

“Et nous aussi nous sommes Citoyennes”: Perceptions of Women’s Political Activity in the French Revolution, 1789-1793.

by

Chandler Freeman-Orr
Bachelor of Arts, Honours, Queen’s University, 2016

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Supervisory Committee

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Supervisory Committee

Dr. Jill Walshaw, Department of History
Supervisor

Dr. Rob Alexander, Department of History
Departmental Member

Abstract

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This thesis explores the multiple ways women's capacity for political action was perceived, both by themselves as well as by others, in the early years of the French Revolution. By beginning with women's journey to Versailles in the October Days of 1789 and concluding with the National Convention's closure of all women's political clubs in October 1793, this thesis will suggest that women perceived themselves politically and as viable revolutionary participants, but that these identifications were grounded in and shaped by hegemonic eighteenth-century gender norms, and often demonstrated continuity with their pre-revolutionary identities. In many cases, both men's and women's perceptions of women's appropriate political roles were influenced by idealized standards and gender norms, as exemplified by the fictitious character, Sophie, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 1762 treatise, *Emile, or On Education*. The ways women rationalized their political inclusion and situated themselves within the developing revolution demonstrate a sense of compromise with the same norms and ideals which were increasingly used to justify their complete exclusion from political life. Through stressing revolutionary ideals such as equality and unity and by underscoring the importance of their complementary revolutionary contributions, women presented a view of themselves as necessary and viable participants in revolutionary politics in a way that, by late October 1793, increasingly seemed to threaten established societal views on the appropriate boundaries of female political life.

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Introduction & Literature Review

In a 16 Messidor Year II (July 1794) statement, written upon her arrest in a Luxembourg prison, founding member of the *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires* Anne Pauline Léon expresses her profound commitment to the French Revolution. In her statement, Léon details multiple examples of her political engagement, including inciting crowds at the Bastille in July 1789, throwing a bust of Lafayette out of an apartment window, and witnessing the massacre at the Champs de Mars in July 1791.¹ She describes how she welcomed the political establishment of the *Montagnards* in 1793, and "...expressed, on behalf of the *citoyennes* of my Section, their joy and satisfaction over the completion of the constitution."²

Throughout her statement, Léon not only makes evident her own extensive stake in the political outcome of the revolution, but she also indicates multiple examples of the ways other women actively participated in the revolution and engaged with its political aspects, including their encouragement of crowds at riots, women's signatures on patriotic petitions, and their participation in revolutionary societies.³ Léon describes herself and the women of her section as *citoyennes*, establishing a space for women within revolutionary politics, and identifying herself

¹ Anne Pauline Léon, "Anne Pauline Léon, Femme Leclerc, Reconciles Her Political Behavior with Radical Revolutionary Principles and Policies," in *Women in Revolutionary Paris 1789-1795*, ed. Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979): 158-160.

² Léon, "Anne Pauline Léon... Reconciles her Political Behavior with Radical Revolutionary Principles and Policies," 159-60.

³ Léon describes her own participation throughout the revolution, from the storming of the Bastille in July 1789 until her arrest on 14 Germinal Year II (April 1794) throughout her statement. Although Léon's statement details her own participation, she frequently refers to other women who were also present at these junctures, including her mother, friends, and fellow members of the *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires*. Léon's own participation is extensive, but also gestures to multiple different points of entry for the participation of women in the revolution more broadly.

as a legitimate public actor through reference to her own citizenship. Although Léon's participation was certainly exceptional, her statement goes beyond exemplifying the depth of her own political commitment and political consciousness to imply the commitment and consciousness of other women in her section, and to indicate only a few of the potential avenues of political engagement available to women in the revolutionary era.

In contrast to Léon's confidence and level of engagement, official responses to revolutionary women signal feelings of both ambivalence and anxiety towards women's political involvement. Nearly one year earlier, on 9 Brumaire Year II (October 30, 1793), National Convention deputy André Amar had attacked women's political clubs such as Léon's *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires*, which were subsequently prohibited by the Convention.⁴ In his statement, Amar directly links women's political participation to recent disorder on the streets while discrediting the notion of a truly political, revolutionary woman. Amar refers to the *Société* as composed of women, « soi-disant jacobines, d'une Société prétendue révolutionnaire. »⁵ Amar separates women from other political actors through referring to them as “so-called” female Jacobins, and by expressing doubt as to whether their society qualified as revolutionary, implying that, to him, women's involvement in the political struggles of the revolution was merely an imitation of legitimate revolutionary engagement. Amar's negative perception of women's political engagement, his recommendation to disband women's political societies, and his proposal to restrict the participation of women such as Léon exemplify the growing apprehension directed towards women's political activity as the revolution progressed.

⁴ See for example: “Séance du mercredi 30 octobre 1793,” in *Archives Parlementaires*, Tome 78: Du 29 octobre au 10 novembre 1793 (Paris : Paul Dupont, 1884):49

⁵ “Séance du mercredi 30 octobre 1793,” 49.

