

**FROM WELLESLEY TO YALE, 1969–1979:
A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF HILLARY RODHAM’S EARLY WRITTEN**

RHETORIC

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The truth is that sometimes it is hard even for me to recognize the Hillary Clinton that other people see. Like millions of women across our country, I find that my life consists of different, and sometimes paradoxical, parts. Often those parts are reduced to a snapshot of one moment in my day, when in fact I wake up every morning trying to figure out how to mesh my responsibilities to my family, my public duties and the friend who might be stopping by for dinner. No doubt the same is true for many people, whether they are beauticians, bankers, teachers or truck drivers. It is just that the complexity of my role is played out in public.

—*Hillary Rodham Clinton, 23 July 1995*

Examining the rhetoric of Hillary Rodham Clinton is something that cannot be reduced to a single snapshot. There is the wife, mother, daughter, lawyer, former First Lady, former U.S. senator, former presidential candidate, and current Secretary of State, all of which roles equally influence and impact her rhetoric. In fact, her image has always been a “complex combination of people’s opinions and expectations, cultural gender norms, opinion polls, and her speeches and actions” (Trent and Short-Thompson 125). Despite her rigorous education, Rodham’s journey (from a budding youth during the tumultuous 1960s to a polished politician with an Ivy League gloss) was a transformation in which she perfected her rhetorical skills. These skills underwent many changes, the most significant during her early years.

During Rodham’s formative, educational years, from 1969 to 1979, while grasping the social change of a generation, her rhetorical style transformed from that of a naive

political observer to [that of](#) a woman destined to leave her mark on the one issue she believed was the biggest inequity of society: children's [lack of](#) rights. This period differs from the broader aspect of her political career as [at this time](#) Rodham was focused solely on a career in law and children's defense and [was](#) not [involved](#) in the national political scene, which Rodham admits didn't happen until late 1998, after her success at helping elect Democrats to the Senate. I will attempt to show how her written rhetoric resembled "radical" rhetoric of the era in terms of a direct approach to readers, even though it was, in fact, never "radical" in the sense of what was familiar on the national scene, i.e., "socialist, radical" protests on college campuses bemoaned by [conservatives](#). Since Rodham has been highly criticized for this period by [conservatives](#) who claim she was a radical of the 1960s, I will include research on protest as well as feminist rhetoric to show how her style was similar to the radical rhetoric, even though protesting with words, rather than signs, was her favored method of delivery for social change. Most importantly, I will compare her writing at Wellesley, which focused on a broader appeal for social change, [to her](#) improved [writing](#) at Yale Law School, [which focused on children's rights](#), her field of expertise. Crucial to her rhetorical changes and focus were her experiences with social issues; the seeming contradictions in her views and inaccurate labels of her political stance can be understood through a close evaluation of the writings from this time.

To accomplish the [goals outlined](#) above, I will examine [Rodham's](#) college thesis, [the](#) new journal [she created](#) at Yale Law School, and two law articles she published in 1973 and 1979 (a third article from 1977 repeats much of the writing from the 1973 law article). These particular works are important to this discussion as they provide extensive examples of her career as she moved from [advocating](#) social change on the broader scale

to focusing on children’s rights. Her biography is also relevant to this discussion because her life experiences inspired her writings and contributed a passionate voice to her work. Her college thesis reflects an early effort to develop a persuasive public voice when dealing with a controversial subject. It is during this time that she struggled with her Methodist upbringing against the backdrop of the civil unrest of the 1960s and her grasp of the Democratic Party after being raised a Barry Goldwater Republican. In the second section of this study, I will examine how Rodham put her persuasive public voice to use in her legal arguments concerning children’s rights, analyzing these to see how the quality of their effectiveness rates against her writing at Wellesley.

