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# **Fixing the Hillary Factor: Examining the Trajectory of Hillary Clinton's Image Repair from Political Bumbler to Political Powerhouse**

**Denise Oles-Acevedo**  
Iowa State University

## **ABSTRACT**

Hillary Clinton faced multiple image-damaging incidents in the 1990s that created the need for image repair discourse. Under investigation is how she managed to defy traditional models of first ladies, weather the Whitewater Land Investigation, and survive the Monica Lewinsky scandal and the ways in which she attempted to (re)establish a favorable public image by applying and critiquing Benoit's theory of image repair. This article analyzes which technique(s) she used that is similar and/or different across the incidents to demonstrate that Mrs. Clinton is defined by a historical trajectory, rather than a single image-challenging event. This study reveals that Benoit's image repair typology is most effective when multiple categories are used in combination in order to most effectively facilitate a repaired image. Moreover, this study reveals that the combination of denial and reducing offensiveness were Mrs. Clinton's main approach to image repair.

## **KEYWORDS**

Hillary Clinton; Image Repair; William Benoit; Apologia; First Lady, gender norms, performativity

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Contact information: Dr. Denise Oles-Acevedo, Iowa State University, 320 Carver Hall, Ames, IA 50011, <mailto:dolesa@iastate.edu>

## I. Introduction

Radical feminist, greedy attorney, forgiving wife, co-president – no matter how Hillary Clinton is described controversy is never far behind. Starting with her first public role as first lady, Senator, presidential nominee, Mrs. Clinton’s time in the spotlight is marred often by image problems. Varying from issues over her appearance,<sup>1</sup> being subpoenaed to testify before a grand jury, her open involvement in her husband’s campaigns as well as her public policy influence during Mr. Clinton’s terms as Arkansas Governor and United States President, Mrs. Clinton has had to repeatedly manage image challenges. Gutin (2003) summarizes Mrs. Clinton’s public turmoil, writing, “It is doubtful that any first lady experienced more highs and lows during her first ladyship or was more polarizing – both loved and despised – than Hillary Clinton” (p. 279). Beasley (2005) echoes Gutin’s thoughts, writing, “. . . Clinton was an independent woman and vilified as a power-mad consort, accused of overarching ambition that negated feminine nature” (p. 224). Mrs. Clinton entered the Washington scene well-educated, career oriented, independent, and by her own admission, an outspoken first lady (Rodham Clinton, 2003). She was criticized because she overtly took a non-traditional approach to her role as the wife of an American President, creating her need for image repair.<sup>2</sup>

As Mrs. Clinton has evolved from a first lady known for her political gaffes and brazen nature into a prominent political figure whose public discourse has become more measured and moderate, it is important to understand the phenomenon that is Hillary Clinton. She is a moving target who has reinvented herself from political bumbler to U.S. Senator, to viable presidential candidate, to Secretary of State. Most perplexing about her political trajectory is the direct attacks that she has undergone and the scandals that she has survived. The scandal survival during her first ladyship facilitated her transformation into the political player she is today.

In this article, I will critically analyze image damaging incidents that Mrs. Clinton faced in the 1990s, as first lady and the ways in which she attempted to (re)establish a favorable public image by applying and critiquing Benoit’s theory of image repair. Specifically under investigation is how she managed to defy traditional models of first ladies, weather the Whitewater Land Investigation, and survive the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Because Mrs. Clinton is a prominent public figure, data was collected primarily from online procurement of newspaper articles from nationally recognized news sources. Additionally, transcripts are analyzed from the media blitzes that led to and/or followed each aforementioned image crisis as well as sections from Mrs. Clinton’s biography *A Living History* relevant to the specific incidences under investigation.

This study draws conclusions about Mrs. Clinton’s over-reliance on denial as a first step to image repair, shows that Benoit’s image repair strategies are not mutually exclusive, but most effective when used in combination, and the ways in which gender expectations play a role in creating a need for image repair. Moreover, this paper analyzes which technique(s) she used that is similar and/or different across the three incidents that span the 1990s to demonstrate that Mrs. Clinton is defined by a historical trajectory, rather than a single image challenging event.