Léon's and Amar's stances on female political engagement differ dramatically. While Léon's statement reflects pride in her political participation, the legislation disbanding women's popular societies, prompted by Amar's speech, indicates official antipathy towards these forms of participation. Eighteenth-century gender norms and ideals had a significant influence on Amar's perceptions, and helped to determine the forms of involvement he perceived as being appropriate for women. Jean Jacques Rousseau's popular work, *Emile, or On Education*, is one example of a publication that enjoyed broad readership in the late eighteenth-century and which influenced the ways people thought about women and the role of gender throughout the period. Throughout Book V of *Emile*, Rousseau details the essential differences between Emile and his wife, Sophie, as well as their complementary characteristics, and stresses that it is imperative for society to recognize the natural differences in roles (and consequently in education) between men and women. He writes that a woman is "worth more as woman and less as man," and cautions mothers not to "make a decent man of your daughter, as though you would give nature the lie. Make a decent woman of her, and be sure that as a result she will be worth more for herself and for us."⁶ Although many contemporaries found Rousseau's descriptions of Emile's education to be impractical and unfeasible, the prescriptions for Sophie were not seen as problematic, as they were more in line with social realities for eighteenth-century women.⁷ As an idealized description of what women should be, widely disseminated to a broad readership in eighteenth-century France, Rousseau's *Emile* explicitly separated women from politics, defined as exclusively masculine, and premised women's virtue on a private existence where their role is

⁶ Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979): 363-4.

⁷ P.D. Jimack, "The Paradox of Sophie and Julie: Contemporary Response to Rousseau's Ideal Wife and Ideal Mother," in *Women and Society in Eighteenth-Century France: Essays in Honour of John Stephenson Spink*, ed. Eva Jacobs, W.H. Barber, Jean H. Bloch, F.W. Leakey, and Eileen le Breton (London: The Athlone Press, 1979): 153-4.

to raise and nurture future citizens. Women's exclusion from politics is therefore described as being rooted in nature, and in the best interests of both women and society as a whole. Although revolutionary politicians did not necessarily reference Rousseau or Sophie directly, his model is frequently reflected in official invocations that women's place is in the home with their children rather than in revolutionary clubs or popular societies.⁸

Yet while this ideal of the private woman whose political engagement is limited to the home appears frequently in official discourse, as Pauline Léon suggested, it did not necessarily reflect the political or revolutionary experiences of women throughout the era. Events such as the October Days of 1789, when women marched to Versailles to demand that the King address their frustrations with obtaining bread for their families, exemplify the tension between private ideals and public realities. Importantly, this key example shows that women's presence and authority in the urban landscape is premised on their identification as women, and is justified by their roles as mothers.⁹ While women's private existence was presented as an abstract ideal, in reality, women maintained a public presence and exercised authority in public spaces throughout the revolution, often using gender norms and women's traditional responsibilities as foundations to their public involvement. Although their application seldom reflected the ideal scenario, these essential divisions between 'masculine' public spaces and 'feminine' private spaces remained influential elements in revolutionary discourse and thought, and continued to influence the ways revolutionaries considered events and perceived the modes of action available to them.

⁸ Rousseau's appeal to women to act in accordance with their nature and the boundaries of gendered systems appears frequently in speeches such as Amar's which questions and ultimately rejects the notion that women can legitimately exercise political rights, which are inherently masculinized.

⁹ See: David Garrioch, "The Everyday Lives of Parisian Women and the October Days of 1789," in *Social History*, vol. 24, no. 3 (October 1999): 231-250.

Importantly, perception is also a pertinent factor in defining what is retained and recorded; revolutionary perceptions of politics and women have contributed to the shape of both revolutionary archives and written histories. Although the archives reflect the stories of those in power at various stages of the revolution, historians have been increasingly able to write on working class male participation, emphasizing the importance of groups such as the sans-culottes in shaping the progress of the revolution. While these histories have become more comprehensive with time, histories of women and their participation in the revolution have remained more elusive. Women have, more and more, been factored into broad histories of the revolution, although their histories have been comparatively haphazard and secondary in revolutionary historical literature.

Historical writing on women in the French Revolution has steadily grown, particularly in recent years, and has developed alongside broader trends in historical work and revolutionary historiography. Early histories of the French Revolution often ignored or inadequately treated women's presence and actions, focusing solely on male political action or on revolutionary politics and government. Alexis de Tocqueville's 1856 work, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* disregards women altogether, while Burke's 1790 *Reflections on the Revolution in France* discusses women almost solely through reference to the weakness of their sex, their corruption, and their roles in hungry crowds.¹⁰ Although Book I, Part VII of Thomas Carlyle's 1891 work, *The French Revolution: A History* is titled "The Insurrection of Women," Carlyle's discussion of women focuses largely on the roles of men such as Maillard and Lafayette, who were each

¹⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution, Volume One: The Complete Text*, ed. François Furet and Françoise Mélonio, trans. Alan S. Kahan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* ed. F.G. Selby (London: MacMillan and Co., 1890): 76, 79.

present for the March to Versailles.¹¹ As with Michelet's discussion of the October Days in his 1847 work, *History of the French Revolution*, the inclusion of women in early works on the French Revolution focuses predominantly on their hunger-fuelled participation in the October Days in comparison to male motives of honour and outrage at insults to the Parisian cockade.¹²

