *Jacqueline Kennedy: First Lady of the New Frontier*, 89-90.

⁶³³ Walter P. McConaughy to Jay Oildner, April 6, 1962, "Kennedy, Jacqueline 3/11/62-4/30/62" folder, Box 705, PP5, SF, WHCF, Kennedy Library.

The staff member's assessment of Mrs. Kennedy's role is remarkably similar to Mrs. Hoover's secretary's evaluation of her trip to Latin America. This particular quotation illustrates the symbolic power inherent in the First Lady's position, as she was able to convey to Pakistani women a favorable impression of American women, as well as evoke a "warm response" from them.

However, upon the trip's conclusion, Mrs. Kennedy decided she would not make any more similar excursions. On the return trip to the U.S. from India and Pakistan, she told a *Saturday Evening Post* reporter, "I'm glad I went, but I'll never take a trip like this again without Jack....Jack's always so proud of me when I do something like this, but I can't stand being out front. I know it sounds trite, but what I really want is to be behind him and to be a good wife and mother."⁶³⁴ Here, Mrs. Kennedy seems to be engaging in gender role modeling. By countering the public attention given to her trip through asserting a desire to return to her traditional role, she was at once denouncing the legitimacy of her role as a public diplomat and contributing to regendering.

Though pre-second wave First Ladies such Lou Hoover and Jackie Kennedy did on occasion travel abroad, their public diplomacy role was sporadic and limited. Though their roles as symbolic representatives had implications for women abroad, there is little evidence that representing women was the prevailing purpose of their trips. As the following sections will illustrate, the second wave of the women's movement spurred the First Ladies to consistently and prominently represent women in their efforts as public diplomats.

⁶³⁴ Qtd. in Perry, *Jacqueline Kennedy: First Lady of the New Frontier*, 91.

Patricia Nixon and Global Women's Rights

Patricia Nixon was the initial First Lady to truly fulfill the role of U.S. emissary to the women of the world. Mrs. Nixon's state-sponsored foreign travel was extensive, and there is evidence that the First Lady's assumption of this role was part of the Administration's broader plan to portray the President as pro-woman during the peak of the feminist movement. Her trips were symbolic and substantive in nature.

Members of the Nixon Administration believed that giving the First Lady a substantive policy mission would help to bolster the President's image as pro-woman both at home and abroad. To illustrate, the White House "Speakers Kit on Women" compiled by Barbara Franklin tied the President's commitment to women's rights to the international arena and Mrs. Nixon's diplomatic role:

[President Nixon] is keenly sensitive to the gathering movement for equality of the sexes in its full global and historical perspective. On the eve of his departure for China he remarked on how important it is 'for us in the United States to recognize that in many parts of the world women are now reaching a new state of recognition and that we on our part should demonstrate that we also have that same standard.' Certainly it is a standard to which he adheres personally as well as professionally—as the whole world could see from the unprecedented role of responsibility and partnership which he accorded the First Lady during their visit to China, and during her earlier solo tour as an American ambassador of goodwill in West Africa.⁶³⁵

By highlighting the First Lady's "unprecedented role of responsibility" and her "partnership," the Administration was attempting to convey the image of equality in the Nixons' marital relationship. Or in terms of symbolic representation, the Administration was trying to re-present a gender ideal of Richard and Pat Nixon's

⁶³⁵ Memorandum, Barbara Franklin to Peter A. Michel, March 9, 1972, "Barbara Franklin Correspondence-Memoranda 1972," Box 35, Office of Women's Programs File, Anne Armstrong Papers, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

partnership that was in accord with “the gathering movement for equality of the sexes.”

Similarly, in a letter to First Daughter Julie Nixon Eisenhower, Barbara Franklin discussed how she had been talking to women around the country about the President’s efforts on various women’s issues. In her correspondence, she highlighted the relevance of Mrs. Nixon’s foreign travels: “It is clear, too, that women were delighted with your Mother’s successful trip to Africa. I believe they identify strongly with a First Lady representing the country on a very substantive assignment.”⁶³⁶ This statement references Pat Nixon’s specific role as a delegate—as she was representing the President and nation to the world—through her public diplomacy. This letter also illustrates the First Lady’s symbolic power as a gender role model, as the image of the First Lady representing the nation on a substantive mission abroad evoked a favorable impression among women at home.

On her official visit to Africa, the policy centerpiece of her discussions with foreign leaders was to offer several graduate scholarships to young women in the countries to study in the U.S. For example, she offered such scholarships to Liberia’s President Tolbert, relating that the finalists would be selected by a bi-national commission established by agreement between the U.S. and Liberia and that the scholarship would be financed through funds administered by the

⁶³⁶ Barbara Franklin to Julie Nixon Eisenhower, February 15, 1972, “1/1/72-3/31/72” folder, HU2-5 Women, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Department of State.⁶³⁷ The First Lady's taking domestic constructions of women's gender roles abroad is evident in this example, as the foreign scholarship policy was clearly intended promote the American value of higher education for women in countries where this was not typically done. This illustrates Mrs. Nixon's trusteeship, as well as her promotion of regendered societal roles for women.

In her remarks to reporters, Mrs. Nixon was also careful to note the woman-centered aspects of her diplomatic assignments. In her interview with Barbara Walters on *Today*, she noted that one of the highlights of her trip to Ivory Coast was visiting with the nation's women. She said, "I visited one center for women and they were being taught homemaking there: How to sew, how to prepare nutritious food. And while the women took these courses, their children were cared for in a day nursery." While her statement does highlight women's domestic roles, her reference to child care is significant. State-subsidized child care was an important policy promoted by second wave feminists. American feminists believed that such provisions for child care were necessary in order for women to reach their full potential by easing their reentry into the workforce or furthering their education. So, in this instance, the First Lady's typical form of representation may have been reversed. That is, seemed to be relating the women-centered policies of other countries to citizens in the United States.

In the same interview with Barbara Walters, Patricia Nixon said that during her upcoming trip to Russia and China, "I hope to get to some of the

⁶³⁷ "Patricia Nixon Scholarships: Liberia," "The Official Visit to Africa of Mrs. Richard Nixon" folder, Box 45, Susan Porter Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

schools there and some of the women who are working and find out how they feel about different subjects.”⁶³⁸ Here, she was framing her mission as fact-finding in nature, as one of the primary missions of her trip was to examine the two countries’ child care systems and their effects on working women. When she returned from these countries, she noted that many parents had no choice but to utilize these day care centers because they were being forced to work.

[S]ome mothers I talked to said they would rather have more time with their children. There are so many jobs to be done over there and they are trying to get ahead economically. I also found that many mothers felt they were imposed upon by having to work all day and take care of their children at night.⁶³⁹

This statement seems contrary to her positive evaluation of African women’s experiences with child care facilities. However, in Russia and China, women’s role in the workforce seemed to have been forced upon them. There was no element of choice in the matter. So, in her statement decrying mothers’ lack of choice, she was also highlighting women’s forced labor within the context of communism and alluding to its implications for possible human rights violations. Here, she was also contrasting women’s conditions under communism with the liberty and freedom women enjoy in the United States.

Indeed, Pat Nixon’s emissary role was by far her most celebrated. In this era of heightened women’s visibility, the public clearly liked seeing Mrs. Nixon playing a public role abroad. She won great praise from the masses in both the U.S. and foreign nations, and this is reflected in the uniformly favorable press coverage she received during her visits. Regarding her trip to Russia, one reporter

⁶³⁸ Sound Recording, Pat Nixon Interview with Barbara Walters on “Today” Show, 2/27/1972, C-104, White House Communications Agency Sound Recordings Collection, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

⁶³⁹ “Comments from Mrs. Nixon,” Folder, Box 7, Gwen King Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

wrote, "Pat Nixon turned in another virtuoso performance as goodwill ambassador extraordinaire, handing the people-to-people aspects of the Moscow summit trip with aplomb while Mr. Nixon was busy for hours on end behind closed Kremlin doors."⁶⁴⁰ So, her successfulness was couched in overtly gendered terms. As one reporter said of her international trips,

While proving that women can play a vital role in world affairs, she also has demonstrated conclusively that such achievement can be accomplished in the traditional feminine manner. She has unmasked the stupidity of those raucous few who seek to advance women's rights by...desecrating the English language with words from the gutter and polluting the atmosphere with their bitter frustrations against men.⁶⁴¹

Thus, any controversy that may have been stirred by her substantive mission was counteracted by the feminine, genteel manner in which she characteristically carried herself.

