

Hillary Rodham Clinton

The First Feminist

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A Thesis Presented to:
The Department of Literature, Area Studies, and European Languages

North American Area Studies

Faculty of Humanities

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MA degree

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UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Spring 2016

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2016

Hillary Rodham Clinton: The First Feminist

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Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

The role of women in American politics has never been more discussed than today. By the end of 2016, the United States may have its first woman president, Hillary Rodham Clinton. No woman has ever come as far in American politics and as close to the Oval Office in the White House. In light of Hillary Rodham Clinton's recent political success, this thesis analyzes Hillary's life, and looks at what makes her different from other American women. It looks at the conflict between how Hillary has chosen to live her life and what American society expects of women. Hillary came of age at a time when the Western world experienced an important shift for women and their rights, and she has been an advocate for women and children since she graduated from Wellesley College. Still, she faces sexism and constant attacks because she is a woman and because she has chosen a career in politics, making her a threat to the establishment and the traditional gender roles in American society. By following Hillary Rodham Clinton's life from early beginnings to the current 2016 primary election, using Hillary's autobiographies, recent interviews and several news articles as primary sources, this thesis argues that Hillary can be considered the First Feminist of the United States. The thesis also argues that she has changed the situation for women in American society and politics. At the same time, this thesis uses Hillary's experience with sexism throughout her career as evidence to support the argument that the United States struggles with sexism and the idea of a powerful woman becoming the next President of the United States.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Deborah Lynn Kitchen-Døderlein for her help and support with this thesis. Her knowledge and encouragements have been essential for this thesis' completion.

I would also like to thank my parents, Kate and Magne, for supporting me in this process and telling me that I could do whatever I wanted while growing up. They have been my biggest supporters since day one. Thank you for letting me talk about Hillary Rodham Clinton for a year straight. I would also like to thank my closest friends and family for their support.

I would like to thank Karen Blumenthal for helping me get a better understanding of Hillary Rodham Clinton. Our correspondence has been essential for this thesis. Thank you, Karen, for taking the time to help a student across the Atlantic Ocean. I would also like to thank the Interim Archivist at Wellesley College, Mary K. K. Yearl, for the valuable help I got when searching for information about the years Hillary Rodham Clinton spent at Wellesley.

A Note on the Names

Hillary Rodham Clinton is the main subject of this thesis, and she is often referred to by the many different variations of her name and her different political titles. As a result, for clarity and simplicity, Hillary Rodham Clinton will be referred to as Hillary Rodham before she married, and Hillary Rodham Clinton after. She will also be referred to as Senator Clinton and Secretary Clinton when these two periods of her life are written about. On second reference, she will be referred to as Hillary, since this is the name she wants people to use.¹ Hillary Rodham Clinton's husband, President Bill Clinton will be referred to as Bill Clinton until he was elected Governor of Arkansas, then he will be referred to as Governor Clinton. After he was elected President of the United States, he will be referred to as President Clinton. On second reference, he will be referred to as Bill before he became president.

¹ Newton-Small, "A First Bid for President", 66.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

American women have lived in the shadows of men for hundreds of years. Their home was considered their rightful place, and they did not have the right to participate in public, professional or political life. The term coverture described the situation for women when the United States of America was founded. The legal term was adopted from British common law. Coverture meant, “Women were both figuratively and literally covered by their husband’s status.”² After marriage, the husband and wife were basically one person under the law, which meant that the wife ceased to exist legally. Wives were considered “civilly dead.”³ This meant that married women had no civil rights or legal rights and they could not sign contracts. The situation for American women has changed massively since the founding of the nation, but the roots of coverture are hard to get rid of and it has continued to define women’s place for centuries. Women have rallied and fought for their civil, human and legal rights during several historical periods, starting with the first wave of feminism of the 19th and early 20th century and continuing during the fourth wave of feminism of the early 2000s. The United States has had well-known women fighting for the rights of women and equality since the first wave of feminism: Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Eleanor Roosevelt, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Bell Hooks and Maya Angelou, to mention a few. One may argue that America’s leading feminist today is Hillary Rodham Clinton.⁴

The United States is currently in the middle of a presidential election. A new chapter in American history is being written, and it is possible that the United States will elect its first woman president in 2016. Hillary Rodham Clinton is running as the presidential candidate for the Democratic Party for the second time. Hillary has already been president, student president at Wellesley College. She graduated from Wellesley College in 1969 and held the student commencement speech in front of her fellow female students, their parents and members of the faculty. In 1995, Hillary spoke at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. During the speech she declared that “human rights are women’s rights... and women’s rights are human rights, once and for all.”⁵ Many have called Hillary the First Feminist mainly because of the work she did for women and equality during the two terms her husband Bill Clinton served as President of the United States, from

² Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 21.

³ Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 21.

⁴ Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 21; Munro, “Feminism: A fourth wave?”

⁵ Clinton, *Living History*, 305.

1993 to 2001. Even though her husband's presidency made her a household name and a role model for women, the impact her upbringing and education had on her and how she chose to live her life is rarely given a lot of focus.

Being a woman in politics is not easy, and media, men and women alike have criticized Hillary throughout the decades she has been in the public eye. Everything from her hair to her pantsuits have been discussed and commented on. Her personal decision to stay with her husband after the Lewinsky scandal was and still is a hot topic. Hillary has been the first at doing a lot in her life, especially when it comes to her professional work and career. She was the first woman to become a full partner at Rose Law Firm and she was the first female United States Senator from New York. In 2008, she became the third female Secretary of State in the first Obama Administration. She was the first First Lady to seek the presidency and she was the first woman to be a presidential candidate in every primary in every state during two elections (2008 and 2016). As if that was not enough, on February 2, 2016 she was the first woman candidate to ever win the primary election in Iowa. At the time of writing, she is the Democratic front-runner, and is very likely to become the Democratic nominee in the 2016 election. Hillary Rodham Clinton can really be considered the First Feminist.⁶

1.1 Research Question

The overall goal of this thesis is to analyze how Hillary Rodham Clinton became a trailblazing American woman. The thesis puts Hillary within the context of women's history in the United States, and looks at the conflict between how Hillary has chosen to live and society's expectations for women. The thesis looks at Hillary's education and how it transformed her into the contemporary politician she is today. It also looks at the challenges she has faced, and still is facing, when running as a woman. To do this, I will examine how Hillary Rodham Clinton's education and the periods she grew up influenced and shaped her. I will place her within American women's history. In doing this I will also examine why Hillary Rodham Clinton is such a polarizing woman. The thesis is divided into two parts, one looking at Hillary's life from childhood to becoming First Lady of the United States, and the second part beginning with her run for Senator and ending with the 2016 primary election.

⁶ Blumenthal, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 373-379; Luhby and Henderson, "Hillary Clinton wins Iowa caucuses"

1.2 Hillary Rodham Clinton

Hillary Rodham Clinton: lawyer, feminist, wife, mother, First Lady, Senator, Secretary of State, grandmother, and two-time Democratic presidential candidate. Her life is one for the history books. Hillary discovered feminism during her years at Wellesley College, where she studied political science during the 1960s and became heavily influenced by the second wave of feminism. Since then, she has worked for women's rights and gender equality not only in the United States, but worldwide. There are plenty of reasons why one can call Hillary a trailblazing woman, because her willpower and spirit have made her able to make history again and again. Hillary is the first woman to come close to becoming the President of the United States, but running as a woman in the United States is not a walk in the park. She has become the American symbol of feminism and powerful women, but at the same time she experiences harsh criticism and sexism. The United States struggles with the idea of a female commander in chief, and when Hillary challenges the traditional view of the president, she is seen as a threat to the establishment.

1.3 Choice of Primary Sources

It was not a hard job finding material on Hillary Rodham Clinton. She has been in the public eye for around four decades, and she has been the subject of several books and articles. Even though the amount of material is huge, the challenging part was to find reliable and accurate information. To be able to shed light on Hillary's personal opinions and interpret them, her autobiographies, *Living History* and *Hard Choices*, are consulted as primary sources. Three of her most important and memorable speeches have also been consulted and cited in this thesis. Several interviews with Hillary are consulted as primary sources to show her personal feelings and opinions about topics she did not cover in depth in her autobiographies. The most recent interviews also convey her opinion on the sexism she faces in the 2016 primary election when she is running as a woman. The topic of this thesis is current and has been evolving throughout the process of writing, especially when it comes to the 2016 primary election. Several news articles and magazine articles are consulted as primary sources to show that Hillary is a hot topic in discussions and debates in the United States. The articles report on current events and are used as evidence to support the arguments of this thesis. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* is used to show how the traditional role of women developed in American society, and the challenges the gender divided society inflicted on women during the 1950s and 1960s. The "Bulletin of Wellesley College Catalogue" and

“The Wellesley News” are consulted as primary sources when looking at Hillary’s years at Wellesley College and how she played an active role in the College government.

1.4 Historiography: Opportunities For Women During the 1950s and 1960s

Betty Friedan’s trailblazing work, *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 1963, in the early beginnings of the period that liberated women from the chains of the kitchen counter. Some have even given the book credit for sparking the flame of the second wave of feminism. One can say that through this book, Friedan was the first to question and shed light on women’s situation during the 1950s and early 1960s. Friedan criticizes how the society and old traditions have contributed to women’s situation:

“For over fifteen years there was no word of this yearning in the millions of words written about women, for women, in all the columns, books and articles by experts telling women their role was to seek fulfillment as wives and mothers. Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity.”⁷

The role of women was deeply rooted in tradition, and breaking away from the chains of the “true role of the woman” would be a challenging task. After decades of indoctrinating women to believe that their true purpose in life was to be feminine, society had created a gender divided society based heavily on traditions.

One of Friedan’s main arguments is that society, particularly the media and the educational system, played a central role in teaching young girls how to be female. Friedan focuses on how media and literature portrayed women, and also how “the sex-directed educators” influenced women through their education. She argues that American educators and the educational system began to educate women to “play the role of woman” during the 1950s and calls them the “sex-directed educators”⁸ because their focus was on how young women would satisfy their husbands. According to Friedan, a college education worked as a “waiting room” until real life could begin for young women. Real life started when women married and moved to the suburbs with their husbands and children. To avoid young women becoming interested in pursuing a professional career outside the home, the professors and college presidents at women’s colleges started to focus on educating them to be future

⁷ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 1-2.

⁸ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 171.

housewives. Marriage courses were introduced at many colleges, and goal was to teach young women how to become the perfect housewife. Friedan argues that women scholars were looked down upon by society at the time. This view of professional women contributed to how young women looked at their future. Being a woman scholar was considered being unfeminine, since she had goals and ambitions for her future, which was considered a male feature.⁹ Friedan argues that the media and educational system together taught young women how to be feminine and how to play the correct role in society. During the 1950s and 1960s, American women's world was "confined to her own body and beauty, the charming of man, the bearing of babies, and the physical care and serving of husband, children and home."¹⁰

Gail Collins' *When Everything Changed – The Amazing Journey of American Women From 1960 to the Present* starts with the second wave of feminism and ends with the 2008 primary election when Hillary Rodham Clinton lost to Senator Barack Obama. When it comes to women's college education during the 1950s and 1960s, one of Collins' main arguments is that there was a division between goal-oriented women who went to college to pursue a career and women who went to college mainly to find a highly educated husband. Collins highlights that the women who went to college to go after a professional career were often looked down on by "the wife-to-be" students, and that they were criticized for being too serious and lacking a social life. Further, Collins supports Friedan's argument, on the "sex-directed educators," by arguing that the college presidents and professors created courses and changed the curriculum to educate skilled housewives. Collins also argues that Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* helped spark a possibility for change for the women going to college, eventually leading to the second wave of feminism washing over the traditional women's colleges during the years Hillary went to college.¹¹

When it comes to women's situation and roles in society, one of Collins' main arguments is that the feminist movement of the late 20th century created a new United States where it was easier to be a woman and where it finally was acceptable that women ran for president. Still, the problem of working and having a family at the same time is discussed, proving that Collins believes that American society still is gender divided. Hillary plays a central role in Collins' book, since it ends with the 2008 primary election that she lost. Collins argues that Hillary's life "had been unlike that of any other woman in American history, yet she was also very typical of that whole generation of postwar feminist who had

⁹ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 170-211.

¹⁰ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 27.

¹¹ Collins, *When Everything Changed*, 38-39; Collins, *When Everything Changed*, 57-59.

intended to both change everything and have it all.”¹² Collins argues that Hillary is a trailblazer of her generation. She further points out that many American women identifies with Hillary, and they therefore see her as a role model. Hillary has often appealed the most to women, especially at the beginning of her career. Many of the women who had grown up in the same time period as Hillary had put their family first and chosen marriage before a career. They saw Hillary as a symbol of what they never got to do: “something really big, really wonderful, in the outside world.”¹³ When Hillary was elected Senator of New York, many women started thinking about second chances and that it was never too late to chase after their dreams. In this way, Collins argue that Hillary still is a important role model for women, and that she may have inspired many women to chase their own dreams no matter their age. Collins paints a picture of Hillary as a tough woman with staying power who refused to be pushed down by the gender divided society.¹⁴

1.5 Historiography: Electoral Possibilities for Women and the American Problem With Powerful Women

Running as a Woman by Linda Witt, Karen M. Paget and Glenna Matthews recounts the story of women and gender in American politics. Women have experienced plenty of discrimination when entering politics, and they were often met with being told that their rightful place was in the home. One of Witt, Paget and Matthews’ main arguments is that women face quite different challenges than men when they participate in professional or political life. “‘Are you running as a woman?’ is the first question put to most women candidates from the time they first ran for public office.”¹⁵ They further argue that marital status, family life, children, clothes and physical appearance play a very central role when women run for office, and that women, sadly, always are critiqued if they decide to run for office while still having small children at home. Another of Witt, Paget and Matthews’ main arguments is that gender plays an important role in American politics, and that women face harsh critique based on their gender when they enter politics. Women are treated different than men by the media, and women’s sexuality or domestic situation often becomes a target. Another of the authors’ arguments is that coverture still plays a role in American life today, even though it no longer exists as a law. “Whether coverture is conceived in its legal sense or

¹² Collins, *When Everything Changed*, 375.

¹³ Collins, *When Everything Changed*, 377.

¹⁴ Collins, *When Everything Changed*, 393.