## II. The Hillary Factor

Women who occupy the space of the first lady face numerous tests. One of the main challenges she faces is figuring out “when to speak, what to say, when to remain silent” (Wertheimer, 2005, p. ix). She is expected to fulfill a role that is both public and private in order to become “an idealized vision of woman when one no longer exists” (KohrsCampbell, 1998, p. 15). The first lady’s influence on political matters is not easy to decipher, but what is clear is that she has the ability to influence the political process, but she must do so in a quiet and dignified manner (Anderson & Baxendale, 1992). Conventionally, the public is resistant to a first lady actively involved in anything more than ceremony, as public affairs should be left to the president and his staff (Burrell, 2001).

A sharp departure from conventionality was Hillary Clinton’s approach to first ladyship. She “elected to systematically and consciously to play a public policy role, a choice that defines her first ladyship as a clearer, more explicit violation of gender roles than has been the case with any other presidential spouse” (KohrsCampbell, 1998, p. 14). Scholars such as Judith Butler (1999) posit that gender is no longer simply understood as a biological construct, as gender is a performance more than it is a matter of biology. Butler (1999) disrupts the notion that gender is determined by sex. She argues that gender is a product of performativity. Performativity, in this sense, is used to understand how people behave and the power associated with performing certain social roles. In other words, she says that gender is performative, and not a fixed point of agency, as identity emerges from the repetition of stylized gender acts (Butler, 1999, p. 179). The cultural standards of the gendered performance of a first lady generally limit her performance to one of a supporting position. A proper performance for the first lady is to “reflect male power” and to “support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power” (Templin, 1999, p. 22). Mrs. Clinton’s deviation from tradition caused her image to be regularly scrutinized by the popular press for the ways in which she attempted to change the role of first lady.

Throughout Mrs. Clinton’s tenure as a public figure she has produced image repair discourse in an attempt to establish and maintain a favorable image. Mrs. Clinton’s more aggressive and masculine gender performance created a negative public framing, which created a series of situations requiring rhetorical responses in order to prevent a minor incident from becoming a serious threat to her already challenged image. A contributing factor to the Hillary problem was the news media’s framing of certain stories that tended “to be long-lasting and influence[d] later choices for both the media and its consumers” (Kelley, 2001, p. 152). Shawn Parry-Giles (2000) argues, “For most of us, the way in which we “know” Hillary Rodham Clinton is through mediated discourse,” and much of the mediated discourse was stereotypical (p. 206). As first lady she was “depicted as a career woman turned feared feminist, a sometimes all-powerful First Lady who becomes a more traditional “good mother,” and a “stand by your man” wife who is victimized by a cheating husband” (Parry-Giles, 2000, p. 206-07).

Two separate incidents during Mr. Clinton’s first election campaign caused mini-image crises for Mrs. Clinton, which created the need for her to defend and repair her image. The first surrounded her husband’s alleged infidelity and the second, her now infamous “stand by your man” reference, which led many to question her opinion toward stay at home mothers. The news

media fueled these two crises by decontextualizing her original statements. Then, during Mr. Clinton's first term, the Whitewater Land "scandal" surfaced followed by the Lewinsky saga.