The First Lady's transition into a new policy field—foreign affairs—was most certainly eased by Pat Nixon's femininity. However, this policy role was also helped along, and any controversy surrounding it likewise eased, by the social climate the rise of the second wave created. Pat Nixon's overarching role as an emissary suggests that she was 'acting for' women as a delegate. Yet, her trusteeship is also evident in her women-focused policy discussions with foreign leaders and her publicizing possible human rights violations. Overall, Pat Nixon's gender role modeling through her public diplomacy had implications for women at home and abroad. In her foreign relations, the First Lady represented the

⁶⁴⁰ "Ladies' Day in Moscow," Source Unknown, "'Editorial Comment'—Editorials on Mrs. Nixon" Folder, Box 7, Gwen King Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

⁶⁴¹ Robert Thompson, "The Outstanding Diplomat," Source Unknown, "'Editorial Comment'—Editorials on Mrs. Nixon," Folder, Box 7, Gwen King Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

progressive construction of American gender roles to women abroad. Also in terms of symbolic representation, her undertaking substantive foreign policy missions served to re-present the Nixons' marriage as an equal partnership, an image that was directed at both domestic and foreign audiences. And even though Pat Nixon's femininity was sometimes attached to her work on foreign missions, her representative roles mainly contributed to transgendering, as she promoted human rights for women, opened opportunities that had been previously denied to them, and generally proved women's capability in undertaking substantive foreign policy assignments.

Betty Ford and International Women's Year

In December of 1972, the UN proclaimed 1975 the International Women's Year (IWY). Then in January of 1974, President Nixon proclaimed 1975 the International Women's Year for the U.S. After Nixon resigned from office, President Ford created a National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, which was charged with promoting the observance of IWY in the U.S. and was housed within the Department of State. The purpose of IWY was threefold: (1) To promote equality between the sexes (2) To ensure the full integration of women in the total national and international development effort, including economic, social and cultural development (3) "To recognize the importance of women's increasing contribution to the development of friendly

relations and cooperation among States and to the strengthening of world peace.”⁶⁴² Thus, IWY had both a domestic and international focus.

Betty Ford played a central role in IWY from the day President Ford signed the Executive Order establishing the National Commission on IWY. At the signing ceremony, White House aides instructed Mrs. Ford to stand strategically behind the President’s chair, peering over his shoulder as he signed the document. They also urged her to make brief remarks from her standing position.⁶⁴³ Positioning Mrs. Ford in such a way was symbolic of the President elevating his wife to a position of prominence and equality and signaled the role she would come to play in furthering the mission of IWY. When the President invited her to make remarks, she said, “Congratulations, Mr. President, I’m glad to see you have come a long, long way.”⁶⁴⁴ This quote and corresponding photo opportunity did indeed receive widespread press coverage, thus having its intended effect.

Though Mrs. Ford was important in the national efforts to promote IWY, Patricia Lindh from the Office of Public Liaison envisioned an even larger role for her. Lindh urged Mrs. Ford to serve as Chairperson of the National Commission for IWY. She cited to Mrs. Ford the following “compelling” reasons for her participation:

- (1) Your personal commitment to equality of women’s rights and responsibilities is recognized and acclaimed.
- (2) Your stature would elevate the work of the

⁶⁴² White House Press Release, “Fact Sheet: International Women’s Year 1975,” January 9, 1975, “1/9/75 Signing Proclamation on IWY” folder, Box 4, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁶⁴³ Memorandum, Terry O’Donnell to Gerald Ford, “Signing Ceremony: Executive Order Establishing a National Commission on the Observance of International Women’s Year 1975,” January 9, 1975, “1/9/75 Signing Proclamation on IWY,” folder, Box 4, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁶⁴⁴ Press Clipping, Eileen Shanahan, “Ford Sets Up Unit on Women’s Year,” *The New York Times*, January 10, 1975, “1/9/75 Signing Proclamation on IWY,” Box 4, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

Commission to priority consideration on the national agenda. (3) Your unique position in American life assures maximum interest and response on the part of the American people. (4) Your participation will communicate to the nations of the world U.S. leadership and commitment to equality of men and women as set forth in the United Nations Charter more than a quarter of a century ago. (5) Your leadership will capture the imagination of women and men from all sectors of our society. (6) The First Lady 'makes' news and your visibility as Chairperson would open up media channels that would help inform the American people as to what remains to be accomplished to achieve equal rights and responsibilities for women. (7) Your personal commitment of time, energy and talent would underscore the importance of utilizing the potentialities of women for the continuing development of the nation and cause of peace in the world.⁶⁴⁵

The First Lady's power as a symbolic representative is very apparent in Lindh's reasoning. She consistently refers to Mrs. Ford's "stature" and "unique position" as First Lady as having the ability to draw attention to IWY and elevate it as a policy priority. She also repeats the sentiment that if the First Lady backs a proposal, this will signal to other women that the cause she is undertaking is important and thereby cause women at home and abroad to join in supporting it.

Illustrating another dimension of the First Lady's symbolic representation, Anne Armstrong also suggested that Betty Ford serve as Honorary Chairman of the National Commission or that both she and the President serve as Co-Chairman "to envision the idea of partnership."⁶⁴⁶ Here, Armstrong is explicitly advancing a proposal to utilize the First Lady as a symbolic representative, as she would be working to re-present the ideal of equality in the Fords' marriage relationship through an IWY co-chairmanship.

But perhaps the most controversial proposal for Mrs. Ford's role in IWY was for her to personally appear at the World Conference for International

⁶⁴⁵ Memorandum, Patricia Lindh to Betty Ford, January 17, 1975, "1/9/75 Signing Proclamation on IWY," Box 4, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁶⁴⁶ Memorandum, Anne Armstrong to Mrs. Ford, December 6, 1974, "Ford, Betty-Briefings," Box 21, Lindh/Holm Files, Ford Library.

Women's Year in Mexico City, the most important IWY conference of 1975. The proposal originated in Patricia Lindh's office, and she said that the purpose of Mrs. Ford's attendance was to "demonstrate the interest of the First Family in this event," given that the wives of other foreign leaders were leading national delegations to Mexico City.⁶⁴⁷ Some members of the West Wing staff supported Lindh's proposal. One aide reasoned that "through her efforts to date, the White House and the President have developed and continued to maintain a solid, positive image on women [sic] issues. Her attendance at this Conference is an ideal way to enhance that very important part of the Administration's political posture."⁶⁴⁸ The State Department also gave its full endorsement to Lindh's proposal, saying that Mrs. Ford's participation "would add prestige and honor to our Delegation" and even suggested that she "make the principal policy statement in plenary."⁶⁴⁹ Here again, the administration officials were invoking Mrs. Ford's power as a symbolic representative in their justification for her participation in the IWY conference.

Not all members of the Ford Administration were nearly as enthusiastic about Mrs. Ford's participation. The National Security Council (NSC) recommended against Mrs. Ford's participation, citing "concerns over the expected tenor of the debate, which might be severely critical of the U.S., as well

⁶⁴⁷ Memorandum from Patricia Lindh, May 8, 1975, "Ford, Betty 4/18/75-5/20/75," Box 3, PP5-1, WHCF, Ford Library.

⁶⁴⁸ Memorandum, Stephen Herbits (Special Assistant, Presidential Personnel Office), May 16, 1975, "Ford, Betty 4/18/75-5/20/75" folder, Box 3, PP5-1, WHCF, Ford Library.

⁶⁴⁹ Memorandum, George Springsteen (Executive Secretary, State Department) to Brent Scowcroft, May 13, 1975, "Ford, Betty 5/21/75-6/12/75" folder, Box 3, PP5-1, WHCF, Ford Library.

as the security problems inherent in possible extra-conference activities.”⁶⁵⁰ So, while some members of the Ford Administration were eager to send the First Lady on diplomatic missions, others were reluctant to send her to areas of the world where anti-American sentiment was fierce, demonstrating a belief that her power to ease such sentiments might be limited.

In the end, the NSC won the debate, but, as a compromise, Mrs. Ford sent prepared remarks to the conference that were read by Pat Hutar, the U.S. Representative of the UN’s Commission on the Status of Women. In her remarks, she emphasized the Ford Administration’s commitment to the work of the conference:

I wish you to know that the people and Government of the United States are firmly committed to the goals of the conference...As my husband said on the occasion of announcing our own National Commission for the Observance of International Women’s Year, the search to secure rights for women frees both sexes from restrictive stereotypes. Liberation of the spirit opens new possibilities for the future of all individuals and of all nations....⁶⁵¹

Her speech, consistent with the overarching theme of IWY, contained transgendered undertones, with references to women’s freedom from “restrictive stereotypes” and the “liberation” that will open up new possibilities for women globally.

Mrs. Ford did serve as the keynote speaker at the largest IWY conference in the U.S., held in Cleveland, Ohio, with over 30,000 people participating. The organizers of the Cleveland convention were thrilled when Mrs. Ford accepted the invitation and amazed at the power of the First Lady to draw public attention to an

⁶⁵⁰ Memorandum, Jeanne W. Davis to Pat Lindh, June 12, 1975, “Ford, Betty 5/21/75-6/12/75” folder, Box 3, PP5-1, WHCF, Ford Library.

