

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Institute of International Studies
Department of North American Studies

Master's Thesis

2019

Anna Matějčková

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Institute of International Studies
Department of North American Studies

**What Type of First Lady Was Michelle Obama: Case
Study on Michelle Obama as First Lady**

Master's thesis

Author: Anna Matějčková

Study programme: North American Studies

Supervisor: Mgr. Jana Sehnálková

Year of the defence: 2019

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on July 31, 2019

Anna Matějčková

References

MATĚJČKOVÁ, Anna. *What Type of First Lady Was Michelle Obama: Case Study on Michelle Obama as First Lady*. Praha, 2019. 55 pages. Master's thesis (Mgr.). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of International Studies. Department of North American Studies. Supervisor Mgr. Jana Sehnálková

Length of the thesis: 111 132 words with spaces

Abstract

This Master's Thesis analyzes various roles that First Ladies of the United States take upon when their spouses are elected President of the United States. Even though the role of First Ladies is undefined, the public still expects a certain level of manners and dedication to their selected causes. The influence of First Ladies is, on the one hand limited by the fact that they do not have any real policies to follow. On the other hand, the platform of First Ladyship offers a great deal to influence and ability to raise awareness to causes they care about. The main argument is that Mrs. Obama had a particular skill to promote her initiatives and to turn negative attention by the media to the rights directions. Additionally, she was able to get the attention of corporations and state officials to help her make a real impact on her initiatives. Her authenticity and fun engaging style helped her with engaging young people into her campaigns and her status of popular First Lady. Therefore, the goal of this thesis is to find out how the role of First Lady changed during Michelle Obama's term as First Lady and what kind of influence her initiatives brought. Finally, the analyses shows that Michelle Obama was a very active First Lady that pushed the role of the First Lady forward. Her well thought initiatives and strategies helped her achieve both popularity and as well as actual results.

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá rolemi prvních dam Spojených států. Jejich úloha je často nelehká, protože instituce role první dámy jako taková není nikde oficiálně ustanovena. Přestože tomu tak je, tak se ze strany společnosti stále setkáváme s očekáváním ohledně jejich role, jejich vystupování a odpovědnosti k roli jako takové. Zároveň vliv umožňuje prvním damám využívat svou platformu pro neomezené množství účelů, zejména pak k etablování se pomocí iniciativ. První dáma Michelle Obamová využila platformy velmi inovativním způsobem, díky kterému zároveň využila zájem médií o svou osobu, pro účely propagace svých kampaní. Dále byla Michelle Obamová schopná svým vlivem a přístupem zapojit do svých iniciativ také nové aktéry jako jsou nadnárodní korporace nebo státní představitelé. Díky své autentičnosti a mladistvému přístupu dokázala přilákat a zapojit mladé publikum do svých iniciativ. Michele Obamová byla velmi aktivní první dámou a dokázala svůj vliv využívat jak v rámci popularizace své osoby, tak svých politických agend.

Keywords

Michelle Obama, Laura Bush, First Lady, initiatives, Reach Higher, Let Girls Learn, Joining Forces, Let's Move, celebrities, athletes, corporations, influence, role

Klíčová slova

Michelle Obamová, Laura Bushová, první dáma, iniciativy, Reach Higher, Let Girls Learn, Joining Forces, Let's Moce, známé osobnosti, sportovci, korporace, vliv, role

Title

What Type of First Lady Was Michelle Obama: Case Study on Michelle Obama as First Lady

Název práce

Michelle Obamová jako první dáma: Případová studie

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude for those who enabled me to interview them for the purpose of writing this Master's Thesis. I sincerely thank my amazing thesis supervisor, Mgr. Jana Sehnálková for her patience and time that she spent consulting my drafts. I am also grateful to the diploma seminar supervisor, Lucie Kýrová, M.A, Ph.D. for making time for me with her consultations and helpful tips on the writing process.

Also, many thanks to my dear family for their support.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
INTRODUCTION	2
1. DEFINING THE ROLE OF FIRST LADY	5
1.1 <i>Defining the role of First Ladies by setting up initiatives</i>	9
1.2 <i>Defining the role of First Ladies through media</i>	11
1.3 <i>Defining the role of First Ladies through criticism</i>	14
1.4 <i>Defining the role of First Ladies through fashion</i>	16
2. ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA THROUGH HER INITIATIVES	19
2.1 <i>First Lady Laura Bush</i>	20
2.1.1 <i>Reading</i>	20
2.1.2 <i>Women Empowerment</i>	21
2.1.3 <i>Healthcare</i>	22
2.1.4 <i>Influences and Impact of Mrs. Laura Bush as First Lady</i>	22
2.2 <i>First Lady Michelle Obama</i>	23
2.2.1 <i>Family First</i>	23
2.2.2 <i>Michelle Obama’s narrative</i>	24
2.2.3 <i>Let’s Move</i>	26
2.2.4 <i>Joining Forces</i>	31
2.2.5 <i>Education focused: Reach Higher and Let Girls Learn</i>	34
2.2.6 <i>Influence and Impact of Michelle Obama as First Lady</i>	37
3. ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF FORMER FIRST LADIES	39
CONCLUSION	43
SUMMARY	45
LIST OF REFERENCES	46

Introduction

This Master's Thesis analyzes various roles that First Ladies of the United States take upon when their spouses are elected President of the United States. Even though the role of First Ladies is undefined, and the public still expects a certain level of manners and dedication to their selected causes. The influence of First Ladies on the one hand limited by the fact that they do not have any real policies to follow. On the other hand, the platform of First Ladyship offers a great deal to influence and raise awareness to causes they care about.

When I first started to look into the topic of First Ladies of the United States, I realized that it plays perfectly into the evolution of women's empowerment since First Ladies throughout the history helped shaped stereotypes of what women should do. Having role models that people can look up to is very important to have, and so First Ladies can also serve as a great example of such role models for young people, especially girls and women. First Ladies of the 20th century became more socially and publicly engaged, and their initiatives were that more publicized and promoted.

Also popularizing the role of First Ladies through fashion, interviews, engaging in campaigns helped make the role more relevant to the public and the media. Due to the work of Michelle Obama, we can see an increasing interest in the role of First Ladies. She was able to take her role as the First Lady to a whole different level by including young people into her campaigns as well as presenting herself in media and more importantly in popular TV shows and programs alongside celebrities and famous TV personnel.

This thesis analyzes the shift in the role and influence of the First Lady during Michelle Obama's term as First Lady. Several examples from Laura Bush's time as First Lady will show where the role was when Mrs. Obama became First Lady. First Ladies of the United States are very intriguing, they show the developing role of women in society as a whole, and at the same time, they have their unique ways to push the limits of role forward. Limits that are social construct since they are not established in any official form.

The main argument is that Mrs. Obama had a particular skill to promote her initiatives and to turn negative attention by the media to the rights directions. Additionally, she was able to get the attention of corporations and state officials to help her make a real impact on her initiatives. Her authenticity and fun engaging style helped her with engaging young people into her campaigns and her status of popular First Lady. Therefore, the goal of this

thesis is to find out how the role of First Lady was changed during Michelle Obama's term as First Lady and what kind of influence her initiatives brought.

Primary sources are the main sources of information of this thesis. I have extensively studied videos of panel talks, interviews, and speeches of Michelle Obama. Most of these are still available online, particularly on YouTube. For this thesis, I was also able to arrange three extensive, in-depth interviews with people who had closely followed the careers of First Lady Laura Bush and First Lady Michelle Obama. One of them was Richard Benedetto, a retired USA Today White House correspondent, and columnist. Thanks to his previous profession, Benedetto's insight into the topic of First Ladies of the United States is fascinating and offers a unique perspective and opinions.

I also had an opportunity with Melissa Winter, who is currently the Chief of Staff to Michelle Obama and has worked for Mrs. Obama since February 2007. She was the first staffer that Mrs. Obama hired. She brings a unique and extremely close insight into the world of First Ladies, especially to the works and ideas behind Mrs. Obama's eight years as the First Lady.

Another primary source is an interview with Natalie Gonnella-Platts, who is the director of the Women's Initiative at the George W. Bush Institute in Dallas, Texas. The initiative seeks to empower women in their communities to become leaders in their communities and countries. They work with grassroots advocates as well as high profile advocates like first spouses in supporting them to use the platform to effect change. To this thesis she brings extensive knowledge and analysis of the definition and evolution of the role of the First Ladies since in 2018, the George W. Bush Presidential Library presented a whole study on the influences and roles of First Ladies last year.

I was also able to attend one of Michelle Obama's talks on her European book tour in Amsterdam. She was very authentic and engaging with the audience. The whole experience was pretty much a show with an intimate interview in the middle. Michelle Obama talked about her struggles during the campaign trail, achievements that she sees in raising her daughters and her plans for the future as an empty nester.

During research for this thesis, I found that many authors start with Martha Washington's way of establishing the role of the First Ladies, continue with Eleanor Roosevelt's push for equality and women empowerment. They then continue with Jackie Kennedy and her fashion sense and restorations of the White House and usually finish with the political ambitions of Hillary Clinton. I try to avoid those typical introductory chapters.

The first chapter focuses on interviews with people around the First Ladies and authors trying to define the role as such. I then continue by describing the various goals that First Ladies set up before entering the Office. Finally, I also analyze the approach of the media and public towards the First Ladies. Secondary sources include historian of First Ladies like Robert Robert Watson (2001) and academic researches like Meyers and Goman (2002) or theorist Ralina Joseph (2011).

The next chapter focuses on two First Ladies and examines in detail their work and the reasons they chose their initiatives in the first place. Namely, I describe the work of Laura Bush as First Lady and First Lady Michelle Obama. In the key subchapter, I focus on Michelle Obama. I talk about her initiatives and reasons why she chose them and the tools she used to promote them. Concluding statement talks about where she was able to push the role of First Lady with her work. This part is based on many primary sources like interviews, biographies by the First Ladies themselves and references to news articles on various events hosted by the First Ladies. The chapter also includes academic papers, namely commentaries by MaryAnne Borelli (2013) and again, Meyers and Goman (2002). The most useful book was by Peter Slevin (2015), who describes Michelle Obama's life and life as First Lady. His book helped to navigate Mrs. Obama's various activities and social media presence. However, this is the only book that at least partially follows the various activities of First Ladies.

The third chapter discusses the life of First Ladies after the White House and how former First Lady Laura Bush and Michelle Obama handled the transition and how they are using the platform now. There are no academic sources that would examine the role of former First Ladies from a perspective of their post-White House activities. For this part, I refer to a few direct interviews with the First Ladies, their memoirs, and news articles.

Finally, the analyses show that Michelle Obama was a very active First Lady that pushed the role of the First Lady forward. Her well thought initiatives and strategies helped her achieve both popularity and as well as actual results.

1. Defining the role of First Lady

To define the role of First Ladies can be complicated since even academics, historians and commentators admit that it is difficult. The job and position that the First Lady holds are so broad as well as not adequately institutionalized that it makes it difficult to make any final definition of the term. Jill Hummer says that: “The first ladyship is a job that defies definition, even though it is endowed with power. The Constitution says nothing about it. Though the courts have ruled that the presidential spouse is a de facto federal official, it is a derivative position. She acts because she is married to the president” (Hummer 2017: 210). The complexity of this position is, therefore, necessarily linked to the changes over time, like women empowerment movement that brought changes, not only in the society but for the role of First Lady as well.

It also depends on each of the First Lady and her intentions that she has with the role. Richard Benedetto describes the role of the First Ladies as: “undefined and unsalaried, leaving each occupant of the office free to put her own personal stamp on the role she chooses to play” (Benedetto 2019).

Additionally: "We forget, and what is true in the United States and internationally, is that this is not necessarily an institutionalized role. We have the Office of the First Lady in the United States, but there is no formal document description, nowhere does it say the First Lady of the First Gentleman will do x-y-z (Gonnella-Platts 2019). Since there is no real documentation that would support the works and expectations of First Lady, then there is an issue with how to truly define the role. At the same time, this gives the First Ladies and an enormous amount of space to define the role based on their preferences.

First Ladies are often put into mainly two columns, and they are either passive or active First Ladies. Their role is somehow being measured by the public and the media based on the number of engagements or their appearances on TV. Their time spent on activities connected to their "role" is almost hijacked, and their work is judged based on "how many" activities they have going on. So, no matter what, they are still being judged for doing too much or too little. As Ms. Winter notes: "I think you cannot group first ladies into one headline. Everyone brings something different to an administration, and each one has to define the role for herself or else she goes through the motions. I am not a historian, but I do not know what a passive first lady would look like. I would submit that Mrs. Obama certainly was hands-on, fully engaged, and very strategic First Lady" (Winter, 2019). This speaks to

the sensitivities that we have about their role and what we think they should do and how much. Jill Hummer (2017) argues that those standards of activity should not classify First Ladies. That is because their situations are completely different based on the temporary situation. She also says that the role is always changing "based on patterns in history" when First Ladies act based on the historical period they live in, like the suffrage movement (Hummer 2017: 220; 223). As was the society progressing and evolving so was the role of First Ladies. These authors presented their point of view on the evolution aspect that is connected to the ladyship.