***Stand by Your Man.*** During a [60-Minutes](#) interview as the Clintons attempted to dispel rumors about a 12-year affair Mr. Clinton had with nightclub singer and Arkansas employee Gennifer Flowers, reporter Steve Kroft asked the Clintons a series of questions about their relationship, their marriage, and Flowers, a woman the Clintons said was a "friendly acquaintance" ("Adultery Accusations," 1992). In the interview, Mr. Clinton denied ever having an affair with Flowers, but Kroft kept prodding for more information about the Clinton's rumored troubled marriage. Mr. Clinton defended their marriage by denying it was an arrangement or understanding and stating that they are two people who love each other. Mrs. Clinton's first mini-crisis occurred as she attempted to refute that their marriage was an arrangement just as Mr. Clinton had done, however, the phrasing of her refutation created a sound bite which was publicized out of context that made her come across as cold, standoffish, and quick tempered. Publicized out of context was, "You know, I'm not sitting here some little woman standing by my man like Tammy Wynette..." ("Adultery Accusations," 1992, para. 42). Left out was, "I'm sitting here because I love him and I respect him and I honor what he's been through and what we've been through together. And you know, if that's not enough for people, then heck, don't vote for him" ("Adultery Accusations," 1992, para. 42). The problem with the comment was not that she referenced Wynette's famous song *Stand by Your Man*, but that some construed the remark, especially because of the editing, as attacking Wynette and that Mrs. Clinton's conduct was questionable because she was not behaving in a feminine manner, as is expected of first ladies (Anderson & Baxendale, 1992). According to KohrsCampbell (1998), being feminine means, "adopting a personal or self-disclosing tone... while speaking" in order to create identification (p. 5). Mrs. Clinton, however, speaks using the tone in which she has been trained as a "lawyer, advocate, and expert" (p. 6), which elicited harsh public reaction to her comments. Mrs. Clinton personally apologized to Wynette and then publicly during a campaign stop in Colorado.

***Baking Cookies and Hosting Teas.*** During a campaign stop in Chicago, a reporter asked Mrs. Clinton what she thought of accusations made by then Democratic presidential candidate and former California Governor Jerry Brown that when Mr. Clinton was governor of Arkansas, he purposefully directed state business to the Rose Law Firm to increase Mrs. Clinton's salary. She replied, "I thought, number one, [the remark] was pathetic and desperate, and also thought it was interesting because this is the sort of thing that happens to... women who have their own careers and their own lives. And I think it's a shame, but I guess it's something that we're going to have to live with" (Rodham Clinton, 2003, p. 109). A follow-up question was asked about whether the Clinton's could have done things differently when Mr. Clinton was Governor to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, which instigated the cookies and teas comment. "You know, I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas, but what I decided to do was fulfill my profession, which I entered before my husband was in public life. And I've worked very, very hard to be as careful as possible, and that's all I can tell you" (Rodham Clinton, 2003, p. 109).

The "cookies and teas" comment created a second scandal for Mrs. Clinton which came less than two months after the Wynette incident, that she had to address because the press

interpreted the comment as having “demeaned traditional women and their homemaking priorities” (Gould, 1996, p. 639). Just like the *Stand by Your Man* comment, the transformation of a well-made statement into a decontextualized news media sound bite, spun a relatively harmless remark into a direct attack against stay at home mothers. The interpretation of the sound bite illustrates what Jamieson (1995) and others refer to as the competency/femininity double-bind that women have to negotiate. The negotiation is figuring out how to “walk a fine line between being regarded as too feminine...or too tough” (p. 121). The comment, which was taken out of context by media critics, illustrates the difficulty Mrs. Clinton had negotiating her position as potential first lady and the way in which she articulated her struggle to define her place in public life. Clear from the remark is that she struggled to balance her public and private life, and her roles as wife, mother, and career woman. Moreover, the statement illustrates that she felt a need to justify the choices that she made in regards to family and career, something a man most likely would never feel compelled to defend.