⁶⁵¹ *The Department of State Bulletin*, “Women-International Women’s Year Conference” folder, Box 47, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

event. One of the organizers wrote to Mrs. Ford's appointments secretary, "The announcement of Mrs. Ford's appearance at the Cleveland Congress of the IWY celebration has given us the front page and news coverage that we badly needed. It was impossible to get off the women's pages until the City Editors learned about Mrs. Ford's interest in the Congress. Now I am being called by every businessman I know, asking to help us in some way."⁶⁵² This instance again reveals the First Lady's power as a symbolic representative in her ability to elevate the prominence of an issue. It also shows how her participation in the event contributed to transgendered coverage by the media, as her appearance had the power to move reports on the IWY conference from a marginalized status in the women's pages and onto the main pages of the newspapers.

Mrs. Ford participated in numerous other events commemorating IWY. She participated in events honoring the members of the National Commission for IWY. She was the guest of honor at the National Archives' special exhibit of documents illustrating women's progress throughout history, entitled, "Her Infinite Variety: A 200-Year Record of America's Women." Mrs. Ford's staff encouraged her to attend the event, in part because they believed it would produce good photo opportunities during IWY.⁶⁵³ She also was the guest of honor at the inaugural luncheon of the Women's Division of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, where she was presented with the Rita V. Tishman Human Relations Award in appreciation for her leadership in IWY. In their tribute to her, the

⁶⁵² Joanne Kaufman to Susan Porter, October 16, 1975, "10/25/75, Greater Cleveland IWY Congress," Box 19, Shelia Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁶⁵³ Memorandum, Susan Porter to Sheila Weidenfeld and Patti Matson, April 24, 1975, "7/10/75 National Archives IWY Reception" folder, Box 6, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

organization stated, "For American women particularly, the first lady has a preeminent role to play in their struggle for recognition as equals by right and by law."⁶⁵⁴ And "You have become a symbol of the true meaning of the 1975 International Women's Year...If this International Women's Year is successful in moving our world one step closer to achievement of its theme of 'equality, development, peace,' we shall have to thank you for your magnificent contribution."⁶⁵⁵

The above sentiments show how IWY, and Mrs. Ford's role in it, had both a domestic and international focus. IWY was intended to promote the integration of women more fully into national and international economic, social and cultural roles. Betty Ford's role in IWY was primarily focused on women in the United States, but her actions likely affected the prominence of the IWY on an international scale as well. In her 'acting for' women through IWY, she primarily resembled a delegate in her domestic-focused public diplomacy, as she was being sent out on various IWY missions as a representative of the Administration. However, as demonstrated above, the value of the First Lady's participation in IWY events was primarily symbolic. It was thought that her active role in IWY would help re-present the ideal of equality in the Fords' marital relationship. Betty Ford's power as a symbolic representative is also illustrated in her ability to elevate the prominence of IWY and to motivate other women to promote the cause. Furthermore, her words and actions primarily have implications for

⁶⁵⁴ B'nai B'rith program, "America's First Lady" Tribute, "6/11/75-New York City (2) Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith" folder, Box 16, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

⁶⁵⁵ Remarks, Mrs. William Levitt, B'nai B'rith Luncheon Chairman, "6/1/75-New York City (3) Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith" folder, Box 16, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Ford Library.

transgendering, as the purpose of IWY was, as Mrs. Ford noted, to free women from restrictive stereotypes and open new opportunities for them both nationally and internationally.

Rosalynn Carter and Substantive Diplomacy

On May 3, 1977, President Jimmy Carter announced that he was sending his wife Rosalynn on a diplomatic trip to Latin America, with stops in Jamaica, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela. In Carter's initial announcement, he called his wife "a political partner of mine," noting that she would "conduct substantive talks with the leaders of those countries."⁶⁵⁶ Thus, from the outset, in terms of symbolic representation, the Carter Administration was framing her Latin American trip in such a way as to re-present the domestic construction of women's gender roles by conveying the ideal of equality in marriage. Assigning the First Lady such substantive duties would surely help bolster the Carter Administration's image as pro-women's rights.

Given the "substantive" emphasis placed on her Latin American trip, many people, including Latin American governments, questioned Mrs. Carter's qualifications for undertaking this important foreign policy role. In an interview, Mrs. Carter gave reasons for her ability to effectively carry out the trip's mission. In particular, she highlighted her marital connection to the President as justification for why she would be a useful representative:

I thought I could develop some personal relationships between the Heads of the States, the countries that I visited, and my family. I think that's very, very important.

⁶⁵⁶ Susanna BcBee, "Substantive Talks Are Slated for Mrs. Carter on Latin Trip," *The Washington Post*, 5/25/1977.

Because the Heads of these States do not know Jimmy. But I wanted it to be more than that and I thought that I could convey to them the goals and priorities of the Carter Administration which is really different for Latin America and Caribbean now....And he wanted me to go. And I thought I could represent him well. Because I'm close to him. And these leaders know that I can come back and tell him their feelings too. I think that's important.⁶⁵⁷

In this statement, Mrs. Carter specifically notes that she is able to represent the President well because she is his wife and can therefore speak with authority to foreign leaders as an extension of him. Moreover, by stating she could "represent him [the President] well," she is explicitly describing herself as a delegate in terms of substantive representation, as she is representing the President to nations abroad.

And when the interviewer questioned her about whether her unofficial status posed a problem, Rosalynn Carter again invoked her marital connection to show why she was able to carry out her mission:

I think that I have a pretty important position, think that I am close to Jimmy and I think that that makes it easier for me to be able to meet people and have them know that I will convey that information to Jimmy. I think that's very important to these foreign leaders and that's what I did. I met with them, some very in-depth discussions about the specific issues and I have brought this information back to Jimmy.⁶⁵⁸

Here, Rosalynn is saying that her marriage is the factor that provides her with the credibility to carry out the delegate role.

Though she did not mention that women's issues would be the main focus of her trip, she did say that human rights were among the foremost topics she discussed in her public diplomatic efforts. Many of the nations she visited had not adopted the American Convention on Human Rights, which had been negotiated

⁶⁵⁷ Transcript, Rosalynn Carter's interview with Judy Woodruff, "RSC Interview on the *Today* Show with Judy Woodruff, June 21, 1977," Box 3, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁶⁵⁸ Transcript, Rosalynn Carter's interview with Judy Woodruff, "RSC Interview on the *Today* Show with Judy Woodruff, June 21, 1977," Box 3, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

in 1969. She attempted to convince the leaders of numerous countries she visited to sign and ratify the Convention.⁶⁵⁹ With President Michelsen of Colombia, she discussed the problem of international drug smuggling.⁶⁶⁰ With President Geico of Brazil, she tackled the issue of nuclear nonproliferation. With President Morales of Peru, she debated the soundness of the country's arms buildup. Mrs. Carter said that she believed she was successful in "opening the dialogue" between the countries, helping them to ease tensions over international security.⁶⁶¹

Though women's rights were not at the top of Mrs. Carter's policy agenda, she believed her trip did have the effect of uplifting the women in the region. She stated,

Every single country that I went into, I had the leaders of the countries say to me, Mrs. Carter you're doing great things for wome[n]. The women in our country from now on are going to be looking for things that they can do. Without exception in every country I went to there was a remark made about me being a woman and being able to do this...⁶⁶²

Here, Rosalynn Carter's power as a symbolic representative is similar to that of Lou Hoover and Jacqueline Kennedy, as she demonstrated the power to awaken and inspire women abroad. Here, it is also apparent that Mrs. Carter's gender role modeling through her public diplomacy had implications for transgendering, as she was able to stimulate women to do things they previously did not believe themselves capable of undertaking.

⁶⁵⁹ Transcript, Rosalynn Carter's interview with Judy Woodruff, "RSC Interview on the *Today* Show with Judy Woodruff, June 21, 1977," Box 3, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁶⁶⁰ Susanna McBee, "Mrs. Carter Arrives in Colombia; Drugs Top Talks Agenda," *The Washington Post*, 6/10/1977.

⁶⁶¹ Transcript, Rosalynn Carter's interview with Judy Woodruff, "RSC Interview on the *Today* Show with Judy Woodruff, June 21, 1977," Box 3, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁶⁶² Transcript, Rosalynn Carter's interview with Judy Woodruff, "RSC Interview on the *Today* Show with Judy Woodruff, June 21, 1977," Box 3, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

Public reaction to Rosalynn Carter's delegate role was mostly favorable. A Roper poll taken soon after her trip found that 68% of Americans believed that Mrs. Carter had done a 'good' or 'excellent' job as a representative of the United States on her Latin American trip, while only 12% said that she did a 'not good' or 'poor' job. The poll also found that 55% of Americans believed that a First Lady should officially represent the United States in talks with other countries.⁶⁶³

Though it would seem that the First Lady's substantive Latin American trip was a success, her subsequent international travel mostly "fell within the older, more traditional bounds for presidents' wives."⁶⁶⁴ Nonetheless, having the First Lady undertake such an important mission early in the Carter Administration really helped to convey messages about domestic gender roles to international audiences. In other words, through Rosalynn Carter's substantive performance as a delegate and public diplomat, she was able to serve as a role model and inspiration for women to take on activities that they were previously discouraged from undertaking, thereby contributing to transgendering. Additionally, her gender role modeling also helped portray the Carters' marriage as a political partnership in accord with feminist ideals, in order to appeal to audiences at home.