Taking a Stand at Wellesley: Senior Year, 1968–1969

Rodham headed to Wellesley, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1965 after graduating from Maine Township High School South in Park Ridge, Illinois—a suburb of Chicago. Rodham has admitted that she did not know where she wanted to attend college. Her father requested that she not go to “beatnik” colleges like Mississippi or Radcliffe. Two teachers suggested Smith and Wellesley. Rodham applied to both but ultimately chose Wellesley based on the photographs of the lake on campus, which reminded her of Lake Winola, twenty miles northwest of Scranton, Pennsylvania, where Rodham’s family spent each summer (Clinton, *Living History* 25). Wellesley was a drastic change from her mostly conservative Republican upbringing. “I arrived at Wellesley carrying my father’s political beliefs and my mother’s dreams and left with the beginnings of my own.” Rodham said (27).

Throughout half of her years at Wellesley, Rodham still held fast to her Republican values, and was even the president of the Wellesley Young Republicans—

certainly not seeing herself as a feminist or a radical. But as 1968 drew to a close—one of the most tumultuous years in the civil rights struggle, with the [assassinations](#) of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.—Rodham faced an identity crisis. [She](#) was beginning to write her thesis as she prepared to graduate and focus her attention on the next step. Rodham did [not](#) know [at first](#) what to research in her [senior honor’s thesis for the political science department](#) but ultimately decided on a fellow Chicagoan, [community organizer Saul Alinsky](#), a [surprising choice](#) given her background and early college views. [The finished thesis, “There Is Only the Fight: An Analysis of the Alinsky Model,”](#) represented a reversal of views after a four-year identity struggle. Throughout the five chapters [of](#) her [ninety](#)-page thesis, Rodham assesses [her subject](#), known mostly as a “[radical](#),” and does an effective, objective job of focusing on her interviews of him and not the influence [of](#) critics:

The epithets [\[assigned to him\]](#) are not surprising as most people who deal with Alinsky need to categorize in order to handle him. It is far easier to cope with a man if, depending on ideological perspective, he is classified as a “[crackpot](#)” than to grapple with the substantive issues he presents. (1)

Her examination begins by asking the question “What is a radical? This is a basic question for Alinsky who proudly refers to himself as a radical” (3) and “credits himself with being the second most important Jew in the history of Christianity” (30). She spends much of the first chapter analyzing Alinsky’s life in the [biographical](#) sense—where he grew up and the bulk of his early work. If critics claim Rodham is a radical based on her writing [about](#) Alinsky, they are mistaken since there are no emotional appeals or calls for radical social reform—just a close analysis of Alinsky’s life and work. Rodham is more

interested in assessing him than endorsing him. Her goal is to understand him better. She clarifies his reasons for his initiation of social/political organizing by outlining his beliefs:

“Alinsky’s anti-fascism, built around anti-authoritarianism, anti-racial superiority, anti-oppression, was the ideological justification for his move into organizing and the first social basis on which he began constructing his theory of action” (3). Subsequently, [Rodham](#) provides her own definition of a radical based on what Alinsky says during their interviews, which she still doesn’t feel aptly applies to her. She still views herself as a social/civil activist—not quite reaching the extreme of radical. In fact, she has always been baffled by the charge [that](#) she is radical and has never viewed her life or beliefs as such. She simply views herself as a hard worker who keeps a low profile even when having to defend her work:

A radical is one who advocates sweeping change in the existing laws and methods of government. These proposed changes are aimed at the roots of political problems which in Marxian terms are the attitudes and the behaviors of men. Radicals are not interested in ameliorating the symptoms of decay but in drastically altering the causes of societal conditions. (6)

It’s interesting how her use of phrases such as “advocates sweeping change” and “the roots of political problems which in Marxian terms” are familiar political rhetoric today, especially the former. She also incorporates phrases like “luxury of symbolic suicide” (7) and describes [César Chávez](#), almost nonchalantly, as the man “of California grape strike fame” (24). One humorous effect is how she turns a phrase from the poem “The Night Before Christmas” into one about a community: “With memories of fire hoses dancing in their heads, the residents of Rochester settled down for a long, bitter conflict” (36). These

little phrases reveal her comfort in relying on familiar clichés or “cutesy” adolescent one-liners to hide behind as she negotiates her views on social and political issues. She releases her grip on these phrases later as she develops more confidence through experience.