Additionally, the role of First Ladies is also defined by the roles that women were defined by during certain periods of time. As Mrs. Gonnella-Platts points out, the evolution of women in society helped First Ladies and vice versa: "As women stepped out more and more and asserting their influence and use of this platform to steward change or to get attention to issues or to support the policy goals of their respected spouse, or in a diplomatic sense, in context of hostess. (Gonnella-Platts, 2019). Robert Watson agrees that agrees that the First Ladies are an essential part of American history. He says that o topic needs to be discussed since they can be influential and offer role modeling features in terms of women studies (Watson 2002: 8).

However, Betty Caroli says that for the future she sees the role and expectations to evolve even more and that the traditional hostess role will be delegated on to third party like "protocol greeters", as she calls them (Caroli 1995: 359). Mr. Benedetto explains that those undefined lines are not so simple to erase because: "There are certain traditions and public expectations a First Lady is charged by the American public to uphold. For example, Americans expect the First Lady to follow the tradition created by the first First Lady, Martha Washington, to be the chief hostess for social and state events held at the White House" (Benedetto 2019). We can, therefore, assume that Martha Washington's position was indeed both simple as well as challenging. She had been faced with a task to manage the role, but since there was no example of how it should look, she had the opportunity to make it her own.

First Ladies who came after Mrs. Washington had, in a way, more defined patterns of expected behavior, than her. Those First Ladies could always count on traditions that Mrs. Washington established before them. However, the core of this thesis is that each First Lady makes the position she found herself in, her own. Robert Watson recognizes that the First Ladies hold several types of influential roles that are either historically established, like the

role of hostess or are developed through time, like advocate role. Watson emphasizes that since women were historically pushed aside, First Ladies championed goals of empowerment and showcase their influence even now (Watson 2001: 9; 13).

The Bush Institutes' research divides the roles into more specific and descriptive roles: *hostess*, *teammate*, *champion*, and *policy advocate*. According to Gonnella-Platts, there is only a limited amount of research conducted on the topic of First Ladies and their influence. The research they conducted by interviewing fourteen current and former First Ladies from around the world. They also tried to find similarities and connections as well as distinctions in the role in a much broader context (Gonnella-Platts 2019). Mrs. Gonnella-Platts says that: "We saw this evolution of the role, if you look into the American context into the days of Martha Washington, this hostess function is something that contributed to the early identity of this role, here in the United States. However, it is also paralleling, this hostess function of First Ladies, that takes effect internationally as well" (Gonnella-Platts 2019).

The hostess function is still expected from the First Ladies as it was established. However, Mr. Benedetto points out, that First Lady use events which the host also for promoting their causes: "I recall how Nancy Reagan hosted Christmas holiday events at the White House for the children of White House staffers and how she led efforts to discourage young people from getting involved with drugs with her "Just Say No" campaign" (Benedetto 2019). The roles of First Ladies are interchangeable, and through the years First Ladies were challenging the traditional ways of doing things and use several roles at once. Furthermore, it is important to think about the fact that: "The women in the position have primarily shaped the role, so their education, their background, where they grew up, their professional experiences and who they are as individuals really has a sizeable influence on this role" (Gonnella-Platts 2019).

As far as the role of a teammate goes, First Ladies can be used as a balancing force for their husband's causes. Robert Watson says that First Ladies act beside their husbands as: "presidential booster, spokesperson, and surrogate, traveling, appearing on behalf of the president, and even serving as his political adviser" (Watson 2002: 4). And Mr. Benedetto points out that: "Michelle Obama was promoting her causes and putting a friendly face on her husband's policies, even the more controversial ones such as Obamacare and while Obama was involved in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Michelle's advocacy for military families helped soften some of that news coverage" (Benedetto 2019). First Ladies are often

part of their husband's campaign trails. They can attract different types of crowds than the Presidential candidate would not. Especially now, people like to follow up on their careers, outlook on life, mothering skills as well as fashion.

Media like to report on presidential wives and potential First Ladies because the public show they interest in them through polls (MacManus – Quecan 2008: 337-338). First Ladies as teammates play an important role for their husbands when they support them through campaigning, choosing initiatives that are coherent with the administration of their husband, and supporting their views. One of the most known cases, where First Lady took over her husband' duties, was Eleanor Roosevelt, who: "raised the public profile of First Ladies by the role she played in going out around the country and acting as the eyes and ears of her husband, President Franklin Roosevelt, who was limited in his travel because of his inability to walk due to paralysis. Thus, she was a familiar figure in the news during the Depression and World War II visiting coal mines, poor neighborhoods, schools, shipyards, military hospitals, and defense plants" (Benedetto 2019).

First Ladies are also expected to hold a role for comforters and again a balancer during difficult situations and after tragic events. As Melissa Winter (2019) recalls several mass shootings after which Mrs. Obama had to make visits and comfort people affected by them: "There was just so many times where she was comforter-in-chief, she was alongside her husband. It is a very hard thing to do when a nation is mourning, and a nation is feeling pain, and I can only imagine a fraction of what Mrs. Bush went through during 9/11" (Winter 2019). The role holds more than diplomatic standards and creating initiatives. This showcased the ad hoc situation that is required for the first ladies to be actively engaging in. Therefore, we may add to the undefined definition of the role that the First Ladies should be available to the public in cases of crisis. This role is very demanding, and yet it has not any real rule book.

Furthermore, First Ladies are seen promoting particular issues important to them or society in general. As Mrs. Gonnella-Platts says: "You can see First Ladies take on this role of a champion and policy advocate. Even though these influences existed, champion and policy advocate, it was not until later half of the 20th century that you can see first ladies being recognized for their advocacy" (Gonnella-Platts 2019). These categories speak to the nature of how we can see all the aspects of the First Ladies' role as a complex issue and not just one position of well-dressed women who host prestigious dignitaries from around the

world. Furthermore, mainly, the last category brings us to the next chapter that focuses on First Ladies and their thought process when choosing initiatives and policy agendas.

1.1 Defining the role of First Ladies by setting up initiatives

When new President is elected, his spouse has to manage the almost impossible: taking care of her family, moving and settling in a new house, creating a team of staff, and come up with her agenda and policies. All of which she does while in a public eye. In this chapter, we discuss how and why First Ladies choose their causes that they want to work on. The authenticity, life, and professional experience play a huge role in the next four or eight years that the First Lady spends in the White House.

Roberts Watson says that First Ladies are both scrutinized for choosing initiatives, as he calls them "pet projects" because the public still expects from First Ladies not to be as active. When the public thinks that First Ladies is too dominant, they like to criticize her. Watson, however, points out that at the same time, those polls show a keener relationship from the public to the First spouses than the President (Watson 2002: 5-7).

Experts (Watson 2001: 9; Hummer 2017: 221-223; Gonnella-Platts 2019) agree that factors that play into agenda-setting of First Ladies initiatives vary from the authenticity of one's experiences, professional or educational, mothering, the time period they serve as First Ladies and also women empowerment. Authenticity has been the key player for most of the First Ladies throughout history, but more evidently, it is right for those in the late 20th century. That is when they embraced their newly gained power and decided to focus on their passions through initiatives and to be outspoken about issues they care about. Mr. Benedetto explains that: "Each First Lady usually picks an interest or a cause which she feels strongly about and then uses her high-profile Office to promote and aid that cause. For example, Jackie Kennedy chose White House restoration and preservation. Lady Bird Johnson promoted highway beautification, Roslyn Carter advocated for better mental health care and treatment, Barbara Bush led efforts to improve adult and children's literacy" (Benedetto 2019).

First Ladies often speak up or speak against causes that are relevant to the time in history in which they found themselves. Some of those examples were mentioned above, like the mass shootings for Michelle Obama or 9/11 for Laura Bush. The AIDS epidemic was an issue any First Lady before Barbara Bush did not pay any attention to. She went to a

hospice where she engaged with children and young patients, and she had no problem touching them and showing affection to the. As Mrs. Gonnella-Platts recalls: "This was the early 1990s, and there was still much stigma around HIV/AIDS, and it became an issue that she advocated for, but she knew the affluence of her position and the visibility of that. So, through that simple, very thoughtful action, she was able to challenge that stigma that existed" (Gonnella-Platts 2019). It is, in those instances, when a cause that would have never been foreseen suddenly appears as a new initiative or something that the First Lady can highlight when she is publicly speaking out or has a chance to speak to other public figures.

At the same time, it is also the ever-changing role of women in a society that First Ladies shine a light on. According to Gonnella-Platts, it was Laurence Harding who fought for the separation of men and women in prisons, since until then women were incarcerated next to men, which lead to possible abuse. She also recalls that Eleanor Roosevelt fought for women in remote communities, mainly Afro-American women, and fought for their equal rights. In the same category is Betty Ford and her, unfortunately, failed to fight for amending the Equal Rights Amendment, which would equalize the rights of men and women. Mrs. Bush and Mrs. Obama were amongst those who promoted equal opportunities in girls' education (Gonnella-Platts 2019). Jill Hummer also notices the shift in history during which First Ladies used their influence to highlight important issues. Hummer also analyzes the impact of womanhood and traditional women roles on First Ladies. She concludes that First Ladies, even though keen on speaking about women empowerment, are careful when it comes to controversial issues like abortion (Hummer 2017: 220; 222). This also showcases the evolution of the role where the priorities and expectations in society changed. First Ladies were then the most vocal advocates at times before the real change was established or agreed upon. And oftentimes, the main goal was to speak up for women's causes.

As for Mrs. Bush, it was her professional experience that decided her focus as First Lady. According to Melissa Winter: "Mrs. Bush, before she was the wife of the governor or the First Lady of the US, she was a librarian and she loved reading so one of the first things she did when she was the first lady is make reading a priority, and she worked very closely with the Library of Congress and their Annual Summer book fare out on the Mall. I think one of the characteristics for the First Lady is being authentic because I think people can sense when someone goes through the motions" (Winter 2019). There are tendencies to think that since First Ladies are usually women and mothers that they will be interested in one cause only, and that would be education. As Mrs. Gonnella-Platts states: "Education is a

popular topic, but I think that with scrutiny and the very bias narrative that exists about this role we tend to think that first lady should fully work on issues specific to children and that is not necessarily the case" (Gonnella-Platts 2019).

On the other hand, not all policy agendas work as First Ladies would wish for. Mr. Benedetto says that: "I also recall how Hillary Clinton got herself into political hot water and set off alarms by going past an invisible public line by taking on the role of a government staffer and leading the effort to reform the nation's health care system. A large chunk of the public felt she was going too far beyond tradition in taking an actual role in government policy. So, when her health care plan failed, she retreated to more-traditional First Lady roles" (Benedetto 2019). Mrs. Clinton stayed vocal on the issue even though she was not able to establish this particular government policy.

1.2 Defining the role of First Ladies through media

This chapter focuses on First Ladies and the media. A relationship that is driven by each other, as many public offices are. First Ladies need media presence to promote the public's interest drives their causes and media as never before. However, this chapter, among other things also shows that this relationship is not a topic of the only current era, but that media was used by First Ladies long before social media and all-day breaking news cycles. What generates news is the interest of the public and sales of those publications.

Richard Benedetto has first-hand knowledge about the media and their reporting and mindset when it comes to the coverage of the White House and their occupants. He explains the system of news outlets when they report on First Ladies: "It had long been a tradition in the news media to leave coverage of first ladies to reporters who covered lifestyle issues rather than day-to-day politics. However, as first ladies have become more politically active, starting with Hillary Clinton, reporters who cover the White House on a day-to-day basis have found themselves picking up more and more duties in covering first ladies" (Benedetto 2019).

Of course, the media interest in First Ladies has been powered long before Hillary Clinton. First Ladies and vice versa used the media since the late 19th century. The celebrity aspect, as well as the photo-op for the causes to be elevated, were those initial causes as to why use media. Mrs. Gonnella-Platts says that it was Florence Harding who used media to her advantage: "She very strategically used the media, used the photo opportunity to elevate

important issues. This includes the status of women in society at the time. She was the first First Lady who could vote for her husband. She was in the White House, just after women suffrage had passed and she very strategically would bring in the media in to showcase issues that were important to her.¹ Jackie Kennedy was the first First Lady to employ a press secretary” (Gonnella-Platts 2019). Jackie Kennedy was also the first to open doors to the White House through media and subsequently TV. It was for the first time that Americans could see what the residence looks like. She also made the White House available to artists to present their work (Graddy – Pastan, 2014: 39).

First Ladies themselves used the press and the interest of the public to promote awareness about their chosen causes. For that, they need to know the audience and what kind of message and in what form they are most likely to receive it well. Generally speaking, traditional political shows do not have the audiences that the First Lady needs. Their focus is mostly ordinary people with everyday jobs and everyday concerns.

Therefore, First Ladies strategy to use media and press as the deliberate tool to promote their message. For example, Betty Ford has been elevated by Mrs. Gonnella-Platts in at least three instances ² where she used media. Not only that Betty Ford’s goal was to inform the public about what was going on in her life but also warn them and be open the issues that were taboo at that time. As Mrs. Gonnella-Platts says: “She knew that by being open, by being public and engaging with media that it wasn’t just about the level of transparency for her, the first family, the administration but it was also about using the media, using the interest that was garnered about this very personal battle to inform other women, to come forward and be screened and not to be afraid and to confront stigma that exists around this disease. She did that again with relations to her very public addiction, again addressing the stigma of mental health and addiction” (Gonnella-Platts 2019).

¹Florence Harding hosted a group of women suffrage from the Philippines who were still fighting for the right to vote in their country and had a photo-op, giving them visibility and attention to the issue and also projecting through the media her sense of values and appreciation for really pushing through the barriers” (Gonnella-Platts, 2019).