Hillary Clinton: "Women's Rights are Human Rights"

For Hillary Clinton, becoming the central player in the major domestic policy effort to revamp the nation's healthcare system evoked criticism from

⁶⁶³ Memorandum, Hodding Carter III to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, September 8, 1977, "Administrative Memos—East Wing, 1976-1979," Box 30, Mary Finch Hoyt Papers, Carter Library.

⁶⁶⁴ Caroli, *First Ladies*, 267.

certain segments of the American public. The ultimate defeat of healthcare reform in the fall of 1994, and the subsequent Democratic losses in the congressional midterm elections, left the First Lady wondering whether she “had gambled on the country’s acceptance of [her] active role and lost” and how she “had become such a lightning rod for people’s anger.” These defeats also left her searching for a new role that she could undertake to help her husband’s Administration.⁶⁶⁵

She would discover the role that came to define a major part of her political activity for the remainder of the Clinton Administration on a trip to India and Pakistan in March of 1995. On this trip, she witnessed the positive impact she could have on global women’s rights. As Hillary Clinton would observe, even though she had spent twenty-five years of her life working to improve the status of women and children in the domestic arena, “my message abroad carried few of the political overtones of my proposals for specific policies at home.”⁶⁶⁶

To understand the lack of public criticism of Hillary Clinton’s work for international compared to domestic women’s rights, the political context must be considered. Recall that in national politics, the Clintons were somewhat compelled to appease the family values forces. Among family values forces, contrary to feminists, there was a belief that women’s rights in the United States had already been achieved. Thus, so long as Hillary Clinton did not make a contrary claim—that there was in fact more work to be done on women’s rights on the domestic front—her policy work would remain uncontroversial. However, among the right, there did not seem to be a similar belief pertaining to woman

⁶⁶⁵ Clinton, *Living History*, 278.

⁶⁶⁶ Clinton, *Living History*, 278.

abroad. Thus, it remained relatively uncontroversial for the First Lady to take on an activist role in international women's rights. Laura Bush's activism for women's rights abroad can be justified along the same dimensions. Ferguson explains this rationale in terms of the Bush Administration, but it can just as easily be extended to the Clinton years.

Our respect for women at home should motivate us to care about the status of women abroad....Civilized nations and civilized people respect women, and therefore treat them with dignity and recognize their rights. The United States clearly respects its women since it has for almost a century now recognized women's rights. [Other countries] by contrast [do] not respect [their] women...Accordingly, [other countries were] uncivilized and needed to be brought under control and domesticated.⁶⁶⁷

This rationale justifies how First Ladies after the second wave successfully took domestic constructions of gender roles and women's rights abroad in their performance of public diplomacy.

The State Department had asked Mrs. Clinton to visit India and Pakistan because neither the President nor the Vice President could make the trip, given the security risks from the ongoing conflict there. The State Department believed that her presence in the volatile region would signal to South Asian leaders that the President supported their efforts to strengthen democracy and promote human rights, especially the rights of women. So, her role was construed primarily as a delegate in terms of substantive representation, as she would be representing the President and the nation to women abroad.

Mrs. Clinton's mission on the trip to Pakistan was to meet urban and rural women and to go into remote villages where public officials rarely venture. She

⁶⁶⁷ Ferguson, "'W' Stands for Women: Feminism and Security Rhetoric in the Post-9/11 Bush Administration," 21.

wanted to "meet with as many women as possible to stress the correlation between women's progress and a country's social and economic status." In particular, she wanted to focus on development issues, and this trip was her first personal exposure to the role of women in the developing world. And with the new Republican majorities in the House and Senate targeting cuts in foreign aid, she hoped to use the media spotlight that follows the First Lady "to demonstrate the tangible impact of U.S.-funded programs in the developing world." Regarding the mission of her trip to India, she remarked, "Bill had asked me to go because he wanted to oversee the development of good relations with India....I wanted to see for myself the world's largest democracy and learn more about grassroots efforts to spur development and women's rights."⁶⁶⁸ In this statement, Hillary Clinton is indicating that, in her international role, she served as both a delegate and trustee in terms of substantive representation. On one hand, her public diplomacy resembles that of a delegate because the President had sent her out to represent the nation on the mission abroad. On the other hand, in Hillary Clinton's own mind, she was serving as a trustee by embarking on a fact-finding mission particularly concerned with women's rights.

In Pakistan, Hillary Clinton held discussions with female leaders about the changing roles of women in the country and visited girls' schools and women's training centers. In India, the First Lady promoted micro-credit lending programs to help poor women start their own businesses, visited a women's health clinic, and met with members of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), which provides loans and offers women basic literacy and business training. She

⁶⁶⁸ Clinton, *Living History*, 268-76.

also gave a major speech on women's rights to the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation.⁶⁶⁹

Her activities were intended to highlight and promote women's political, economic, and cultural advancement, thus furthering transgendered roles for women abroad.

Hillary Clinton's most famous address as First Lady was to the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, China in September of 1995. The conference was established to provide a forum to discuss international women's issues such as family planning, women's suffrage, property rights, and micro-lending. Hillary Clinton traveled to the conference as the representative from the U.S., and she hoped her presence "would signal the U.S. commitment to the needs and rights of women in international policy." Women around the world had not been making the same gains politically and economically as women in the United States, and "virtually no one who could attract media attention was speaking out on their behalf."⁶⁷⁰ These sentiments reveal several dimensions of Hillary Clinton's representative role. Her statement alluding to her ability to attract media attention demonstrates her power as a symbolic representative. Also, she says that her attendance would signal the U.S. commitment to women's rights abroad, illustrating her delegate role. Yet, her trusteeship is also evident here. Hillary Clinton's goal at the conference was to advance the economic and political progress of women internationally, and she seemed to be taking on the role of a guardian, acting in behalf of the human rights of women.

⁶⁶⁹ Clinton, *Living History*, 272-85.

⁶⁷⁰ Clinton, *Living History*, 299.

Hillary Clinton wanted the central message of her speech to be that women's rights are not separate from human rights and that women must be free to make choices for themselves. She said,

[I]t is no longer acceptable to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights....For too long, the history of women has been a history of silence....It is a violation of human rights when women and girls are sold into the slavery of prostitution....It is a violation of human rights when individual women are raped in their own communities and when thousands of women are subjected to rape as a tactic or prize of war....It is a violation of human rights when young girls are brutalized by the painful and degrading practice of genital mutilation....If there is a message that echoes forth from this conference, let it be that human rights are women's rights...and women's rights are human rights, once and for all.

Her message certainly resonated. As she noted in her memoir, "*The New York Times* editorial page wrote that the speech 'may have been her finest moment in public life.' What I didn't know was that my twenty-one minute speech would become a manifesto for women all over the world. To this day, when I travel overseas, women come up to me quoting words from the Beijing speech or clutching copies they want me to autograph."⁶⁷¹ This is yet another example of the First Lady taking domestic constructions of gender roles abroad in her human rights-focused public diplomacy. Her strong women's rights rhetoric was praised and not criticized because, applying Ferguson's rationale, she expressed the need to transplant the women's rights that had already been achieved in the U.S. to uncivilized nations that continually violated women's rights and did not uphold women's dignity.

Hillary Clinton was also intimately involved in the U.S. government's Vital Voices Democracy Initiative, which was launched in 1997 as an outgrowth of the Beijing conference. As Hillary Clinton would later write, "The project was

⁶⁷¹ Clinton, *Living History*, 304-06.

close to my heart, a prime example of the Administration's efforts to incorporate women's issues into foreign policy." Melanne Verveer, Hillary Clinton's Chief of Staff, was instrumental in implementing the program and making it a success. Vital Voices brought together government officials, NGOs, and international corporations to promote progress for women in building democracy, strengthening economies, and working to achieve peace. Mrs. Clinton decided to involve herself in the project because she believed that attention to women and children was missing from U.S. diplomatic rhetoric about free markets and democracy and that women suffered disproportionately in countries transitioning from communism. Vital Voices, and Hillary Clinton's role in it, filled this gap in U.S. foreign policy, as she served as a trustee through 'acting for' the interests of women abroad.

As First Lady, Hillary Clinton continued the work of Presidents' wives who had gone before her in taking the domestic construction of gender roles and human rights to women abroad. Thus, similar to previous First Ladies, Hillary Clinton carried out gender role modeling through her public diplomacy. Also in terms of symbolic representation, Mrs. Clinton used her position as First Lady to highlight and attract attention to parts of the world where women's human rights were being violated—and to parts of the world where progress was being made. Therefore, it can be said that her efforts mostly contributed to transgendering. As a substantive representative, she both represented the President to women as a delegate and women to the President as a trustee. And as demonstrated below, Laura Bush's role in international relations was quite similar to Hillary Clinton's.

Laura Bush: Middle Eastern Women and the War on Terror

After the September 11, 2001 attacks on America, combating terrorism became the pre-eminent mission of the Bush Administration. Soon thereafter, Laura Bush carved out her own role within the Bush Administration's war on terror. Laura Bush cites "global diplomacy" as one of her major initiatives as First Lady.⁶⁷² Her diplomatic efforts are largely focused on international women's rights, particularly those of Middle Eastern women.