Rodham spends much of chapter 3 addressing Alinsky’s critics, including Daniel P. Moynihan, then director of the Joint Center for Urban Studies at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University and President Nixon’s domestic adviser (Rodham assumed his seat in the Senate in 2001). Working through Moynihan’s argument, she notes: “Moynihan writes in a spirited style but even his behind-the-scenes stance does not make his argument less confusing” (44). She analyzes how Moynihan doesn’t define terms like “participation” or “social change.” With a lack of a definition, Rodham believes this is a way “for men to play greater roles in shaping their own lives, and to the dire state of twentieth-century America” (45). The attack on Alinsky’s critics seems to make Rodham appear pro-Alinsky, but in her own assessment later she calls him, in a derogatory tone, “a man of exceptional charm” (53). There is an inherent contradiction in her writing here. Readers can’t exactly pinpoint which side she supports. As she contradicts herself, she runs the risk of losing the trust of her readers by offering two opposite opinions. Warren Barrett describes how this inner conflict is typical of the “student radical who must take up a critical position outside the structure of the establishment while at the same time founding his or her critique on its inner contradictions” (140). She almost acts as mediator between Alinsky and his critics in her assessment: defending Alinsky but not afraid to criticize him. This contributes to her identity struggle, as she is trying to balance her personal views against her obligation to provide an objective analysis of her subject; she is

struggling with the voice of her father's Republican ideology against what she has come to know with Alinsky.

Overall, [Rodham](#) recognizes [that](#):

much of what Alinsky professes does not sound [“radical.”](#) His are the words used in our schools and churches, by our parents and their friends, by our peers. The difference is that Alinsky really believes in them and recognizes the necessity of changing the present structures of our lives in order to realize them. ([“There Is Only the Fight”](#) 6)

But she also notes how, “unfortunately, the war-like rhetoric can obscure the constructiveness of the conflict Alinsky orchestrates” (9). Thus, she concludes at the end of her thesis that, if in fact what Alinsky fights for is [truly worthwhile](#) and his efforts become realized, “the result would be social revolution. . . . As such, he has been feared—just as Eugene Debs or Walt Whitman or Martin Luther King has been feared, because each embraced the most radical of political faiths—democracy” (74). Her conclusion is somewhat of a cliché and certainly leaves more substance desired. She incorporates these clichés into her writing—almost as if she [is](#) trying to hide behind them instead of directly speaking to the heart of her audience. Despite that, she still has no problem [both](#) criticizing and praising him, leaving readers wondering whether she agrees with him or not, suggesting her own political struggle.

Rodham reflected [back](#) when she became First Lady (possibly to create a more politically correct response to her critics, [as](#) Carl Bernstein suggests), “I basically argued that [Alinsky] was right. Even at that early stage I was against all these people who came up with these big government programs that were more supportive of bureaucracies than

actually helpful to people” (qtd. in Bernstein 57–58). Certainly her writing at this point was [that](#) of a mature student (she was an [honor’s](#) student and graduated top of her class), especially considering the large undertaking to spend a year interviewing a controversial man and writing her thesis. But the focus of her writing was still that of an amateur trying to apply the principles she learned in the classroom to the assignment in front of her. This “student radicalism” is what she has been criticized for—[she was](#) linked to the subject she wrote about [in college](#) when she first emerged upon the national consciousness in 1992; though it could be argued that a writing of more than [twenty](#) years prior may not necessarily fully represent the person who wrote it, especially considering the controversial subject it was based upon. Her words weren’t radical, the subject was. Thus, she was radical by association. She was also trying to understand her subject a little better as these views were new to her. Rodham’s writing was weak, emerging, slowly but surely, into what she would do in law school. Her lack of experience contributed to a broad focus on social and political issues at Wellesley—thus the clichés—until she entered law school and adapted a more focused analysis of social inequities. She would eventually turn this focus into a career for child advocacy.