¹⁵ Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 12.

as a broader cultural phenomenon, the depth of its hold has had lasting consequences for women's entry into politics. Women have lacked two fundamental traditions necessary to running for office: financial independence, and the stature necessary to the exercise of public leadership."¹⁶ Hillary Rodham Clinton is written extensively about in *Running as a Woman*, since she has played a central part in changing the situation for women in politics and additionally because she was an active First Lady at the time the book was written. Witt, Paget and Matthews emphasize that Hillary became a victim of the "Hillary bashing" when she took on an active role in her husband Bill Clinton's two periods as president of the United States. The three authors further state that Hillary was "painted as a sexual aberration, neglectful mother, and a possible too-powerful meddling wife."¹⁷ They explain that she was a threat since she was an educated woman and a graduate of Yale Law School. She called herself Hillary Rodham, which led to reactions from conservative voters since she kept her maiden name and used it actively. Witt, Paget and Matthews points out that Hillary bowed to the pressure of the voters of Arkansas, "who apparently worried that a governor whose wife would not take his name was less than a man, or under a women's thumb,"¹⁸ and she adopted her husband's last name, proving that the American society still struggled with sexism and coverture during the 1970s and 1980s.

Published in 2008, Gil Troy's book *Hillary Rodham Clinton – Polarizing First Lady* is about what Hillary Rodham Clinton did as First Lady in the White House. It looks at the role of the First Lady, how this role helped shape Hillary's political future and how she used the role to pave the way for her future career. Troy's main argument is that Hillary was "one of the most polarizing figures in the history of the institution"¹⁹ of the First Lady. He explains how Hillary's years as First Lady made her one of America's most controversial and famous Democrats, and one of the world's most controversial and famous women because of her central and professional role in both Clinton Administrations, which made her stand out from the previous First Ladies. Troy states that he believes that Hillary's experience as a professional and trailblazing First Lady has made her the successful and independent politicians she is today. Another of Troy's main arguments is that Hillary never fit the role of First Lady, and that this is the reason she received so much criticism and became a polarizing woman. She broke with existing traditions, and was considered a threat by many Americans.

¹⁶ Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 24.

¹⁷ Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 78.

¹⁸ Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 79-80.

¹⁹ Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, xxv.

Troy's argument can be seen as evidence for the claim that the United States struggles with powerful women. Troy also emphasizes that Hillary came of age during the second wave of feminism, and argues that her upbringing and teenage years played a central role in making her into the feminist politician she is today. Troy argues that the Lewinsky scandal left Hillary more powerful than she had ever been, and that her run for the Senate liberated her from the role of First Lady she never really fit into.²⁰

Rebecca Traister's book *Big Girls Don't Cry* analyzes the 2008 election with focus on the change that happened for American women because of the election. Traister's main arguments are that the 2008 election showed that American society struggles with sexism – that sexism was one of the main reasons that Hillary Rodham Clinton lost the nomination and that gender is the most restricting force in American politics. She also argues that the 2008 election changed how Americans view women in power, making it more possible and realistic that a woman can one day become President of the United States. Traister calls Hillary's first bid for president a social experiment. She became the first serious female politician to run for president, even though there had been women running for president before her. She further emphasizes that sexism and resistance against Hillary became apparent when she came closer to the general election. The anti-Hillary men, who still believed in the traditional gender roles of the 1950s, represented misogyny in America. Traister argues that this was the first meeting young American women and men had ever had with sexism, and that what Hillary experienced became an eye-opener for the younger generation. To support her main arguments, Traister states that the sexism thrown at Hillary was evidence of how the American political system excluded everyone who was not white and male.²¹

In *Broad Influences – How Women Are Changing the Way America Works*, Jay Newton-Small writes about American women in politics. She focuses on the run for executive office and the electoral challenges that meet women when they are seeking office. One of Newton-Smal's main arguments is that women are changing the United States based on the theory of critical mass, "the point at which a minority begins to change the tone and policies of the institution it has begun to integrate."²² What she means by this is that when women come together and reach 20 percent of an organization, change starts to happen and

²⁰ Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, xxviii; Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 205; Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 4-5; Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 204-205.

²¹ Traister, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, 9; Traister, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, 62; Traister, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, 65-67; Traister, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, 103.

²² Newton-Small, *Broad Influence*, 5.

they start to believe in their power to change the world. She also states that Hillary has helped change the situation for women in politics, especially during the years she was First Lady. Newton-Small writes about the challenges women face when they run for office or chase high-powered jobs. The challenges Newton-Small highlights are that women face sexism on a higher level than men, that women struggle with believing in themselves when running for office and that there are few female role models in executive offices. Another of her main arguments is that the United States still struggles with the idea of a woman in power. Newton-Small emphasizes that the United States has never had a female president and that very few women are chosen as CEOs of major corporations or elected governors. Her third main argument is that women's traits often hinder them when they seek a job where they are going to rule or lead. This keeps women from breaking the glass ceiling, a task Hillary Rodham Clinton has tried to accomplish several times. Like Friedan, Newton-Small points to a woman problem and argues that the reason why there are few women in politics is because women have very few high-powered and ambitious female role models. *Broad Influences* was published after Hillary Rodham Clinton launched her 2016 campaign. Newton-Small argues that with Hillary as the Democratic front-runner, the Republicans will show their true colors when it comes to sexism and their opinion on the position of women in American politics. Newton-Small's fourth main argument is that ultimate change for women in American politics will not happen before there is a woman in the Oval Office, and that until then progress is and will be too slow.²³

1.6 Structure

The following chapters will analyze Hillary Rodham Clinton's life and place her within American women's history. Chapter two presents Hillary's education and the historical periods she grew up in. The chapter looks at how her education at Wellesley College shaped her future, and why she chose another direction than some of her fellow students. Further, it looks at her life up until leaving her job as First Lady of the United States and why Hillary was a trailblazing and different First Lady from the ones before her. The second chapter also looks at how the Lewinsky scandal influenced Hillary's second term as First Lady and how it divided feminists. Chapter three focuses on the political life of Hillary Rodham Clinton. It looks at her independent political career as Senator, Democratic presidential candidate in

²³ Newton-Small, *Broad Influence*, 8; Newton-Small, *Broad Influences*, 73; Newton-Small, *Broad Influences*, 174; Newton-Small, *Broad Influence*, 200.

2008 and Secretary of State. The chapter also looks at the current 2016 primary election and the challenges Hillary faces when running as a woman. It also looks at the United States struggle with powerful women and sexism. The final chapter will conclude by highlighting the important findings of this thesis.

Chapter 2. A Woman Living History

Growing up during the 1950s and 1960s influenced Hillary Rodham Clinton's views of marriage, education and women's position in society. During her childhood she stood out among the other girls at school, and she had high ambitions for her future. Hillary grew up in the era of the housewife and the golden era of marriage. The role of women was shown and defined in magazines and on television, and marriage courses were taught at several colleges around the United States. "Ring by spring" was a saying among the young female students, meaning that the goal was to have a diamond ring on their finger before summer and then quit school to become a full time housewife, the true role of women at the time. This chapter will discuss how Hillary Rodham Clinton reacted to these expectations leading to different possibilities for her future. It will discuss how she learned to follow her dreams and how she discovered that there were other possibilities in life than being a housewife. The chapter will also look at how Hillary was a different First Lady from the ones before her and how the Lewinsky scandal affected her life and career.²⁴

2.1 Her Future

Hillary Rodham was born in 1947. She grew up in a middle class family in Chicago, in a standard nuclear family with a mother, a father and two younger brothers. From early on, she was an active, curious and involved girl. According to her mother Dorothy, she was never shy or afraid, but instead mature and confident. When Hillary was born, her name was considered a boy's name, and the fact that her parents still chose this name gives a hint about her parents not conforming to the norms of the period. One can interpret this as a choice made by her parents so that she would avoid being limited by the straightjacket society forced on women in the 1950s. It was clear that Hillary's parents had plans for her future from early childhood, and they emphasized academic achievement. They also encouraged her to set high professional goals. Hillary had high ambitions at an early age, and her years as a college and university student would push her ambitions even higher.²⁵

Proof of Hillary's high ambitions is found in a sixth-grade paper she wrote called "My Future:" "When I grow up I want to have had the best education I could have possibly

²⁴ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 170-175.

²⁵ Sherrill, "The Education of Hillary Clinton part 1"; Altman, "The Evolution of a Leader", 24; Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 5.

obtained. If I obtain this I will probably be able to get a very good job. I want to either be a teacher or a nuclear physics scientist.”²⁶ Teaching was one of the professions women were allowed to have, and many of the female college students during the 1950s and 1960s started working as teachers when they graduated. One can argue that Hillary stood out from her fellow female students as early as primary school, since she had career goals and plans for her future education. One can therefore argue that Hillary was not one of the girls Friedan argued was dreaming of becoming housewives and mothers. According to Hillary’s mother, Hillary did not want to obey the female standard of the 1950s and she refused to wear make-up in her early teenage years. She chose a completely different direction than what the women’s magazines pictured as the correct life for a woman. Journalist Martha Sherrill interviewed friends of Hillary when she wrote the article “The Education of Hillary Clinton,” published in *Washington Post* in 1993. The people she interviewed paint a picture of a young Hillary Rodham who was interested in politics and sports, who did not care about how she looked – a girl without vanity. While her girlfriends wanted to become mothers and wives, she wanted to become a teacher, a doctor or an astronaut. One can argue that Hillary’s parents contributed to her following her dreams and not conforming to the gender divides of the society. Her parents did not differentiate between Hillary and her brothers, and she grew up as a tomboy who enjoyed sports instead of playing tea party with the other girls. The neighborhood Hillary grew up in, Park Ridge, consisted of more boys than girls, and all of the children played together outside.²⁷

In Hillary Rodham Clinton’s first autobiography, *Living History*, she writes about her childhood and the impact her parents had on her. Her mother spent a lot of her time educating her children, especially through reading books and she wanted her children to learn about the world. Hillary explains that her mother felt limited by the society she grew up in. Dorothy wanted her children, especially her daughter, to experience a different kind of life with plenty of options. Even though she grew up with what she calls a “Father Knows Best” upbringing, where her father was the head of the family, Hillary’s parents taught her to resist peer pressure and told her that she was unique, that she could think for herself and that she was not “everybody.” Hillary’s first direct encounter with the gender divided society happened during the “space race,” when she wrote to NASA to volunteer for astronaut training. She received an answer that they were not accepting women in the program, and for the first time in her life, Hillary felt devalued because she was a girl. She felt what she describes as a “click,” an

²⁶ See Appendix 1: “My Future”

²⁷ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 173; Sherrill, “The Education of Hillary Clinton part 1”

immediate reaction to treatment she felt was based on her gender, when she got the rejection: She faced an obstacle she could not defeat with determination and hard work. One can argue that this experience made a mark on a young Hillary Rodham, and that her aspirations of working towards a more equal society grew out of this incident.²⁸

Friedan argued that girls and young women faced limitations during the 1950s, and that they were forced to conform to the gender divided society. Still, Hillary remembers a childhood without the typical gender divide:

“I clearly expected to work for a living, and I did not feel limited in my choices. I was lucky to have parents who never tried to mold me into any category or career. They simply encouraged me to excel and be happy. In fact, I don’t remember a friend’s parent or a teacher ever telling me or my friends that ‘girls can’t do this’ or ‘girls shouldn’t do that.’”²⁹

One can argue that Hillary would never have made it as far as she has today, if it had not been for her parents or her attitude towards education and work. Her mother clearly wanted her daughter to have different choices and opportunities than what she had herself. Hillary was not directly influenced by the media, since her parents did not allow her to watch television as much as other children did at the time. Due to her parents’ actions she was not taught how to be feminine by the society in the same way other girls were, and, as Friedan argues, many young women were during the 1950s and 1960s. Hillary’s parents let her choose her life and which directions to take. Still, she lived a protected middle class suburban life, through which she was shielded from the harsh realities of life. She recalls that some of her girlfriends “had picked up the subtle and not-so-subtle cultural signals urging them to conform to sexist stereotypes, to diminish their own accomplishments in order not to outperform the boys around them.”³⁰ This proves that Friedan’s arguments on how media in particular taught young women how to be female and how they taught them about the “true role of women” were still an issue during Hillary’s teenage years. Hillary, on the other hand, had no intention of giving up her education to get married. During her senior year at Maine Township High School South, Hillary ran for president for the first time. She ran for student government President against several boys, and lost. Hillary remembers that she was not surprised by her loss, but she reacted to one of her opponents’ claim that she was “really stupid if I thought a

²⁸ Clinton, *Living History*, 10-14; Clinton, *Living History*, 20.

²⁹ Clinton, *Living History*, 20.

³⁰ Clinton, *Living History*, 20.

girl could be elected President.”³¹ Even though she lost her first run for president, Hillary did not give up on her leadership abilities and she ended up heading the Organizations Committee instead. One can argue that her reaction to losing made her open her mind to the second wave of feminism she would experience at college. Her natural born role as a leader became even more evident when she enrolled at Wellesley College in the mid 1960s.³²

2.2 The Wellesley Years

When Hillary Rodham stepped up to the podium during the spring of 1969, she was making Wellesley College history. She became the first student to make a commencement speech at the traditional college. To get approval from Wellesley’s President, Ruth Adams, proved to be a difficult task. Adams was uncomfortable with the student groups of the 1960s and their rebellious ways, but after the students rallied to get approval, Adams gave in. Adams’ feelings towards the openly feminist students reflects Friedan’s argument of how traditional schools and faculty members wanted to educate women to play the true role of the woman and how they argued that being serious and interested in politics was unfeminine. During the years Hillary attended Wellesley the Western world saw the arrival of the second wave of feminism, and the traditional school was forced by its students to change its ways. Even though she did not make Wellesley College history before her senior year, Hillary started to experience change in her life four years earlier, when she first arrived at Wellesley in 1965. One can argue that the years that defined Hillary’s life and future career were the years she spent at Wellesley College in Massachusetts. Wellesley is a woman’s liberal arts college where many young women arrived with the “primary goal of finding a good husband and becoming a wife and a mother”³³ during the 1950s and 1960s. This supports Friedan’s claim that college was a “waiting room” before real life as housewives could begin. According to the Bulletin of Wellesley College from 1965, the college’s intention was that the student developed “perspective and intellectual strength for the endeavors of a lifetime.”³⁴ The college catalogue also highlights the importance of the College Government Association, where students were elected as representatives and where they could learn about a well functioning democracy. It is clear that the college had high ambitions for their students, and the students were encouraged to explore different fields in liberal arts and sciences before deciding on the field

³¹ Clinton, *Living History*, 24.

³² Clinton, *Living History*, 10; Clinton, *Living History*, 20-21; Clinton, *Living History*, 24.

³³ Blumenthal, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 37.