Defending the rights of women has been central to the Bush Administration's justification of the war on terror:

The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was justified not only in terms of the war on terror but also in terms of restoring the rights of women mistreated under Taliban rule. The U.S. government has openly supported the codification of women's equality and participation in both Afghani and Iraqi interim governments and constitutions, on the grounds that women's inclusion in these emerging democracies is essential to our national security.⁶⁷³

As noted in previous chapters, Laura Bush has most frequently represented the Bush Administration on women's issues. Her speeches and actions have served to equate international women's rights with building stable democracies, which is central to the President's justification of the war on terror.

On November 17, 2001, Laura Bush became the first First Lady to deliver a Presidential Radio Address in its entirety. She began, "I'm Laura Bush and I'm delivering this week's radio address to kick off a world-wide effort to focus on the brutality against women and children by the al-Qaida terrorist network and the

⁶⁷² Mrs. Bush lists "global diplomacy" as one of her major initiatives on the White House website. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/firstlady/global.html> (3/9/2006).

⁶⁷³ Ferguson, "'W' Stands for Women: Feminism and Security Rhetoric in the Post-9/11 Bush Administration," 10.

regime it supports in Afghanistan, the Taliban.” So, from the outset, it is clear that she would be using her power as a symbolic representative to draw attention to the plight of Middle Eastern women.

Notably, her remarks reflected the Bush Administration’s connection of women’s rights with the war on terror. She stated, for example,

Civilized people throughout the world are speaking out in horror—not only because our hearts break for the women and children in Afghanistan, but also because in Afghanistan we see the world the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us....The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women.

This quote is also an illustration of the justification for First Ladies taking the domestic constructions of gender roles and human rights abroad. Laura Bush invokes the argument, noted by Ferguson, that uncivilized countries ought to be brought under control and domesticated and taught to accord women dignity and human rights.

In this radio address, which is probably her most famous speech as First Lady, Laura Bush set the themes that would frame her global diplomatic efforts: bringing to light the oppression of women around the world, connecting their mistreatment to terrorism, and relating to the American people that their country has a humanitarian obligation to stop the global oppression of women:

Afghan women know, through hard experience, what the rest of the world is discovering: The brutal oppression of women is a central goal of terrorists. Long before the current war began, the Taliban and its terrorist allies were making the lives of children and women in Afghanistan miserable....Women have been denied access to doctors when they’re sick....Women cannot work outside the home, or even leave their homes by themselves...

Only the terrorists and the Taliban forbid education to women. Only the terrorists and the Taliban threaten to pull out women’s fingernails for wearing nail polish. The plight of women and children in Afghanistan is a matter of deliberate human cruelty, carried out by those who seek to intimidate and control...

All of us have an obligation to speak out....We respect our mothers, our sisters and daughters. Fighting brutality against women and children is not the expression of a specific culture; it is the acceptance of our common humanity...I hope

Americans will join our family in working to insure that dignity and opportunity will be secured for all the women and children of Afghanistan.⁶⁷⁴

Here, Laura Bush is connecting Afghan women's rights to basic human rights, just as First Ladies who had gone before her had consistently done.

In her speeches, Laura Bush connected her commitment to international women's rights with her husband's vision for spreading democratic values throughout the globe. In her remarks to at a luncheon for the Center for Strategic and International Studies in 2003, she said, "Two years ago in his Inaugural address, the President spoke of our democracy and of our 'moral obligation to champion freedom throughout the world.' He said, 'Our national courage has been clear in times of depression and war. We must show courage in a time of blessing, by confronting problems instead of passing them on to future generations.'" She again quoted his State of the Union address in her remarks to the National Association of Women Judges: "America will always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the power of state, respect for women, private property, free speech, equal justice and religious tolerance."⁶⁷⁵ Here, the First Lady is taking the President's message about democracy in the Middle East to the public as a delegate, as well as connecting women's right to human rights and to the obligation of the U.S. to promote these domestic values abroad.

⁶⁷⁴ Radio Address by Mrs. Bush, November 17, 2001, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011117.html>> (3/9/2006).

⁶⁷⁵ "Mrs. Bush Remarks at Center for Strategic and International Studies Luncheon," 1/25/2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030125-1.html> (3/9/2006); "Mrs. Bush's Remarks at Conference of the National Association of Women Judges," 10/10/2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/10/20031010-5.html> (3/9/2006).



Laura Bush with Afghan girls in Kabul. March 30, 2005.

Photo by Susan Sterner. *The White House Website*,

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/firstlady/photoessays/2005/mar-2/07.html> (3/9/2006).

Laura Bush has also advanced the freedom of Afghan girls and women to pursue an education. She began this crusade in January of 2002, shortly after she delivered her initial radio address on Afghan women's rights. She promoted a partnership between the U.S. and other countries called the Back-to-School Project for Afghan Girls, whereby Afghan women can earn money for their families by sewing school uniforms for Afghan girls. On her visit to Afghanistan in March of 2005, she highlighted the National Women's Dormitory and the Women's Teacher Training Institute, which were both Bush Administration initiatives. She also announced the establishment of the Bush Administration-sponsored American University of Afghanistan, saying "The American University will aggressively reach out to young Afghan women, to ensure they feature prominently in the school.... There will be appropriate facilities and housing for women, and care will be taken to be sure the faculty of this co-ed institution is inclusive of women." She also noted that she was "working with our government and the private sector to develop a teacher training institution that will help

Afghanistan meet its educational needs by training Afghan teachers, especially women.”⁶⁷⁶ Overall, she has highlighted the Bush Administration’s work to educate Afghan girls and women in nearly every speech she has given on global diplomacy.

Just as Betty Ford served as the Ford Administration’s spokeswoman for International Women’s Year in 1975, Laura Bush has served as the Bush Administration’s spokeswoman for International Woman’s Day, designated by the UN to be March 8th of each year. In 2002, with September 11th terrorist attacks still fresh in the American memory, the First Lady gave an address at the UN to commemorate the day and advocate the work of the Bush Administration on behalf of international women’s rights:

We have committed at least \$1.5 million to help Afghan women work and support their families, some for the first time in years...In Kabul and Mazar-E-Sharif, the U.S. is sending wheat to 21 bakeries run by widows who earn a living and feed their own families... Women, children and widows who were forced to flee to refugee camps are now returning home to Afghanistan. Today, the United States has helped some 150,000 people return, and we have pledged about \$50.2 million dollars in support...⁶⁷⁷

On International Woman’s Day in 2006, Mrs. Bush welcomed Iraqi and Afghan women leaders to the White House, and she told her audience, “I’m proud to be married to a man whose policies promote...progress for women in many parts of the world.” Her speech went on to highlight the Bush Administration’s policy achievements on international women’s rights:

⁶⁷⁶ “Mrs. Bush’s Remarks at USAID Event with Afghan Authority Interim Chairman Karzai,” January 29, 2003; “Mrs. Bush’s Remarks to Back-to-School Project for Afghan Girls, March 20, 2002; “Mrs. Bush Highlight Women’s Achievement in Afghanistan,” March 30, 2005, “Mrs. Bush’s Remarks at Conference of the National Association of Women Judges,” October 10, 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/firstlady/global.html> (3/9/2006).

⁶⁷⁷ “Mrs. Bush’s Remarks on International Women’s Day at the United Nations,” March 8, 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020308-15.html> (3/9/2006).

Consider his policies in Africa. Girls go to schools there, thanks to scholarships from the African Education Initiative. Women receive antiretroviral drugs and deliver babies free of HIV because of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. In Afghanistan, young girls go to school and women serve in government because America helped liberate the Afghan people...As we celebrate International Women's Day and Women's History Month, we honor men and women who work together to advance justice, dignity, and opportunity for women. And no one is more committed to those ideas than my husband, our President, George W. Bush.⁶⁷⁸

These examples show how Mrs. Bush served mainly as a delegate, representing the President and his policies on women to national and international audiences.

Though the above illustrations mostly reveal Mrs. Bush as a delegate in terms of substantive representation—taking the President's message on democracy, dignity, and humanity to domestic and international publics—trusteeship can also be ascertained through her overall work. Mrs. Bush has been the primary administration official to undertake the cause of international women's rights. Acting in behalf of, in the interests of, and as the guardian of international women's rights has characterized her entire tenure as First Lady, and therefore her trusteeship cannot be underestimated. Like First Ladies who had gone before her, Mrs. Bush brought domestic constructions of gender roles and women's rights to places of the world where women were oppressed. As a public diplomat, she consistently connected women's right to human rights, demonstrating the obligation of the U.S. to bring these values to uncivilized nations. One scholar has remarked that Laura Bush's rhetoric on international women's rights has not been controversial because it suggests that

Women's rights were achieved for Americans long ago, and so there is no need for feminists to agitate for them at home. The work to be done is to be done abroad. Even if there are still problems that American women face...these are nothing

⁶⁷⁸ "President and Mrs. Bush Celebrate Women's History Month and International Women's Day," March 7, 2006, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/03/20060307.html> (3/9/2006).

compared to the atrocities suffered under the Taliban and...Saddam Hussein. So our attentions are best directed toward liberation in other countries.⁶⁷⁹

And so, like Hillary Clinton, Mrs. Bush has received very little criticism for this role.