In other cases, early histories have adhered to a 'great man' approach of historical writing, focusing disproportionately on a few exceptional women and their participation in the revolution.¹³ These early attempts at feminist histories of the era implied that women's contributions to the revolution could be adequately explained through the analysis of a small number of notable individuals, visible not only because of their militant and radical views on revolutionary politics, but also, quite often, because of their literacy and social class. Women such as Olympe de Gouges, who wrote the notorious *Déclaration des droits de la femme and de la citoyenne*, are consequently overrepresented in these earlier works because they left documents behind which detailed their revolutionary experiences and outlook, thus rendering themselves visible to future historians.¹⁴ Throughout *Les femmes de la révolution*, Michelet

¹¹ Thomas Carlyle, "Book VII: The Insurrection of Women," in *The French Revolution: A History* (London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd.: 1891): 187-229.

¹² Michelet writes that "[the] real, the certain cause, for the women and the most miserable part of the crowd, was nothing but hunger..." and explicitly separates women's motivations for instigating the march from men's motivations for participating, writing in the following paragraph that "[for] the majority of the men... the cause of the movement was honour, the outrage of the Court against the Parisian cockade, adopted by all France as a symbol of the Revolution." Michelet's work denies women's political motivations for the march, simply reducing them to hungry and miserable members of the masses while attributing a political motivation solely to male participants, both elite and of the people. Jules Michelet, *History of the French Revolution*, ed. Gordon Wright, trans., Charles Cocks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967): 281.

¹³ For further examples, see: Léopold Lacour, *Les origines du féminisme contemporain : trois femmes de la Révolution: Olympe de Gouges, Théroigne de Méricourt, Rose Lacombe* (Paris: Plon Nourrit, 1900) ; E. Lairtullier, *Les femmes célèbres de 1789 à 1795, et leur influence dans la révolution, pour servir de suite et de complément à toutes les histoires de la Révolution Française* (Paris: Chez France, 1840)

¹⁴ See: Olympe de Gouges, "Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne," Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Droit, économie, politique <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k64848397>

references a number of revolutionary women, including Olympe de Gouges, Madame Roland, Claire Lacombe, and Théroigne de Mericourt.¹⁵ In focusing on these and similar women, early historians pursued a depiction of female engagement with the revolution limited to those who left documents behind, or who were otherwise prominently engaged with formal revolutionary politics. Through focusing exclusively on prominent women, ‘great woman’ histories of the French Revolution ignored the diversity of female political engagement through attributing too much weight to radical, strong women such as those who demanded equal rights, brandished weapons, or engaged in active struggles to defend their views. Further, this focus on individual women often does not do justice to their connections to and roles in the revolution more broadly, as these works too often resist integrating women into the revolutionary narrative by treating them separately.¹⁶

In the 1960s, historical analyses of the French Revolution further shifted towards an emphasis on everyday revolutionary contributions, moving away somewhat from earlier ‘great man’ style histories in favour of social histories that focus on ordinary people and experiences.¹⁷

¹⁵ Jules Michelet, *Les femmes de la révolution: héroïnes, victimes, amoureuses* (Paris: Hachette, 1855) <http://archive.org/details/lesfemmesdelar00mich/>

¹⁶ Historians have continued to publish works that focus on the revolutionary contributions of an exceptional few women in spite of a broader shift in favour of a more ‘everyday’ outlook. These works continue to constitute a sizeable portion of work on women in the French Revolution, particularly those with radical or exceptional views. See for example: Lisa Beckstrand, *Deviant Women of the French Revolution and the Rise of Feminism* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009); Biancamaria Fontana, *Germaine de Staël: A Political Portrait* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Linda Kelly, *Women of the French Revolution* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987); Gita May, *Madame Roland and the Age of Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970); Joan Wallach Scott, “The Uses of Imagination: Olympe de Gouges in the French Revolution,” in *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Marilyn Yalom, *Blood Sisters: The French Revolution in Women’s Memory* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

¹⁷ See for example: David Andress, *French Society in Revolution, 1789-1799* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Norman Hampson, *A Social History of the French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1963); Peter M. Jones, *The Peasantry in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Georges Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution*, trans. R.R. Palmer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947); Peter McPhee, *Living the French Revolution, 1789-99* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006)

Some of the most prevalent of these ‘bottom-up’ interpretations of the French Revolution, such as George Rudé’s *The Crowd in the French Revolution*, follow a Marxist interpretation, paying particular attention to class-based dynamics and economic tensions. Similarly, Georges Lefebvre’s *The French Revolution* emphasizes the antagonism of the popular masses against the aristocracy and monarch.¹⁸ However, these accounts remain essentially masculinized and tend to present women as either revolutionary outsiders or as tangential to the political processes of the revolution in spite of their inclusion in class-based and economic tensions. These works separate women from the patterns of the revolution and define specific instances or types of action as ‘feminine,’ limiting women’s involvement to a few gendered examples. For instance, Rudé discusses women’s participation when it is most prevalent, such as during the March to Versailles and the Germinal-Prairial riots, but generally ignores women’s participation in the broader, everyday politics of the revolution outside of these examples.¹⁹ Women’s participation is presented as an important branch of the French Revolution, but it is not always treated as an integrated aspect of the revolution.