³⁴ Wellesley College, “Bulletin of Wellesley College Catalogue Number 1965-1966”, 21.

they wanted to major in. Hillary chose political science as her major field, which set the stage for her political transformation. The intention of Wellesley College is supported by Collins' argument that there was a division between women who went to college for a career and women who went to meet their future husbands.³⁵

When Hillary began her education at the traditional college, more women had started studying for a higher education. But the golden era of marriage still had a firm grip on them and many often dropped out to marry. "Wellesley was a girls' school when we started and a women's college when we left"³⁶ reflects Hillary, and she further explains that this quote says as much about her, and the change she experienced, as it says about the college. This also describes how the second wave of feminism influenced the women of Wellesley, and Hillary in particular, transforming them into women who were interested in politics and equality. Miriam Horn describes Hillary's class in her book *Rebels in White Gloves*, and Horn emphasizes that the young women were mostly feminists who wanted change. Hillary describes her time at Wellesley as a period when she was allowed to stretch her wings and mind "in the ongoing journey toward self-definition and identity."³⁷ This description of women's colleges and women's education is somewhat different from Friedan's descriptions in *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan argues that the teachers became "sex-directed,"³⁸ and how they focused on educating housewives rather than professionals. Collins supports Friedan's argument and adds that, in 1960, 60 percent of young women dropped out of college, mainly due to marriage. Hillary addresses the differences between her class of 1969 and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's Wellesley class of 1959, in her autobiography. She writes that she often discussed the differences with Albright: Albright and her friends in the late fifties "were more overtly committed to finding a husband and less buffeted by changes in the outside world."³⁹ Even though the second wave of feminism sparked a change at Wellesley, the rules of residence printed in the college catalogue in 1965 show that change happened slowly. The students at Wellesley lived in college halls, and they were required to do three hours of housework each week and uphold "high standards of civic and personal

³⁵ Blumenthal, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 57-61; Clinton, *Living History*, 38-43; Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 170-176; Wellesley College, "Bulletin of Wellesley College Catalogue Number 1965-1966", 24; Wellesley College, "Bulletin of Wellesley College Catalogue Number 1965-1966", 22; Blumenthal, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 55.

³⁶ Clinton, *Living History*, 27.

³⁷ Clinton, *Living History*, 28.

³⁸ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 171.

³⁹ Clinton, *Living History*, 28.

morality.”⁴⁰ Married students were not allowed in the freshman or sophomore classes and a married junior or senior student was not allowed to live in the college halls. The college believed that women should not marry before they were ready to create their own home, and therefore they no longer had the right to live in the college halls after marriage. This may be the reason for the high rate of young women dropping out of college emphasized by Collins.⁴¹

In his article “Hillary: The Wellesley Years,” Charles Kenney explains that Wellesley College would change during the years Hillary’s class would spend on campus. Kenney further argues that Hillary was a key player in the process of changing Wellesley. The college stuck with old traditions and rules, and Hillary was active in the work to modernize many of the old regulations. She was part of a group that wanted to revise the constitution of the college and make the role of College Government more meaningful and take part in all aspects of the college educational experience. As a result of the work the student group did, the student government was renamed the Wellesley College Student Association. The newly organized association would be more open and involve students in an even more democratic way, and in August 1968, The Wellesley News reported: “The strength of the Association is based on free discussion and cooperation among the administration, Academic Council, and students in setting and achieving the academic and social standards and rules of the community.”⁴² Hillary’s involvement in student politics and student government shows that she wanted to work for change at an early stage. The traditional college and its students changed at the same time the world would change because of the women’s movement of the 1960s and Friedan’s trailblazing book.⁴³

One can argue that Hillary Rodham evolved into a leader during her years at Wellesley. After taking part in changing the college constitution, she was elected president of the student body after campaigning herself by going from door to door at the campus. This time she was not limited by her gender, since all of the students were women and it was both obvious and natural that the student President would be female. Hillary’s student career at Wellesley ended with her being chosen to hold the first ever student commencement speech, which led to her fellow students whispering about the possibility of Hillary one day becoming

⁴⁰ Wellesley College, “Bulletin of Wellesley College Catalogue Number 1965-1966”, 137.

⁴¹ Horn, *Rebels in White Gloves*, xxi; Collins, *When Everything Changed*, 38; Wellesley College, “Bulletin of Wellesley College Catalogue Number 1965-1966”, 137.

⁴² Wellesley College. “The Wellesley News (1968-02-08)”

⁴³ Kenney, “Hillary: The Wellesley Years”; Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 171-179; Wellesley College, “The Wellesley News (1968-01-25)”

President of the United States.⁴⁴ In her student commencement speech, Hillary commented on the importance of education, how it changed her and how it can liberate people:

“But we also know that to be educated, the goal of it must be human liberation. A liberation enabling each of us to fulfill our capacity so as to be free to create within and around ourselves. To be educated to freedom must be evidenced in action, and here again is where we ask ourselves, as we have asked our parents and our teachers questions about integrity, trust, and respect.”⁴⁵

This reflects how her education at Wellesley influenced and solidified Hillary Rodham. She felt liberated and did not feel defined by her gender. In *Living History*, she remarks that a woman ran all of the student activities, and that they felt free to take risks and make mistakes. For the students at Wellesley it was obvious that a woman would be top of the class, a woman would run the school newspaper and a woman would be class president.⁴⁶

Hillary grew up with a strict Republican father, Hugh Rodham, and she looked up to him. Her political beliefs reflected her parents' values, and even though her mother Dorothy was a Democrat, it was her conservative Republican father who influenced her the most. Hugh Rodham was the typical American Republican who believed in self-reliance and was engaged in teaching his children how to take care of themselves and plan their future. During her teenage years, Hillary was an active Young Republican and a “Goldwater girl” who supported Republican Senator Barry Goldwater. Hillary remembers that it was Goldwater's support of individual rights that made her support him. During her freshman year at Wellesley, she was voted President of the college's Young Republicans, but doubts about the party had begun to seep into her mind. She was encouraged by her teachers to expand her understanding of the world, which led to her realizing that she no longer agreed with the Republican Party. Hillary recalls 1968 as a not only a critical year for the United States, but for her personal and political evolution as well. It was the year when Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy were assassinated and the year the Vietnam War intensified. When asked about the impact Wellesley had on Hillary, journalist Karen Blumenthal explains:

“She became a Democrat at Wellesley and stayed with it. She became more concerned with the bigger world there, opposing the Vietnam War, seeing the Republican Convention and the violence at the

⁴⁴ Altman, “The Evolution of a Leader”, 27; Horn, *Rebels in White Gloves*, 47.

⁴⁵ Rodham, “Hillary D. Rodham's 1969 Student Commencement Speech”

⁴⁶ Clinton, *Living History*, 29.

Democratic Convention. Wellesley itself gave her a great deal of confidence to take on the world. It gave her the opportunity for serious study and she had great leadership opportunities there.”⁴⁷

Hillary also emphasizes the importance of meeting black students at Wellesley when it comes to her transformation into a Democrat, since she had rarely seen black people before she came to Wellesley. Through her relationship with her new friends, she saw the struggles and challenges black people faced in the United States. After her years at Wellesley, Hillary Rodham was ready to pursue a career in law and to tackle yet another traditional institution of education. She would soon experience the gender divided American society she had been protected from by her parents and at Wellesley.⁴⁸

2.3 Yale and “Billary”

Hillary’s choice of university was between two of the eight Ivy League universities – Harvard Law School and Yale Law School. After being confronted by a Harvard professor explaining that they did not need any more women at Harvard, Hillary got her first taste of the gender divide still present during the late 1960s. She had been protected from the gender divide during her years at Wellesley, since it was an all women’s college. This was also the first time she had experienced gender discrimination in a professional context. The Harvard professor’s statement led Hillary to choose Yale. Again, she stood out in the student body, but this time it was because she was a woman. In her law school class she was one of 36 women in a class of 237 students. The reason for the low number of women attending Yale may be that the change Friedan sparked had not yet reached universities. It was at Yale she found her interest in working with children and women’s rights. One can argue that Hillary has been a trailblazer since her childhood in Park Ridge because of her early plans for her future education and because she chose to distance herself from the female standard created by the society and media. Still, it was the years at Wellesley and Yale that took her to the next level and transformed her into the feminist Hillary we know today. In this gender divided society, Hillary quickly became interested in women’s rights and early on saw herself as a women’s rights advocate. At the time Hillary graduated from Yale, she found herself being one of very few female lawyers in the United States. However, at Yale she would meet a man who would

⁴⁷ Karen Blumenthal, e-mail message to author, February 11 and March 17, 2016.

⁴⁸ Clinton, *Living History*, 11; Clinton, *Living History*, 21; Clinton, *Living History*, 31-34

change her life forever, and who would spin her life in a completely different direction than law: the White House.⁴⁹

During Hillary's second year at Yale, she decided to focus on how the law affected children. In New Haven, Hillary saw a different life from what she had grown up with in Park Ridge. Child abuse and domestic violence occurred on a daily basis and Hillary instantly knew that she had to fight for and protect these children. While studying law and working for children rights, Hillary met a man she describes as looking like a Viking. She recalls how they first met in the Yale law library: "I noticed that he kept looking over at me. He had been doing a lot of that. So I stood up from the desk, walked over to him and said, 'If you're going to keep looking at me, and I'm going to keep looking back, we might as well be introduced. I'm Hillary Rodham.'"⁵⁰ The couple was nicknamed "Billary"⁵¹. This was the beginning of the iconic Clinton couple that untraditionally shared an apartment in New Haven, and lived together for a long time before getting married. One can argue that this is a proof of how influenced they both were by the second wave of feminism, and how they did not want to conform to the gender roles and traditional expectations that couples did not live together before marriage.⁵²

Hillary Rodham was not ready for marriage, but she was ready for a career. After graduating from Yale Law School, Hillary was ready for a career in law. However, she met fierce resistance from her Yale friends when she told them she wanted to be a trial lawyer:

"I was undecided, and when Bert Jenner asked me what I wanted to do, I said I wanted to be a trial lawyer, like him. He told me that would be impossible. 'Why?' I asked. 'Because you won't have a wife.' 'What on earth does that mean?' Bert explained that without a wife at home to take care of all my personal needs, I would never be able to manage the demands of everyday life, like making sure I had clean socks for court."⁵³

This shows how trailblazing Hillary was when she chose to go further with her education and seek a career in law, which was unusual for women during the 1970s. Children's rights have always been a focus in Hillary's career, and after working with children while studying at

⁴⁹ Clinton, *Living History*, 38; Blumenthal, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 62; Clinton, *Living History*, 44-51.

⁵⁰ Clinton, *Living History*, 52.

⁵¹ Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 33.

⁵² Clinton, *Living History*, 49-55.

⁵³ Clinton, *Living History*, 69.

Yale, Hillary chose to pursue a job at the Children's Defense Fund in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her interest in and commitment to children's rights and law would be one of her main areas during her the rest of her career, both as First Lady and during her independent political career. One can argue that Hillary has always fought for the weaker groups in American society throughout her career, and her work for the Children's Defense Fund can be considered part of the beginning of that.⁵⁴

After living far away from Bill Clinton, Hillary had a decision to make concerning their future. Due to Bill's campaign for a seat in the United States House of Representatives, Hillary chose to move to Fayetteville, Arkansas, to find out if they had a future together. The childhood dream Hillary wrote about in her sixth grade paper, "My Future," of becoming a teacher came true in 1974, when she took a job as a professor of law at the University of Arkansas. Karen Blumenthal states that Hillary's choice to move to Arkansas can be seen as one of the defining moments of her life. Initially, Hillary did not want to move to Arkansas since she had a blossoming career ahead after graduating from Yale and taking part in the impeachment of President Richard Nixon during the Watergate scandal. In January 1974, Hillary joined the House Judiciary Committee to work on the inquiry on President Nixon, where she researched the procedures of impeachment. Even though she excelled in her job in the House Judiciary Committee, she chose to follow her future husband to Arkansas, where they married in their living room in October 1975. One can argue that Hillary's decision to move to Arkansas for Bill shows that she put his career in front of hers. However, it did not take long before Hillary made history after the newly married couple moved to Little Rock, Arkansas. After moving, Hillary had to decide what to do next in her career, and she decided to accept a job offer at the old and respected Rose Law Firm. There had never been a female associate at the law firm before Hillary accepted the job in 1976. Hillary's new job broke with the Southern traditional and gender divided society. In her autobiography, *Living History*, Hillary recalls that women usually did not even have meals with men other than their husbands at the time, and there she was having meetings and dinners with men other than Bill. One can interpret Hillary's decision to accept the job at the Rose Law Firm as a sign of how trailblazing she is and how she has worked to create more professional possibilities for women. Hillary did not stop after becoming the first female associate of the firm. In 1979 she was made partner of the firm, again making history as the first woman partner. A year earlier,

⁵⁴ Blumenthal, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 87-93.

in 1978, Bill Clinton was elected Governor of Arkansas, and Hillary had to juggle the role of law partner and First Lady of Arkansas.⁵⁵

2.4 First Lady and First Feminist

After serving as First Lady of Arkansas for ten years, Hillary Rodham Clinton's life took a new turn in 1992. After Bill Clinton's victory in the presidential election, the Clintons headed to Washington D.C. and the White House, and Hillary would take on a completely new role as First Lady. Hillary had been a working woman since she graduated from Yale Law School. Her sixth grade predictions about her future came true: She got the best education possible. She was the first First Lady ever to have an office in the West Wing of the White House, and the First Lady to hold a postgraduate degree.⁵⁶

One of her fellow Wellesley students predicted in 1969 that Hillary Rodham would become the first woman President of the United States. Karen Williamson explains, "A lot of us thought Hillary would be the first woman president (...) I thought if ever in my lifetime there is a woman president it would be her."⁵⁷ Dorothy Rodham remembered her daughter as a tomboy who never suffered from low self-esteem and was a leader from early on: "She was always the leader. The other kids looked up to her for ideas for games. She was always in the forefront of this gang of kids. There were more boys than girls and she was able to work with and be a leader with the boys, too."⁵⁸ Michael Crowley states that America has "never seen a First Lady as influential as Hillary Clinton during her eight years in the White House."⁵⁹ Miriam Horn, Karen Blumenthal, Michael Crowley and Gil Troy all emphasize that Hillary was the most influential and powerful First Lady in American history in their writings. When Eleanor Roosevelt was First Lady, she was considered an influential one, and Hillary writes about her as one of the women she looks up to in *Living History*.⁶⁰ Karen Blumenthal explains how Hillary was a different First Lady:

⁵⁵ Blumenthal, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 107-109; Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 27-33; Karen Blumenthal, e-mail message to author, February 11 and March 17, 2016; Blumenthal, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 94; Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 101-103; Clinton, *Living History*, 78-83.