Conclusion

Before summarizing the chapter's implications for representation, it is first necessary to explain the omission of Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush from this analysis. While these women traveled with their husbands abroad on diplomatic trips, engaged in public diplomacy, and spent their visits doing traditionally feminine things with foreign leaders' wives, such as touring museums and hospitals, there is not much evidence that their primary purpose on these trips was to reach out to international women specifically. Thus, the character of their diplomacy was quite different from that of the First Ladies explored in this chapter. As noted above, the primary purposes of First Ladies representing women in international affairs was multifaceted: to further international women's rights and to portray the presidential administrations as pro-woman and the presidential marriages as equal partnerships. Furthering women's rights at home or abroad was not a priority of the Reagan and Bush I administrations. And, as explained in previous chapters, they did not want to portray their marriages as political partnerships or take on substantive policy roles of any kind. These factors can explain why and how First Ladies Reagan and Bush are distinguished from the administrations explored in this chapter.

⁶⁷⁹ Ferguson, "'W' Stands for Women: Feminism and Security Rhetoric in the Post-9/11 Bush Administration," 32.

As noted above, there are several representative themes that unite the work of First Ladies Nixon, Ford, Carter, Clinton, and Bush. Most importantly, these First Ladies set a universal standard for women during their respective administrations. All of these women performed gender through their public diplomacy. That is, they each took domestic constructions of gender roles and women's rights and attempted to impart them on foreign nations. In their public diplomatic efforts, they consistently related women's rights to human rights and affirmed the United States' obligation to promote these values in parts of the world where these rights were being ignored or violated.

This form gender role modeling is certainly a manifestation of symbolic representation. In the international arena, First Ladies served as symbolic representatives along several other dimensions as well. Their symbolic power is evident in their ability to draw attention to a particular issue or area of the world and to get others to recognize the importance of global women's rights. Additionally, from Lou Hoover through Laura Bush, it is evident that First Ladies' visits to uncivilized nations had an awakening or inspiring effect on the women of those countries. And during the second wave in particular, Presidents sending First Ladies out on substantive missions abroad was intended to convey the image of equality in the presidential marital relationship or to re-repent gender ideals in accord with feminist values.

More evident in this chapter than in any other, First Ladies consistently have taken on the role of delegates in terms of substantive representative. That they would resemble delegates in the international affairs chapter is logical.

According to Pitkin, a word closely related to 'delegate' is 'emissary,' which is a term directly and commonly associated with international relations. As delegates, they would represent the President's positions and accomplishments on women's rights and issues to domestic and foreign audiences. However, elements of trusteeship are also evident in their roles. First Ladies, most notably Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush, largely defined their tenures through their work in behalf of international women. And in their overall representative roles, it is evident that they were acting in behalf of, to the benefit of, and as guardians of women around the globe.

Indeed, Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush seemed to be the primary if not sole officials within their respective administrations to undertake the task of representing women abroad. This indicates that, as in previous chapters, there may have been some "passing off" to the First Lady the responsibility for looking after women's interests. And this, in turn, would be indicative of regendering. However, First Ladies representation of women abroad had an explicit focus on women's rights as human rights. Their purpose was to get oppressive nations to understand the universality of human rights and to apply them to their women. Their focus on universality has transgendered implications in that human rights are to be accorded regardless of gender. Therefore, this chapter, similar to the previous one, illustrates how First Ladies' work primarily contributed to transgendering, if not in specific societal and cultural roles than in the extension of basic human rights to women by international regimes.

As previously discussed, it is notable that in the post-second wave era both Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush extensively used feminist-sounding rhetoric to advocate international women's rights and received virtually no criticism from either Party for doing so. It is safe to assume that, if these women had tried the same rhetoric on women's rights at home, the result would probably not have been as favorable. This has implications for the future of First Ladies women-focused activities. In the current political context at least, it seems acceptable for First Ladies to advance women's rights at the international, but not domestic, level. Thus, until the domestic political context regarding women's rights changes, it seems that future First Ladies' women's rights activities would be more fully accepted by the general American public if focused on the international arena.

~Conclusion~

“Abolish Her”? Representation versus Regendering

This study has argued that representing women has been one of the First Lady's most important tasks. Drawing on literature concerning the modern presidency, the women's movement, gender constructions, and political representation, I posited a developmental theory tracing the origin and evolution of her roles. This project has argued that the First Lady's representation is expressed through several functions: reaching out to women voters, liaising with women's groups, and addressing women's domestic and international policies and programs.

The introductory chapter posed several questions to help guide the project's analysis: What difference does it make that First Ladies have represented women, their issues and interests for the U.S. presidency? Does the First Lady (an unelected official) undertaking this representative role actually work to marginalize women, relegating them to the status of second-class-constituents of the presidency? Has the First Lady actually advanced women's progress, or has the First Lady's representative work further solidified traditional gender stereotypes? Therefore, what should be the future of the first ladyship?

To help answer these questions and thereby analyze the conclusions of this work, it is helpful to begin with an exploration of the claims of a scholar who has posited firm answers to many of these inquiries. To the question, 'what should be

the future of the first ladyship?' feminist writer Germaine Greer has answered that it should be abolished. Her conclusion is based upon her claim that the First Lady has solely functioned as a regressive gender role model. In other words, in her writing, Greer has argued that First Ladies exhibit extreme regendering. Because of this regendering, and the continued oppression and marginalization of women it implies, she believes that the first ladyship should have no place in the American polity. Greer reasons,

For the president to bring his wife out of seclusion may seem like progress, but to dub her First Lady at the same time and to display her in every conceivable medium as such is as retrograde to the cause of human equality as the tendency to turn elected office into hereditary rulership. In a democratic world, mere relationship to an elected officeholder should simply never be a route to power. The courtesies extended to male politicians' wives in the West should never be justified in the name of equality because the duties expected of politicians' wives are demeaning and dishonorable.⁶⁸⁰

Greer included among these demeaning tasks: "On all official occasions the First Lady is expected to let herself be seen by her husband, so that she can lead the appreciation of the audience for his every word or action." Some other dishonorable tasks included that "she must be seen to be faithful to her absentee husband, to have borne children by him, the more the better, and to be devoted to those children." In addition, "Besides confirming the First Gentleman's sexual adequacy, the First Lady must also display his success as a provider..." In her article, Greer basically claims that the First Lady is a "decorative consort," a role usually associated with dictatorships, not democracies.

Not all portions of this project's analysis are out of accord with Greer's assessments of the first ladyship. It must be acknowledged that within American

⁶⁸⁰ Greer, "Abolish Her: The Feminist Case against First Ladies."

culture, a retrograde stigma has been attached to the First Lady's office, as she has been associated with traditional femininity, thereby causing her work to be minimized. Since many of her duties have involved household management, social entertaining, and standing by her husband's side at ceremonial events, it is understandable that some may see her position as regressive. It cannot be denied that the First Lady exercising power as an unelected official has historically been called into question. So, her identity within American political culture has been bound up tightly with regendered stereotypes. In other words, for many Americans, the First Lady has symbolized traditional femininity. And this analysis has illuminated many instances in which the First Lady's political representation has specifically contributed to this regendering.

For instance, this project has pointed to many instances in which the West Wing has passed off women's issues to the East Wing, thereby segregating women's issues in the First Lady's office. Virginia Sapiro has argued against the establishment of special women's offices and committees within the parties and government, reasoning that such segregation of women's issues "can 'ghettoize' the problems; it can segregate the issues both from other related problems and from experts and leaders in other fields."⁶⁸¹ This project has shown that the First Lady has regularly interacted with such offices and committees, and to the extent that the responsibility for women's representation has been passed off to her, this can further the marginalization of women in the presidency. Only this marginalization may be magnified when the First Lady becomes affiliated with an

⁶⁸¹ Sapiro, "When Are Interests Interesting? The Problem of Political Representation of Women," 182.

issue or role, given the retrograde stigma attached to her position and the consequent trivialization of her role within American politics.

Additionally, and related to the above points, this project has shown how the actions of First Ladies have arisen *because of* their sex or feminine character, thereby overriding the end of transgendered government. For, the end of transgendered government is to move toward a system in which the actions and traits of officials are seen as acceptable *regardless of* sex. However, First Ladies have campaigned to and liaised with women because they are women. First Ladies have worked in behalf of women-centered international and domestic policies because they are women. To summarize, in the Executive Branch, First Ladies have become intimately linked to women and their issues specifically *because of* their sex.