In the 1970s and 1980s gender became an increasingly prominent element of historical writing, leading historians of the French Revolution to reframe their work and, as Barrie Rose put it, “to write women back into human history.”²⁰ In her 1975 article titled “Women’s History in Transition: The European Case,” Natalie Zemon Davis critiqued the isolation of women’s action in early women’s histories, as well as their tendency to focus on the biographies on individual women. Instead, Davis argues that historians should focus on understanding the

¹⁸ Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution, Volume 1: From Its Origins to 1793* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962).

¹⁹ George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959): 69.

²⁰ Barrie Rose, “Feminism, women and the French Revolution,” in *The French Revolution in Social and Political Perspective*, ed. Peter Jones (London: Arnold, 1996): 254.

significance of gendered groups in the historical past, and claims that this cannot be accomplished through looking at men and women in isolation from one another.²¹ In Joan Scott's 1986 article, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," Scott further contended that it is important to "... [analyze] in context the way any binary opposition operates, reversing and displacing its hierarchical construction, rather than accepting it as real or self-evident in the nature of things."²² She continues, writing that "[to] pursue meaning, we need to deal with the individual subject as well as the social organization and to articulate the nature of their interrelationships, for both are crucial to understanding how gender works, how change occurs."²³ Davis' and Scott's pieces each comment on the importance of considering women within the appropriate historical and social contexts, and critique the stark separation of men's and women's histories in past works. Historical scholarship in the 1970s and 80s increasingly integrated women within the grand narratives of the revolution, and aimed to recognize the contributions of women as members of the social whole rather than analysing them separately or in isolation. This shift in scholarly focus contributed to a proliferation of works on women in the French Revolution which moved beyond the simple acknowledgement of women's presence on revolutionary streets or the life stories of prominent women to better understand the different ways women were connected to the revolution. In doing so, historians have focused on various themes in order to better reflect the diversity of women's engagements with the revolution across the nation and throughout different social classes, and have better recognized the multifaceted nature of the revolution as well as the people who engaged with it.

²¹ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women's History in Transition: The European Case," in *Feminist Studies*, vol. 3 (Winter 1975-76): 83-4, 90.

²² Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," in *American Historical Review*, vol. 91, no. 5 (Dec 1986): 1066.

²³ Scott, "Gender," 1067.

The works of Olwen Hufton and Jane Abray in 1971 and 1975, respectively, served as an important starting point for contemporary histories of women in the French Revolution, though each is characterized by a pessimistic overtone and an overall sense of women's failure to achieve longstanding reforms or substantial improvements to their rights. Hufton pinpoints the moment of women's defeat as the return of starved and dejected women to Catholic churches following the Germinal and Prairial riots, while Abray comments more generally on the narrow base and appeal of revolutionary feminism in rationalizing its failure.²⁴ In both works, the authors conclude that though women were present and active in the French Revolution, the decade was not a watershed occasion for the improvement of women's condition or rights. These works explicitly question whether women gained anything through their revolutionary experiences, and whether the outcomes of the revolution for women were of much significance if they ended the revolution hungry, dejected, and still without political rights.

Darline Gay Levy and Harriet Branson Applewhite are comparably optimistic in their 1979 article, "Women of the Popular Classes in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795," where they identify women's participation in the revolution as progress towards their involvement in democratic politics.²⁵ Importantly, they argue that emphasizing the failures of feminism and the defeat of the working class detract our attention from what is a key change: the development of new networks of political institutions that allowed non-elite women the opportunity for democratic political participation.²⁶ Women remain the object of study, but Levy and Applewhite

²⁴ Jane Abray, "Feminism in the French Revolution," in *The French Revolution in Social and Political Perspective* ed. Peter Jones (London: Arnold, 1996): 251; Olwen Hufton, "Women in Revolution 1789-1796," in *Past & Present*, no. 53 (Nov 1971):105-106

²⁵ Darline Gay Levy and Harriet Branson Applewhite, "Women of the Popular Classes in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795," in *Women, War, and Revolution*, ed. Berkin and Lovett (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980): 9.

²⁶ Levy and Applewhite, "Women of the Popular Classes in Revolutionary Paris," 10.

go beyond the basic fact of women's presence to emphasize the development of political institutions that were open to women's attendance and participation.²⁷ Through focusing on political culture and the changing political networks that enabled women's involvement in the revolution as opposed to the lack of longstanding feminist reforms, Levy and Applewhite contribute to a more developed understanding of the structures that supported the development of women's revolutionary participation, highlighting the things women achieved during the revolution rather than their losses.