**Whitewater or Wifewater.**<sup>3</sup> Speculation of fraud and wrongdoing was rampant with the land deal scandal commonly referred to as Whitewater. This complicated scenario always had more to do with Mrs. Clinton than Mr. Clinton. There are several key factors in the Whitewater case that negatively affected the first lady’s image and trustworthiness when they became publicly known. She, not only to save her image, but that of her husband, had to provide a narrative that competed with the one being circulated by the news media and the independent counsel. The couple initially thought the investigation would clear up the rumors about Whitewater that were “drowning out Bill’s message” (Rodham Clinton, 2003, p. 213). The investigation revealed that Mrs. Clinton was legal counsel for James and Susan McDougal and the failed Madison Savings and Loan.<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Clinton’s position as legal counsel led to questions about how she became a billing partner on the account given her business involvement with McDougal and her husband’s position as governor, whose office regulated McDougal’s thrift. As the investigation into Whitewater began, questions were raised about how much and what type of work Mrs. Clinton did for Madison Savings and Loan. On January 26, 1996, Mrs. Clinton made history by being the first, first lady requested to testify before a grand jury about the land deal.

**The Lewinsky Affair.** The final area of inquiry into the first lady’s image repair strategies is to investigate her approach to dealing with the backlash she experienced when she announced that she was staying with her husband despite his public admission of an affair with then 21-year-old White House Intern Monica Lewinsky. Mr. Clinton was under scrutiny for Whitewater, sexual impropriety with Gennifer Flowers, Paula Jones and then Monica Lewinsky, which led to accusations of wrongdoing like marital infidelity and lying to a grand jury. This was capped off with a case built on 11 grounds as to why the President should be impeached based on a series of statements made regarding his sexual relationships, which caused him, and subsequently the first lady, trouble.

Mrs. Clinton was by the President’s side during his eight years in office, despite his tenure being marred by scandal. She referred to the Lewinsky investigation as “a vast right-wing conspiracy” (which included the independent counsel) against her husband during a [Today Show](#) interview with Matt Lauer where she staunchly supported her husband<sup>5</sup> (“Clinton Discusses Allegations,” 1998, para. 76). During this interview, Mrs. Clinton referred to the events as a “battle” and that the series of mini-crises that make up the saga were caused by a conspiracy to

take down her husband. The exchange between Lauer and Mrs. Clinton continued as she answered questions about her husband's character, if she had ever met Lewinsky, if Lewinsky had been given preferential treatment by Mr. Clinton and other White House staff members, and the like.<sup>6</sup> She acknowledged metaphorically that there was a lot of 'smoke' billowing around this battle, but there were no combustible materials to make fire. The smoke though can be attributable to Mr. Clinton's previous statement of having caused pain to the Clintons' marriage. Mrs. Clinton denied Lauer's notion that Mr. Clinton could have caused pain to their marriage a second time, "...I have learned a long time ago that the only people who count in a marriage are the two that are in it. We know everything there is to know about each other, and we understand and accept and love each other. And I just think that a lot of this is deliberately designed to sensationalize charges against my husband, because everything else they've tried has failed ("Clinton Discusses Allegations," 1998, para. 68).

Mrs. Clinton had to take deliberate steps to combat the negative press coverage of these particular incidents by offering her account or explanation regarding the incident to protect her image. Many studies confirm the need to immediately address an alleged act of wrongdoing, and that remaining silent can exacerbate a small image-challenging event. To analyze Mrs. Clinton's image repair discourse about these four incidents, Benoit's theory of image repair, which operates as prosthesis to the more traditional approach of apologia, is used.

### III. Fixing the Hillary Factor – Image Repair Analysis

Previous apologia literature focuses on what individuals and organizations should do before and after a crisis while Benoit's theory provides insight as to how to construct the rhetoric or the message about the crisis (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997). Put simply, Benoit's theory provides a mechanism for analyzing what individuals, groups, and organizations can say when faced with a crisis as it provides insight into message design. When analyzing the different areas where image repair may become necessary (entertainment, sports, corporate, religious or political), Benoit (1997) posits that no matter what arena one is studying, image and reputation are extremely important; "discourse can be a remedy for threats to image; and although which strategies are used most often, or which are most appropriate, may vary, the same options are open to all rhetors" (para. 22).