To my knowledge, no scholar has argued the opposite extreme of Greer's analysis: that the first ladyship should be preserved because it has advanced women's progress in a way that promotes transgendering, thereby removing vestiges of sexism from the operations of the presidential branch. Indeed, this claim would be a stretch, particularly given that the First Lady has symbolized traditional femininity and is largely evaluated by her adherence to that standard. However, as noted above, Greer's conclusions about the abolition of the first ladyship are firm and extreme, and this extremity is justified by her belief that the first ladyship is out of accord with democratic ideals. This project, however, has argued that in their exercise of political representation, First Ladies have played an integral role in furthering women's place within American democracy. The

assertion that the First Lady has done some democratic good for women indicates that the conclusions and evaluations of this project cannot justifiably be as extreme as Greer's. Indeed, the picture that Greer paints of First Ladies is in many ways different than the one presented in this project.

The sum total of evidence brought to bear on this study shows that First Ladies have helped women gain representation within the presidential branch. According to the civic ideals of the democratic republic, it is "good" for constituents to have more representation than less or none at all. If one is to have political personhood, then he or she must be represented. That is, according to Hanna Pitkin, somebody within the government must be acting in their interests in a manner responsive to them. If no such representation exists, then the political personhood of individuals is called into question.

Before 1920, women were denied this political personhood. The 1848 Seneca Falls *Declaration of Sentiments* describes woman's pre-suffrage state of lacking political personhood: "Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides. He has made her...in the eye of the law, civilly dead."⁶⁸² A state of civil deadness has characterized women throughout much of American history. Though America's citizenship laws did not always correspond with the civic ideals of liberalism and republicanism,⁶⁸³ through the efforts of suffragists, women were eventually given the first right of

⁶⁸² Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments, 1848, qtd. in Lynne E. Ford, *Women and Politics: The Pursuit of Equality* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002), 36.

⁶⁸³ See Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

citizens, the elective franchise. This, presumably, would guarantee them political representation. I say "presumably" because, even though women had the right to vote, this did not guarantee that elected officials would look after their interests. Masculinism still pervades representative institutions. Giving women the right to vote did not solve the problem that women's particular needs, interests, and concerns may not be adequately addressed in a political system dominated by men.⁶⁸⁴

This has been a particular problem for the presidency, the most masculine branch of government. As this dissertation has shown, First Ladies have assumed and been delegated women as a specialized constituency in the presidency's representative work. Because of the First Lady, women's representation in the presidential branch has increased. By increasing their representation, she has helped women become more civilly alive and less civilly dead. In this way, her roles have extended to women the liberal and republican civic ideals upon which this country was founded.

So, while Greer claims that the first ladyship is a "retrograde" position worthy of abolition because of its furtherance of regendered roles, this project has shown how First Ladies in many ways have extended civic ideals to women. From providing women's organizations access to the presidency, to helping women attain positions of power within the federal government, to advocating for women's equality at home and abroad, American First Ladies have helped to integrate women more fully into American democracy.

⁶⁸⁴ Anne Phillips, "Democracy and Representation: Or, Why Should It Matter Who Our Representatives Are?," in *Feminism & Politics*, ed. Anne Phillips (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 233.

These representative actions are not completely out of accord with the goals of transgendering. Helping to integrate women into the political system from which they were previously excluded—whether by encouraging them to vote, recognizing their legitimacy as a constituency, alerting them to their policy roles, or making sure their equal rights were recognized—is in accord with transgendering, as their representative work has tried to counter the belief that women should not civically engage in these ways or be accorded certain treatments by government *because of* their sex. Rather, First Ladies have tried to encourage women participate in government—and tried to encourage the government to acknowledge women's citizenship—on an equal basis with men and *regardless of* their sex.

To summarize the above discussion, the abolition of the first ladyship cannot be reasonably justified, as Greer would assert, on the grounds that she has contributed entirely to regendering and not at all to women's democratic advancement. However, nor can the preservation of her office be justified on the grounds that it has furthered transgendered political institutions, thereby removing all the vestiges of sex discrimination from the operation of government. Rather, the First Lady has contributed to both, thus pointing to a fundamental tension between advancing women's progress and affirming women's traditional roles that has existed within her political representation.

Furthermore, this tension has revealed important characteristics of the concepts of transgendering and regendering. Most significantly, it has revealed that these concepts are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They can exist along a

continuum, and a blending of and pulling between the divergent ends of the continuum can be exhibited in an official's general role or within a specific activity. With the First Lady, the blending of and pulling between transgendering and regendering are evident in that she has both advanced women's progress and affirmed traditional stereotypes generally across the history of her office and in the specific activities she has undertaken.

The following section is devoted to exploring this tension through the representative roles First Ladies have undertaken. Though all First Ladies from 1920 through the present have served as substantive, symbolic, or descriptive representatives, the following section focuses on the most illustrative instances of these forms of representation and the consequent implications for transgendering and regendering.

Substantive Representation: Substantive representation is the form of representation with which this project has been mainly concerned, as its focus has been on the First Lady's actual activity. Action words or verbs have organized the individual chapters, and this study has shown how she *liaises* with women voters and constituents, *promotes* women's economic interests, and *lobbies* for women's rights. This project has argued that the trustee and delegate forms of substantive representation have best and most consistently characterized First Ladies' historical representative roles.

The trustee form of substantive representation is characterized by the representative acting in behalf of, in the interests of, and as the guardian of

women. Directionally, under this form of representation, the First Lady has represented women's interests to the President. Her trusteeship is most apparent in her liaison work, and especially in her work within the patronage system. Her work in behalf of women's patronage also illustrates the tension between advancing and inhibiting women's progress through transgendering and regendering.

As trustees, certain First Ladies have worked to ensure that women were awarded positions of responsibility within the federal government. In many instances, First Ladies have assumed personal responsibility for making sure their husbands' administrations did not ignore women and neglect to place them in positions of responsibility. On the one hand, this illustrates a certain amount of transgendering in that First Ladies have tried to open up new possibilities for women that had previously been denied to them because of their sex. Without the First Lady's trusteeship, many women would have continued to be denied the opportunity to serve their government in a meaningful way. Thus, First Ladies have extended the promises of representative democracy to women by integrating them into the workings of the government *regardless of* their sex, thus making them more civilly alive and less civilly dead.

On the other hand, the First Lady's trusteeship in this area arose because the President and his staff either ignored or passed off responsibility for women's patronage to the First Lady's office. In their broader liaison work and in their specific patronage responsibilities, First Ladies have worked with 'girls' networks' that have operated outside the realm of the 'boys' networks'

surrounding the President and his staff. As noted above, these types of sex-segregated networks can contribute to the marginalization of women and their interests. The very existence of sex-segregated networks is clear evidence of regendering, as their liaison work has arisen precisely *because of* their sex. Thus, in the First Lady's liaison work there is a tension between transgendering and regendering and also between advancing and inhibiting women's progress.

First Ladies have also served as delegates in terms of substantive representation. Directionally, under this form, First Ladies have represented the President and the nation to women. They have been sent out on missions as emissaries to carry messages to women at home and abroad. Her delegate role is perhaps most evident in her work advancing international women's rights.

In this representative role, First Ladies have attempted to link women's rights to human rights and highlight areas of the world where these rights were being violated. In so doing, First Ladies have taken domestic constructions of women's rights and women's dignity and tried to transplant them in locations abroad. In this delegate role, First Ladies have veered more toward the transgendering end of the continuum, though regendering can still be inferred.

As previously noted, one of the underlying goals of the First Lady serving as an international delegate has been to further the extension of human rights to women. This has implications for transgendering, as they have tried to get nations to extend human rights to their citizens *regardless of* sex. However, it can also be said that this role pulls slightly toward regendering. As previously noted, scholars have asserted that this role for the First Lady implies that women's rights at home

have already been fully achieved. It is also another example of First Ladies assuming the responsibility for a women's issue because they are women, and so are 'acting for' women precisely *because of* their sex.

Symbolic Representation: This project has shown how First Ladies have 'stood for' women from 1920 through the present. According to Pitkin, a symbol is a proxy for what it represents and has the power to evoke feelings or expressions of emotion.⁶⁸⁵ Symbols can also create meaning. In other words, political figures, who are symbols, can also be "symbol-makers." And those figures can undertake activities designed to foster belief, loyalty, and satisfaction among the people.⁶⁸⁶ First Ladies have served as symbolic representatives within the presidential branch along these varying dimensions.

First of all, First Ladies have served as gender role models for American women. That is, First Ladies have set an example for women on how to carry out their particular gender roles. This form of symbolic representation is most evident in their work within the 'domestic' economy, which was largely focused on the First Lady, as the First Housewife, setting an example for (or serving as a role model for) women in carrying out their duties as consumers and home economists. Out of all the representative roles covered in this project, her symbolic roles in this chapter lean most heavily toward regendering. As First Housewives, First Ladies have explicitly reaffirmed traditional gender roles. Yet, even under this form of symbolic representation, there is a slight pull toward

⁶⁸⁵ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 99.

⁶⁸⁶ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 107.

transgendering. As discussed in Chapter Three, First Ladies have tried to help women achieve fuller economic citizenship by making economic policy relevant to their lives and according them the status of important economic actors. Yet, because this was done in a very gender-specific way—by making the domestic economy relevant to them through their roles as housewives—this role leans more heavily toward regendering.