The Polishing Begins: Legal Rhetoric at Yale

In the fall of 1969, Rodham entered Yale Law School, which helped focus her rhetorical style into a more formal, legal fashion and narrowed her field of expertise to children’s rights. She and some friends began a new alternative law journal called [the Yale Review of Law and Social Action](#) in the spring of 1970. Rodham was listed as one of the board members; [she and the other editors](#) wrote in the first issue:

This, the first issue of *Law and Social Action*, begins our exploration of

areas beyond the limits of traditional legal concerns. For too long, legal issues have been defined and discussed in terms of academic doctrine rather than strategies for social change. *Law and Social Action* is an attempt to go beyond the narrowness of such an approach, to present forms of legal scholarship and journalism which focus on programmatic solutions to social problems. (qtd. in Bernstein 65–66)

Rodham is clearly more comfortable with this legal style—no longer relying on clichés to advance her argument. She takes responsibility for every word and is careful with her word choices. Her talent is making comparisons of what *has been* done versus what *should be* done. It isn't a push for radical social change with broad ambiguous rhetoric, such as she relied on as a young writer; it is a carefully mapped out road to a solution. She has a more focused objective for the journal, clearly defining what her readers can expect every time they read it instead of vague generalities. Part of this stems from her seriousness of purpose, especially in her new role as a student of law—no more days of self-discovery. This is where she begins to apply the lessons she has learned to her new level of education. She begins now to show a talent that comes from the traditional legal curriculum, in which students are required to form objective and clear legal analyses of cases, rulings, and legal opinions. Founding a new journal was a monumental undertaking during the first year of law school, which is mostly focused on intense study and is infamously known among students as the hardest year.

Rodham's writing is reminiscent of the “generational perspective” concerning protest rhetoric. “This occurs when an age group perceives itself as unique because of its distinct historical experiences and is at odds with older age groups who had qualitatively different childhood and youthful experiences with society and politics” (“The Life Course

Development of Left--and Right--Wing Youth Activist Leaders from the 1960s" 250).

Rodham believes her generation is unique when it comes to its social problems and how they must be addressed, which is the reason she feels her journal is so important, thus her focus and sharpness.

After spending an extra year in law school studying children's rights, Rodham graduated in 1973, joined the Children's Defense Fund in Washington and published an article in the *Harvard Educational Review* that culminated her study of children's rights, which Rodham believed was "a slogan in search of a definition" ("Children Under the Law" 487). Rodham finally began to shape her career into the field of law she was most passionate about. [She](#) began a successful, probing analysis with cleaner prose in her search for such a definition:

[The](#) dividing point at twenty-one or eighteen years is artificial and simplistic; it obscures the dramatic differences among children of different ages and the striking similarities between older children and adults. The capacities and the needs of a child of six months differ substantially from those of a child of six or sixteen years. (489)

[For](#) her academic work [on](#) children's rights, [Rodham has been](#) characterized by historian Garry Wills as "one of the more important scholar-activists of the last two decades" ([qtd.](#) in Bernstein 76).

This praise was important to Rodham [as](#) a "feminist" (translate female) activist; as Rebecca Klatch points out, "[T](#)he establishment and acceptance of challenging or oppositional frames is particularly difficult because women's roles historically have been assumed to be based on natural differences" (796). Rodham was battling those who wanted little or nothing to do with children's rights—a subject [that](#) wasn't addressed in [the](#)

standard legal curriculum—as well as challenging the traditional masculine legal training by “using elements of a ‘feminine style’” (Trent and Short-Thompson 122). She was forced to speak out about what she saw among the social services cases in the Yale–New Haven community. The reason this falls under the “feminine style” category stems more from the subject matter than particular words or phrases. At the time, children were often looked after by the mother while the father worked. The women’s equality movement was just beginning to transform the home and workplace environments, so children’s issues were seen as feminine because for so long children had been under the care of mothers. Rodham, as a woman challenging a man’s world, was set apart and incorrectly viewed as a “feminist”—as someone might view Gloria Steinem or Betty Friedan, in terms of a radical approach. Rodham was simply doing something different for a woman at that time, and any subject connected to women and children was considered weak and emasculating. Rodham has certainly battled the charges of being both too masculine and not masculine enough her entire career.