⁵⁶ Blumenthal, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 62; Blumenthal, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 119-121; Crowley, "White House Lessons," 41-41; Koepp and Duffy, "Hillary By The Numbers", 20-21.

⁵⁷ Kenney, "Hillary: The Wellesley Years"

⁵⁸ Kenney, "Hillary: The Wellesley Years"

⁵⁹ Crowley, "White House Lessons", 40.

⁶⁰ Clinton, *Living History*, 258-259.

“Her determination to do more than pick menus and place settings and to be involved in policy and politics was definitely an outgrowth of her belief that women in the White House weren’t just wives. Many First Ladies had causes, but her global efforts while in the White House were unique.”⁶¹

During the 1992 campaign, Bill Clinton explained how his potential presidency would be a partnership between him and Hillary, “two for the price of one.” They would go further than President Franklin Roosevelt and Eleanor, and they would take on the White House as a professional duo. When Bill Clinton was elected the 42nd President of the United States, the country also got their first “copresident” in Hillary. Women all over the country praised her and saw her as their champion. However, she received criticism for being too power-hungry and for not taking the backseat when her husband became President. Hillary blamed the criticism on America’s continuing struggle with powerful women, and refused to back down.⁶²

One can argue that Hillary entered the nation’s consciousness in an unfortunate way in 1992, when she insisted that she was not “some little woman standing by her man like Tammy Wynette”⁶³ when her husband was confronted with having cheated on her with Jennifer Flowers. She confronted the traditional roles of marriage and gender roles in society through her reaction and she stood up for herself. In *Running as a Woman*, Linda Witt, Karen M. Paget and Glenna Matthews write about Hillary’s role as First Lady. They emphasize that she received criticism and was attacked for being a strong woman who did not want to set her professional life aside for her husband. During the 1992 Democratic primary, the opposing candidates felt that Bill Clinton should have used his right as a husband to refuse to allow Hillary to work at the Rose Law Firm while he was running. This proves that coverture still had a grip on the American society in the 1990s, over two hundred years after the founding of the nation. It also supports Witt, Paget and Matthews’ claim that coverture still exist, though not in a legal way.⁶⁴

Hillary has been nicknamed the First Feminist since she moved into the White House. After all, she was the First Lady to come of age during the second wave of feminism and she embraced the movement publicly. She is heavily influenced by the second wave of feminism

⁶¹ Karen Blumenthal, e-mail message to author, February 11 and March 17, 2016.

⁶² Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 1; Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 4-5.

⁶³ Washingtonpost.com, “In 1992, Clinton Conceded Marital ‘Wrongdoings’”

⁶⁴ Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 23-24.

of the 1960s and 1970s when it comes to her views on women's rights, supporting Troy's argument that Hillary was a trailblazing and unique First Lady. On September 4 1995, she became the symbol of feminism when she spoke at the United Nations' 4th World Conference on Women, in Beijing. Dressed in a pink suit and a pearl necklace, she looked ready for a tea party at the White House, but her speech proved otherwise. She entered the "feminist world stage" when she declared her belief that "human rights are women's rights... and women's rights are human rights, once an for all."⁶⁵ Her speech became iconic and made her an international women's rights advocate. Jay Newton-Small argues that Hillary worked to build "a critical mass of women, pushing her husband to appoint female Cabinet members and administration officials, fostering a new generation of women in public service."⁶⁶ Hillary's firm position and influence in the White House proves that she did not take the backseat and that she would use her position to make change for women. Hillary faced many of the modern woman's challenges, and got a first hand experience of the professional women's situation in America. During the early 1990s, women wearing pants to work at the federal government level were frowned upon, but after Hillary's move to the White House things changed. After all, she is famous for wearing her pantsuits, which led to it being accepted that woman wore pants to work in Congress and at the White House. Hillary has contributed to change for women in America and around the globe. Removing the dress code for women at work may not be one of the biggest changes, but it was still an important step towards a more equal world for women in America. She stood up for women and encouraged them to change the world with her.⁶⁷

Hillary Rodham Clinton was a different First Lady from the ones before her. She was the first avowed feminist in the White House. As First Lady, Hillary was controversial and polarizing, and she received a lot of criticism due to the problematic relationship America had, and still has, with powerful women. Hillary emphasizes that there are no training manual for First Ladies, and they become a public figures because their husbands are elected. Troy argues that Hillary's struggle to balance her need for equality and her identity as a woman made her an iconic First Lady. Since her childhood, Hillary had been a woman without vanity who did not care about her looks, but when she became First Lady she felt forced to care about this. Many women think of the First Lady as their role model and looked up to her.

⁶⁵ Clinton, *Living History*, 305.

⁶⁶ Newton-Small, *Broad Influence*, 62.

⁶⁷ Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 5; Newton-Small, *Broad Influence*, 62; Newton-Small, *Broad Influence*, 182.

When Hillary became First Lady in 1992, she stood out from the women who had occupied the position before her. One can argue that she was a woman who embodied social change, since she was the first First Lady to come of age during the second wave of feminism. She represented an important change for women, and she was considered the First Feminist. Hillary soon realized that the American people had a clear definition of how the First Lady should act and dress. To please the public, Hillary gave in and transformed herself to become more of a lady. She had help with her hair and her clothes, and she went from wearing her big round glasses and her long hair straight, to getting contact lenses and a new hairstyle considered more appropriate for the White House. One can argue that Hillary found it difficult to fit into her role as First Lady, because of the traditional and deeply rooted image of how a First Lady should live, act and look. This argument supports Troy's argument that Hillary never really fit into the role of First Lady and that she struggled to find her place. In *Living History*, she writes that she found her new role as not only First Lady, but as a symbol, a challenging one. To Hillary, it was only natural that she would care about politics and the state of the nation while at the same time caring about the menus served at the dinner parties at the White House.⁶⁸

2.5 The President, The First Lady and Miss Lewinsky

President Bill Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton may be one of the most famous American couples in history. They met at Yale Law School and began dating in 1971. Little did they know how influential they would one day become, and little did they know the challenges their marriage would face. The American presidential couple is often seen as a role model for the nation with their successful family and their polished looks. The First Lady is supposed to be the picture perfect wife who supports her husband and stands by him during every storm. Bill and Hillary Clinton were, and still are, a successful couple going strong, but a big scandal threatened their marriage during President Bill Clinton's second term as President and commander in chief of the United States. By choosing to stand by her husband, Hillary had to face critique from her fellow feminists and the general public. She had to take a stand in a private case that was made public. The Lewinsky scandal can be seen as evidence of how influenced Hillary's view of marriage has been influenced by the decades she grew up in.

⁶⁸ Karen Blumenthal, e-mail message to author, February 11 and March 17, 2016; Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 4-5; Clinton, *Living History*, 119; Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 9; Clinton, *Living History*, 110-111; Clinton, *Living History*, 140-141.

Hillary Rodham grew up in the 1950s and 1960s in a Chicago suburb. She witnessed change happening for Western women during the second wave of feminism. At the same time, she grew up with another view of marriage than the one that was common when she married in the middle of the 1970s. The 1950s are seen as the golden era of marriage. The world had just experienced a war and came together to focus on the future, which turned into an enthusiasm for marriage across the Western nations. At the end of the 1960s, 95 percent of all persons in North America and Western Europe married, and the divorce rates fell. People married younger and therefore spent a longer time of their life married. One can argue that the main goal during the 50s and the 60s was to get married and produce children, and the gender roles were clearly defined with the male breadwinner and the female caregiver. As Friedan argues, young women grew up with the picture of the perfect housewife in the media, and they were educated to become skilled mothers and housewives at school. People believed that this view of marriage was permanent, and that the traditions had to be kept. Wives were expected to quit their jobs when their children were born and stay at home. The view of divorce during the 1950s was very different from what it is today, and was seen as a personal failure. It was considered taboo to talk about divorce, and struggling married couples turned to marital therapy and experts for help in secret. Change happened in the late 1960s and 1970s as a result of the second wave of feminism. The focus was turned to women's rights, and as a result changed women's work roles dramatically, making working mothers and wives more common. Couples began to rethink how their marriages should function, and the focus shifted from the male breadwinner and female caregiver to a more equal relationship where both persons could work and have their own private values. As a result of the second wave of feminism, women were given the right to decide over their own bodies and make their own choices. Women were given the right to have an abortion in 1973, when the Supreme Court legalized abortion in *Roe v. Wade*, which protected women's constitutional right to privacy. One year prior to the *Roe v. Wade* decision, the women's movement won the battle over the Equal Rights Amendment, which passed in 1972, though it did not get ratified, which serves as evidence for the strong hold the traditional gender roles and the old coverture had on the United States. The situation for women in the United States was changing.⁶⁹

Five years later after the Clinton couple married, in 1980, their only child Chelsea was born, and they became a perfect example of the American nuclear family. The main difference between an ordinary American nuclear family and the Clinton's became evident during the

⁶⁹ Coontz, *Marriage, a History*, 225-235; Coontz, *Marriage, a History*, 255; Collins, *When Everything Changed*, 234-235; Collis, *When Everything Changed* 209.

end of 1992, when Bill Clinton was elected President of the United States. Clinton became a household name, and their marriage and life were constantly in the spotlight.⁷⁰ During the Campaign Rally in January 1992, the potential First Lady spoke about her marriage to Bill: “In any marriage, there are issues that come up between two people that I think are their business. From my perspective, our marriage is a strong marriage. We love each other, support each other, and we have had a lot of strong and important experiences together that have meant a lot to us.”⁷¹ When Hillary married Bill she not only became his wife, but also his supporter and political partner. The First Lady often chooses a project or charity to focus on while her husband serves as President, but Hillary was given a central political role when becoming the First Lady of the United States. This is another evidence of how different Hillary was as First Lady, which supports Troy, Blumenthal, Horn and Crowley’s argument that she was the most important and powerful First Lady. During his first term as President, Bill Clinton revealed that Hillary would lead the President’s Task Force on National Health Care Reform. Since Hillary was an educated lawyer, this new project made her the first First Lady to do profession related work. The new health reform was named “Hillarycare,” and Hillary’s interest and commitment to work for children’s and women’s rights to proper health care can be traced back to her days at Yale and at the Rose Law Firm. Many warned her about her new job in the Task Force after the announcement was made, and people were critical of her working professionally together with her husband, the President. The Clintons campaigned as a duo, and during the presidential election Hillary was promoted as Bill Clinton’s greatest political asset: “Two for the price of one.”⁷² Still, people were worried that Hillary would gain too much control in the White House, and men in particular were concerned that the President could not control his wife and therefore could not be trusted.⁷³ Even former President Richard Nixon went after the Clintons and stated that he believed that when the wife is “too strong and too intelligent (...) it makes the husband look like a wimp.”⁷⁴ Nixon also stated that he thought “intellect in women was unbecoming.”⁷⁵

Hillary Rodham Clinton can be seen as a woman ahead of her time even though she grew up during the golden era of marriage and housewives, she went forward and became

⁷⁰ Clinton, *Living History*, 75-84; Clinton, *Living History*, 148-149.

⁷¹ Rognak, *Hillary Clinton In Her Own Words*, 92.

⁷² Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 1.

⁷³ Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 52; Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 23-24.

⁷⁴ Clinton, *Living History*, 106.

⁷⁵ Clinton, *Living History*, 106.

both a professional woman and a mother. It is important to keep in mind that Hillary came of age during the late 1960s and early 1970s, that she witnessed the second wave of feminism, and that this influenced how she views the working woman. Married women who worked outside the home were far more common when Hillary came of age than during the 1950s and the numbers were getting higher by each year. The role of marriage changed from the 1950s to the 1970s, and when Bill and Hillary married it was considered a more emotional, intimate and fair pact than it had 20 years earlier. By playing a central role in the Clinton Administration, Hillary paved the way for her husband's career, while at the same time she paved the way for her own future career. The role of the First Lady was no longer only a symbolic one, Hillary was ready to create change and her staff and office became known as "Hillaryland." Her position in the Clinton Administration shows that the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s influenced Hillary since she took on an active and professional role and did not take the backseat.⁷⁶

Hillary Rodham Clinton has always stood by her husband, through good and bad, as the marriage vows say, and she has been vocal about her support. As the First Lady, she was supposed to stand by her husband in any political storm. However, the storm that gathered in the beginning of 1998 was not based on politics, it was personal and a threat to the Clintons and their idyllic family life in the White House since it would lead to a marriage in turmoil and impeachment of the President. In 1995, a young woman started working as an intern at the White House, and her name was Monica Lewinsky, a name that would be linked to a political and presidential crisis for years to come. Lewinsky is said to have met the President on several occasions, and their affair allegedly began in November 1995. The affair was kept secret for some time, until Lewinsky told her colleague Linda Tripp about her relationship with the President. At the same time, a former state employee from Arkansas, Paula Jones, sued President Clinton on sexual harassment charges and Jones' lawyers subpoenaed Lewinsky. On January 17, 1998, President Clinton denied the sexual affair with Lewinsky during his deposition in the lawsuit by Jones. Two days later, the rumors about the alleged affair surfaced on the Internet, and the ball began to roll. President Clinton denied the accusations, but it was too late to avoid the Lewinsky scandal. About a month later, First Lady Hillary explained that she believed her husband and that the accusations would disappear on their own over time. Towards the end of July, President Clinton agreed to testify in the case. On August 17, President Clinton became the first sitting president to testify before a grand

⁷⁶ Clinton, *Living History*, 148-149.

jury, and later the same day he admitted that he had an affair with Monica Lewinsky on national television.⁷⁷

In her first autobiography, *Living History*, Hillary Rodham Clinton writes about her first reaction to the rumors and how she instantly believed her husband because of previous accusations. She had already tolerated six years of claims and rumors made by people associated with the ones who went to trial against President Bill Clinton as a result of the Lewinsky affair. Hillary also explains that she questioned her husband about the rumors and that he continuously denied them and told her they were false. She states that she believed that the President's political opponents constructed the Lewinsky affair rumors, since they had created rumors like this before. In her autobiography, Hillary writes few words about the previous affairs of her husband, and one can interpret this as a sign of Hillary wanting some parts of their relationship to be kept private. Hillary believed her husband, and chose to stand by him even though she knew they faced yet another investigation and a possible threat to Bill's presidency.⁷⁸ Hillary decided to fight the rumors, and prove to the public that she believed her husband: "I chose to keep going and fight back, but it wasn't pleasant to listen to what was being said about my husband. I knew that people were wondering, 'How can she get up in the morning, let alone go out in public?'"⁷⁹ There was no doubt that people voiced their opinion on how the First Lady decided to handle the situation, and Hillary admits that she struggled with hearing what people said about her marriage. At every public event she attended, she was pressured by the press to answer personal questions about her private life. Still, she continued her work as usual and faced the journalists and critics. Hillary Rodham Clinton was under pressure, and this time it was not because of a political question, but because of her marriage to the man she loved. It is not difficult to understand that doubt began to seep into Hillary's mind, since she had memories of an episode like this happening eight years earlier. One can also argue that she was influenced by the 1950s view of divorce as a personal failure, and that she believed that her marriage was stronger.