The politicization of traditional female roles and responsibilities has become an increasingly pertinent subject of analysis for historians of the French Revolution, who discuss the ways women's everyday activities and traditional roles became infused with political importance during the revolution. Women's responsibilities to their families and neighbourhoods and their involvement in local marketplaces and in religion each gained revolutionary significance, and transformed from being everyday actions and encounters into what Lynn Hunt refers to as political "microtechniques."²⁸ These histories necessarily engage with a broader definition of politics, and recognize the complex nature of revolutionary involvement for women rather than identifying 'politics' and 'political action' solely through reference to government institutions. Through thinking about politics in this broader sense, historians have been better able to represent women's political engagements throughout the revolution than earlier works that limited their discussions of women's political presence and impact.

The family is one such axis of analysis which has enabled historians to more deeply investigate women's engagement with the revolution through consideration of their roles as

²⁷ Levy and Applewhite, "Women of the Popular Classes in Revolutionary Paris," 28.

²⁸ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 72.

mothers. Jennifer N. Heuer, in *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830*, argues that the tendency towards considering the family, gender, and citizenship as separate issues detracts from the ways these systems simultaneously challenged and supported one another.²⁹ In one example, Heur discusses the unequal treatment of male and female *émigrés* following an April 1792 law which prompted petitions from women who were threatened with the loss of their property, and where they invoked their female gender as justification for their compulsion to flee France.³⁰ The petitions Heuer cites include pleas from women that “their sex was unable to withstand the revolutionary and wartime chaos,” or that they had only “yielded to the impulse natural to [their] sex and [their] age, a will that was not in [their] power to fight.” Heuer argues that there is a connection between the issues of gender and citizenship, given the suggestion that dependents within families did not voluntarily emigrate from France, but that women and children had been forced by their “natural duty” to accompany their husbands and fathers.³¹ Here, citizenship is an issue fundamentally tied to gender and the family structure, refuting the simple division between public, political man and the private, domestic woman who is wholly removed from the politics of the revolution.

Suzanne Desan’s book, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France*, similarly uses the family structure as a way of analyzing changes in women’s political role, as well as their rights to inheritance and divorce throughout the revolution. Desan argues that women’s changing positions within their families are foundational to understanding the development of their political roles and responsibilities in the revolution. In one case, she demonstrates the perceived ties between marriage and citizenship through referencing the ways marital reforms were

²⁹ Jennifer Ngaire Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005): 9.

³⁰ Heuer, *The Family and the Nation*, 33-34.

³¹ Heuer, *The Family and the Nation*, 33-34.

intended to transform women from gullible puppets of the Old Regime into enlightened mothers and wives.³² She refers to contemporary arguments that women “must be freed from the flirtatious and degrading task of pleasing men with coquettish behavior,” in order to restore their natural dignity, and to turn their homes into “schools of patriotism.”³³ She suggests that during the revolution, women’s moral influence became politicized and was viewed as a useful tool in stimulating male patriotism. Republican marriage recast women’s sexuality as “patriotic,” purging it of its prior aristocratic, adulterous connotations, while marital reform and an emphasis on conjugal love would help transform women from “superficial seductresses” into moral, revolutionary influences on their husbands and children.³⁴ Desan argues that women’s marital roles and her *sensibilité* were politicized and “reformed” in the revolutionary era to work in favour of the developing republic and to ensure a new generation of good, republican citizens.³⁵ Marriage and motherhood were each endowed with political and moral significance, tasking women with the work of regenerating men through introducing political judgements and moral

³² Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): 87.

³³ Desan invokes multiple examples of pieces recommending the liberation of women from “the flirtatious and degrading task of pleasing men with coquettish behaviour,” and from “frivolous forms of political seduction.” Although this task of freeing women and regenerating marriage took multiple different forms, the theme of recasting marriage into a revolutionary, patriotic tool appears in many works including: Dominique Lacombe, curé constitutionnel de la paroisse Saint Paul de Bordeaux, *Discours à l’occasion de la loi qui permet le divorce, prononcé dans l’église de Saint Paul* (Bordeaux, 1793) : 24-25 ; Plaisant de la Houssaye, « Déclaration des droits des amants, » in *La Constitution des Amours* (Paris, 1793), as quoted by Harten and Harten, *Femmes, culture et Révolution*, 165 ; Lequinio, *Les préjugés détruits* (Paris, 1792) : 143-154 ; Etta Palm d’Aelders, *Discours lu à la Confédération des Amis de la Vérité* (Caen, 1791) : 3-4 ; Desmoulins, Blandin, « Réponse de la citoyenne Blandin-Desmoulins de Dijon au citoyen Prudhomme, 10 Fev. 1793, » in *Révolutions de Paris* (Fev. 1793) : 16-23 ; Lettre de la citoyenne Maugras, c. Mar. 1793, as quoted in Perrin, « Femmes de Besançon, » 10 : 42-43. For further examples, see: Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 85-92.

³⁴ Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 88-89.