² “Betty Ford was very vocal and used opportunities to speak on the International Year of the Woman about the Equal Rights Amendment, which was never ratified in the US, but she was very strategic in using opportunities, using the visibility platform and bring the interest of the media to highlight important issues. She was also very open and spoke publicly and got a lot of media coverage when she had her mastectomy and was treated for breast cancer” (Gonnella-Platts, 2019).

First Ladies have different ways to speak to their audience and different means they communicate with the public. For Laura Bush, the mean of talking to her audience was through radio. And it was Laura Bush who used radio to speak about the oppression and lack of opportunity for girls and women in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule. (Gonnella-Platts 2019). Ms. Winter sees Michelle Obama's media presence as a strategic move: "I think she understood very clearly that while her husband was president and he had a certain way of transmitting news, which was very traditional for the office of the president, that she as a first lady wanted to meet people where they were" (Winter, 2019).

Michelle Obama's approach was to connect with everyday Americans, and she knew that those everyday people were watching either daily shows like *Ellen* or night shows hosted by one person like Jimmy Fallon or James Corden. She also had a positive approach to all kinds of social media, like Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook. She knew that at those places, she would find her audience, which was moms (Winter 2019). As Ms. Winter describes the intentions and goals of Mrs. Obama and her "Let's Move" initiative: "If she wanted to talk to moms about the eating and making sure that their kids were getting enough exercise and getting outdoors and how to make sure that your school district was providing healthy school meals during the day, then she had to go where the moms were and in general, moms aren't looking at news that comes out of the White House press office. That's how she started this strategy of going on fun shows where she could convey a message and it was conveying in a fun way that made people want to go back and watch it over and over, like Mom Dancing on Jimmy Fallon which you can watch ten, twenty times because it is fun but also part of her message which is get up and dance with your kids and get some exercise" (Winter 2019). This speaks very well to the notion of strategy as well as audience-focused messaging. This is to show the importance of the media for the Office of the First Lady.

Additionally, Ralina Joseph (2011: 56-57) presents her theory on post-identity and how Mrs. Obama was under attack for one televised event, and during one, she was able to "save herself". The first incident sparked questioning of Mrs. Obama's patriotism. During the second live event, she was able to retrieve and gain her influence back on *The View*. Joseph analyzes Mrs. Obama's speech and the use of words that are inclusive and not at all threatening. She calls her safe "media makeover". Mrs. Obama and her team were able to save the campaign by using more inclusive words (Joseph 2011: 70-71).

1.3 Defining the role of First Ladies through criticism

However, the other side of the coin is how the media works with the news about First Ladies and how they portray them. Mr. Richard Benedetto notices that: “How the news media feel about a first lady plays a huge role in how the public perceives them. Michelle Obama was a media darling who could do no wrong. Her various child nutrition and physical fitness programs received tons of positive publicity in the news media. So, she was a tireless promoter of her causes and herself by going out and appearing on popular TV shows such as Jimmy Kimmel, The View and Late Night. Contrast that with Melania Trump, who in the eyes of the media, can do no right. The media widely criticize her programs to reduce child bullying because they view her husband as a bully. Also, while she is a high-fashion model, her clothes are widely disparaged. What makes the media covering her even angrier is that she does not bow to them” (Benedetto 2019). The fact that Mrs. Trump used to be a model has nothing to do with how the media covers her fashion choices now. However, we indeed have to look into which political side the news coverage comes from.

Because Michelle Obama was not beloved by everybody, she received criticism about her initiatives and even about what she wore by the most right-wing media. For instance, as pointless as it may seem, she was under scrutiny when she wore a dress that the media instantly turned into a piece of clothing that was, according to them, outrageously inappropriate to a First Lady. Ms. Winter recalls: “the media was obsessed and the amount of conversation that transpired about her wearing a sleeveless dress was absurd” (Winter 2019).

Karen Finley says that the critique was ultimately misplaced because the role modeling that Mrs. Obama showcased was exactly what women and especially African American women need. Additionally, she notices patterns in history that always generate "need for a look". Giving the example of the "Jackie Look", she notices an interesting fact that Jacqueline Kennedy was under such scrutiny for wearing a similar sleeveless dress (Finley 2009: 88).

Benedetto himself sees an imperfection to the media portrayal of First Ladies. He says: "A First Lady can only be as powerful or effective in aiding her own or her husband's causes as the media will allow her to be. If the media like the first lady, she can be very effective. Try to imagine how the news media would cover Melania if she tried to help her husband deal with immigration by advocating for migrant children or better trade relations with China or Mexico” (Benedetto 2019). Again, this particular example speaks more to the fact that

American media, news channels to be more exact, are divided politically, and they report to the public that watches them the most, which brings us to another point, how does the public feel about the First Ladies.

In comparison to how does the media present First Ladies, is it also interesting to see how the public perceives First Ladies and how our interest generates the press to report on the topic of First Ladies. There is an apparent double standard. We tend to judge the First Ladies for doing too much or too little. At the same time, and especially in this era, we like to be informed about everything, and we tend to be keen on getting as much personal information as possible. As Mrs. Gonnella-Platts notes: "It is interesting how we become more and more aware of this role. People were very intrigued by the celebrity status of the first lady and overtime, over the last several decades we come to expect more of this role. We have been very quick to criticize. When we have a successor to a first lady, who maybe is quieter, we are very quick to criticize her for not being so open and active. We expect a lot from women who hold this role, but we are also as a society very quick to judge them, forgetting there is no job description, forgetting that this role is essentially defined by women who have held it. It is a very interesting paradox and a very slippery slope for women who hold this role. Our criticism has gotten more apparent in more recent memory" (Gonnella-Platts 2019).

At the same time, there is not only a double standard for the First Ladies about their (in)activity but also there is a double standard when it comes to men. As Mrs. Gonnella-Platts notices: "It extends beyond the role of first ladies and how we treat female heads of state and heads of government and what we scrutinize about them is very different from how we scrutinize men. The role of the first lady highlights this double standard" (Gonnella-Platts 2019). It is tough to speculate how the American public would judge a "First Gentleman" but from the international perspective it valid that we do not hear much about spouses of, for example, Britain's Prime Minister or German Chancellor.

On the other hand, there is a surprising lack of interest within the scholarly work and museums that could portray First Ladies. For example, the American History Museum in Washington DC and the exhibition on the Presidency is full of artifacts, notes, documents, and extensive audio and visual tray of information. The other side of this particular exposition is "dedicated" to First Ladies. This wing is full of Inaugural dresses, the exhibition also includes interesting facts about those dresses and china dishes that the First Ladies chose (First Ladies Exhibition 2018). Not to argue that those fashion and china choices for the

White House and their meaning are not impressive, but it was a striking difference in the presentation of the Presidency and First Ladies. Jennifer Keohane suggests that perhaps the exhibition in the American History Museum should include more substantial artifacts to show the visitors. She proposes to: "showcase manuscripts of speeches, campaign videos, and documents related to the projects these women have undertaken, and it should present clothing beyond inaugural gowns" (Keohane, 2017: 285).

The Bush Presidential Library in Dallas prepared a completely different exhibition called *First Ladies: Style of Influence*. Natalie Gonnella-Platts says about the exhibition: "It is a unique platform to effect change, and one particular occupant should not have to define how other approaches it. They are individuals, and I hope that with our exhibit last year that the individuality, that influence notion came through. We did not want to be a collection of dresses, and we did not want it to be just a testament about just the ideas of this role. We wanted to showcase the individual leadership, the individual legacies and the individual approach of these women" (Gonnella-Platts 2019). The exhibition was filled with notes, documents, video documentary, and interactive tasks for the public to try their knowledge. This exhibition also included a section that discussed First Ladies and their impact on First Ladies abroad.

And as for the scholarly work, according to Eksterowicz and Watson point out the lack of interest in informing about First Ladies from a more academic point of view, rather than a superficial one. Adding that: "While there have been notable recent efforts to correct the traditional lack of consideration of women in textbooks and university curricula, this reformist movement appears to have bypassed the field of presidency research. We believe that it is important for all students enrolled in introductory American government courses to understand how first ladies can influence presidential decision making and the policy process" (Eksterowicz – Watson 2000, 589).

1.4 Defining the role of First Ladies through fashion

Fashion and influence. Nothing that is usually in the same sentence with the Presidency. However, we see the connection in almost every mention of a First Lady. At the same time, First Ladies know how to make a statement through clothes and promote American fashion designers. The press always finds a way to mention the kind of clothing or dress the First Lady wore or by which designer.

When asked about First Ladies and the fact that media always mention fashion. Ms. Winter who: "always found it a little hypocritical that no matter what event Mrs. Obama did, there was always a sentence or paragraph describing what she wore. Often that particular part of the article came higher up in the article than describing what it is she was saying. People were obsessed with her fashion" (Winter, 2019). However, the strategic approach came, in case of Michelle Obama, when wearing "normal clothes" and engaging with people in the White House: "Mrs. Obama's ability to wear what you and I can call regular, everyday mom clothes allowed her to be more accessible to people. Since she spent much time hugging kids at the White House and being able to walk in the garden in jeans and a T-shirt gave her this accessibility" (Winter, 2019). The theme of motherhood and trying to reach out to other moms and the aspect of being authentic to relate is something that Mrs. Obama chose for herself as something to be defined by.

When asked about the media portrayal of First Ladies solely from fashion rather than their agendas, Mr. Benedetto agreed: "Yes, it has long been tradition to comment on first ladies' fashion. Jackie Kennedy, a fashion icon, really was the first to get heavy fashion treatment. It has not stopped since. Feminists these days think to comment on First Ladies' fashions is sexist. It remains a staple of First Ladies' media coverage, as we see from Melania Trump. While feminists disparage media coverage of first ladies' fashions, I hear many so-called women's rights advocates commenting negatively on Melania Trump's clothes. Fashion writers and gossip columnists still find plenty to work with when it comes to first ladies, especially with Melania Trump" (Benedetto 2019). However, the critique of Melanie Trump came after she wore, what was considered, unfortunate fashion choice. This happened last October, during the detention crises on the US-Mexican borders. Mrs. Trump's jacket was saying, "*I don't really care, do you?*" which some interpreted that she speaks about kids being detained on borders (BBC 2018).

Nonetheless, as Mrs. Gonnella-Platts points out, First Ladies have, in this case, a unique way to use the focus to work into their advantage: "We care so much what these women wear and whom they are wearing and how they are wearing it, but we do not ask men the same questions. It is interesting how strategically first ladies used fashion to project core values of the administration, or to project diplomatic favor, or to showcase American innovation and design. For example, Jacqueline Kennedy, in the 1960s, set the recognition of this role into a completely different realm. She very strategically used fashion to pay tribute often to dignitaries and other politicians, she was meeting with her hosting"

(Gonnella-Platts 2019). As we can see, actual diplomacy was done through the presentation of the right clothing for the right audience with strategic intentions.

Additionally, there is also an economic strategy for First Ladies and their fashion choices. By popularizing American brands, First Ladies, in many cases, tried to promote fashion designers to the public. “Lady Bird Johnson hosted a show to celebrate American design. Michelle Obama and Mrs. Bush often looked to American designers to showcase American design and American innovation. Mrs. Obama was very accessible to the American public, and she mentions how she hoped that it would fire people to support American fashion company, Michael Kors, J.Crew and others that are very accessible” (Gonnella-Platts 2019).

Delisia Matthews notices that fashion choices influence the public, which leads to an increase in sales when they start modeling her fashion choices. Matthews sees the potential for brand validation by clothing First Lady (Matthews 2015: 10-11). Popularization did not end there. A whole blog page was created, dedicated solely to follow up on Mrs. Obama's fashion choices and report on events that attended. The blog fashion hub is called *Mrs.-O* (Mrs.-O, n.d.) Finally: “Mrs. Obama did a lot for the fashion industry in the United States, she was an economic boom in a way that we had not seen before because she focused on American designers” (Winter 2019).

In Conclusion, defining the role of First Lady is eventually up to First Ladies themselves. The academic research suggests that the role is defined throughout the history and actions of First Ladies. The definition and typology of First Ladies is a matter of analyzing seemingly similar nuances as well as differences in actions of First Ladies. Since the roles are interchangeable and have many, even personal, nuances the role and influence of each First Lady will always be different and unique. Additionally, Mrs. Gonnella-Platts point out that First Lady don't have it easy since: “They wear many hats, and for us hostess, teammate, champion and policy advocate really defined the four key pillars about how the first ladies leverage their influence, and they are interchangeable, but it doesn't mean that first lady has to wear all four hats. It is interesting how society's expectations about the role have evolved and generally, and as the global audience thinks that you should wear all four, but we are very quick to scrutinize when they overstep or evade our expectations of what that role is as well” (Gonnella-Platts 2019). The next chapter analyzes specific initiatives of

Michelle Obama that shaped her Office and shaped opinions on school lunches, exercise and after high-school education opportunities.

2. Role and Influence of First Lady Michelle Obama Through her Initiatives

This part of the master thesis showcases a more specific analysis of the evolution of the role of the First Lady. The objective is to introduce the main initiatives of Michelle Obama and her understanding of the role of the First Lady, set her initiatives in a theoretical framework that was introduced in the first chapter, e.g. based on what leads First Ladies to choose their policy agendas: family background, education, professional experiences; showcase different instruments that Michelle Obama used to succeed with her programs and finally present evidence of pushing the role to different level and/or present the real impact of those initiatives.