William H. Chafe describes the relationship between President Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky as a secret affair that happened mainly in the White House, and only the people working very close to the President knew about it. Chafe questions whether the Lewinsky affair was the first time President Clinton had cheated on his wife, and Chafe calls the numerous rumors about affairs the "Clinton mythology." It was known that President

⁷⁷ Cnn.com, "A Chronology: Key Moments In The Clinton-Lewinsky Saga."

⁷⁸ Clinton, *Living History*, 441.

⁷⁹ Clinton, *Living History*, 443.

Clinton had affairs with other women, and Chafe writes about his affair with Marilyn Jo Jenkins in 1990 and remarks that this affair almost led to divorce for the Clinton couple. The affair affected Hillary, and “after the near-divorce prompted by Clinton’s intense affair with Marilyn Jo Jenkins, Hillary had insisted that the two enter prolonged marital therapy.”⁸⁰ Chafe puts Hillary in role as President Clinton’s rescuer, and emphasizes that she worked hard to save him from political crisis. Perhaps Hillary believed that her husband had changed as a result of the therapy they had previously attended together, and therefore she chose to believe him when the rumors of the affair with Lewinsky surfaced. After all, she grew up in a time when marital therapy was seen as a key to fix and save an unhappy marriage.⁸¹

While the Lewinsky scandal swept the nation, the First Lady was faced with a challenge concerning how she would react and what she would do. The picture of her perfect American life started to fade, and the American people, women especially, were watching her every move. Carl Bernstein emphasizes that Hillary decided to stand by her husband and fight back. Bernstein also questions whether or not Hillary chose to stay with her husband only for love, or if she did it to help save her future career and gain a political position. She understood that the possible consequences of the scandal would be that her world could collapse. Bernstein states, “As the pressure intensified, Hillary was already planning how their presidency could be saved. She knew she was once again the key to their potential survival. She understood that everyone would be rigorously examining her words and actions, looking to her for clues.”⁸² Hillary rarely writes about the fact that her marriage was at risk in her autobiography, which one can interpret as yet another sign that she was influenced by the golden era of marriage where a divorce was seen as a personal failure. Bernstein interviewed some of the Clintons’ friends, which lead to him gaining information that President Clinton believed that their marriage was at stake. Bernstein writes about a strong First Lady Hillary and how she rallied the White House staff members and made sure that they worked on the President’s second term. In public and around friends Hillary acted as nothing was going on. Personal problems were supposed to be kept secret during the 1950s, and Hillary’s reaction in public can be interpreted as an evidence of how much the golden era of marriage’s view of marriage problems affected her and made her seem like a 1950s housewife suppressing her ongoing marital problems.⁸³

⁸⁰ Chafe, *Bill and Hillary*, 270.

⁸¹ Chafe, *Bill and Hillary*, 269-270.

⁸² Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 485.

⁸³ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 486; Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 492.

As a result of the Lewinsky scandal hitting the news worldwide, Hillary Rodham Clinton went on live television. On January 27, 1998, Matt Lauer on the *Today Show* interviewed the First Lady. This interview became famous since it was the first interview Hillary had done alone since the scandal hit the news. Lauer questioned Hillary about the affair and she had to respond in the best way possible without sowing any doubts in the public. She believed her husband, and the public had to believe her to avoid the scandal becoming even bigger:

“There has been one question on the minds of people in this country, Mrs. Clinton, lately. And that is, what is the exact nature of the relationship between your husband and Monica Lewinsky? Has he described the relationship in detail to you?” I answered: “Well, we have talked a great length. And I think as this matter unfolds, the entire country will have more information. But we’re right in the middle of a rather vigorous feeding frenzy right now, and people are saying all kinds of things and putting out rumor and innuendo. And I have learned over the last many years being involved in politics, and especially since my husband first started running for President that the best thing to do in these cases is just to be patient, take a deep breath and the truth will come out.”⁸⁴

The interview became particularly famous for Hillary’s claim that a “vast right-wing conspiracy” was behind the allegations and rumors.⁸⁵ Bernstein states, “After her appearance on the *Today* show, a *Washington Post/ABC* poll showed that 59 percent of Americans believed that ‘Clinton’s political enemies are conspiring to bring down his presidency...’”⁸⁶ The Lewinsky scandal was not only a challenge for the Clinton’s and the presidency, it turned out to also challenge Hillary Rodham Clinton’s position as First Feminist.

When the rumor about the Lewinsky affair was out, the feminist movement reacted and questioned whether or not Hillary really was a feminist at heart. Some famous feminists did not speak up after the rumors became public, and *Time Magazine*’s Barbara Ehrenreich was quick to voice her opinion on how the famous feminists suddenly became mute. Ehrenreich especially criticized the way Hillary handled it all. She was after all the First Feminist and the first who should have reacted to the affair. The feminists were conflicted when it came to President Clinton, on the one hand he was a pro-choice President who had appointed Madeleine Albright as the first woman Secretary of State. On the other hand this

⁸⁴ Clinton, *Living History*, 445.

⁸⁵ Clinton, *Living History*, 445.

⁸⁶ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 503.

was not the first time rumors about affairs outside his marriage had surfaced, and feminists started to question why Hillary stood by her husband. Self-proclaimed feminist Marjorie Williams, former contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*, was one of the conflicted feminists. She wanted the President who was pro-choice and who worked for gender equality, but she questioned why the feminist organizations like the National Organization for Women or the Feminist Majority Foundation did not speak about the accusations and Hillary's choice. Some bold women like Williams and Ehrenreich spoke up and asked for reactions from the feminists around the nation. Since many feminists supported President Clinton because of the work he had done for women, it seemed like Hillary's choice to stand by him was accepted. After all, he had decided to stay with his wife and First Lady, and rejected Monica Lewinsky. When it came to sharing a home and a presidency, he chose Hillary.⁸⁷ Williams questions whether Hillary stayed with her husband to save her career: "Leaving aside Clinton's repeated public humiliations of his wife, she's always been a dubious feminist heroine: after all, she married her power, and in the White House she had wielded it without accountability."⁸⁸ This question became even more central six months after the initial rumors surfaced, since the rumors were true and the President had cheated on his First Lady.

August 17, 1998, can be seen as one of the days that changed the life of Hillary Rodham Clinton. The day that her husband admitted that he had lied about the affair and that he had cheated on his wife. Hillary recalled her reaction in *Living History*:

"I could hardly breathe. Gulping for air, I started crying and yelling at him, 'What do you mean? What are you saying? Why did you lie to me?' I was furious and getting more so by the second... I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Up until now I only thought that he'd been foolish for paying attention to the young woman and was convinced that he was being railroaded. I couldn't believe he would do anything to endanger our marriage and our family. I was dumbfounded, heartbroken and outraged that I'd believed him at all."⁸⁹

The husband she had trusted and counted on for the past years had cheated on her all along. He had lied to her, and this put their marriage to the ultimate test. News reports from *CNN* on August 17, 1998, refer to the President's address about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky. President Clinton claimed full responsibility for the "wrong" relationship and regrets "that he misled the public and his family over the last seven months about his

⁸⁷ Ehrenreich, "The Week Feminists Got Laryngitis"; Williams, "Clinton and Women."

⁸⁸ Williams, "Clinton and Women."

⁸⁹ Clinton, *Living History*, 466.

relationship with the former White House intern.”⁹⁰ The report continued with remarking that the First Lady was not present during the address, but that sources told *CNN* that she had helped write the address. A family friend describes the situation as “‘wrenching’ for his wife, Hillary, and daughter, Chelsea.”⁹¹ The news report emphasized the work the President had ahead of him and how he needed to save his family and marriage. Two days later, reports on how Hillary was handling the situation hit the news. Eileen O’ Connor wrote the article “Hillary Stands By Him – But She’s Angry” For *CNN* on August 19, 1998. The title says it all and underlines the feelings Hillary had after the news broke. “She is the person some people say is the most humiliated, the most pitied and perhaps the most respected person in all this.”⁹² O’Connor also refers to the reactions by the public and by the women’s movement that Hillary was close to. “To move on, people are looking to Mrs. Clinton to be strong and supportive – publicly. ‘I heard one woman saying today that she hoped in private she kicks his behind, but that in public we should not know about that,’ said Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women.”⁹³ The people stood by Hillary, but she was still criticized for staying with her husband. On August 19, Hillary’s press secretary Marsha Berry issued a public statement from the First Lady. *Washington Post* journalist Ruth Marcus reported on the statement and speculated that the statement was released with three goals in mind: to satisfy the press craving a reaction from Hillary, to reassure the people that she was standing by her husband and to make it clear that the First Lady had not been told the truth and therefore had been misled and was a victim. The public statement itself explained how much Hillary loved her husband, daughter and family. She wanted the public to know that she believed in the President and that she was uncomfortable with her personal life being made public.⁹⁴

The First Lady is a role model to many women who follows her every move and reaction. People questioned why she stood by her husband and if she would leave him. She chose to stand by her husband, and this can be interpreted as a sign of the influence the 1950s view of marriage had on her. Hillary Rodham Clinton addresses these questions in *Living History*: “Although I was heartbroken and disappointed with Bill, my long hours alone made me admit to myself that I loved him.”⁹⁵ Hillary reflects the views the women had in the *CNN*

⁹⁰ Cnn.com, “Clinton Admits to ‘Wrong’ Relationship with Lewinsky”

⁹¹ Cnn.com, “Clinton Admits to ‘Wrong’ Relationship with Lewinsky”

⁹² O’ Connor, “Hillary Clinton Stands By Him – But She’s Angry”

⁹³ O’ Connor, “Hillary Clinton Stands By Him – But She’s Angry”

⁹⁴ Marcus, “Hillary Clinton ‘Committed’ to Marriage”

⁹⁵ Clinton, *Living History*, 471.

report, and she wanted to hurt him physically, but she was conflicted: “My personal feelings and political beliefs were on a collision course. As his wife, I wanted to wring Bill’s neck. But he was not only my husband, he was also my President, and I thought that, in spite of everything, Bill led America and the world in a way that I continued to support.”⁹⁶ Hillary’s friends had other things in mind, Bernstein interviewed Sara Ehrman who thought Hillary “should have killed him on the spot.”⁹⁷ After long talks with her friends, Hillary eventually decided to hold the marriage together, and ultimately seek a seat in the Senate. Hillary choosing to stand by her husband can be seen as an evidence of how influenced she was by her upbringing during the 1950s and 60s, when divorce was considered a personal failure.⁹⁸

Chafe explains that the public responded much better to the long-suffering wife than to the prosecutor Kenneth Starr, and Hillary’s approval rating increased to more than 70 percent. He further emphasizes the importance of Hillary forgiving Bill, which made it seem more likely that the public would follow her. After “rescuing” her husband again and avoiding the impeachment, Hillary could finally think of her own future. Two years later, in 2000, New York Congressman Rangel suggested that Hillary should consider running for Senator Moynihan’s seat in the Senate. This strengthens the claim that Hillary saved her marriage to save her future, she needed her husband’s presidency to survive in order to secure a possible political career for herself. An argument against this claim is that when Hillary decided to stay with her husband in 1998 and 1999, she had no idea that Senator Moynihan’s seat would open up.⁹⁹

In 2014, Diane Sawyer interviewed Hillary Rodham Clinton for the TV channel *ABC*. This interview shows that Hillary is still asked questions about the scandal that took place 16 years earlier. In the interview, Sawyer states that the political opponents are warning that they think the Lewinsky scandal is fair game, and that they plan to use it against Hillary if she is elected the Democratic presidential candidate in the presidential election in 2016. Sawyer continues calling the scandal “an old stress” that has returned to Hillary’s life. When asked about the return of Lewinsky in the media, Hillary answers “I dealt with it at the time. I have moved on, and that’s how I see my life and my future.”¹⁰⁰ The interview shows that Hillary is done with the scandal and is not interested in talking about it, and she is ready to tackle the Republican opposition if they decide to use the scandal against her. It is important to state that

⁹⁶ Clinton, *Living History*, 471.

⁹⁷ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 513.

⁹⁸ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 513.

⁹⁹ Chafe, *Bill and Hillary*, 295-301.

¹⁰⁰ YouTube.com, “Hillary Clinton with Diane Sawyer Interview 6-9-14.”

in the interview, Hillary explains she still believes that the Lewinsky scandal was created as a political effort against the Clinton Administration. Sawyer asks about Hillary's marriage to President Clinton, and if they still are going strong after all these years, Hillary's answer is: "It's never stopped, and we make each other laugh, we support each other, it's really another one of my blessings."¹⁰¹ The interview shows the importance of marriage in the United States, and how marriage still plays a central role in the society even though the golden era of marriage is long gone. Questions about the marriage of Bill and Hillary Clinton are still raised, but the two seem stronger than ever. In 2015, Hillary announced that she is running for President of the United States in the 2016 elections. It is therefore likely that the Republican opposition will use the Lewinsky scandal against her when they get the chance. In November 2016, the world will know if the United States will have their first woman President and if Hillary Rodham Clinton has made history again. One can argue that her two presidential campaigns in 2008 and 2016 would not have been possible for her to achieve if she had divorced her husband back in the late 1990s, and that she chose to stand by him to save her future career and not only her marriage. At the same time, one can argue that Hillary could not predict her political future in 1998. One can therefore argue that it was her love for her husband and her faith in their relationship that made Hillary stay with Bill. Journalist Karen Blumenthal argues that Hillary's faith and religion played an important part in her decision to stay with her husband. Blumenthal also explains that because of Hillary's very personal faith she did not believe in divorce. Her mother, Dorothy, was a child of divorced parents and she had struggled with this. One can argue that Hillary chose to stay with Bill because of her strong love for him, but also to hold her family together. Recent interviews show that Bill Clinton is standing by his wife while she is running for president, and he is ready to become the first "First Man" or "First Dude" in the White House.¹⁰²

The Lewinsky scandal is still known as one of the biggest personal and political scandals in the White House. President Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton went through their toughest marital crisis and they both doubted that their marriage would survive it. Still, 18 years later they are going strong, maybe stronger than ever due to their current popularity, and former President Clinton is playing a central role in Hillary's 2016 primary campaign. He is advising her and plays an important role as a political advisor to Hillary, which shows that

¹⁰¹ YouTube.com, "Hillary Clinton with Diane Sawyer Interview 6-9-14."