The popular subject of the era, as Philip Altbach points out, was the environmental movement, which ranked high among student concerns and filled most campus newspapers with editorial after editorial (620). Altbach also notes how the entire decade of the 1970s was characterized by apathy among students, who realized that the radical protests of the 1960s had done little to change society. Carl Bernstein notes that despite their earlier popularity, “radicalism and fervent ideology held little appeal” for Rodham once she graduated Yale Law School in 1973. She had not consciously adopted a feminist rhetoric or a “rigid ideology” (104), just a concern for the well-being of children. She

wanted to shed light on a situation that was being marginalized by other political hot topics of the day.

In her article [“Children Under the Law,”](#) Rodham argues in a [clear and straightforward](#) manner that America [has fallen far short of](#) its goal of achieving a familial, child-centered society:

Unfortunately, the state has not proved an adequate substitute parent in many of the cases where intrusion has resulted in the removal of a child from his home. . . . Age may be a valid criterion for determining the distribution of legal benefits and burdens, but before it is used its application should be subjected to a test of rationality. ([491, 507](#))

Rodham avoids the clichés she relied on as an undergraduate; as one with experience in the field, she takes responsibility for what she’s arguing, and clearly, her vocabulary has increased and is more specific to what she is trying to say, despite the fact [that](#) she is a bit longwinded on the policy details. Her tool of carefully explaining the situation and [how it should be ameliorated](#) shows her patience in assessing a situation. In her autobiography, she recalls painful memories when she talks about her time at the Yale–New Haven Hospital, the reason she spent an extra year in law school, assessing the situation of child abuse and neglect:

I saw children whose parents beat and burned them; who left them alone for days in squalid apartments; who failed and refused to seek necessary medical care. The sad truth, I learned, was that certain parents abdicated their rights as parents, and someone—preferably another family member, but ultimately the state—had to step in to give a child the chance for a

permanent and loving home. ([Clinton](#), *Living History* 50)

In her article, Rodham is using pathos as a way to advance her fight for children's rights. She is no longer relying solely on logos. Partly because of the topic and [because she was](#) not a politician at the time, Rodham never had to make strong emotional appeals to make a case. In her undergraduate work, she was more focused on broad social topics and used a logical argumentative style in her approach. With her newfound focus on children's rights, she adapts an emotional style. Tugging at the [heartstrings](#) of the audience works to her advantage. Having identified that soft spot in the heart of her readers, [Rodham](#) opens the door for more support from those who may have originally been uninterested in the topic. Another reason she feels she needs to do this is because [focusing](#) on the facts hasn't worked to strengthen her argument with her audience [in the past](#). So Rodham now relies on these emotional elements to attract attention to her cause, which shows how she is able to adapt her style to her audience. Rodham is using another tool, [which](#) Leslie Miller describes as debunking the family myth, "calling not for analysis but for remedial action." Miller notes how most textbooks on family sociology show [that](#) "family scholars are increasingly aware that the homage paid to the domestic ideal is unjustified when family life 'itself' . . . comes under scrutiny" (266). Rodham isn't afraid to challenge these ideals in order to get [across](#) her point that more attention needs to be given to children. She has witnessed the horrors of child abuse, neglect, and poverty. She doesn't like to waste time with clichés in order to reach the heart of her audience. She realizes the severity and urgency of the issue, which she believes needs to be addressed by lawyers, politicians, and the nation as a whole. If she needs to use emotional appeals to attract more people to the cause, then so be it.

Rodham continues [in like vein](#) in her conclusion of the article, where she argues [that](#) state intervention should be used [only](#) as a last resort and for medically justifiable reasons. Just because a parent may do something that the community [finds objectionable](#), she argues, as long as the child isn't [being](#) harmed in a way that requires medical attention, the child shouldn't be removed by the state. On one hand this seems like a rational approach, limiting the role of the state or federal government in the home (which works to her advantage when trying to appeal to conservative critics), but it almost feels like a lack of protection for children who may, for example, be mentally abused. Rodham doesn't clarify what she deems is "medically justifiable," which might have more to do with her audience, who [is](#) presumably aware of a definition, but she knows the importance of juxtaposing the different conditions and painting them against a backdrop of squalid conditions to appeal to her audience and strengthen her argument. She isn't just using these experiences as a "photo-op" appeal, [as](#) politicians today might go to a senior citizen home or a community gathering only to be seen and [to](#) create the illusion [they are](#) doing something significant for that group of people in order to retain [their](#) seat in an upcoming election, for example. She is using emotion because the situation really does make her emotional; to see children being beaten and burned in their own homes. This is more powerful than her college writing; she uses experience to demonstrate and appeal to emotion instead of relying on clichés to build argument.