I structure this chapter by first presenting Michelle Obama's predecessor Laura Bush, her role and influence as the First Lady. The reason is to present the readers with a picture of how the role of the First Lady was handled just before Michelle Obama took over. Another reason is the unique relationship and friendship the two Ladies share. Mrs. Laura Bush was instrumental when Mrs. Obama was entering the White House as a First Lady. This friendship was first based on a simple exchange of experiences provided by Mrs. Bush and her team. Mrs. Obama and Mrs. Bush then both often participated in events concerning women empowerment, the leadership of First Ladies around the world as well as discussing current world issues in various panels and conferences.

The second part solely focuses on Michelle Obama and her main four initiatives: "Let's Move", "Joining Forces", "Reach Higher", and "Let Girls Learn". There are many reasons why she worked on those specific issues. Mrs. Obama was able to see the bigger problem of issues surrounding certain areas, like education, children's lifestyle, support for women, and military families. Finally, the goal of this particular part is to capture a contemporary setting for the role of the First Lady. Also, analyze how Michelle Obama handled the role which lacks proper definition in the founding documents.

2.1 First Lady Laura Bush

Former First Lady Laura Bush had, on the one hand, one of the unique positions, thanks to the knowledge from her mother-in-law, Barbara Bush, about the various roles of First Lady. On the other hand, she had one of the hardest tasks that a First Lady must go through, to console the nation after such traumatic events, such as the terrorist attack of September 11. To properly analyze the meaning behind her initiatives and steps that she took as a First Lady, we have to establish her background as well. Key factors that played a role for Mrs. Bush when she was deciding which initiatives and causes to promote were her own professional experiences a librarian, ad-hoc situations that she was not in control of and standing behind her husband's policies. Those factors played into Mrs. Bush's First Lady's duties and decision-making about causes to promote during her time in the White House.

2.1.1 Reading

Mrs. Gonnella-Platts notes: "Mrs. Bush is a former librarian and a teacher so she was naturally interested in education and it was an issue she was working on in Texas as governor's wife, and it was an issue that was important enough to her when she moved on to a nation-wide stage in Washington" (Gonnella-Platts 2019). Laura Bush was part of establishing the Texas Book Festival in 1995, and the goal was to: „bring authors and readers together in a celebration of literature and literacy" (Texas Book Festival n.d.). When Mrs. Bush was asked about what she was going to do with her new position as a First Lady, she said: "You need to start with what you know. I was a librarian. I was a teacher. Those were the important things that had to do with literacy and what you want children and families to do together" (CBS This Morning 2017).

Mrs. Bush started very actively to work on her First Lady's duties in early 2001. She already hosted a state dinner and started to work on her policy agenda of promoting literacy through the "National Book Festival" (Updegrove in Swain 2015, 427). The goal of the Festival was to bring authors and passionate readers from around the country to Washington D.C. to discuss, share, and get the opportunity to meet each other at book signings. The organizer, Library of Congress, also included people with disabilities and prepared a round of presentations with new technologies for those with special needs such as individual reading devices (The White House n.d.). Mrs. Bush hosted this event in cooperation with the Library of Congress ever since, and the fact that C-SPAN took an interest in this particular

event was outstanding as well. It meant that the idea got across to more people (Bush 2010, 180). Mrs. Bush implemented more reading, and education focused initiatives and events where she engaged with kids, parents, and teachers. She supported her husbands' policy "No Child Left Behind" by promoting a set of educational programs for school children (Gerhart In Swain 2015: 434; Bush 2010: 247-248). This particular piece of policy became very controversial over the years and was no longer in progress and was changed by the Obama administration.

2.1.2 Women Empowerment

As was established in the previous chapter, reactive creation of policies and discussing issues that are relevant in the society is also, how First Ladies use their role and position. For the Bush administration, it was of course 9/11. Events of that day changed the course of the whole administration but also shifted the political focus. For example, Mrs. Bush and her interest in women empowerment, especially in the Middle East, is an indirect consequence of her husband's strike on the Taliban in Afghanistan. As Mrs. Gonnella-Platts mentions: "Mrs. Bush will often speak, and she wrote about it in the introduction in the book *We Are Afghan Women*, about how in sixth grade she had to pick anywhere in the world to do project on she picked Afghanistan- She never thought that decades later that Afghanistan and the status of women and girls in Afghanistan would be achieved. She realized that she had a responsibility and an opportunity to highlight the oppression and atrocities that were committed against women and girls in Afghanistan. There was a duty to take a stance with her "sisters in Afghanistan" and speak to not only the challenges they had to face under the Taliban but also the immense importance of gender equality and the equal role that women in society, in Afghanistan and internationally" (Gonnella-Platts 2019).

We may argue that Laura Bush's work with women in Afghanistan was in many ways, a manifestation of soft power in contrast to her husband's hard power. At the same time, it is true that she continues to be interested in the country and region as well and even as Former First Lady she is making sure that especially girls and women in Afghanistan have access to education. More on this particular part of the topic in the last chapter. After the events of 9/11 itself, Mrs. Bush found herself in a position where she had to take on a brave hat and reassure the American people that everything would get back to normal. For her calm personality and demeanor, she got the label Comforter-in-Chief (Gerhart 2001). She started to visit hospitals where people were treated for various injuries from the attacks. Mrs. Bush

also made well thought TV appearances in which she spoke about the importance of embracing one another and making sure the kids understand that they are safe. One week after 9/11, she made an appearance on Oprah Winfrey TV Show, which had an enormous reach among Americans (Bush 2010, 207-211; Gerhart 2001).

2.1.3 Healthcare

Another partially reactive issue was the spread of HIV/AIDS. An issue that was in the news for several decades at that point and especially the outbreak in Africa was critical. Mrs. Bush knew the impact that she can have with the highlight of a health issue. She had the example of her mother-in-law, Barbara Bush. Mrs. Gonnella-Platts notes that: "There are many factors that play into the issues that first ladies take on. That includes being mothers, wives, and having their professional careers. The issue of HIV in places like Sub-Saharan Africa was not necessarily an issue Mrs. Bush thought that she would take on. However, it became a significant issue. Laura Bush recognized that as a First Lady, as a mother, as a woman, she had an opportunity to approach this issue as an issue of women's health. She highlighted it as an important topic when speaking to her international counterparts" (Gonnella-Platts 2019). In 2003, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief was implemented, and drugs to help prevent the spread of diseases like malaria and help with relief for patients with AIDS were distributed through this act. Mrs. Bush was part of the whole initiative, and in her role, she focused on informing women about the disease and educating them about possible prevention options (Bush 2010, 328-329; Gerhardt In Swain 2015, 437). Healthcare on an international level is also something that Mrs. Bush still tries to discuss at various panels, helping others to get educated on the issues. Her daughter Barbara Pierce Bush established a non-profit organization called *Global Health Corp*, dedicated solely to this purpose. This non-profit organization brings together young professionals with the purpose to improve healthcare systems around the world (Hager – Bush 2018, 207-210).

2.1.4 Influence and Impact of Mrs. Laura Bush as First Lady

The influence of Laura Bush's policies reached a generation in her own family that now tries to empower others. The actual influence of Mrs. Bush lay in the fact that she was able to stay calm during the most challenging times. Laura Bush preserved her ability to be non-partial, generous, and authentic. For these characteristics, she was very well received by

the public. Mr. Benedetto how he sees Mrs. Bush's time the White House and commented: “She was a highly active first lady even though she never got the media coverage Michelle Obama got” (Benedetto 2019). The lack of media coverage may be connected to the fact that Michelle Obama tried to reach out to the public through social media, which were not as evolved during the Bush administration. Also, there is perhaps an explanation in the generational gap.

2.2 First Lady Michelle Obama

Former First Lady Michelle Obama has been one of those First Ladies that is loved by millions and hated by many. It seems that her popularity is more evident now, thanks to her relatively relaxed approach to media. However, already during the first presidential campaign of her husband, Barack Obama, it was evident that the media and subsequently, the public would heavily scrutinize her. Her strategy of trying to be forward-going towards media, rather than closing herself in, where the right move. Michelle Obama also knew how to use her status as well as the status of others: celebrities, TV hosts and presenters, athletes, influential people across the cultures and fields. It almost seems as she was trying to hush critics by being even more visible and more vocal about the issues, she was passionate about.

2.2.1 Family First

Michelle Obama’s life, her childhood, and upbringing are in recent months a subject of her interviews during which she promotes her new memoir, *Becoming*. What shaped her were most definitely her parents, her self-motivation, and the possibility to get to a college and eventually, graduate from Harvard Law. She practiced law, however, her need to serve others and give back was evident. She, therefore, left law practice to work for the city government in Chicago (Obama 2018, 4-5; Slevin 2015, 94-96, 137). Michelle Obama then went to work for the Public Allies organization. During this period, we can see that she already shows enormous interest in youth, their education, and wellbeing (Slevin 2015, 146-147). Michelle Obama says that she was initially hesitant about her husband campaigning. She was not sure about the impact on her daughters as well her career. Mrs. Obama says that she was the breadwinner during a campaign period (Obama 2019).

Michelle Obama and her team acknowledge the family aspect and friendship that Laura Bush provided for the incoming First Lady and her family in 2007. The importance of the peaceful transition of powers is an important process for the Nation to see and as Ms.

Winter notes the staff of Laura Bush did event more than hand over their office spaces: "Mrs. Bush's office was so generous and kind with the amount of time they gave us as the incoming president. Also, keep in mind we were the different parties we have spent much time talking about how different the Obama administration could be from the Bush administration. On the day when the President was inaugurated, every single one of Laura Bush's staff left a note on their desk for whoever was the incoming staffer. Also, it was the most generous, elegant gesture. Our team ended up emulating them and doing the same when we left the White House in 2017. After the Obamas won in November, Jenna and Barbara Bush, brought the girls to DC and they gave Sasha and Malia sort of secret tour around the White House. The Bushes were very gracious" (Winter, 2019). It certainly speaks to the tradition of a smooth transition of powers as well as great stepping stone for Laura Bush and Michelle Obama and their friendship and partnership for their common causes, like women empowerment and networking with First Ladies from around the world and sharing with them their knowledge about the opportunities that First Lady's platform holds.

2.2.2 Michelle Obama's narrative

Michelle Obama was stepping into the role after, First Lady Laura Bush, whose mission was education and empowerment of women, among other things. As Mrs. Obama says, in a 2018 interview with Jenna Bush Hager, she thrives with clean slates. By this, she means that she did not want to put pressure on herself as to what the expectations from her should be. She realized that she had a better position than her husband since the president's expectations must be at least matched. Since the role of First Lady was defined, Mrs. Obama was able to get extra time to settle in. Obama said about herself that she thrives on a clean slate, and that is what the undefined role provided (TODAY 2018).

Michelle Obama's own experiences and understanding of what motherhood means played the most significant part throughout her time as First Lady. Ms. Winter explains how and why she choose this cause: "I think she chose everything in her policy agenda based on things that she had experienced in her own life. There is continuity to all of Mrs. Obama's initiatives that make sense to her for who she was as a person and as a first lady" (Winter 2019). In the case of Mrs. Obama, it the aspect of motherhood, which became a theme also for her initiatives and policy agendas. Ms. Winter explains that: "Mrs. Obama had her priorities very clearly in mind when she got to the White House and one of her first priority above and beyond anything else was making sure that her girls were settled, to enrol them

into school making sure they have playdates and dance classes and music classes just like any other girls and then once she felt confident that her girls were happy and had adjusted to their new life then she sat down to figure out what was authentic to her and what she wanted to spend her work hours working on” (Winter 2019).

There are several theories about Mrs. Obama's goals with promoting motherhood. For example, Meyers and Goman argue that Michelle Obama was using motherhood rhetoric and her academic and professional success to promote the neoliberal agenda. The authors explain that: "Within this neoliberal narrative, racism and poverty are obstacles to be overcome through making the right choices, and gender is viewed through the narrow lens of motherhood rather than gendered inequalities" (Meyers – Goman, 2017: 20). Their methodology consists of analyzing YouTube videos posted by the administration. The footage shows Mrs. Obama pushing the high school kids to get a better education as if all the problems can be overcome by going to college. According to the authors, agenda-setting through motherhood and trying to relate was for Michelle Obama, a tool to break a social construct of stereotypical African American mothers (Meyers – Goman, 2017: 31-32).

On the other hand, Hayden argues that Michelle Obama's on motherhood, the importance of family and stability are neither propagandistic nor authentic as they may seem. She argues that rhetoric was a complex strategy. Mrs. Obama picked and chose her speeches based on the audience she spoke to (Hayden, 2017: 24). In addition to motherhood, Michelle Obama tried to break barriers about stereotypical views on Black women. Brittney Cooper says that Mrs. Obama's way of presenting herself during events, and the way she spoke, and the message of her speeches was to present and represent black women and mothers in the best way possible (Cooper 2010: 54-55). In a way, it is hard to say what statements are truthful and authentic and which are not. It is up to the audience to decide that. Critics will only so often see positive aspects and "fans" will often try to hope for the good. However, we have to credit Michelle Obama was consistent with her agendas and reasons why she supported the causes that she did.