Benoit and Brinson (1994) define image restoration as a recurring type of discourse "designed to restore face, image, or reputation after alleged or suspected wrong-doing" (p. 75). The utility in Benoit's theory, according to Ulmer (1998), is the comprehensive nature of his work as "he extends the work of Ware and Linkugel by merging the impression management literature, rhetorical theory and the...rhetorical genre of apologia" (p. 45). Benoit's typology includes five main strategies of action to employ in the repair of an image which include denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification<sup>7</sup> (see Benoit, 1995; Benoit & Hanczor, 1994; Benoit & McHale, 1999; Blaney & Benoit, 2001; Brinson & Benoit, 1996). This study reveals that Mrs. Clinton used denial and reducing offensiveness as her main approaches to repairing her challenged image.

**Denial.** This is the simple denunciation of wrongdoing or the shifting of blame to another party (Benoit, 1995). The act of denial can include refuting the offensive act occurred. A

second denial strategy is to shift blame to another group or individual. In this case, the rhetor finds a scapegoat to blame for the indiscretion. Nonetheless, the accused denies any involvement. If the action of denial is successful, little damage should occur to the challenged image; however, it is unlikely that the image will immediately rebound from the incident.

The initial image saving responses by Mrs. Clinton to the cookies and tea, stand by your man, and the Lewinsky scandal was denial, as was her approach to the Whitewater scandal where she denied lying, cheating, obstructing justice, and having done anything that would have given the impression of misconduct by her or her husband. The denial strategy for Mrs. Clinton should have worked in each case given that she was truthful about the intent of her words (when taken in context) and that she legally did nothing wrong in the Whitewater case. In the first three incidents, denial was not enough as the public wanted explanations for her actions, thus it needed to be paired with other strategies. Moreover, denial did not work for the complicated mess known as Whitewater because there were so many conflicting stories, misplaced documents, obstruction of justice charges, indicted partners, seemingly ethical violations, negative commentaries by journalists, in conjunction with the independent counsel investigation. Benoit (1995) concludes that denial may be accompanied by “explanations of apparently damaging facts or lack of supporting evidence” which to some degree was done by Mrs. Clinton as she refuted every charge brought against her and argued (as her husband did) that the Whitewater investigation was a smear campaign against them (p. 75). This was a weak strategy because by the time the Whitewater investigation was complete, it was clear that she may not have done anything legally corrupt, but her involvement in the case created a clear conflict of interest which made some question her ethics.

Analyzing Mrs. Clinton’s “battle” rhetoric about the Lewinsky scandal, she again uses denial as a way to deal with this crisis created by her husband’s enemies. She repeated her husband’s denial of wrongdoing, she denied the accuracy of the media’s portrayal of the situation, and she denied that the crisis was anything of their doing. Put simply, she shifted the blame or scapegoated others for the current image-challenging event. Most importantly though is to recognize that throughout her rhetoric of denial is the fact that she created a narrative to compete with the one being put forth by the independent counsel’s office. As previous research on crisis and image management indicates, individuals and organizations need to attempt to control the flow of information about their reputation in a favorable manner during an image-threatening situation, with the ultimate goal of shaping the issue in favor of the individual or organization (Kuhn, 1997). When control is taken of the situation, it is then possible to draw attention away from the alleged wrongdoing. When Mrs. Clinton planted the conspiracy seed in the public’s mind and used the metaphor of a battle, attention was diverted away from the Lewinsky scandal and placed on the conspirators and the allegedly politically motivated special prosecutor. This strategy opened up the question of whether there was substance behind the latest scandal. In essence, Mrs. Clinton told the public and the media to pay attention to her conspiracy theory and ignore the allegedly false accusations of the Clintons’ enemies by denying that neither she nor her husband was to blame for the latest scandal.