Finally, in 1979, after working as a young lawyer on the impeachment investigation of President Nixon and teaching [law](#) at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, she published "Children's Rights: A Legal Perspective." Rodham discovers the decreasing standards [s](#) for [children's](#) rights within the legal system. Her way of carefully

examining each aspect of what needs to be accomplished (in order to accomplish the overall goal) proves coherent and consistent with her new adapted rhetorical style.

Rodham breaks down the piece into four broad categories, which she admits “cannot possibly cover all of the ramifications for children’s rights or any particular individual child’s rights . . . but we can raise questions and look at the subissues that each

relationship suggests” (22). As a new lawyer uncovering more and more about the subject, she realizes that the issue has almost become unmanageable because there are so many facets to it. She does her best at breaking down each section and isn’t afraid to tackle an issue of such magnitude. She wants others to join the fight for children so that one person,

Rodham herself, isn’t the sole advocate for change. She believes it is easier if everyone shares the burden of change, something she has learned through her work and observations.

Rodham’s attention to policy detail and use of analogies prove her point, which otherwise may fall flat for those who aren’t familiar with legal jargon. When she describes how the law has trouble defining at what age a child becomes an adult competent to stand trial and participate in his or her own defense, Rodham paints a historical picture:

Children in the Middle Ages became adults at the age of seven, at which time a boy was apprenticed to a tradesman, or otherwise sent out to find his fortune, and a girl was trained for future domestic responsibilities. . . .

During the nineteenth century in this country, the idea of compulsory education provided an opportunity for children to be trained, and took them out of an increasingly smaller work force, so that they would not compete with adults. . . . Because children now remain in the family for longer

periods . . . the opportunities for intrafamily disputes have increased dramatically. [Thus] the fears that many people have about the formulation of a family policy or a law of children's rights arise from their concern about increasing government control over intrafamily disputes. (24–25)

This device of painting a backdrop for her readers is best so they won't get lost in her articulate details. Putting the subject in historical context makes it relatable to the reader, thus establishing a trust between Rodham and her audience, a trust she couldn't have established without her life experience. This is an improvement over her thesis about Alinsky: she now has more control over her writing and she can articulate her message better due both to her increased familiarity with her subject and her passion for it. The trust she builds with her audience is stronger than it has ever been.

According to Richard Harvey Brown:

The sequential ordering of a past, a present, and a future enables the structuring of perceptual experience, the organization of memory, and the constructions of the events, identities, and lives that they express. . . . This rhetorically constructed narrative unity provides models of identity for people in particular symbolic settings or lifeworlds. (191)

This sequential ordering helps arrange Rodham's argument for even the least familiar with legal rhetoric and can elicit a supportive response from her audience, enhancing her credibility and trust for those she may represent in court, for example. This continued during her years as First Lady:

Her language was always direct, confident, and free of hedges,

_____intensifiers, disclaimers, or tag questions. . . . [Her rhetoric] reflected her

_____ experience as a lawyer and political activist in the language she used. Her _____ language choices emphasized her apparent strength of conviction and _____ seriousness of purpose. (Trent and Short-Thompson 119)

Another question she raises, an aspect of the situation [that is too often](#) overlooked, is, [Who is watching the state? Although](#) certain types of state intervention [are](#) critical, what [happens](#) when [children](#) in the care of the state are being neglected? “Will the staff be adequate to the task of serving as substitute parents? Who will hold the institution and staff accountable?” She points out [that](#) lawsuits [have been](#) filed in situations where children were treated unfairly [while](#) under state supervision. “In some cases, the rights that were violated were similar to rights adults might claim in analogous situations, such as in training schools where children were subjected to cruel and unusual punishment or in mental institutions where children were deprived of due process and protection”