MaryAnne Borelli notices that First Ladies choose their initiatives to champion gender-based issues. She analyzes the stereotypical concepts of White and African American women and implies those to the Former First Lady Michelle Obama. She is concluding that the identity she established for herself as First Lady leads to a social construct that everyone was keen on. She also speaks of using pop culture as a strategy tool to promote causes and popularize the role of First Lady (Borelli, 2013: 242-244). However, Meyers and Goman

come with a theory of neoliberal narrative that they imply to Mrs. Obama's appearances as First Lady. Their theory concludes that Mrs. Obama's emphasis on education and motherhood were constructs with one agenda in mind, not noticing racial and social inequality (Meyers – Goman, 2017: 20 33).

At the same time, Ralina Joseph uses a post-identity narrative to make the discourse in social work for her. The goal of Mrs. Obama being to still present herself as a proud African American woman and at the same time, set a tone for the whole, mostly White, America. As the author puts it: "In using postidentity tools, Obama is creating a counternarrative to controlling images of Black women" (Joseph, 2011: 59).

2.2.3 Let's Move

"Let's Move" initiative was established in 2010 to lower childhood obesity rates and engage kids, their parents, and schools to cooperate on the issue. The indicatives' statistics have shown that obesity is an issue in notably more impoverished communities, where almost 40% of kids suffer from obesity (Let's Move n.d.-b). There were a few reasons Mrs. Obama took up herself this cause. Firstly, it was questions of motherhood and her own life experience with raising two young kids in a busy household. As Ms. Winter notes: "Genesis for "Let's Move" was based on her own family's life. She realized at a certain point that her kids were having too much sugar and sugary drinks and that it was easier to bring home pre-made take-out food for dinner instead of making your own and she realized that her kids were not getting balanced nutrition. So, the "Let's Move" initiative was entirely based upon her own experience in raising two young daughters and realizing that when families are busy, it is hard to make smart choices all the time" (Winter 2019).

Secondly, the initiative went hand in hand with the healthcare reform of her husband, President Obama. After all, "Let's Move" was about the health and wellbeing of kids and families as a whole. Lowering the statistics of obesity would mean lower costs on healthcare for diseases caused or linked to obesity (Let's Move n.d.-a). Situation before the initiative was critical: "Overall childhood obesity rates tripled in the past three decades, climbing from about 5% in 1974 to nearly 17% by 2008, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. All told, 12.7 million children were considered obese when "Let's Move" got underway in 2010" (Linshi 2015).

The strategy to reach the goal was two-pronged. Mrs. Obama decided to use the platform to attract as much attention for the cause as possible through engaging celebrities and famous TV shows to help her promote the message behind the initiative, very merely put eat your veggies and exercise. However, they also engaged brands and key players to make a real impact. Mrs. Obama involved all parties of the problem: kids, parents, corporations, and politicians. She knew that the problem laid in horrific branding strategies that she experiences herself as a mum buying food for her kids. Ms. Winter says that: "Part of "Let's Move" was figuring out ways that she could talk to parents about making sure that her kids were getting exercise and how easy it could be to fix a few simple meals few nights a week that were not loaded with salt and sugar. She then went and talked to the grocery stores and explained to them how displaying sugary, fatty foods at the kids' eye level was not helpful. Those sorts of things were born out of her own experience in raising children" (Winter 2019).

The promoting part took place on social media, talk shows as well TV shows that Michelle Obama took part in. She was not afraid to make fun of herself or go on shows for teenagers. In one of the first appearances on the Ellen Show, Mrs. Obama shares her daily routine, including her workout regime. She said that she either works out early in the morning or after her daughter leaves for school for about an hour and a half and that both cardio and strength workout is part of her routine. Ellen and Mrs. Obama then challenged each other to do push-ups (The Ellen Show 2012).

Popular singer Beyoncé was also a big part of the campaign with her song *Move Your Body*. The clip for this song was set up in a high school dining room, and kids and students danced to the song. As part of the promotion of the song, Beyoncé went to several events in New York to surprise real high school students and dance with them (McHugh 2011; Conley 2011; Slevin 2015, 300-301). President Obama and Vice-president Biden also took part in some promotions of the initiative. They shot a minute-long spot in which they run around the offices and halls of the White House (Letsmove 2014-b).

In 2015, for the fifth anniversary of the initiative, Michelle Obama proposed a challenge called *GimmeFive* as part of the upcoming Easter Egg Hunt at the White House. Many celebrities got involved, such as Beyoncé, Ricky Gervais, Conan O'Brien, Kelly Ripa, Hugh Jackman, Space Station crew of NASA and many others as Mrs. Obama explained on the Ellen Show. She wanted to engage people to exercise by showing five moves and then

nominating someone else. She and Ellen perform a dance routine along with the famous *Uptown Funk* song by Bruno Mars that she prepared for the Easter Egg Hunt (The Ellen Show 2015). This video has more than 12 million views to the end of July 2019.

With Jimmy Fallon, Mrs. Obama created a whole series about exercise and a healthy lifestyle. In The Tonight Show, Mrs. Obama promoted her campaign with series like *Dancing Moms* or “*Ew!*”. Fallon helps to promote the cause on the grounds of the White House as well. Both Fallon and Mrs. Obama compete in several disciplines like jumping in a bag (Lahitou 2017).

Sports teams were also involved in promoting “Let's Move”, for example, some of the players for LA Galaxy were part of a discussion with kids about the benefits of staying active and healthy. David Beckham was part of the delegation. Mrs. Obama hosted this particular event in 2012, and she highlighted how much soccer teams stepped in to organize sports clinics around the country and how she appreciates their involvement (The Obama White House 2012).

Aside from exercise, Mrs. Obama also promoted healthy eating, both at home and at schools. For this part, she also depended on the help of famous people, and most importantly, popular kids show Sesame Street. Prominent associations were also involved in the campaign. In 2013, Mrs. Obama paired famous kids' TV programs, Sesame Street and Produce Marketing Association, the two giant companies promised to lead a positive branding when it comes to promoting food to kids on TV and in stores. As Mrs. Obama said, she was pleased with this pairing since the branding of bad foods was promoted more often to kids in opposite to promoting healthier food options like fruits and vegetables, where only one add was aired during a week (The Obama White House 2013-b). When introducing this partnership, she cites a recent study that showed that when kids have the option between a sweet treat like cookie and apple, they choose the cookie. However, she points to the fact that positive branding has a massive impact since when a sticker of a famous kid's character, like Elmo from Sesame Street, is on the apple, kids were more likely to choose the apple. She is then joining on stage with the two puppets, Elmo and Rosita, and Mrs. Obama has a conversation with them about a healthy lifestyle and the importance of eating a healthy and balanced diet (The Obama White House 2013-b). The strategy of Mrs. Obama was in this sense very profound since pairing kids show with the corporate world that until then did not

care about the impacts of marketing to kids was a great move towards promoting the "Let's Move" initiative.

To expand the audience to older children, in 2012, Mrs. Obama came up with the idea to host children at the age of 8 to 12 for a State Dinner event dedicated to those who enjoy cooking healthy meals. She again paired the kids-focused occasion with reaching out to third parties for support. Mrs. Obama cooperated with food and cooking magazine *Epicurious* that helped select young chefs that came up with the most interesting recipes. Together with their parents, they were then flown to D.C. by Delta Airlines for Kid's State Dinner in the White House. Mrs. Obama paid attention to every detail of this event. Even the decorations were well thought of. Instead of expensive China and floral decorations that are usual for regular State Dinners events, this event was decorated with fruits and vegetables vases and decorations.

During her speech at the 2014 Kid's State Dinner, Mrs. Obama, for example, called out on kids who together with their recipes described their goals and reasons why they liked to help cook healthier meals in their communities or at home (The Obama White House 2014-b; *Epicurious* n.d.). This is a great example of Mrs. Obama's relationship with the kids and her genuine interest in them and their future. In her speech, Mrs. Obama said that the goal of the "Let's Move" campaign has slightly changed since it first started. This was due to the fact that the initiative already accomplished some of their goals, such as the act to the school lunches program that passed in 2010.³ Mrs. Obama wanted parents, kids, and again, big corporations to get involved. She criticized the fact that big money was involved when it came to branding and promoting food, while the kids' health was a secondary concern (The Obama White House 2014-b). Of course, big companies were hesitant to cut on their most prosperous products, like sweets, sugary drinks, etc.

Pushback also came from some of the students and their parents, who blamed Mrs. Obama for fat-shaming people and kids and trying to over-regulate American parents (Staver, 2012; Cohen 2014). She responded that her campaign did not ban food, it simply tried to encourage parents and kids to make healthier choices. Liptak points out: "Let's Move has survived criticism from Republicans, food companies, school lunch professionals, and -

³ „The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act allowed USDA, for the first time in over 30 years, opportunity to make real reforms to the school lunch and breakfast programs by improving the critical nutrition and hunger safety net for millions of children“ (USDA Food and Nutrition Service, n.d.).

- perhaps most visibly -- schoolkids themselves, some of who registered their displeasure at new school lunch rules by posting photos of soggy scoops of vegetables on social media” (Liptak 2015). From this pushback, we can assess that those critics did not care so much about the freedoms of vending machines but rather the flow of money that goes into the lobbying and marketing around "bad food groups". However, Mr. Han points out that Michelle Obama's focus was also seemingly off. He suggests minority communities, those most affected by obesity, found themselves out of reach to fresh food markets and are more likely to be living in areas with fast food options. As Han argues: "Instead of dancing with Big Bird, Michelle Obama might need to mind the grocery" (Han 2013: 7). Mrs. Obama was criticized for her body, critics saying she was too big to promote a healthy diet and exercise. The fact is she was just strong thanks to her regular exercise. Ula Taylor explains that the criticism was, in fact, underlaying way to racial provocations: "Michelle Obama is not the first black woman to be called “too strong,” historically a racially coded phrase used to defeminize African American women and instead to frame them as threatening to conservative hegemonic notions of womanhood” (Taylor 2011: 236).

Among other actors, Michelle Obama, also engaged elite athletes and sports teams. What a better way to promote exercise and healthy eating than to involve a group of sports celebrities to say it for you? Mrs. Obama truly knew how to make the initiative fun, and she was able to cooperate with athletes like Serena Williams, Kobe Bryant, Stephen Curry, Shaq, LeBron James, and others. Again, she mostly aimed at creating fun videos with a message for kids and fans of those athletes in general. She, for example, solicited NBA players participating in a video promoting healthy eating in order to stay fit for big games and playing basketball as a family (Letsmove 2014-a, Slevin 2015, 300-301).

She was also able to involve sports celebrities in various activities for a program called "Let's Move! Active Schools" that encouraged people to sign up in their communities and schools and arrange some sort for physical activity. This program again brought surprising attention to two big corporations, Nike and Reebok. The brands cooperated and supported the program by providing for kids signed up to the program. They were providing sports camps and other sports activities (Letsmove 2013). The press release from 2013 says: "Since launching in February, nearly 4,000 schools have signed up at LetsMoveSchools.org to be active schools, building on the knowledge that active kids do better. Today’s announcement builds on a \$50 million dollar commitment from NIKE, Inc. and others to get

kids active and engage 50,000 schools in the program in the next five years” (The Obama White House 2013-a).

In conclusion, this initiative first and foremost challenged the establishment of food corporations, marketing associations as well as school district officials and how they look at their after-school programs and PE classes as a whole. Mrs. Obama also used the tools of, both traditional and social media that were quickly becoming more popular among people and kids, such as YouTube, Vine, Facebook, and Snapchat, to get her message across. At the same time, she was able to gather an enormous number of athletes and showbiz people together to participate in an unprecedented First Lady initiative. Her presence on TV and popular shows made it possible for people to get to know her initiative and then decide if they had fun watching it or not and if they wanted to join in or not. Until then, I think, initiatives of the First Ladies depended mostly on if and how the press would report about them and whether the White House issued a press release. Mrs. Obama was very pro-active with her initiative "Let's Move" and she carefully planned her appearances either on TV or social media.

2.2.4 Joining Forces

The military is a topic that is closely linked to patriotism and pride of Americans and the fact that the President is a Commander-in-Chief. It is, therefore, a must for the First Family to spend their time talking to military families and publicly show support to the American troops and show appreciation for their work at home and abroad.

In 2010, Mrs. Obama, in cooperation with Dr. Jill Biden, wife of the vice president, presented an initiative called “Joining Forces”. The goal was to support families of those who were deployed on a military mission and help those who came back to civilian life. Peter Slevin (2015, 298) points out that the initiative helped her husband with his own political goals. Another reason for this initiative was Mrs. Obama's instincts as a mother. She understood that it is hard for military families, to provide a stable income for the spouse "at home". "Joining Forces" paid attention mainly to wives and husbands whose counterparts were deployed on a military mission and were in need of support like finding a well-paid job. Department of Defense says that in 2011, one year after, the initiative was launched, that thanks to the established partnership between companies and military families who were part of the initiative, more 65 thousand vacancies were filled by military spouses and

veterans (DOD 2014). Showing that there was a need for such initiative to happen and support veterans and military spouses in job hunting.

The focus on job hunting was well reasoned since couples that were not in the military were paid much more and were more likely to find a job. The issues, like military spouses not being able to hold a job for very long, were caused by lousy employment state laws. Those were not set up for families who move a lot around the country, like military families. In reality, it meant that each time the family move, the spouse had to first apply for a proper licence that the state required, like nursing or teaching licence (Slevin 2015, 294-296). Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden met with governors from all 50 states to discuss a solution to the issue of licensing across state borders. In 2015, it was decided that the licensing process would be improved in favor of military families (The Obama White House 2016-b).