³⁵ Desan defines women’s *sensibilité* as “a certain moral and emotional sensitivity, compassion, and impressionability” natural to women. Her work tracks the revolutionary transformation of this *sensibilité* to work in favour of the revolution, and invokes its politicization and power in infusing intimate relationships with political and patriotic salience. This is in contrast to perceptions of women as comparatively politically corrupt during the Old Regime. See: Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 69.

lessons into their intimate relationships.³⁶ Together, Heuer's and Desan's works demonstrate the ways marriage and family were infused with political meaning, particularly pertaining to citizenship, throughout the French Revolution. In spite of the ideal of private life for women, even private life was politically charged during the revolution, and was an important political field for women to participate in and to demonstrate their support for the revolution. These works complicate the simple association of politics and political life with the public sphere through invoking the political significance of private life as a venue for women's revolutionary contributions.³⁷

Historians have also used women's traditional involvement in religion as a means of understanding their revolutionary participation. In her article, "Counter-Revolutionary Women," Olwen Hufton describes the broad designation of the 'counterrevolutionary woman' as used by government officials and in police reports as "modest personages who were prepared to turn their backs on the national line." Hufton provides multiple examples of this 'counterrevolutionary woman,' but emphasizes the slow development of this idea, peaking in 1795, and its concentration in the countryside in comparison to the 'revolutionary woman' who was an urban byproduct of the revolutionary *journées* and who "had her heyday in 1793."³⁸ Hufton highlights counterrevolutionary women's opposition to revolutionary encroachments on valued traditions and cultural practices, particularly Catholicism, as well as the prevalent association among revolutionary officials between women, irrationality, and superstition, accentuated by women's commitment to retaining Catholic structures and religious rights.³⁹ Her

³⁶ Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 69, 73.

³⁷ See also: Hufton, "Women in Revolution," 90-108; Lynn Hunt *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992)

³⁸ Olwen Hufton, "Counter-Revolutionary Women," in *The French Revolution in Social and Political Perspective*, ed. Peter Jones (London: Arnold, 1996): 285-286.

³⁹ Hufton, "Counter-Revolutionary Women," 288-9.

work uses examples of women in the countryside flouting revolutionary laws to protest institutions and policies such as the closure of Catholic churches that imperiled traditional practices. Hufton describes many examples in her work, including a June 1794 instance in Saint Vincent, where, while listening to a paean to the Supreme Being, the women in the audience collectively rose, turned their backs to the altar of liberty, and utterly humiliated the celebrant by raising their skirts in show of derision towards this new deity.⁴⁰ The documents she invokes and the official perspectives she uses express a perception of women as trapped within an irrational past, holding back the progress of rationality and truth through their devotion to Catholicism, yet Hufton presents religion as an important gateway to women's counterrevolutionary political involvement because of their interactions with officials, including verbal confrontations and demonstrations of collective obstinacy.⁴¹

Suzanne Desan's article, "The Role of Women in Religious Riots during the French Revolution," also uses religion as an axis of analysis for women's revolutionary engagement, but focuses instead on women's presence in religious riots as a consequence of their lack of officially recognized political rights. Desan argues that women's lack of access to official political channels such as petitions, voting, and assemblies acted as rationale for their prominence in religiously charged riots, where they replaced institutional political participation with their own riotous, informal engagement.⁴² Compared to men, Desan finds that female rioters often downplayed the political implications of their actions, rationalizing their participation through reference to their traditional religious rights and duties.⁴³ Women's participation in

⁴⁰ Hufton, "Counter-Revolutionary Women," 299.

⁴¹ Hufton, "Counter-Revolutionary Women," 287, 297.

⁴² Suzanne Desan, "The Role of Women in Religious Riots During the French Revolution," in *Eighteenth Century Studies* vol. 22, no. 3 (Spring 1989): 451-2.

⁴³ Desan, "The Role of Women in Religious Riots," 455, 459.

religious riots is described as continuous with their Old Regime identities and roles as women, allowing them an unofficial channel of political participation in the revolution. Further, Desan argues that women's participation exemplifies their appropriation of revolutionary concepts and their application of these political concepts to religious riots. Female rioters applied revolutionary concepts of "liberty" and "popular sovereignty" to religious riots in pursuit of the right to religious freedom and autonomous action, and in defense of Catholicism.⁴⁴ Desan's work points to the ubiquity of revolutionary political culture, and to the multiple ways political culture transformed everyday aspects of eighteenth-century life, such as religion, into politically salient topics and venues for political debates and participation.

Finally, some studies of women in the French Revolution focus on questions of gender in connection with the neighbourhood. This continues the trend of emphasizing the ways women's traditional roles within the family economy and their presence on neighbourhood streets enabled women's participation in revolutionary events such as the October Days of 1789. These works implicitly question the simple division between the public and private spheres, which for example, Dominique Godineau argues were not as explicitly gendered in the revolutionary period as they would later become.⁴⁵ Community-based studies demonstrate the role of women's everyday experiences in influencing their revolutionary actions and participation, including instances where they perceived their own intervention to be appropriate. Women's lives and functions within their neighbourhoods and families, including their roles as mothers, their participation in eighteenth-century marketplaces, and their prominence in religious institutions were each examples of ways women's traditional roles and everyday lives acted as rationales

⁴⁴ Desan, "The Role of Women in Religious Riots," 460.

⁴⁵ Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution* trans. Katherine Streip (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 7-8.

guiding women's involvement in various aspects of the revolution such as educating their children, ensuring their subsistence, and commenting on laws such as the *Constitution civile du clergé*.