¹⁰² YouTube.com, "Hillary Clinton with Diane Sawyer Interview 6-9-14."; Mercia, "Bill Clinton opens up about his relationship with Hillary"; Karen Blumenthal, e-mail message to author, February 11 and March 17, 2016.

they are still a forceful duo.¹⁰³ Fourteen years after the Lewinsky scandal changed her life, Hillary reflected on how hard it is to stay true to yourself while constantly being in the public eye:

“Sometimes it’s hard to have your own internal voice be heard... it’s hard because you’ve got society expectations and you’ve got family, friends, and other who are expressing opinions. When you’re in the public eye, it’s like open season with the entire world.”¹⁰⁴

Hillary Rodham Clinton stood by her husband while they faced their biggest personal trial. Whether she saved her marriage only because she loved her husband, or whether she did it to save her future and her career is up for speculation. She grew up in a time when marriage was seen as one of the biggest personal goals and divorce was seen as a personal failure, and one can argue that she was influenced by the golden age of marriage especially concerning divorce and how to cope with marital problems. As Friedan argues, Hillary grew up in a time where becoming a housewife was considered the main goal for many young women. At the same time, Hillary is a strong, determined and powerful woman who decided to stand up for her marriage and family, while at the same time making it possible for her to continue her professional career, and now possibly becoming the first woman President of the United States, which shows her feminist side. Hillary Rodham Clinton is a woman influenced and defined by the decades she grew up in, with the traditional view of marriage of the 1960s and the second wave of feminism and women’s liberation during the 1960s and 1970s.

Even though the Lewinsky scandal was challenging and tough for the Clintons, Hillary experienced a surge in popularity: “With her marriage in crisis, and amid all the humiliating revelations, Hillary Clinton achieved a symbiosis with the American public she had never before enjoyed. All of a sudden, she was the Democrats’ most popular speaker, their most prolific fund-raiser, and their sexiest star, with a 65 percent approval.”¹⁰⁵ Troy argues that Hillary’s run for Senate liberated her from the restrictions of the First Lady role. When running for the Senate, she could be herself, and she could use her professional knowledge and show her intelligence without being deemed a threat or inappropriate. One can argue that a lot of the criticism Hillary received, during the eight years Bill Clinton served as President, was based on how she never was the typical First Lady who did not

¹⁰³ Frizell, “Hillary Clinton Aides Shed Light on Bill’s Role in Her Campaign.”

¹⁰⁴ Waldman, “Is This Really Goodbye?”

¹⁰⁵ Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 198.

engage in her husband's work. As President Clinton's second term came to an end it was Hillary's time to go solo in politics.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 205.

Chapter 3. Making it on Her Own

The First Lady chose to stay with her President, even though he had lied under oath about his affair with the young intern. She stayed with him because she loved him, because of her personal faith and because of her view of marriage. After saving her husband's presidency, the scorned wife chose to move on and launched her own independent political career, which would prove as continuing evidence of her being a trailblazer. One would think Hillary Rodham Clinton would nurse her wounds after the scandal that shook the White House, but she "soldiered on."¹⁰⁷ Two years after the Lewinsky scandal, Hillary became the first First Lady to run for and be elected senator. She had already made history several times, and she showed no signs of slowing down. During the 2008 elections she became the only woman to be a presidential candidate in every primary in every state. Being a woman in American politics is not an easy task, and women face challenges and discrimination men never face. Women are a minority in American politics, but they are starting to change the country, state by state, which is what Jay Newton-Small calls the theory of critical mass. "With more girls around, we got more comfortable. We began asserting our right to be included, to be heard and to lead."¹⁰⁸ When women see other women participating in politics, they may feel more confident to get involved. When women reach critical mass, when minimum 20 percent of those involved are women, they are able to create change. Hillary's political career would change her life, and she would continue making history and end up moving to the White House in Washington D.C. This chapter will discuss how Hillary Rodham Clinton chose to go after an independent political career. It will also look at the role the 2008 primary election played in Hillary's life, and how it contributed to a change for women. The chapter will also discuss the challenges women face when running for office in the United States, and how the country still struggles with sexism. Hillary's role as Secretary of State and her second bid for president will also be discussed, with particular focus on her work for women's rights and why she can still be considered the First Feminist.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Clinton, *Living History*, 439.

¹⁰⁸ Newton-Small, *Broad Influence*, 5.

¹⁰⁹ Koeppe and Duffy, "Hillary By The Numbers", 20-21; Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 194; Newton-Small, *Broad Influence*, 5.

3.1 Moving On as Senator of New York

Hillary Rodham Clinton has stated “the most difficult decisions I have made in my life were to stay married to Bill and to run for the Senate from New York.”¹¹⁰ When New York Senator Patrick Moynihan decided not to run for re-election in 2000, there was a job opening in New York. At the same time, President Clinton was facing impeachment charges as a result of the Whitewater scandal and the Lewinsky scandal. Hillary was not from New York, and she had never lived there. Still, many Democrats wanted her to run for Senate. She was still the First Lady of the nation, and no First Lady had ever ran for office while still living in the White House. Even though Hillary had just experienced humiliation and her marriage was at risk, the Lewinsky scandal made her more powerful and popular than she had ever been. Women in particular supported her even more than before, and conservative Republican women slowly started to warm up to her since she now was a woman that demonstrated their values and view of marriage. One can argue that Hillary’s choice to run for Senator springs out of her need for her own career, and was made possible because she experienced a surge in popularity after the Lewinsky scandal. The way the public supported her and her popularity skyrocketed when she was “lying down,” can be seen as a sign of what Ann Friedman calls “The Hillary Clinton Catch-22.”¹¹¹ What Friedman means by this is that for Hillary to succeed, she needs to be liked, but to be liked she needs to restrain her success. Hillary cannot be outspoken about her success if she wants to be liked, and one can argue that this shows that coverture still lingers in American society. Friedman points to the public reactions after the Lewinsky scandal when her popularity soared, but when she announced her run for Senate it plummeted. This was not the first time her career choice and ambitions would make her unpopular with the people. One can argue that this serves as a pattern in Hillary’s professional career, since every time she wants a promotion, a huge part of the public turn against her.¹¹² As Friedman puts it, “When she’s herself – a woman with formidable intelligence, years of experience, and powerful connections – America can’t stand her.”¹¹³ Friedman’s statement supports the argument that the United States struggles with powerful women. One can argue that the Lewinsky scandal sparked Hillary’s hunger and need for her own career. She had been the First Lady for 8 years, and stood by her husband through good and bad. Because she experienced the surge in popularity she gained confidence and felt

¹¹⁰ Clinton, *Living History*, 506.

¹¹¹ Friedman, “The Hillary Clinton Catch-22”

¹¹² Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 198-199; Friedman, “The Hillary Clinton Catch-22”

¹¹³ Friedman, “The Hillary Clinton Catch-22”

more empowered to speak out on her own. Troy argues that Hillary never fit in to the role of First Lady and that she felt limited by the expectations. One can argue that Hillary wanted to seek an independent political career to free herself from the role of First Lady, which supports Troy's argument that she never really fit the role of First Lady.¹¹⁴

Hillary explains that the words of a young girl at a basketball tournament made her run for the Senate:

“‘Dare to compete, Mrs. Clinton,’ she said. ‘Dare to compete.’ Her comment caught me off guard, so much so that I left the event and began to think: ‘Could I be afraid to do something I had urged countless other women to do? Why am I vacillating about taking on this race? Why aren’t I thinking more seriously about it? Maybe I should ‘dare to compete.’”¹¹⁵

Even though she became unpopular for wanting her own political career and stepping out of her husband's shadow, Hillary Rodham Clinton won the election in 2000. She served as Senator of New York for two terms, from 2001 to 2009. During the years she served, she sponsored 713 bills. The type of bills she sponsored reflects her personal and political beliefs concerning women's and children's rights and welfare. The Paycheck Fairness Act, the Compassionate Assistance For Rape Emergencies Act of 2007 and the Medically Fragile Children's Act of 2008 were some of the bills she sponsored. Even though she sponsored hundreds of bills, only 3 of them became laws. None of the bills concerning women and children welfare became laws, which can support the claim that these groups often are left out in the making of laws. Senator Clinton proved that she was a true feminist when she pushed the emergency contraception Plan B through at the FDA, making it easier for those who need emergency contraception to get access to it.¹¹⁶

Hillary had just settled in her new job when the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, shocked the world. As Senator of New York, she was one of the first from the government to visit the remains of the World Trade Center. During her youth, Hillary protested against the Vietnam War and developed clear anti-war values. When her country was attacked and threatened the situation changed, she supported the American invasion of Afghanistan. One of her reasons for supporting the War on Terror was to help the women who were oppressed by the Taliban regime. *Time Magazine* published an article written by

¹¹⁴ Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 205.

¹¹⁵ Clinton, *Living History*, 501.

¹¹⁶ Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 204-205; Congress.gov. “Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton”; Traister, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, 30.

Hillary in late 2001. Her role as feminist and women's rights advocate shines through in the article. She argued that women's rights and human rights would lead to less terrorism springing out of Afghanistan, and therefore she supported the fight against Taliban. It does not matter which argument she used, Hillary still supported an invasion and eventual war, which showed a different side of her. Even though, one can argue that she supported the invasion based on her personal and political beliefs connected to women's rights. As her second term as senator came to an end, people speculated whether Hillary would enter the race for the presidency. Rebecca Traister argues that Hillary's ability to cooperate well with the others at the Senate, and her ability to listen to what others had to say, made her popular not only among her own, but also among the Republican opposition. She gained a lot of support before she decided to run for president, and it was women in particular who supported and rallied for her to enter the race. Hillary would once again face the "Hillary Clinton Catch-22," and experience the challenges of running, as a woman, for the highest position in the United States. To be able to come far in the election, she needed to be liked, but at the same time she could not seem too eager to win or too keen on power.¹¹⁷

3.2 Running as a Woman – The 2008 Election

In the 2008 election, Hillary Rodham Clinton ran as one of the Democratic presidential candidates. She was not the first woman to ever run, but one may argue that this was the first realistic chance for a woman to become the President of the United States and the world's most powerful woman. In one of the Democratic debates in 2007, Hillary was confronted with the issue of being a woman in politics. She was asked if she was running as a woman:

“I couldn't run as anything other than a woman. I am proud to be running as a woman. And I'm excited that I may be able, finally, to break that hardest of all glass ceilings. But, obviously, I'm not running because I'm a woman. I'm running because I think I'm the most qualified and experienced person to hit the ground running in January 2009. And I trust the American people to make a decision that is not about me or my gender.”¹¹⁸

Hillary's answer can be seen as evidence for Witt, Paget and Matthews claim that “are you running as a woman?” is the most asked question to a woman candidate. It also supports their

¹¹⁷ Clinton, *Living History*, 32-33; Clinton, “New Hope For Afghanistan's Women”; Collins, *When Everything Changed*, 377; Traister, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, 26.

¹¹⁸ Cnn.com, “Part I: CNN/YouTube Democratic presidential debate transcript”

argument that women often face critique based on their gender when they participate in American politics. In early 2008, Feminist and journalist Gloria Steinem reflected on the challenges women face in American politics:

“Gender is probably the most restricting force in American life, whether the question is who must be in the kitchen or who could be in the White House. This country is way down the list of countries electing women and, according to one study, it polarizes gender roles more than the average democracy.”¹¹⁹

Steinem’s argument reflects what Linda Witt, Karen M. Paget and Glenna Matthews wrote about fourteen years earlier: Women face sexism and discrimination based on their gender because of the old and outdated gender divided society of the past. Witt, Paget and Matthews emphasize that men feel threatened by women in power, and that men often feel less male when women gain power. Gender is the biggest challenge women face in American politics. Steinem’s statement can also be interpreted as evidence of the firm grip of coverture, and that it still influences how conservative Americans perceive gender. Steinem and Traister both argue that gender is the most restricting force in American life, particularly when it comes to politics and professional careers.¹²⁰

Hillary ran as a woman, and she made history being the first First Lady to ever seek the presidency in the United States. In addition, she became the only woman to earn front-runner status for a major political party’s presidential nomination. She gained support from the important political action committee EMILY’s List. The PAC was created in 1985 to fund campaigns for pro-choice Democratic women in politics. After Hillary announced she would seek the presidency, EMILY’s List made its first presidential endorsement. When it was clear that Hillary was the only female Democratic candidate, gender was once again on the agenda, which was no surprise. By running as a woman, she became an instant threat to the established white male power in the United States. The “Hillary-bashing” returned. “Hillary-bashing” is a term that came to life when Hillary took the stage in the Clinton Administration. She received heavy critique from men, but the “bashing” also came from other women. Barbara Bush led the group of women who criticized Senator Clinton, and she claimed that women were supposed to be in service of their family, and not choose a professional career. The “Hillary-bashing” can be interpreted as a sign of how important traditional gender roles

¹¹⁹ Steinem, “Women Are Never Front-Runners”

¹²⁰ Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 12; Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 52. Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 71.

are in American society, which Witt, Paget and Matthews argue for in *Running as a Woman*. One can argue that the Republican opposition played the gender card because Hillary seemed unstoppable. It was when she got close to become the Democratic nominee that a wave of resistance became apparent. The resistance consisted mainly of men who saw Hillary as a threat to the traditional gender roles, but conservative women also took part in the resistance against the First Feminist. Hillary had, after all, experienced success since being First Lady. Since 1992, when she became First Lady, she had worked her way up as a politician and she was now becoming a threat against a possible Republican victory in 2008. The sexism in American politics, which Traister highlights, became even more visible.¹²¹

Hillary came close to being the first female presidential candidate, but America was not ready for their first woman president. On June 8, 2008, Hillary Rodham Clinton had to admit defeat to Senator Barack Obama in the Democratic primary election. During her concession speech she said:

“Although we weren't able to shatter that highest, hardest glass ceiling this time, thanks to you, it's got about 18 million cracks in it, and the light is shining through like never before, filling us all with the hope and the sure knowledge that the path will be a little easier next time (...) You can be so proud that, from now on, it will be unremarkable for a woman to win primary state victories - unremarkable to have a woman in a close race to be our nominee, unremarkable to think that a woman can be the president of the United States.”¹²²

When considering this quote in 2016, one can argue that the situation for women in American politics has changed, at least to some degree. Women play a bigger role in American politics, and the percentages of women in U.S. Congress, statewide elective and state legislatures have all increased since 2007, the year before Hillary ran for president. Center for American Women and Politics reports that the percentage of women in U.S. Congress was 16.1 percent in 2007 and has increased to 19.4 percent in 2016.¹²³ This is a change in the right direction for American women. The numbers serves as evidence for Newton-Small's theory of critical mass, and one can argue that Hillary has helped this development. Even though women play a bigger role in politics, they still experience sexual harassment and discrimination. Hillary is

¹²¹ Koeppe and Duffy, "Hillary By The Numbers", 20-21; Emily'slist.org. "Our History"; Blumenthal, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 315; Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 78; Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 54; Traister; *Big Girls Don't Cry*, 65.