(“[Children’s Rights](#)” 27). [Here she successfully argues by](#) making comparisons of what adults might experience if they were in the same position as children and how they would feel if they didn’t have equal rights under the law. She chose this structure so adults might emotionally connect even more with her argument because she forces [them](#) to think about how they would feel [under the circumstances](#). Certainly her legal education and experience as a lawyer in the courtroom helped her develop techniques that would reach her audience, including forcing adults to place themselves in the position of a child.

In her conclusion Rodham recalls her past experiences in this area [as](#) analogous to [those of](#) other social scientists in the field and calls on her readers to take notice:

“Interested adults should be alerted to the work that must be done to inform the public and decision makers about children’s needs, interests, rights, and responsibilities and to secure

positive action” (35). At this point in the paper, Rodham has fully stressed the importance that adults must take a stronger stand on the issue in order for rights to be secured for children. Her rhetoric is a direct call to her colleagues, who have overlooked the importance of children’s rights. in her use of phrases like “interested adults should be alerted” and “inform . . . decision makers.” It is a strong conclusion to her paper in which she recognizes that the road ahead toward comprehensive children’s rights is tough. She advises:

The first thing to be done is to reverse the presumption of incompetency and instead assume all individuals are competent until proven otherwise. . . . All procedural rights should be extended to children. They are entitled to legal representation in any proceeding in which their interests are at stake. (33–34)

Rodham’s summary clearly encompasses her argument in a few simple sentences, leaving the reader passionate to join Rodham’s cause. Despite her straightforward tone, she still remains positive and upbeat, much as she proved later when she was First Lady. “She referred to problems but only as a way to discuss how they could be eliminated” (Trent and Short-Thompson 119).

Conclusion: From Wellesley to Yale: Ten Years Later

Rodham’s progression within ten years is noteworthy. After staying an extra year at law school, she continued her academic career by writing articles about children’s rights and how those issues needed to be addressed throughout the legal curriculum. Her law articles show how articulate she had become in a few short years. Her writing at Wellesley evidences how she struggled with the Republican upbringing she inherited from her father

and [her](#) process of self-discovery at a new place with a new ideology, [culminating in her choice](#) to write about Saul Alinsky. This is one of the contributing factors to her passion for social service. Many of these factors were apparent when she became First Lady, as her “rhetoric . . . was a mixture of masculine, feminine, and neutral styles. [And even then] while she spoke about children and women most, she did not approach those topics as a traditional mother, wife, or first lady but as an aggressive activist” (Trent and Short-Thompson 125). Rodham decided to take a big step and create a new path by protesting through her words, even if she wasn’t consciously supporting a feminist and/or political ideology, and raised awareness for issues [of interest to her](#).

Her rhetoric sharpened after receiving an Ivy League education at Yale and was more specific than her use of vague analysis and generalized clichés when discussing Saul Alinsky, and despite [her critics’](#) charges, she wasn’t the “radical feminist protester” they characterized [her as](#). She focused what she wanted to say based on what she experienced during those [ten](#) years and carried it throughout her career. Rodham’s early adult development contributed to a cognitive dissonance at Wellesley, where she struggled with what she saw and what she was taught to believe and what role she would play in society. The more experience she had with children and the things she witnessed increased her use of emotional appeals and eliminated her use of clichés. We can look back at this period and understand her [not as another radical protester of the era but as a young woman whose](#) rhetorical development was the result of venturing out for the first time and trying to assess her new values against [those of](#) other people. She proved during her years at Yale Law School that she took ownership of her argument and was more concerned with helping children, even if that meant using emotional appeals for an emotional topic.

As people begin to understand Rodham more, the strength of her work will outweigh the unfair criticism she has received concerning [not only](#) this period [but](#), especially, her entire career. The controversial topics she addressed contributed to this negative criticism when her passionate voice was only attempting to [improve the situation of children under the law and to](#) understand the role she [herself](#) would play in society.

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