***Reducing offensiveness.*** Reducing offensiveness of an act occurs when the offender asks the public to view the mistake or action as minor—less offensive than first thought (Benoit, 1995). A rhetor may employ one of six strategies in order to reduce offensiveness, which include



bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attack accuser, and compensation (Benoit, 1995). Bolstering is used when actors attempt to survive an image threat by relying on their good reputation to make up for the undesirable act. A rhetor may also attempt to minimize the harmful feelings attributed to the negative act by claiming the action is not as serious as first thought. Differentiation and transcendence are similar attempts to reduce offensiveness. Differentiation tries to persuade the audience that the act is less offensive than similarly committed wrongdoings by presenting the incident with more favorable language, while transcendence uses a claim that a higher value will result from the necessary wrongdoing. Another strategy is to attack the accusing organization's credibility in order to reduce the sympathy received by the injured party. Finally, the act of reducing offensiveness is to offer compensation.

The image saving responses to *Stand by your Man and Cookies and Teas* incidents were attempts to deny that her words were intentional and to reduce the offensiveness of the ways in which her words were interpreted. She tried to explain, clarify, and defend her choice of words in order to minimize the negative impact and negative framing of her character by the popular media, illustrating that Benoit's typology is most effective when used in combination. Reducing offensiveness was the most logical image repair attempt after denial for these two particular situations because a rhetor may attempt to diminish the offensiveness of an act by trying "to reduce the degree of ill feeling experienced by the audience" (Benoit, 1995, p. 77). Her goal with the cookies and tea comment was to illustrate the tough choices women are often faced with as women's roles in society change; however, the press categorized her attempt to explain her situation as another political mistake and that she held a negative opinion against traditional women. Through misinterpretation and the news media frenzy that followed the cookie and tea comment, transcendence would not work to save Mrs. Clinton's troubled image. She acknowledged, though awkwardly, that working women make tough choices between professional careers and their families; however, the sound bite produced emphasized an either/or reading—that you were either a career woman or a mother, but that you could not do both. A more effective approach would have been to pair denial with defeasibility and reducing offensiveness. These two strategies would have allowed her to claim that she was unaware that the public would have interpreted her work as a lawyer as a conflict of interest in addition to explaining that the apparent conflict of interest was not as serious as reported, thus reducing the offensiveness of the act. The strong denial stance she took made her appear in the court of public opinion that she had something to hide in the Whitewater case.

**Mortification.** The final image repair strategy is mortification – admitting responsibility, expressing regret for the action, and then asking for forgiveness (Benoit, 1995). The rhetor does not challenge the assigned blame nor does he/she try to defer the offensiveness of the action. It is hoped that by taking responsibility and sincerely apologizing for the action, the audience will forgive the incident, thus aiding in the repair of the image. Benoit (1995) does recommend combining mortification with another image repair strategy such as corrective action to prevent a recurrence of the incident.

In addition to denying her *Stand by Your Man and Cookies and Teas* comments were malicious, and attempting to reduce the offensiveness of her comments, her public apology engaged mortification in order to sincerely apologize and express regret for her actions. The



troubled relationship the Clintons had with the media was partially attributable to the fact that “the press has become obsessed with gossip rather than governance...[and] as a result, its political coverage produces trivialization rather than enlightenment” (Sabato, 1991, p. 6). One can posit that this incident would not have existed if the press had not taken her original comment out of context and turned mis-worded responses into gossip and rumors.

Some organizations have successfully engaged in image repair (see Benoit, 1997; Benoit & McHale, 1999) while others have failed (see Benoit & Hanczor, 1994). The successful application of the discourse has resulted in a successful repair of the threatened image; however, if an individual or organization uses the wrong strategy or combination of techniques, the damaged image may not be repaired. The commonality between all applications of the theory is that it is in response to a specific image-damaging crisis.

#### **IV. Conclusions**

First ladies have a very specific set of expectations placed on them regarding how they should dress, what they can say and how they can act because they are one of the most scrutinized women in the United States. Departures from traditional behavior invite criticism and backlash from the public and the media, which were hard lessons learned by Mrs. Clinton. During the early days of her husband’s first presidential campaign and through most of Mr. Clinton’s eight years as President, she struggled to figure out exactly what her role was. Mrs. Clinton’s frequent missteps not only damaged her image, but that of her husband’s, creating sayings such as the Hillary Factor and the Hillary Problem. In order to alleviate the factor or the problem, she had to take steps to repair her damaged image. It was important that Mrs. Clinton respond to the events that challenged her image because her image was directly connected to her husband’s, which had the potential of damaging his image and his presidential aspirations. The image challenging events investigated here once again illustrate that when an image is challenged, steps must be taken to repair or save the image.