Also in regard to gender role modeling, First Ladies have worked to re-present gender dynamics within the presidential marriage. This type of role modeling is evident across all chapters but is particularly evident in Chapter One on campaigning. The ways in which presidential couples have re-presented gender dynamics have varied according to the force and prominence of national women's movements and according to presidential ideologies. For example, First Ladies during the height of second wave feminism attempted to portray the presidential marriages as equal partnerships. However, with the rise of conservatism, First Ladies such as Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush purposefully conveyed the dynamic of the public man / private woman. Even Hillary Clinton was compelled to temper her activist campaign image during the era of family values.

The above examples illustrate the tension between regendering and transgendering that is evident through symbolic representation. First Ladies who have tried to re-present the presidential marriage as an equal partnership tend toward transgendering, as they are conveying the message that active public and policy roles are acceptable *regardless of* the sex of the marriage partner. Yet,

those who have conveyed the public man / private woman dynamic have furthered the regendered notion that certain roles are acceptable or desirable *because of* the sex of the marriage partner.

This initial chapter on campaigning also illustrates how the tension between transgendering and regendering can be pulled in one direction or the other depending upon the historical and political context. Notably, this contextual influence does not just apply to campaigning but also to the representative roles discussed in the proceeding chapters. For instance, in the 1970s or the height of the second wave feminism, the representative roles of First Ladies tended more toward transgendering as consistent with feminist ideology. Contrast this with the following period of conservative backlash against feminism. During this time period, consistent with family values ideology, First Ladies tended toward explicit regendering in their representative roles.

Besides gender role modeling, First Ladies have evidenced their power as symbolic representatives along other dimensions. They have demonstrated the power to highlight or draw attention to a particular cause, issue or policy, thus bestowing upon that issue a heightened status of importance within public policy realm and in the public mind. In this role, First Ladies have focused in particular on issues of significance to women.

As symbolic representatives, they have also demonstrated the power to evoke emotional responses from the women of the country. This project has highlighted various cases in which the First Lady was able to inspire, motivate, or

spur women of the country to action by simply meeting with them or lending support to their causes.

Along these two additional dimensions of the First Lady exercising power as a symbolic representative, the predominant direction of the tension between transgendering and regendering largely depends upon the purpose of the specific role she is assuming. For example, in Chapter Three, First Ladies demonstrated tremendous power as symbolic representatives in their ability to spotlight issues related to the 'domestic' economy and to inspire women to work for these issues. As discussed above, First Ladies' work in this area provides the most explicit evidence for regendering. However, in their role as public diplomats, First Ladies were able to highlight areas of the world where women were being oppressed and to awaken and inspire international women through their travels. As explained above, in this chapter, First Ladies' representative work tended more toward transgendering.

Descriptive Representation: First Ladies have also 'stood for' American women as descriptive representatives. Since it is biologically more difficult for male Presidents to 'stand for' for women, the First Lady has been the primary individual within the presidential branch who can perform descriptive representation.

Of course, not every First Lady has 'stood for' all women equally. So, the descriptive characteristic of sex can only to a certain extent point to how well First Ladies can 'stand for' women. Women are not a uniform constituency. They

have varied ideologies and partisan attachments, as do First Ladies. And First Ladies' ideologies and partisan attachments can help to reveal the kinds of women they have 'stood for.'

Chapter Four on the fight for the Equal Rights Amendment demonstrated how First Ladies' descriptive representation of women was intimately bound up in the battle over cultural notions of womanhood. It also illustrated the point that First Ladies have not 'stood for' all women equally as descriptive representatives. During the 1970s, the battle over the ERA was simultaneously a fight over proper cultural notions of womanhood. Those who supported the ERA also supported women's liberation from traditional gender roles, while those who opposed ERA ratification also fought for the preservation of women's traditional roles.

In Chapter Four, First Ladies Nixon, Ford, and Carter primarily 'stood for' women's libbers in the fight over the ERA. By substantively lobbying state legislators and attempting to educate the public and change public opinion on the ERA, they were seen as 'standing for' the liberated women who followed Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinem, not the traditionalists who followed Phyllis Schlafly. This, however, led to severe opposition from traditionalists who accused First Ladies of not 'standing for' or properly descriptively representing them.

As Chapter Four pointed out, the tremendous controversy surrounding the First Lady's opposition to the ERA called into question whether her activities still constituted political representation. As Pitkin notes, a true act of representation should not provoke extended and intense controversy. Since First Ladies' ERA activities did provoke such controversy, they may no longer have been

committing political representation. This also raises the point that there is a societal expectation that the First Lady be kind of a cultural 'everywoman.' For instance, Laura Bush has been rather successful in her descriptive representation of women. Recall the observation of a *Washington Post* reporter, cited at the beginning of Chapter One, about her role in the 2004 campaign, "If you are in the audience in a business suit, she's speaking to you. If you're pushing the stroller, she's speaking to you."⁶⁸⁷ Thus, as First Lady, it can be said that Laura Bush has resembled more of the cultural 'everywoman' than did First Ladies of the 1970s.

With First Ladies of the 1970s taking the side of women's libbers in the ERA battle, it would seem that their actions would tend toward transgendering, as these libbers argued for women's liberation from traditional gender roles. Yet, it is important to note that the very concept of descriptive representation as applied to the First Lady's position runs up against the principles of transgendered government. The First Lady's descriptive representation of women has arisen precisely *because of* her sex or feminine character. So, her descriptive representation does somewhat conform to regendered principles. In a truly transgendered government, officials would perform their representative function *regardless of* the descriptive characteristic of sex or feminine character. In other words, in a truly transgendered government, First Ladies would not 'stand for' women at all. So, even in First Ladies' most liberated representative roles, a tension between transgendering and regendering is still evident.

⁶⁸⁷ Hanna Rosin, "A 'Real Job'? It Works for Laura Bush," *The Washington Post*, 10/21/2004.

To summarize the previous discussion, this study's portrayal of the First Lady's representative position does not entirely reflect Greer's characterization of her as a purely decorative consort—and therefore does not completely justify the abolition of her office. This project has demonstrated how American First Ladies have furthered the substantive, symbolic, and descriptive representation of women and the civic good they have accomplished through this role. The main difference First Ladies have made through their political representation is that they have caused women to become more civilly alive and less civilly dead.

However, the above assessment has demonstrated that this has been at the expense of furthering a presidential branch that is regendered. While her representative roles have tended toward transgendering insofar as she has tried to integrate women into the workings of government, all of her representative roles have at the same time pulled toward the regendered end of the continuum. Indeed, if her position was truly transgendered, this dissertation could not have been written because no special representative relationship between the First Lady and American women would exist.

But to understand how Greer's argument that the First Lady's office should be abolished is a little too simplified, we must return to our original discussion of the character of the Executive Branch. Greer's argument largely assumes that the First Lady's position is itself to blame for its regendered tendencies. By stating that the First Lady's role is more associated with dictatorships than democracies, her argument contains the assumption that

democratic institutions should not in and of themselves be capable of producing such a position.

However, this study began with the claim that a democratic institution is the very thing that caused the First Lady's women-focused representative role to develop. This project began by claiming that masculinity has been a defining characteristic of the Executive Branch from its inception and proceeded to explain how the First Lady's women-centered roles have arisen because of its gendered character. These gendered characteristics were manifested as the presidency became more plebiscitary, policy-oriented, and personalized, and consequently became compelled to represent the interests of female constituents after the elective franchise was opened to them.

So, abolishing the First Lady's office is really an inadequate and incomplete solution, as it ignores the root causes of her women-focused representative role. In order for the Executive Branch to become transgendered, it will first have to be emasculated. However, its masculine roots run deep. As noted in the introductory chapter, they are imbedded in the executive's constitutional responsibility and have become institutionalized over the years. Considering this, it may not be worth sacrificing the civic good that the First Lady's representation of women has brought about in order to help achieve a transgendered presidential branch.

Even the election of a woman President may not go very far in achieving the goal of a transgendered presidential branch, though many may believe that this is the best hope for doing so. In the future, if the United States does have a

female President, she will face many challenges in working within the presidency's long-established masculine mandates, traditions, and practices. Of course, there is the possibility that she may succeed in wholly or at least partially overcoming these tendencies. However, there is also the possibility that her administration could be undone by the institution's masculine character.

Yet, even if the United States does one day have a female President, it can be reasonably assumed that there will be many more First Ladies in the country's future. So, perhaps one test concerning whether a female President has been successful at eradicating the masculinity of the presidential branch would be whether future First Ladies continue to exercise the women-centered representative roles they have been performing since 1920. If they do not continue their representative relationship with American women, then there may be no need to abolish the First Lady's position on grounds that it promotes regendered practices. However, if First Ladies do continue their representative relationship with women, this may indicate that the presidency's masculinity has not been overcome, but at least it will ensure that someone within the presidency is extending to women the promises of American democracy.

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