¹²² Clinton, "Text of Hillary Clinton's concession speech"

¹²³ See Appendix 2: "Percentages of Women in Elective Office"

faced with questions and remarks, both from opposing candidates and the media, which male candidates never experience. Questions and comments concerning clothes, physical appearance and emotional reactions are often limited to women because they are considered the weaker sex and therefore not suitable for powerful jobs. Rebecca Traister, Jay Newton-Small and Karen Blumenthal's arguments that the United States still struggles with the idea of a woman in power and sexism are shown through the treatment Hillary has received throughout the years. During the 2008 primary elections, Hillary challenged American ideas about gender and power by running as a Democratic candidate. Traister argues that the 2008 primary election challenged the traditional role of femininity by including female authority. This was the first time Americans had seen a woman come that close to the White House. Traister further argues that the election also challenged the traditional masculine role, since this was the first time a "First Man" could end up moving into the White House. Traditionally, authority was considered a male feature, and when women displayed this trait it was scandalous. The 2008 election contributed to an important step towards change in the United States when it comes to the image of women in power.¹²⁴

Hillary Rodham Clinton managed to create a decent crack in the glass ceiling, but she also helped to make it clear that sexism was a serious issue in the American society. The constant "Hillary-bashing" was a proof of the existing sexism in American society. It was used to try pushing Hillary out of the race of becoming the Democratic candidate. She ran against a man, and even though Senator Barack Obama was black and faced harsh racism from the Republicans, Hillary was still a woman and many people felt that women did not belong in politics. Once her femaleness was established, which happened when Hillary became emotional in interviews after losing several of the primaries, the misogynistic ball began to roll. Traister argue that the sexism Hillary experienced was a proof of the white male establishment in American politics, a system that excluded everyone who was not a white male. She further argues that since Hillary chose to challenge the white male establishment she was attacked for being unfeminine because she showed off her confidence. Gloria Steinem had seen the issue of the sexism coming, and when asked about if she wanted Hillary to win, Steinem replied that she was unsure whether she wanted Hillary to go through the misogynistic treatment she would face if elected, and she believed that the American people were not ready for a woman running the country. The sexist treatment Hillary

¹²⁴ Center for American Women and Politics, "Women in Elective Office 2016"; Newton-Small, *Broad Influence*, 6-10; Karen Blumenthal, e-mail message to author, February 11 and March 17, 2016; Traister, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, 57.

experienced during the 2008 election proves that the United States still had a problem with its gender roles. It was mainly men who disliked Hillary during her campaign. This time around it was no longer only Republican men, but also Democratic men who hated the former First Lady. This proves that sexism was not limited to a political party, but it had a firm grip on the many of the conservative citizens. The primary election in 2008 became a historical one because of Hillary's gender and Senator Obama's race, and even though she would not become the next president, she had made history as the first woman to win a primary election, and she would play an important role in the Obama Administration.¹²⁵

3.3 Secretary of State – Women's Rights Back on the Agenda

After Barack Obama's historical election in 2008, he became the first black President of the United States. President Obama's election was as historical as Hillary Rodham Clinton's election would have been, since they both came from a minority in American politics. When Hillary accepted President Obama's job offer, Hillary became the third woman to serve as Secretary of State. In her second autobiography, *Hard Choices*, Hillary explains how she understood the job she had just accepted: "Secretary of State is really three jobs in one: the country's chief diplomat, the President's principal advisor on foreign policy, and the CEO of a sprawling Department."¹²⁶ One can argue that while she served as Secretary of State, Secretary Clinton was the most powerful woman in the world. Senior Correspondent at TIME Magazine, Massimo Calabresi calls Secretary Clinton a "global player," and emphasizes that she first entered the world stage while giving her speech at the United Nations' 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. During her speech, she embraced worldwide women's issues, and not only issues related to the Western world. One can interpret this as an early sign of what was to come and that Hillary Rodham Clinton would continue being an important person on a global level. When she accepted the job, she became the first Secretary of State in the Obama Administration.¹²⁷

As Secretary of State, Hillary continued working for women's rights, and one can argue that equality and women's rights have been the basis of her political career. Her fight for women's rights began at Wellesley College and followed her during her years as First Lady and Senator. The famous United Nations speech from 1995 still echoed around the

¹²⁵ Traister, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, 90-92; Traister, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, 103; Traister, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, 117; Traister, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, 166.

¹²⁶ Clinton, *Hard Choices*, 21.

¹²⁷ Calabresi, "Circling A Troubled Globe", 76-89

world when she took on the role as Secretary of State. President of Emerge America, a training program for Democratic women, Andrea Dew Steele, argues that no other candidate has done more for women's rights. Steele points to Hillary's impressive track record while she was Secretary of State: "she appointed the first-ever Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the State Department; oversaw the creation of the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security; and introduced the Global Health Initiative (GHI), investing \$63 billion to help partner countries provide robust maternal and infant health services."¹²⁸ In *Hard Choices*, Hillary explains that nearly 20 years later she still met women who quoted her United Nations speech to her. She further explains that when she once again was back in the White House, she wanted to build on what she had accomplished in Beijing in 1995. This time she wanted to help women internationally, and not only domestically. On her agenda this time around was also equality and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. One can argue that Secretary Clinton brought the fight for equality and women's issues into American foreign policy and international diplomacy. She believed that by putting women's issues on the agenda, change for oppressed women around the world would be possible. Using the same argument as she did when supporting the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Secretary Clinton believed that improving conditions for women would help stabilize societies and resolve conflicts. According to Hillary, helping women in the Middle East would enforce the national security of the United States.¹²⁹

One can argue that when Secretary Clinton left her job at the State Department, she had become a symbol of women in power. A picture taken by *TIME* photographer Diana Walker in 2011 made Secretary Clinton the image of female power. In the photograph, Secretary Clinton is seen sitting in a military airplane bound for Libya. She is looking at her phone while wearing dark sunglasses. The photograph went viral and nearly "broke" the Internet. It also became the symbol of Secretary Clinton's years serving the United States. Her four years as Secretary of State worked in her favor, and she managed to reinforce her reputation as an experienced woman, not only in America, but worldwide. However, after the Benghazi attacks in 2012, which led to the killing of the United States Ambassador to Libya J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans, Secretary Clinton was in trouble, since she was responsible for the protection of Americans in foreign countries. Republicans have used the Benghazi attacks against Secretary Clinton by claiming that she failed to protect American citizens and interests. The Benghazi investigation led to another scandal surfacing

¹²⁸ Steele, "Why Hillary Clinton Has the Best Track Record on Women's Issues"

¹²⁹ Clinton, *Hard Choices*, 468-488.

when Hillary's use of a private email server was discovered. The emails continue to haunt her, and may be the scandal that can destroy her dream of moving back into the White House.¹³⁰

3.4 Trying to Break the Glass Ceiling Again

After serving as Secretary of State during President Barack Obama's first term, Secretary Clinton was once again tempted by the Oval Office. On April 12, 2015, a video was uploaded to Hillary's official YouTube account where she officially declared that she was, once again, running for president. Hillary was ready to make history. On the same day, EMILY's List announced that they once again would endorse Hillary Rodham Clinton for president. EMILY's List predicts that if Hillary is elected president, "it will mean more opportunities for women, more opportunities for girls, and more opportunities for hardworking Americans across the country."¹³¹ Karen Blumenthal believes that Hillary has a decent chance to win the election, and that she is smart, capable and experienced. Blumenthal does, however, believe that a lot of American citizens, both men and women, are still uncomfortable with the idea of a woman president. Blumenthal shares the same view as Jay Newton-Small when it comes to the United States' struggle with the idea of a woman leading the country. In an interview in the March 2016 issue of *Vogue*, Hillary contemplates on America's problems with women in executive positions. When asked why it still is such a difficulty for women in the United States, Hillary answers that she does not understand it herself, but she explains that she believes "there still is a very deep set of concerns that people have, which very often they're not even aware of or they couldn't articulate. There's nothing overt about it in most instances."¹³² One can interpret the American struggle with a woman in power as a sign that the traditional gender roles are alive in American society. Hillary has not given up trying to break the famous glass ceiling, and she will challenge the gender roles by running as a woman.

One can argue that Hillary Rodham Clinton is the most experienced and qualified of all the candidates in both political parties. Not only has she experience with life in the White House, she also has experience of working close to the President both as First Lady and as

¹³⁰ Calabresi, "Circling A Troubled Globe", 89; Feifei and Moakley, "The Photograph That Has Everyone Texting Hillary Clinton"; Kaphle, "Timeline: How the Benghazi attacks played out."; Graham, "From Whitewater to Benghazi"

¹³¹ YouTube.com. "Getting Started. Hillary Clinton"; Emilyslist.org. "EMILY's List Endorses Hillary Clinton for President"; Emilyslist.org. "Hillary Clinton"

¹³² Van Meter, "Will Hillary Clinton Make History?"

Secretary of State. She has also served the people when she was senator of New York City. At the time of writing, Hillary Rodham Clinton is running against Senator Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primary election. Political commentators and experts have named her the front-runner once again. History is repeating itself: she is running against one man, like she did in the 2008 primary election. Blumenthal explains that the situation for women has changed since the 2008 primary election. Collins also argues that by running in the 2008 primary election, Hillary helped change the situation for women in politics. The last time Hillary ran for president American citizens asked themselves if a woman really could serve as commander in chief of the United States. A lot has happened for women in American politics since the last time Hillary ran for president. In 2016, the American people ask if it is Hillary Rodham Clinton, lawyer, First Lady, Senator and Secretary of State, who will be the next commander in chief of the United States. However, being a female presidential candidate is still an issue in American politics, and one can argue that the traditional gender roles make it difficult for many Americans to accept a female president.¹³³

Hillary Rodham Clinton is the best presidential candidate for women, not because she is a woman, but because of her track record on women's issues highlighted by Dew Steele. The First Feminist Hillary is reflected in her 2016 campaign, with women's rights and opportunities and campus sexual assault being two of her main topics. When it comes to women's rights and opportunities, Hillary supports Planned Parenthood, a nonprofit organization providing sex education and reproductive health care. Her outspoken support for the organization led to Planned Parenthood officially endorsing Hillary as president, which led to the organization's first endorsement in its 100-years existence. The endorsement comes as a reaction to the Republican presidential candidates' promise to remove financing for the organization. In January 2016, Hillary took an important step in her defense of abortion rights in the United States: she is planning to repeal the Hyde Amendment if she is elected president. The Hyde Amendment forbids the use of federal funds to pay for abortions, even if the woman's health is at risk. Hillary's outspoken defense of abortion rights reflects her commitment to feminism and women's rights, but at the same time it has made her the feminist symbol that threatens the conservative voters' view of reproductive rights. Even though Hillary Rodham Clinton is a popular candidate and Democratic front-runner, the "Hillary Clinton Catch-22" is very much alive and continues to challenge her. Republican

¹³³ Karen Blumenthal, e-mail message to author, February 11 and March 17, 2016; Blake, "Why Hillary Clinton just became an even bigger front-runner"; Blumenthal, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, 370.

candidate Donald Trump is currently the leader of the “Hillary-bashing,” and he continuously claims that Hillary plays the woman card. Witt, Paget and Matthews argue that when a man and a woman are pitted against one another, it can be strategic for men to focus on the woman’s gender, which is exactly what Donald Trump does since he sees Hillary as his main competitor. This is evidence of sexism in American politics, and shows that American society still struggles with what Hillary has been fighting for her whole career: gender equality. One can argue that the 4th Democratic debate, held on January 2016, is proof of how the United States struggles with women in power. Senator Sanders was asked about what he thought about President Bill Clinton’s previous sexual indiscretions, while Hillary was never asked about her important and groundbreaking defense of abortion rights by attacking the Hyde Amendment.¹³⁴

Political commentators and journalists claim that Hillary Rodham Clinton has a “woman problem” and that she needs the support of more women to win the election. Former Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright believes that the reason why more women are not supporting Hillary is because women are still very judgmental about one another. Albright also emphasizes that it is not easy being a first at anything, especially not being the first woman presidential candidate to do well in a primary election. Her interpretation of the “woman problem” is that women think “‘Well, I can’t do it. How can she?’”¹³⁵ Even though Hillary is faced with the challenge of gaining support from more women, Albright believes that she will become the next President of the United States and the first woman ever to be commander in chief. At the time of writing, Hillary’s chance of becoming the Democratic presidential nominee is good. She won a landslide victory in her “home” state, New York, on April 19, making it clear that the people of New York believe in their former Senator and would like to see her as their next President. One can also interpret her New York victory as

¹³⁴ Steele, “Why Hillary Clinton Has the Best Track Record on Women’s Issues”; Hillaryclinton.com, “Campus sexual assault”; Hillaryclinton.com, “Women’s rights and opportunities”; Chozick, “Planned Parenthood, in Its First Primary Endorsement, Backs Hillary Clinton.”; Plannedparenthoodaction.org, “Hyde Amendment.”; Cauterucci, “Why Hillary Clinton’s Call-Out of the Hyde Amendment is so Important.”; Pengelly, “Donald Trump says Hillary Clinton is ‘constantly playing the woman card.’”; Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 63; Van Meter, “Will Hillary Clinton Make History?”; Traister, Rebecca. “NBC Found Time to Ask About Bill Clinton’s Sex Life, But Not About Hillary Clinton’s New Defense of Abortion Rights.”