The strategy to use celebrities, to encourage people and companies to support military families, was used yet again in this campaign. For example, Michelle Obama was joined by Conan O'Brien on a military base Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. He helped her to promote the initiative and performed for the troops on the ground. Mrs. Obama also used the opportunity to challenge him to do push-ups as a reminder of the "Let's Move" campaign. Conan failed to them properly, and they rather decided to go and chat with the soldiers (Team Coco 2016). For promoting and talking about Joined Forces, Michele Obama also attended various TV Shows, such as Extreme Makeover: Home Edition or even Tv series like NCIS. She also reaches out to kids and teenagers with the idea to explain what military families go through on Sesame Street and iCarly (Watson 2012).

Mrs. Obama and dr Biden hosted various meetings and panel talks in the White House. One example of a successful initiative was, "Joining Forces" *Employment Event*, which took place in 2016. The Employment Event encouraged companies and employers across the country to hire military spouses as the right business decision as well as a show of support to them for their sacrifices. One of the speakers was Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, who is a supporter of the military and in fact, his company hired over 10,000 military spouses and veterans since 2011. He expressed all the benefits that the hiring brought to the military families. Also, to their own business because many of those employees have a great set of skills and competencies. At the event, Mrs. Obama shared, during her speech, the impact that the "Joining Forces" accomplished since 2011. In those five years, businesses hired or trained over 1,2 million military spouses or veterans (The

Obama White House 2016-a). She also again emphasized the enormous benefits that those prospective employees could offer with their skill sets and expertise in fields like computer science and technologies and many others. Michelle Obama also emphasized the fact that military service is done by choice and encouraged young people to join the American military since there may be opportunities ready for them when they leave the military. Mrs. Obama, therefore, mentioned the fact that many agencies, like the Department of Labor or Department of Defense, are cooperating with her initiative (The Obama White House 2016-a). Again, we see the repeating strategy to bridge the parties involved together; in this case, it is about military families and companies which were encouraged to look for prospective employees in service members.

Mrs. Obama also took part in sports events hosted by Prince Harry, called *Invictus Games*. The Games coincidentally combined almost all of Mrs. Obama's initiatives, support for veterans, their families, sports, and exercise. In 2016, the Games took place in Orlando, Florida. To promote the event, Mrs. Obama took it to Twitter and made a fun video alongside President Obama and a few servicemen and women to challenge the UK side of the Games. To which Prince Harry shared his video alongside the Queen and using the famous "mic drop" feature (CBSN 2016). During the opening ceremony, Former First Lady Laura Bush was present as an honorary chair. Mrs. Obama spoke about the fact that veterans and servicemen and women were an inspiration to many, and she emphasized the stamina of wounded soldiers and their caregivers (The Royal Family 2016).

In conclusion, the "Joining Forces" had a positive impact on the people that the initiative was trying to help, i.e., military families, and veterans. We could see the increase in people being hired and legislators across the country were working on this issue instead of just talking about how much they support the military personnel. This was Michelle Obama's goal, to bring solutions and results in action and not only talk about what changes needed to be made. Mrs. Obama again pushed the role of the First Lady to the next level, yet again used her platform to engage companies and businesses to take action. She also used her platform to inform the public about her goals. She did so through popular TV programs, that were also aiming at kids, to understand the meanings of sacrificing for a country.

2.2.5 Education focused: Reach Higher and Let Girls Learn

Michelle Obama's last two initiatives have a few things in common. They focus on the education and empowerment of girls, low-income families, or minorities. Both initiatives helped the President with his political agenda, like the *North Star*. North Star was a goal set by President Obama's administration to catch up with the world in creating more college graduates by 2010. The administration argued that the increase in college graduates needs to be addressed (Slevin 2015, 340-341). Therefore, Michelle Obama also focused her time as First Lady to encourage high schoolers to apply to colleges and pursue higher education.

Education was essential to Mrs. Obama, and she was genuinely interested in children and young people what they have to say and offer. As I already presented Mrs. Obama's background, education played an enormous part in her own life, and she knew the value of being embraced by academics and knowledge. Ms. Winter notes that: "She understands better than many the importance of education, so both "Reach Higher" and "Let Girls Learn". Reach Higher is a domestic program that tries to encourage young people to get some degree after high school. "Let Girls Learn" was an international initiative which was encouraging young women around the world to continue their education for as long as possible and hopefully for them that meant high school as well. Both of those initiatives were grounded in her own experience and the power of education" (Winter 2019). Therefore, Mrs. Obama empowered students to believe in themselves and apply for college.

On an international level, she did the same for girls. However, the issue of educating girls is often challenging for some and has many more challenges that must be solved. Ms. Winter recalls: "Mrs. Obama had an argument to make those economies are better, and communities are better, countries are better when your girls are educated. That keeping girls out of school is counterproductive and counterintuitive to having an active community" (Winter 2019). Laura Bush also shared a very similar belief, and it gave rise to her campaign to empower Afghan women. Mrs. Bush and Mrs. Obama, as many other leaders are starting to realize, that the battle for equality is still not finished, especially in rural areas where women and girls are still being taken as second-class citizens and therefore not allowed to have the same education as boys in their communities. In an op-ed for *The Atlantic*, Mrs. Obama says that the investment into girl's education is an investment into countries' future: "Girls who are educated marry later, have lower rates of infant and maternal mortality, and are more likely to immunize their children and less likely to contract HIV. Educated girls also earn higher salaries—15 to 25 percent more for each additional year of secondary

school—and studies have shown that sending more girls to school can boost an entire country's GDP. Moreover, when educated girls become healthy, financially secure, empowered women, they are far better equipped to advocate for their needs and aspirations and challenge unjust laws and harmful practices and beliefs. So really, this can be a virtuous cycle” (Obama 2015).

As for the “Reach Higher” initiative, the goal was to encourage high school graduates to apply for colleges, especially those from disadvantageous families or communities. Overall, Mrs. Obama emphasized to young people the necessity to explore their potential through college life. Additionally, the importance of education also played a big part in Barack's policy agenda. The bigger picture was a deal signed with China about student exchange programs, called *100,000 Strong Initiative*, that would encourage college students to study China with a side objective to broaden the knowledge on different culture, political thinking and also for the American students to share and explain their way of life (Schulman 2011; The Obama White House 2014-a).

When it came to promote “Reach Higher”, Mrs. Obama chose to speak directly to students and use school assemblies and panel talks as the most useful tool to encourage dialogue among students about their futures studies. Through “Better Make Room”, awareness campaign, Mrs. Obama was able to cooperate with partners from all kinds of industries and businesses. The campaign reached out to high schoolers to help them with making decisions, provided information about financial aid, scholarship possibilities, etc. Among the companies promoting the cause were *Vine*, *UpNex*, *The CW Network*, and others (The Obama White House 2015-b). Mrs. Obama was committed through her initiative to increase the number of school counselors for high schoolers. She worked very closely with the Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who then incorporated Michelle Obama's suggestions into the budget. Additionally, she encouraged the school to keep the arts programs in their schools' profiles (Lynch 2016).

I mentioned that Mrs. Obama, as every First Lady, was closely followed due to her fashion choices. Deliberately, Michelle Obama used fashion to promote American fashion designers or honor designers of countries she was visiting. In my opinion, she made a brilliant decision when she matched the interest in her clothing by supporting young and inspiring fashion designers. In October 2014, she hosted Fashion Education Workshop where one of the speakers was Anna Wintour, Editor-in-Chief of Vogue. Ann Wintour

highlighted Mrs. Obama's nurturing personality, which she projected to her daughters but also through her initiatives and especially young people. Mrs. Obama said that: "Today's workshop is one in a series of events that we have done over the past six years for young people across the country. We have been doing this since the day we entered the White House for young people. We want them to be in this house and experience the things that they are passionate about. And this workshop is one of many, whether it's music or dance or poetry, our mission is always the same: to inspire you guys to dream bigger, to reach higher, and then, most importantly, to pull somebody else up with you along the way" (The Obama White House 2014-c).

"Let Girls Learn" also had many workshops and panel talks which attracted high-level speakers, including women leaders and CEOs. One of the most famous promotions for the cause was done in a series of James Corden, called *Carpool Karaoke*. Mrs. Obama and James Corden sing in a car while driving around the White House, the songs include hits from Stevie Wonder and Beyoncé. Michelle Obama also talks about her initiative and the importance of equality in education for girls around the world. Then come Missy Elliot and they all sing, almost an anthem for the initiative, song *This Is for My Girls*. This collaboration video has more than 70 million views (The Late Late Show with James Corden 2016). The song itself was not only a promotion but: "the single's proceeds will be donated to the Peace Corps Let Girls Learn Fund, part of Obama's #62MillionGirls campaign to benefit the 62 million young women around the world without access to education" (Vivinetto 2016). InStyle's magazine author, Shalayne Pulia (2017), notices that the First Lady again collaborated with corporations like Nike but also invited other charity organizations to participate and get involved in the initiative, like Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. On her international trips, she took celebrities like Meryl Streep and Freida Pinto. During a particular trip to Liberia, a documentary *We Will Rise Up* was made by CNN. The goal was to show the lives of African girls who were enrolled in school and get to know the reasons what it means to them and their families and subsequently their future (Curry 2016).

Mrs. Obama's education-focused initiative reached out to a whole generation of young people. She was able to draw the attention of corporations and agencies on her side so that they could help with her goals, i.e., to provide tools, financial aid, and support that students need. She was especially eager to do something about Afro-American students who were for so long discouraged from even applying to college to get a better education. Mrs.

Obama commented: "I believe that education is the single-most important civil rights issue that we face today. Because in the end, if we want to solve issues like mass incarceration, poverty, racial profiling, voting rights, and the kinds of challenges that shocked so many of us over the past year, then we simply cannot afford to lose out on the potential of even one young person. We cannot allow even one more young person to fall through the cracks" (The Obama White House 2015-a).

On the other hand, as a reaction to a similar speech by Michelle Obama, Britni Dannielle points out that the rhetoric and encouragement was simply not enough for Afro-American communities and said that: "For every story of someone who overcame crushing poverty to achieve massive success are thousands of others of those who continue to languish in low-wage jobs and in substandard conditions" (Danielle 2015). Mrs. Obama did accomplish a lot for African Americans in terms of providing them with better opportunities to get to the right college. Meyers and Goman do not see it that way. They argue that the self-help talks about getting through academic life do not necessarily apply to all minorities. Even though Michelle Obama struggled as young students and first-generation college graduates her story may still not apply to many others. According to Meyers and Goman, the rhetoric that everyone can achieve what she did is misplaced (Meyers – Goman 2017: 27-29).

On the international level, with her "Let Girls Learn" initiative, Mrs. Obama went on several trips abroad to help raise the awareness of her campaign. The United States Agency for International Development helped the initiative to distribute almost 1 billion dollars in programs for educational programs for girls around the world; they helped train teachers provide materials (USAID 2017). Unfortunately, since spring 2017, Trump administration cut back on funding the programs set up by Mrs. Obama. The cuts were not made directly to end the "Let Girls Learn" initiative. However, the proposed budget plan would cut the expenses of the agency USAID, and subsequently, this impacted the initiative (Rajan 2017).

2.2.6 Influence and Impact of Michelle Obama as First Lady

Overall, Michelle Obama had a significant impact on the role. She was a very active First Lady and, in many cases, went against the established patterns of the role. Applying the Bush Institute's theoretical framework of First Ladies on Michelle Obama, we can say that she was a hostess. She opened the doors of the White House to many more people. She traditionally was a hostess with a role in preparing for State Dinners but also in an innovative

way of hosting kids or using the White House to make videos for her campaign. Even though she did not have a clear vision for her agenda at first, gradually, she took up her causes. Her initiatives made sense and were also in close coordination with her husband's administration's goals and objectives.

Michelle Obama was also a political champion for important issues such as education, health care, military families, and job opportunities. She pushed this particular part of the role further by engaging with people and by being vocal about issues concerning particular social groups and communities, i.e., students, military families, children, minorities, women, and girls. Mrs. Obama's strategy to use celebrities helped her immensely with raising awareness of her causes and herself as First Lady.

Finally, Mrs. Obama was a political advocate. She was able to gather large corporations' CEOs and representatives from all states, people from the Hill to discuss not only the problems but solutions to the problems and push them into action. In terms of Michelle Obama's legacy, she will always be the first African American First Lady, and she will be remembered as a working mom who truly puts her kids and as well as children of others before anything else. She perhaps was a bit of a dreamer with her objectives for the initiatives. Actually, too perfect for African American women. Because, she and the President looked like the perfect couple and for many, the goal was unreachable and maybe even frustrating. Melissa Winter describes Michelle Obamas' doing as a First Lady by saying: "Her legacy is really grounded in what she did for young people and children. She opened up the White House so that more kids were able to come through its doors and participate in more activities than ever before. She understood the power of looking young person into their eye and hearing what they had to say and hugging them. She knew the impact of that. She has a gift of talking to young people and hearing them and letting them know that they have been heard and I think they listen to her in return. I think her greatest legacy is how she interacted with children over those eight years" (Winter 2019). Generally, First Ladies are interesting to watch as they keep up with their role. They have a special place in American society. It is, however, the question of how they use their platform and how will the public and media be kind or critical to her personality and actions.

In conclusion, Mrs. Obama's impact and fame that came up from her First Ladyship will be everlasting. Since she will always be the first African American First Lady, she will also be seen as an innovator and role model of the generation of women and girls.