Women's involvement with formal and organized political structures, including their participation in popular societies and their gallery attendance shift focus from women's traditional roles to their newly developing political ones. While revolutionary historiography has evolved in recent years to better integrate women's participation in the revolution, formal politics and the struggle for power in the political arena have remained essentially masculinized in revolutionary studies. Still, the topic of women's political consciousness and their agency as independent, revolutionary actors remains central within these works. In his survey text, *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order*, D.M.G. Sutherland downplays the agency and political consciousness of female participants in the October Days of 1789, treating women as useful tools in the protest rather than individual actors in their own right. He writes that in the case of the October Days, as in the riots of 1795, "women's taunting of the men was the start of the affair and they were also participants, literally drumming up help, invading workshops to round up others to follow and so on."⁴⁶ Sutherland's account of the October Days invokes the importance of women in crowds in disarming troops and avoiding persecution, but largely fails to distinguish between women's traditional involvement in grain riots and their revolutionary participation, and avoids discussing women as actors with the ability to make choices or wield influence of their own.⁴⁷ In contrast, historians such as Olwen Hufton and

⁴⁶ D.M.G. Sutherland, *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003): 78.

⁴⁷ Sutherland, *The French Revolution and Empire*, 75.

Shirley Elson Roessler invoke the political impact, knowledge, and involvement of women throughout the revolution. In the case of the October Days, Hufton emphasizes the political consciousness of its participants, including the dissatisfaction of members of the crowd on the return of the delegation to the King, who wondered “what guarantees had the monarch offered? Had the delegation got anything in writing?” and “if they went back to Paris with no more than promises, how was their situation improved?”⁴⁸ Additionally, Roessler argues that women seemed to realize that political intervention was the means to practical reform, and that their interventions would have to exceed the boundaries of their traditional participation in order to resolve the crisis within the revolutionary environment of Paris in 1789.⁴⁹ Micah Alpaugh, in his article, “The Politics of Escalation in French Revolutionary Protest,” also acknowledges the development of women’s ability to intervene in politics through reference to marches throughout the summer of 1789 in honour of Sainte Geneviève. Alpaugh suggests that these marches in honour of the patron saint of Paris were important models for the development of the October Days march, and critically provided women with the opportunity to develop their own political spaces, and to voice their grievances over issues such as Parisian security and subsistence in their interactions with Lafayette at the end of each march.⁵⁰ While each of these historians recognize the importance of women’s participation in Old Regime grain riots, they treat women’s participation in the October Days differently through their consideration of women’s political

⁴⁸ Olwen Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992): 10.

⁴⁹ Shirley Elson Roessler, *Out of the Shadows: Women and Politics in the French Revolution, 1789-1795* (New York: P. Lang, 1998): 11.

⁵⁰ Micah Alpaugh, “The Politics of Escalation in French Revolutionary Protest: Political Demonstrations, Non-Violence, and Violence in the *Grandes Journées* of 1789,” in *French History*, vol. 23, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 353-354. See also: Levy and Applewhite, “Women of the Popular Classes in Revolutionary Paris,” 13.

consciousness and agency during the October Days and at various other junctures of the revolution.

Women's engagements with political institutions were varied, and many scholars have chosen to focus on more specific aspects of women's political involvement. Clubs are one popular subject of study in political analyses of the revolution, including those focused on women's participation. Historians such as Roessler and Godineau have each dedicated substantial space to discussions of the Parisian women's club, the *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires*, and discuss the more militant aspects of women's participation in clubs and political societies.⁵¹ Although women's actions within the exclusively female, urban *Société* were generally more radical, other scholars have focused on mixed gender clubs, and male clubs more open to women's membership and participation such as the *Cercle Social*, which also provided women with important venues to advance their political educations and to pursue arguments in favour of their own inclusion.⁵² This body of literature demonstrates the ways women's political engagement developed throughout the revolution, as well as the ways women pushed traditional forms of engagement within the context of the revolution, participating in revolutionary clubs and sitting in government galleries as political commentators.

Citizenship is a key theme within many works focusing on women's political engagement in the revolution, as it is connected to women's right to participate and justifies their stake in political struggles. For example, Olwen Hufton argues that the feminine form of *sans-culotterie*

⁵¹ See: Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*; Roessler, *Out of the Shadows*, 101-161.