A common theme that appears in each of Mrs. Clinton’s repair attempts is that of denial, not denial of having been involved in the particular incident but denial that her words or actions were designed to cause damage to either the president or the symbolic position of first lady. Denial is an important defense strategy for several reasons. During her initial gaffes about Tammy Wynette and baking cookies, she had to deny that her comments were intentionally malicious in nature toward traditional womanhood because to do otherwise would alienate a large segment of the voting public. A first lady cannot appear to be anti-home and anti-family, as these characteristics are not found in a dignified first lady.

Mrs. Clinton also had to deny that the mess that became known as Whitewater was solely of her doing since it was her idea to partner with the McDougal’s. The one issue that really prevented Mrs. Clinton from walking away with a repaired image, even after the independent counsel cleared her and Mr. Clinton of any wrongdoing, was the appearance of impropriety. In other words, though denial was the right approach because the allegations against her in the end were unsubstantiated, denial did little to repair her image because the seed of doubt lingered in the public and media’s mind. Denial was ineffective because of the time span from when the allegations were first made and the couple was cleared of wrongdoing. Pairing denial with other

strategies, as previously mentioned, would have given the President and first lady the opportunity to defuse the growing hostility over this incident. Moreover, Benoit's typology does not account for a situation like this – it does not provide suggestions for analysis or appropriate discourse on how to repair an image when the audience believes the appearance of impropriety despite the fact that the allegations were proven false. A significant part of her repair discourse was when she shifted the blame for the saga to the office of the independent counsel saying it was a vendetta, conspiracy, and a smear campaign. Shifting the blame allowed her to transfer the focus onto someone besides her or Mr. Clinton in addition to creating a narrative to compete with the one reported by the media and created doubt about the veracity of the investigation; however, pointing fingers at someone else offered little explanation about the situation. The narrative of the conspiracy theory and overzealous independent counsel returned in Mrs. Clinton's defense rhetoric regarding the Lewinsky affair. Though she was not trying to repair her image directly during this crisis, she was attempting to save the image of her husband, her marriage, and the office of the presidency. During the Lewinsky affair, Mrs. Clinton began to act as a more traditional first lady, which in the end led to an improved personal image because for the first time she was the supporting wife. In other words, Mrs. Clinton's image improved when her marriage was strained, because she stood by her husband.

On the surface she may not appear to have the facade of a traditional first lady, but in the end it was partially because she stood by her man, supported and defended him, that her husband's presidency survived. The Hillary factor or the Hillary problem that initially received so much negative press helped save a presidency and facilitated her reinvention from political bumper to viable presidential candidate to Secretary of State.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Clinton's plain dress, lack of makeup and uncoiffed hair was subject to much commentary.

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Clinton's appointment to the president's taskforce on healthcare reform drew criticism because a first lady never before held an office in the White House or had a defined role in public policy.

<sup>3</sup>*The Economist* originally coined the Whitewater Land investigation as Wifewater.

<sup>4</sup>McDougal's were the Clinton's business associates in the Whitewater Land deal.

<sup>5</sup> The interview six days into the crisis, according to NBC transcripts, had been scheduled prior to the news of the Lewinsky affair in order for Mrs. Clinton to talk about childcare.

<sup>6</sup> Lewinsky was moved from the White House to the Pentagon and then granted a job interview with Bill Richardson at the United Nations, and recommendations for two jobs in New York City by Vernon Jordan.

<sup>7</sup>Evading Responsibility and Corrective Action are not defined in this study, as Mrs. Clinton did not employ these techniques.

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