¹³⁵ Van Meter, “Will Hillary Clinton Make History?”

evidence for how successful her years as Senator of the state were. Hillary continues to win primary elections, and she believes that her nomination victory is in sight.¹³⁶

3.5 The Right-Wing Conspiracy and The American Woman Problem

Scandals have followed the Clinton's since 1992, when Bill Clinton was faced with infidelity charges. During her run for president, Hillary Rodham Clinton is again facing scandals that may destroy her chances of becoming the next President of the United States. One can argue that the way the Benghazi attacks and the email scandal have been used against Hillary during the 2016 primary elections proves that the right-wing conspiracy from 1998 still is alive. One can also argue that because the investigation does not include former Secretary of State Colin Powell or former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, it looks like the attacks are constructed by the right-wing conspiracy. Republican candidate Donald Trump has stated that he will use the Lewinsky scandal to go after Hillary if he ends up running against her in the general election in the fall of 2016. He previously claimed, "If Hillary Clinton can't satisfy her husband what makes her think she can satisfy America?"¹³⁷ This right-wing attack on Hillary shows that Newton-Small's argument, concerning the Republicans showing their opinion on women in politics, is valid. Around 6 months before she announced her second run for president, Diane Sawyer interviewed Hillary in her home in Washington D.C. Sawyer asked if Hillary is ready for the Republican opposition to use the Lewinsky scandal against her in a possible primary election. Hillary answered that she is prepared, she emphasizes that the Lewinsky scandal no longer troubles her and that she has moved on. She also explained that she still believe that the "vast right-wing conspiracy" is still after the Clinton's and the present Obama Administration. During a *CNN* Democratic Town Hall in February 2016, *CNN* anchor Anderson Cooper asked Hillary if she thought that her "vast right-wing conspiracy" quote from 1998 was still relevant. Hillary explained that she believes the right-wing conspiracy, which she calls the partisan plotting against her, is alive and well.¹³⁸

In October 2015, *CNN* reported that Republican Congressman Richard Hanna admitted that the Benghazi panel and the focus on Hillary's emails were created to hurt her

¹³⁶ Wallace, "Why the female generational divide for Hillary Clinton?"; Van Meter, "Will Hillary Clinton Make History?"; Lee, "Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton Win Big in New York"

¹³⁷ Traister, Rebecca. "Could Hillary Clinton Ever Have Imagined This?"

¹³⁸ YouTube.com. "Hillary Clinton with Diane Sawyer Interview 6-9-14"; Condon, "Hillary Clinton: The vast right-wing conspiracy is 'even better funded'"

campaign. This was not the first time a member of the Republican Party had confessed that they were after Hillary, and used the Benghazi attacks as their weapon. Two days prior to *CNN*'s report, Hillary addressed the issue: "It is a partisan vehicle, as admitted by the House Republican majority leader, Mr. McCarthy, to drive down my poll numbers. Big surprise."¹³⁹ Hillary addressed the issue early, and she knew that the Republicans were after her. One can interpret the Benghazi Committee as a weapon used by the Republican Party to kill off Hillary's chance of becoming the next President of the United States. This development supports Newton-Small's argument that the Republicans feel threatened by Hillary and that they show their opinions on women participating in American politics. The Republican opposition is not the only who is attacking Hillary Rodham Clinton, and even her fellow Democrats have contributed to the "Hillary-bashing." At the time of writing, Hillary's only Democratic opponent is Senator Bernie Sanders, but Hillary is still considered the front-runner and her chances of winning the nomination are greater than Sanders'. Sanders' multiple primary losses have made the Sanders campaign launch an attack against Hillary. The attack uses the traditional gender roles deeply rooted in American society, and paints a picture of Hillary as the woman who "tries too hard." This attacks shows that when it comes to politics, Bernie Sanders, who has gained support from feminists, plays on the same sexism as the Republican opposition to try to push Hillary aside.¹⁴⁰

On April 8 2016, Hillary Rodham Clinton sat down with the *Today* reporter Matt Lauer, the same man who interviewed her after the Lewinsky affair became public. In 1998, Lauer interviewed Hillary when she admitted that she believed that a right-wing conspiracy was behind the attacks on her husband. This time around, 18 years later, Lauer again confronted Hillary with the possibility of there being a Republican partisan conspiracy behind the email scandal now haunting her. Lauer confronted Hillary with the Republican's wishes to see her in handcuffs because of her private emails. Hillary answers that she believes there is no chance of an indictment happening, and she also highlights the fact that the Republicans have been after her for 25 years and said false things about her repeatedly. The *Today* interview shows that Hillary is fully aware of the partisan plotting against her. One can argue that the interview reflects that sexism still exists, and that Hillary is its prime target in the 2016 election. Both Donald Trump's statements about Hillary and the sexism

¹³⁹ Washington Post Staff, "The CNN Democratic Debate Transcript, Annotated"

¹⁴⁰ Mercia, "Another GOP Congressman Says Benghazi Panel Meant to Hurt Clinton"; Traister, Rebecca. "The Sanders Campaign's Sexist New Argument: Hillary Tries Too Hard."

Hillary is struggling with is given a lot of space in the interview, which one can interpret as a sign of how important these topics are in the election. The amount of attention the topics are given shows that sexism still is a problem in American society and politics.¹⁴¹

Being a strong and powerful woman is still a threat in American politics and society. Witt, Paget and Matthews reflected on the challenges women faced in the past and up until the 1994 election. The fact that women are still being demonized when they choose to go for a promotion or a high-powered career proves that the United States still have a long way to go when it comes to gender equality. Hillary still faces the “Hillary Clinton Catch-22” and a nation that struggles with women in power. The leader of the “Hillary-bashers”, Donald Trump, continues to accuse Hillary of playing the “woman card” in the election. On April 27, 2016, Trump once again bashed Hillary for using her gender to win. What he probably did not expect was that his accusations against Hillary would help her raise \$26.4 million in April alone. Trump can be considered the current symbol of sexism in the United States. Karen Blumenthal explains that she believes the reason for the sexism against Hillary is an American discomfort with powerful women:

“Many Americans like women to be successful--but only to a degree. They don't want women to be too ambitious, or too powerful or too smart. The U.S. president is more than a leader of a nation – people here see that person as a military leader and one of the leaders of the world. For some people, it's hard to see a woman in that role.”¹⁴²

Hillary also faced this woman problem during the 2008 election, and the fact that it still is such an issue can indicate that the United States still has a long way to go when it comes to gender equality. Traister explains that the way Hillary is criticized relates to the fact that she is the first woman to ever come this close to becoming President of the United States. Traister further explains that Hillary represents a major disruption in the American gendered power structure. Patricia DeGennaro reflects on the sexism Hillary is facing and has faced throughout her career. DeGennaro emphasizes that male presidential candidates' abilities and qualifications are rarely questioned to the same extent as women's, while Hillary, who is experienced and very much qualified for the job, is questioned. Hillary used her terms as First Lady, Senator and Secretary of State to learn how domestic issues are related to international issues, making her prepared to take on the role as commander in chief. According to

¹⁴¹ Today.com, “Hillary Clinton’s Full Interview with Matt Lauer on TODAY”

¹⁴² Karen Blumenthal, e-mail message to author, February 11 and March 17, 2016

DeGennaro, Hillary “has a combination of knowledge and experience that few, if any, presidential candidates have ever had.”¹⁴³ Hillary has experience with both domestic politics and foreign relations, making her the most fitting candidate for the position as President of the United States. Since she became Secretary of State, Hillary has used social media to communicate with the public and to reach young Americans. After *TIME*’s Diana Walker’s famous photograph of the powerful female Secretary of State, Americans have seen what a possible American woman president will look like.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ DeGennaro, “Can the ‘She’ Clinton Be Commander in Chief?”, 127.

¹⁴⁴ Witt, Paget and Matthews, *Running as a Woman*, 286-287; Rappeport, “Donald Trump Keeps Playing ‘Woman’s Card’ Against Hillary Clinton”; Chozick, “Hillary Clinton Cashes In on Donald Trump’s ‘Woman’s Card’ Comments.”; Rebecca Traister, e-mail message to author, April 20, 2016; DeGennaro, “Can the ‘She’ Clinton Be Commander in Chief?”, 123-129.

Chapter 4. Conclusion

4.1 Hillary Rodham Clinton

Hillary Rodham was curious, interested and determined from early on, and she quickly figured out that she wanted to make a change, even if it was only at her local school. Hillary's interests in women's issues and rights were sparked back in Park Ridge when NASA rejected her astronaut application. The years she spent at Wellesley College transformed her into a feminist and a Democrat, and paved a way for her future in politics. It was at Wellesley she learned that anything is possible for women, and it was at Wellesley she first made history. Hillary was the first at doing many things as a woman. When she settled in Little Rock and became the first female partner of the Rose Law Firm, she broke with the traditional and gendered society of the South. Even though she faced resistance, Hillary paved her own way and made her own career despite the gender divided society. When she moved into the White House in 1993, she broke with First Lady tradition and set up office in the West Wing, making it clear that she was there to do a professional job. Even though she took on a traditional and clearly defined role as First Lady, she made a difference in the White House during the two Clinton administrations by leading the Task Force on National Health Care Reform and using her education as a lawyer to work for children and women's rights.

Hillary Rodham Clinton has first-hand experience at being a woman in American politics. Throughout her career, she has put equality and women's rights on the agenda. When she became Secretary of State she chose to put domestic and international women's rights on the agenda of the American foreign policy. She is the only woman who has come close to becoming the President of the United States, and 2016 may be they year she makes history again. After over two decades of being in the public eye, Hillary has faced harsh criticism and she can be seen as evidence of the fact that sexism is a big problem in the United States. The sexism and critique Hillary experiences to this day shows that the United States struggles with powerful women who would like to achieve more. The traditional gender roles of the 1950s and early 1960s are still clearly visible in American society. Even though she has faced a general flow of sexism throughout her career, it was particularly visible during the 2008 primary election and the current 2016 primary election. The Americans' conservative view of gender and its persistent sexism against Hillary may be the causes that will stop her from becoming the first woman President of the United States and

breaking the highest glass ceiling. It is important to point to the fact that men are rarely questioned in the same way as women are when it comes to their qualifications or experience when running for office. Women are questioned about their ability to combine family and a professional career, and they are criticized for being the vulnerable and frail to take on powerful jobs. Hillary is the most competent, qualified and experienced candidate for the role, no matter what her gender is. Every time she has sought a promotion or a higher position, being Senator, Secretary of State or President, she has faced massive resistance based on her gender. At the same time, every time she gets the new job, her popularity soars, which shows that Hillary is a highly competent and professional woman.

4.2 Concluding Remarks

The purpose of the thesis has been to analyze how Hillary Rodham Clinton became a trailblazing and important American woman. The thesis has also looked at the conflict between how Hillary has chosen to live and the society's expectations for women. In conclusion, one of the most important findings of this thesis is that Hillary is the First Feminist of the United States. She chose to live a life that opposed the traditional gender roles and expectations of women in American society. Hillary was never the young girl Friedan describes in *The Feminine Mystique*, she did not dream of becoming a housewife. Based on Collins' argument that there were a division between women attending college during the 1960s, one can argue that Hillary belonged to the group of women went to college to pursue a professional career. Troy and Collins' both argue that Hillary is the most important and trailblazing First Lady in the history of the United States. Blumenthal and Crowley also argue that Hillary is one of the most important women in American politics. Hillary's commitment to working for women's rights proves that she sincerely want to help change women's position in American society and politics. Her track record on women's issues supports the argument that Hillary is the First Feminist. Through her years as First Lady and her years as a politician, Hillary has fronted change for women in American politics. She has become the symbol of a powerful American woman who is not afraid of going after the most powerful job in America – President of the United States.

Based on Traister and Newton-Small's arguments and on the sexism Hillary has faced, another of the most important findings of this thesis is that the United States struggles with women in powerful positions, and that sexism has a firm grip on American society and politics. The treatment of Hillary in public and in politics is evidence of the sexism American

society struggles with. One can argue that the traditional gender roles of the 1950s and 1960s still play a central part in society, and that the sexism Hillary faces has grown out of these deeply rooted gender roles. The “Hillary-bashing” emphasized by Witt, Paget and Matthews is being repeated in the 2016 primary election, and if Hillary becomes the Democratic nominee it will continue to be one of the challenges she needs to face to be able to make history again. The constant focus on Hillary’s gender and the fact that she is running as a woman supports Witt, Paget and Matthews’ argument that gender plays a central role in American politics, and when participating in politics women will face criticism based exclusively on their gender. One of the most powerful forces that can keep Hillary from becoming the next President of the United States is that she is running as a woman.

4.3 Recommendations for Further Research

This thesis has been limited to analyzing Hillary Rodham Clinton’s life and career up until the 2016 primary election. At the time of writing, Hillary’s fate in the 2016 primary election is undecided, even though it looks like victory is in sight and that she will become the Democratic nominee. For further research, it would be interesting to look at the 2016 election and its results in retrospect. Another recommendation would be to look at the 2008 primary election and the 2016 election. One could look at Hillary’s two campaigns, and do a comparative study. Another angle would do an in-depth analysis of the changes that have happened to women in American politics as a result of Hillary’s two bids for president.

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Appendix 1. "My Future"

My Future

When I grow up I want to have had the best education I could have possibly obtained. If I obtain this I will probably be able to get a very good job. I want to either be a teacher or a nuclear physics scientist.

Sometimes people ask me why I would want to be a teacher. The way I figure it though, is that the government and adults are always talking about how the children of today are the citizens of tomorrow. With this thought in mind you have to have teachers to train the young citizens or

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Appendix 2. “Percentages of Women in Elective Office”

Percentages of Women in Elective Office

Year	U.S. Congress	Statewide Elective	State Legislatures	Year	U.S. Congress	Statewide Elective	State Legislatures
1971	3%	7%	N/A	1997	11.0%	25.4%	21.6%
1973	3%	8%	N/A	1999	12.1%	27.6%	22.4%
1975	4%	10%	8%	2001	13.6%	27.6%	22.4%
1977	4%	10%	9%	2003	13.6%	26.0%	22.4%
1979	3%	11%	10%	2005	15.0%	25.7%	22.4%
1981	4%	11%	12%	2007	16.1%	24.1%	23.5%
1983	4%	11%	13%	2009	16.8%	22.6%	24.3%
1985	5%	14%	15%	2011	16.8%	22.1%	23.7%
1987	5%	14%	16%	2012	16.8%	23.4%	23.7%
1989	5%	14%	16%	2013	18.5%	23.0%	24.2%
1991	6%	18%	18%	2014	18.7%	22.6%	24.3%
1993	10.1%	22.2%	20.5%	2015	19.4%	24.7%	24.6%
1995	10.3%	25.9%	20.6%	2016	19.4%	24.4%	24.6%

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