3. Role and Influence of former First Ladies

This chapter discusses the variety of opportunities that await former First Ladies and how they use the influence they acquired in the Office even after the official role has ended. It is interesting to see Former First Ladies engage with the public and see their new projects to come to life. This new period in their lives shows whether their initiatives were authentic passion projects or not. Of course, continuing with projects is not the only way that Former First Ladies use their voice and authority in public life. For example, Hillary Clinton went from being the First Lady to a career politician, and she succeeded by becoming a Senator. She even waged a campaign to be the first female president of the United States. Jackie Kennedy, for example, went back to her professional career and became a book editor for a publishing company in New York (Bilyeau 2017). It has been a habit, that former first families go straight from the White House into building their presidential libraries and writing biographies about the time that they spend in the White House as Presidents and First Ladies. The same is true for both Former First Ladies Laura Bush and Michelle Obama.

Mrs. Bush is out of the White House longer, and her life after White House is working with *The George W. Bush Institute*. She continues with her old initiatives from the time in the White House. Mrs. Bush has also added a few new campaigns. She wrote her memoir called *Spoken from the Heart*, as well as children's books that were co-written with her daughter Jenna Bush, titled *Our Great Big Backyard* and *Read All About It* (Bush Center n.d.), showing that her passion for encouraging children to read her true passion since her previous career as children's librarian. Laura Bush is still very much interested in women's empowerment around the globe, especially in Afghanistan and African countries. She focuses on women's education but also encourages other First Ladies from around the world to use their platform in a meaningful way that could help their citizens. These topics were discussed during several panel discussions hosted by the Institute and with the participation of the First Lady Michelle Obama.

During the 2013 *African First Ladies Summit*, the two First Ladies discussed the importance of the smooth transition of powers. The talk attested to the warm relationship between Laura Bush and Michelle Obama. The talk also focused on the importance of First Ladies being a role model for girls and women (TheBushCenter 2017).

In 2014, the White House, together with the Bush Institute, organized *Investing in Our Future* at the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit. During the discussion, Mrs. Bush and Mrs. Obama analyzed their own First Lady duties, paths, and meaning behind their campaigns when speaking to the audience that was mainly composed of First Ladies from African countries (TheBushCenter 2014).

During the 2015 *Global Women's Network* summit, both Laura Bush and Michelle Obama talked about the power of women leaders, the power of education, networking and exchanging ideas and technologies. Additionally, Mrs. Obama pointed out Mrs. Bush's work and progress that she has made with her *Women's Initiative* since leaving the White House. The initiative helped Laura Bush expand her platform from the position of former First Lady. As Mrs. Obama points out, it is an excellent example of how much she can still do with the unique position of being former First Lady of the United States (TheBushCenter 2015).

Mr. Benedetto says that both, Laura Bush and Michelle Obama were great First Ladies: "All the causes they advocated for have benefitted greatly from their leadership. Americans are more aware of the issues and problems they advocated for, and improvements in them continue beyond their terms of Office. Gallup polls show that they are among the most popular first ladies and continue to be respected at home and around the world" (Benedetto 2019). The Bush family and the Obama family have a genuine friendship that people like to see. The internet and social media are always full of pictures and comments about their outings in public. Many commentaries are especially about Michelle Obama and George W. Bush, who shared few genuine moments that vary from funerals, portrait displays to inaugurations. Mrs. Obama herself says that people are eager to want to see the exchange of emotions between two people with different political ideas (TODAY 2018).

The Obamas' left the White House in early 2017, and since then they follow established footsteps of their predecessors of building Presidential libraries and writing memoirs. The Obamas' are in the process of building their presidential library and have many more plans to be involved in the community in Chicago and across the States engaging with young leaders (Obama Library n.d.). Michelle Obama's memoir, called *Becoming*, was released in November 2018, and by March 2019, there were 10 million copies sold worldwide (BBC 2019). Confirming that for people Michelle Obama was beloved First Lady and they are interested in what she has to say. During a book tour in Amsterdam, she

mentioned that people are often surprised by her book where she reveals marital issues explaining that as First Lady it was not in her mindset to talk about those negatives since the First Family is there to provide for the Americans. Now, since Mrs. Obama has a new platform, she can open up about seemingly picture-perfect family to portray and show people that no family is perfect. Michelle Obama stands by her authenticity and speak about personal issues, like infertility, marital issues were not topics that First Lady can freely talk about. As Mrs. Obama puts it, First Lady is in the Office to serve and not dwell on criticism or personal issues, and even talk about them in public (Obama 2019).

Michelle Obama has plans how to deal with new platform, Mrs. Winter says that: "Mrs. Obama continues to work with her "Reach Higher" initiative and continues to do events with young people and encourage them to get an education beyond high school, whatever it is technical school or community college or four-year college, she is still doing that work till this day. Through the Obama Foundation, she continues to work on international girls' education issues, and she will do that for the rest of her life. She has the Foundation as a support for her international girls' work and Reaches Higher that has spun off into its private sector organization" (Winter 2019).

With the campaign "Better Make Room" for the "Reach Higher" initiative, she visits schools where students are in the process of applying to colleges. She continues to cooperate with celebrities like Conan O'Brien, Usher, John Legend, and others. During the events, speakers, including Mrs. Obama, share their stories with college and encourage students to get the best education possible (Better Make Room 2019). Mrs. Obama also continues to be active on social media and TV shows, where she currently promotes her book. She appeared in many talk shows over the past six months.

Also, one of the latest sketches that she participated in was during James Corden's Late Late Show in June 2019, which has more than 8 million views on YouTube. Michelle Obama and James Corden compete with each other and their teams in dodgeball. The video includes many hints to her initiative "Let's Move" but also her speech for Hillary Clinton. In one instance, she says: "When they go low, we also go low, because that is how dodgeball works" (The Late Late Show 2019).

Life after leaving the White House is for many First Ladies a relief since the political ambitions of their spouses brought them into a position of being under strictly daily media scrutiny. They became public interest, public goods, they had to leave their careers behind.

On the other hand, many Former First Ladies use their gained influence and platform to continue to do good, try something new or go back to their careers. Mrs. Obama is still at the beginning of her "Former Years" stage. However, she was already able to transform her initiative into a private sector organization.

Conclusion

The goal of this Master's Thesis was to analyze different typologies of First Ladies. In the first chapter, we discussed different types of definitions of First Ladies, as it turned out, having a simple definition can be ambiguous. The current literature, academic research, but also interviews showed that First Ladies could be defined by four defining characteristics (hostess, teammate, champion, and policy advocate). They present an overview of the evolution and position of women in society throughout history. Media and public opinions are also subject to this chapter. Research and interviews point out to the fact that First Ladies had to learn to use media to their advantage rather than be used for entertainment. Especially in terms of fashion and appearances, the public and the media can be harsh on First Ladies. Again, First Ladies utilized the interest in their clothing to either promote American designers or make a statement of diplomatic importance.

This thesis mainly examined the role of Michelle Obama as the First Lady. The next chapter analyzes first, Michelle's' predecessor, Laura Bush. One of the reasons being that the two First Ladies were able to sustain a warm relationship and partnership in champion goals of women empowerment. Mrs. Obama, as many First Ladies before her, found herself in a situation where she was presented with a platform before she had her career. She took her time to settle in the role and did not even make any definite statements about her goals as First Lady during Barack Obama's presidential campaign. She wanted to make sure that her daughters were fine with their new life change, and only then she was ready to deal with the expectations of the role. The public was already split about her. Some were even afraid of her. As the first African American family, the Obamas had to face much higher scrutiny and often had to face race-based hatred.

Additionally, Mrs. Obama was challenged for her fashion choices, her appearances, and even her dedication to the country. Some of the resources suggest that Michelle Obama was not genuine when she was talking about mothering and her endurance during her studies. They suggest she used rhetoric to navigate a social construct. On the one hand, I agree that Michelle Obama used some of her experiences on every occasion. On the other hand, I am not sure how her talking points about motherhood and education would negatively impact someone.

Once settled in, Mrs. Obama decided on four significant initiatives she would support and focus on. With the traditional hostess role, she was not afraid to speak up and be authentic and think outside of the box. Reaching out to corporations and asking them for

sponsorships and cooperation was a step forward and pushed the role of the First Lady forward. She worked with brands like Nike and Reebok, two rival two sports brands, that helped her raise awareness of the "Let's Move" campaign and sponsor camps and workshops. Amazon was involved in her "Joining Forces" initiative, which also turned into, a successful campaign.

Involving celebrities was a big part of her overall strategy to get people and especially young people to pay any attention to her and her causes. This particular strategy was never before implemented to such a full extent. She is showing that the role of the First Lady is everchanging and can evolve through time. Additionally, Michelle Obama did not shy away to be part of TV shows and sketches, making fun of herself while talking about national issues like military families, obesity, or education.

Many factors played into Michelle Obama's hand for being intentionally very public First Lady. Numbers and views on social media and YouTube say it all. The timing was everything: social media and youth participation were on the rise. Her authenticity was a significant factor, as well. The scrutiny by some did not end, but it never does. Her fashion choices were under review; her regulatory tendencies as some thought about her initiatives were held against her.

The last chapter talks about former First Ladies and their influence they still hold. Laura Bush and Michelle Obama, both decided to use their still relevant platform to continue with some of the causes they were tackling as First Ladies. I think that having those role models, which First Ladies usually become, is important to have.

Finally, Mrs. Obama was able to accomplish significant changes in influencing the role of First Lady itself and how people engaged in her initiatives. She was most definitely seen and able to affect change at least for a generation of young people who were engaged in her programs through schools but also following on social media and TV. She was an active First Lady who knew her strength and knew how to utilize new means of engaging with people and supporters of her causes.

The role of First Ladies is everchanging. Each First Lady has the opportunity to shape the role as she wishes. In the case of Michelle Obama, she set a high bar for her successors. However, it is still up to them, their circumstances, and abilities to use their influence as First Ladies to serve and represent the American people.

Summary

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá rolemi prvních dam Spojených států. Jejich úloha je často nelehká, protože instituce role první dámy jako taková není nikde oficiálně ustanovena. Přestože tomu tak je, tak se ze strany společnosti stále setkáváme s očekáváními ze strany veřejnosti ohledně jejich role, jejich vystupování a odpovědnosti k roli jako takové. Zároveň vliv prvních dam jim umožňuje využívat svou platformu pro neomezené množství účelů, zejména pak k etablování se pomocí iniciativ. První dáma Michelle Obamová využila platformy velmi inovativním způsobem, díky kterému zároveň využila zájem médií o svou osobu, pro účely propagace svých kampaní. Dále byla Michelle Obamová schopná svým vlivem a přístupem zapojit do svých iniciativ také nové aktéry jako jsou nadnárodní korporace nebo státní představitelé. Díky své autentičnosti a mladistvému přístupu dokázala přilákat a zapojit mladé publikum do svých iniciativ. Michele Obamová byla velmi aktivní první dámou a dokázala svůj vliv využívat jak v rámci popularizace své osoby, tak svých politických agend.

Cílem práce bylo zjistit, zda a jakým způsobem Michelle Obamová roli první dámy obohatila a posunula její vliv dopředu. Závěrem je, že Michelle Obamové se podařilo zapojit do propagace iniciativ hráče, kteří nikdy nebo jen málokdy byla součástí takové platformy jako je úřad první dámy. Zároveň Michelle Obamaová přispěla ke zviditelnění problémů jako je dětská obezita, špatné pracovní příležitosti pro rodiny profesionálních vojáků a stále špatný koeficient rovnoprávnosti na vzdělání.

List of References

BBC (2018, October 14). *Melania Trump says 'don't care' jacket was a message*. BBC News (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45853364>, 21.7.2019).

BBC (2019, March 26). *Michelle Obama's memoir Becoming sells 10 million copies*. BBC News (<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-47704987>, 21.7.2019).

Benedetto, Richard (2019). *Written interview*. June 8, 2019.

Better Make Room (2019, May 1). *2019 College Signing Day LIVE in LA with Michelle Obama*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqFme04xlmM>, 21.7.2019).

Bilyeau, Nancy (2017, August 18). *Jackie Kennedy's Third Act*. Town&Country (<https://www.townandcountrymag.com/society/a10334726/jackie-kennedy-publishing-career/> 21.7.2019).

Borelli, MaryAnne (2013). *High Culture, Popular Culture, and the Modern First Ladies*. University Press of Kentucky, pp.229-248.

Bush Center (n.d.). *Laura W. Bush*. George W. Bush Presidential Center (<https://www.bushcenter.org/people/laura-bush.html>, 21.7.2019).

Bush, Laura W. (2010). *Spoken From The Heart*. 1st ed.. New York: Scribner.

Caroli, Betty B. (1995) *First Ladies*. New York: Oxford University Press. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=nlebk&AN=299098&lang=cs&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 29 July 2019).

CBS This Morning (2017, September 18). *Laura Bush on the influence of first ladies*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNYr4LY8Ma4>, 21.7.2019).

CBSN (2016, April 30). *Obamas in Twitter war with Prince Harry ahead of Invictus Games*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6ncr3vBGtM>, 21.7.2019).

Cohen, Deborah (2014, January 16). *Let's Move On*. Politico Magazine (<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/01/lets-move-michelle-obama-obesity-102283>, 21.7.2019).

Conley, Mikaela (2011, March 29). *Beyonce Joins Michelle Obama's Initiative To Fight Childhood Obesity*. ABC News (<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/beyonce-drops-music-video-fight-childhood-obesity/story?id=13482133>, 21.7.2019).

Cooper, Brittney (2010). *A'n't I a Lady?: Race Women, Michelle Obama, and the Ever-Expanding Democratic Imagination*. MELUS, 35(4), pp. 39-57. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/25759557>

Curry, Colleen (2016, October 11). *Michelle Obama & Meryl Streep Tell Girls 'We Will Rise' in New Documentary*. Global Citizen (<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/michelle-obama-meryl-streep-tell-girls-we-will-rise/> 21.7.2019).

Danielle, Britni (2015, May 12). *Michelle Obama's 'twice as good' speech doesn't cut it with most African Americans*. The Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/12/michelle-obama-twice-as-good-african-americans-black-people>, 21.7.2019).

DOD (2014, December 3). *Joining Forces Yields 65,000 Military Spouse Hires Since 2011*. U.S. Department of Defense (<https://dod.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/603742/> 21.7.2019).

Eksterowicz, J. – Watson P. (2000). *Treatment of First Ladies in American Government and Presidency Textbooks: Overlooked, Yet Influential, Voices*. Political Science and Politics, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Sep., 2000), pp. 589-595.

Epicurious (n.d.). *The Healthy Lunchtime Challenge and Kids' State Dinner* (<https://www.epicurious.com/archive/healthy/news/kidsstatedinner>, 21.7.2019).

Finley, Karen (2009). *ON THE "MICHELLE LOOK"*. *Aperture* (197), pp. 88-88. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/24473419>

First Ladies Exhibition (2018, June 23). *On-Site Visit of an exhibition*. National Museum of American History. Washington, D.C..

Gerhart, Ann (2001, September 19). *Laura Bush, Comforter In Chief*. *The Washington Post* (https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/2001/09/19/laura-bush-comforter-in-chief/e0818f17-fb72-4c14-aaa-fa3f7a654bc9/?utm_term=.0dd94d50e047, 21.7.2019).

Gonnella-Platts, Natalie (2019). *Phone interview*. March 27, 2019.

Graddy, Lisa K. – Pastan, Amy (2014). *The Smithsonian First Ladies Collection*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books.

Hager, Jenna – Bush, Barbra (2018). *Sisters First: Stories From Our Wild And Wonderful Life*. 2nd ed.. New York: Grand Central Publishing.

Han, Tsai-Yen (2013). *Food Desserts*. *Contexts*, 12(3), pp. 7-7. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/24710781>

Hayden, Sara (2017). *Michelle Obama, Mom-in-Chief: The Racialized Rhetorical Contexts of Maternity*. *Women's Studies in Communication*. 40, 1, Jan. 2017, pp. 11-28.

Hummer, Jill (2017). *Conclusion*. In *First Ladies and American Women: In Politics and at Home* (pp. 220-224). University Press of Kansas. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/j.ctt1mmfsxf.11> (Accessed: 29 July 2019).

Joseph, Ralina L. (2011). *“Hope Is Finally Making a Comeback”*: *First*

Lady Reframed. *Communication, Culture & Critique* 4 (2011), pp. 56–77.

Keohane, Jennifer (2017). “*The Most Important Dress in the Country*”: *The Rhetoric of Glamour in the Smithsonian’s “The First Ladies”*. *WOMEN’S STUDIES IN COMMUNICATION* 2017, VOL. 40, NO. 3, pp. 270–288.

Lahitou, Jessicah (2017, January 12). *7 Of The Best Michelle Obama & Jimmy Fallon Moments That Will Make You Miss The Silly FLOTUS*. *Bustle* (<https://www.bustle.com/p/7-of-the-best-michelle-obama-jimmy-fallon-moments-that-will-make-you-miss-the-silly-flotus-29906>, 21.7.2019).

Letsmove (2013, September 7) *First Lady Michelle Obama Speaks at a Lets Move! Active Schools Even*. *YouTube* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3Fq-VJNihU>, 21.7.2019).

Letsmove (2014-a, January 21). *The Miami Heat at the White House: Healthy Tips From NBA Champions*. *Youtube* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEJFIM1m44>, 21.7.2019).

Letsmove (2014-b, February 28). *President Obama & Vice President Biden Show Us How They Move*. *YouTube* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7Z4rGQi2cQ>, 21.7.2019).

Let’s Move (n.d.-a). *Health Problems and Childhood Obesity* (<https://letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/health-problems-and-childhood-obesity>, 21.7.2019).

Let’s Move (n.d.-b). *Learn the Facts* (<https://letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/learn-facts/epidemic-childhood-obesity>, 21.7.2019).

Linshi, Jack (2015, February 9). *This Chart Shows How Hard It Is to End Childhood Obesity*. *Time* (<https://time.com/3700930/childhood-obesity-michelle-obama-lets-move/> 21.7.2019).

Liptak, Kevin (2015, March 6). *Michelle Obama's Let's Move turns 5; Is it working?* CNN Politics (<https://edition.cnn.com/2015/04/06/politics/michelle-obamas-lets-move-turns-5-is-it-working/index.html>, 21.7.2019).

Lynch, Matthew (2016, September 3). *7 Education Initiatives Led by Michelle Obama*. The Edvocate (<https://www.theedadvocate.org/7-education-initiatives-led-by-michelle-obama/> 21.7.2019).

MacManus, Susan A. – Quecan, Andrew F. (2008). *Spouses as Campaign Surrogates: Strategic Appearances by Presidential and VicePresidential Candidates' Wives in the 2004 Election*. Political Science and Politics, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Apr., 2008), pp. 337-348.

Matthews, Delisia et. al. (2015). *The Michelle Obama influence: an exploration of the first lady's fashion, style, and impact on women*. Fashion and Textiles 2: 26, pp. 1-12.

McHugh, Kenna (2011, March 28). *Beyoncé Joins Mrs. Obama's "Let's Move" Campaign with "Move Your Body" Music Video*. AdWeek4 (<https://www.adweek.com/digital/beyonce-joins-mrs-obama's-let's-move-campaign-with-move-your-body-music-video/> 21.7.2019).

Meyers, Marian – Goman, Carmen (2017). *Michelle Obama: Exploring the Narrative*. Howard Journal of Communications. 28, 1, Jan. 2017, pp. 20-35.

Mrs.-O (n.d.) *Home*. Blog (<http://mrs-o.org>, 21.7.2019).

Obama Library (n.d.). *About the Library*. Barack Obama Presidential Library (<https://www.obamalibrary.gov/about-us>, 21.7.2019).

Obama, Michelle (2015, November 2). *Let Girls Learn*. The Atlantic (<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/11/girls-education-michelle-obama/413554/> 21.7.2019).

Obama, Michelle (2018). *Becoming*. 1st ed.. New York: Crown, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group.

Obama, Michelle (2019, April 17). *Becoming: An Intimate Conversation with Michelle Obama*. Ziggo Dome, Amsterdam.

Pulia, Shalayne (2017, May 1). *5 Things to Know About Michelle Obama's Let Girls Learn Initiative*. InStyle (<https://www.instyle.com/celebrity/michelle-obama-let-girls-learn-initiative>, 21.7.2019).

Rajan, Smitha (2017, May 11). *Did Donald Trump shut down Michelle Obama's 'Let Girls Learn' program?* PolitiFact (<https://www.politifact.com/global-news/article/2017/may/11/did-donald-trump-shut-down-michelle-obamas-let-girl/> 21.7.2019).

Schulman, Kori (2011, January 19). *First Lady Michelle Obama: "When You Study Abroad, You're Helping to Make America Stronger"*. The White House blog (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/01/19/first-lady-michelle-obama-when-you-study-abroad-you-re-helping-make-america-stronger>).

Slevin, Peter (2015). *Michelle Obama: A Life*. 1st ed.. New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Penguin Random House.

Staver, Anna (2012, March 12). *Michelle Obama Defends 'Let's Move' Campaign*. HuffPost (https://www.huffpost.com/entry/michelle-obama-defends-lets-move_n_1339722, 21.7.2019).

Swain, Susan – Gerhart, Ann et. col (2015). *First Ladies: Presidential Historians On The Lives Of 45 Iconic American Women*. 2015 ed.. New York: PublicAffairs.

Taylor, Ulma. (2011). *Too Black and Too Strong: First Lady Michelle Obama*. University of Illinois Press, pp. 236-250. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1xcmtq.18>

Team Coco (2016, January 26). *Michelle Obama & Conan Join Forces For Military Families - CONAN on TBS*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lal8zWHkdGU>, 21.7.2019).

Texas Book Festival (n.d.). *Mission and History* (<https://www.texasbookfestival.org/mission-and-history/> 21.7.2019).

TheBushCenter (2014, August 11). *First Ladies Laura Bush and Michelle Obama at Investing in Our Future*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Un0ohUagTWO>, 21.7.2019).

TheBushCenter (2015, September 22). *A Conversation with Mrs. Laura Bush and Mrs. Michelle Obama*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5623iP7sYK8>, 21.7.2019).

TheBushCenter (2017, March 24). *Mrs. Laura Bush and Mrs. Michelle Obama at 2013 African First Ladies Summit*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUgoMZYk5w4>, 21.7.2019).

The Ellen Show (2012, February 2). *Can Ellen Do More Push-Ups Than Michelle Obama?* YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTAiedFfUBU>, 21.7.2019).

The Ellen Show (2015, March 13). *Ellen and Michelle Obama Break It Down*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZO5q0B5wfw>, 21.7.2019).

The Late Late Show with James Corden (2016, July 21). *First Lady Michelle Obama Carpool Karaoke*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ln3wAdRAim4>, 21.7.2019).

The Late Late Show with James Corden (2019, June 18). *Team USA v. Team UK - Dodgeball w/ Michelle Obama, Harry Styles & More*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yRVdV3b8F0>, 21.7.2019).

The Obama White House (2012, May 12). *First Lady Michelle Obama Welcomes Kids to a Let's Move! Event with the LA Galaxy*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsfllAskG8>, 21.7.2019).

The Obama White House (2013-a, September 6). *Reebok, DC Public Schools Make Commitments to Getting Kids Active Through Let's Move! Active Schools*. Press Release (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/06/reebok-dc-public-schools-make-commitments-getting-kids-active-through-le>, 21.7.2019).

The Obama White House (2013-b, October 30). *The First Lady, Elmo, and Rosita Partner to Encourage Healthy Food Choices for Kids*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHpz-TLCL-I>, 21.7.2019).

The Obama White House (2014-a, March 22). *The First Lady on the Importance of Studying Abroad*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=493uXtbp95Q>, 21.7.2019).

The Obama White House (2014-b, July 18). *The President and First Lady at the 2014 Kids' State Dinner*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEfYvI8mB4c>, 21.7.2019).

The Obama White House (2014-c, October 9). *First Lady Michelle Obama Speaks at the Fashion Education Workshop*. YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6t_m9VdJuGQ, 21.7.2019).

The Obama White House (2015-a, February 21). *The First Lady Speaks at "Celebrating Women of the Movement" Event*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22D8CoUtCr0>, 21.7.2019).

The Obama White House (2015-b, October 19). *FACT SHEET: The First Lady announces "Better Make Room" campaign*. Press Release (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/19/fact-sheet-first-lady-announces-better-make-room-campaign>, 21.7.2019).

The Obama White House (2016-a, May 5). *First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Biden Host a Joining Forces Employment Event*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUS1n0U6X5s>, 21.7.2019).

The Obama White House (2016-b, July 1). *FACT SHEET: First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden Announce that All 50 States Have Taken Action On Military Spouse Licensing*. Press Release (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/07/02/fact-sheet-first-lady-michelle-obama-and-dr-jill-biden-announce-all-50>, 21.7.2019).

The Royal Family (2016, May 9). *Prince Harry and Michelle Obama speeches at the Invictus Games Orlando Opening Ceremony*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqUUOIO31cg>, 21.6.2019).

The White House (n.d.). *National Book Festival 2001*. (<https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/firstlady/initiatives/nationalbookfestival2001.html>, 21.7.2019).

TODAY (2018, November 15). *Michelle Obama Opens Up To Jenna Bush Hager About Her New Book - Full Interview*. YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QLL-jM30QA>, 21.7.2019).

USAID (2017, January 27). *LET GIRLS LEARN* (<https://www.usaid.gov/letgirlslearn/fact-sheet>, 21.7.2019).

Vivinetto, Gina (2016, March 16). *'This Is For My Girls': First lady releases song with Kelly Clarkson, others*. TODAY (<https://www.today.com/popculture/my-girls-first-lady-releases-song-kelly-clarkson-others-t80701>, 21.7.2019).

Watson, Leon (2012, April 23). *Michelle Obama's 44 cameo appearances on everything from Sesame Street to Jay Leno make her the most televised first lady in history*. Daily Mail (<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2133793/Michelle-Obamas-cameo-appearances-Sesame-Street-Jay-Leno-make-televised-lady-history.html>, 21.7.2019).

Watson, Robert P. (2001). *The “White Glove Pulpit”: A History of Policy Influence by First Ladies*, *OAH Magazine of History*, Volume 15, Issue 3, Spring 2001, pp. 9–14.

Watson, Robert P. (2002). *First Ladies of the United States: A Biographical Dictionary*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=nlebk&AN=1053847&lang=cs&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 29 July 2019).

Winter, Melissa (2019). *Phone interview*. February 27, 2019.