⁵² For discussion of women's clubs specifically, see for example: Suzanne Desan, "Constitutional Amazons': Jacobin Women's Clubs in the French Revolution," in *Re-creating Authority in Revolutionary France*, ed. Bryant T. Ragan and Elizabeth A. Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992): 11-35. On sympathetic clubs more generally, see: Gary Kates, *The Cercle Social, the Girondins, and the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

demonstrated a form of female citizenship that was not passive; rather, it emphasized the necessity of women's jurisdiction over combatting enemies within French borders, while sending their sons and husbands to the warfront to combat external enemies.⁵³ Other pieces such as Annie K. Smart's *Citoyennes* and Mary Durham's article, "Citizenesses of Year II of the French Revolution" engage with the ways the concept of citizenship was applied (or in some cases, denied) to women. Late-eighteenth century society was generally hostile to the political participation of women, and considered their capacity for citizenship to be limited; the definition for *citoyen* in Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie* necessitates an active stake in the politics of the revolution to qualify for citizenship. According to Diderot, women are emblematic of the private sphere; as such, he implies that women are non-viable political actors, and that they are able to access politics only through the mediums of their spouses or fathers.⁵⁴ Although Diderot's definition for *citoyen* and the revolutionary constitution of 1791 denied women the right to active citizenship, Durham and Smart demonstrate the various ways women engaged directly with the politics of the revolution, exercising their own form of female citizenship. These historians emphasize the prevalence of revolutionary citizenship as an aspect of political culture, and the importance of the term in the developing political consciousness of both men and women in the revolutionary period. Those who bore the title of *citoyen* had received an important indicator of revolutionary inclusion, defining them as insiders to the revolutionary political transformations taking place throughout the period.

In contrast, women's relationship with citizenship was tenuous, for while women were excluded from formal institutions of political power, they qualified as passive citizens under the

⁵³ See for example: Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution*, 22.

⁵⁴ Denis Diderot, "Citoyen," *ARTFL Encyclopédie*
<https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/encyclopedie1117/navigate/3/2171/>

dictates of the 1791 Constitution. As William Sewell indicates in his article, “Le citoyen/la citoyenne: Activity, Passivity, and the Revolutionary Concept of Citizenship,” the term *citoyen* was inherently ambiguous and often packed with contradictory meanings, including the identification of ‘passive’ citizens.⁵⁵ Along with Smart and Durham, Sewell focuses on the complexity of the application of ‘citizenship’ to women, including the contradictions inherent between women’s passive political rights and their title of *citoyennes*.⁵⁶ Although the term connoted political activity, Sewell recognizes the importance of identifying women as *citoyennes*, given the revolutionary emphasis on civic equality.⁵⁷ In studying instances in which women invoked their own status as citizens as justifications of their revolutionary inclusion, these works analyse the ways women both adhered to and refuted their gendered, political roles.

Beyond the ambiguities of female citizenship alone, Joan Landes’ work argues that women’s exclusion from revolutionary politics was complete, as exemplified in the conscious development of the bourgeois public sphere as inherently masculine and premised on the absence of women.⁵⁸ Landes uses Habermas’ definition of the public sphere in her analysis: an association of private persons who come together as a public oriented towards general interests, and signaling the potential of a political life beyond the state.⁵⁹ She then suggests that women were absent from the public sphere, and argues that this absence is demonstrative of an ideological aversion to women’s politicization. She posits that revolutionary republicanism relied

⁵⁵ William H. Sewell Jr., “Le citoyen/la citoyenne: Activity, Passivity, and the Revolutionary Concept of Citizenship,” in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture, Volume 2: The Political Culture of the French Revolution*, ed. Colin Lucas (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988):106.

⁵⁶ See: Annie K. Smart, *Citoyennes: Women and the Idea of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011); Mary Durham, “Citizenesses of Year II of the French Revolution,” in *The Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750-1850*, ed. Lee Kennett (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1973): 87-109; William H. Sewell, “Le citoyen/la citoyenne,” 105-124.

⁵⁷ Sewell, “Le citoyen/la citoyenne,” 111.

⁵⁸ Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988): 7.

⁵⁹ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 5-6.

on a gendered discourse that emphasized women's silence and domesticity, and argues that the revolutionary shift in the organization of public life and the collapse of the Old Regime patriarchy led to a more pervasive gendering of the public sphere. Although rights in the Old Regime were not universal and largely excluded women from their purview, she does not consider women's political exclusion in the Old Regime to have been "exceptional," as many men were also barred from exercising political rights.⁶⁰ Prior to 1789 and the advent of the revolution, Landes argues that certain noble women enjoyed at least some access to the public sphere, participating in the development of public opinion through mediums such as salons. However, she suggests that over the course of the revolution access to the public sphere was increasingly defined through reference to gender rather than class or social standing. Her work uses multiple examples to demonstrate the conscious exclusion of women from the developing revolutionary public sphere, including Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, which critique the excessive political interventions of women in the Old Regime and argue that this excessive female influence has led to the development of a perverted and overly feminized regime.⁶¹ She concludes that women's exclusion from the public sphere required at least a modicum of women's consent, including their own use of gendered language and terms such as 'republican motherhood,' and 'domesticity,' implicitly locking themselves within the private sphere.⁶² In

⁶⁰ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 2-3.

⁶¹ Landes makes particular use in this case of letter 107, sent by Rica to Ibben in Smyrna, commenting on the extensive involvement of women in the French state, writing that: "For every man who has any post at court, in Paris, or in the country, there is a woman through whose hands pass all the favours and sometimes the injustices that he does." His critiques are not limited to women's involvement in politics, but comment more broadly on the liberal roles of French women in Old Regime society, including their immodesty (letter 26), their obsession with fashion (letter 99), and their promotion of luxury and excess to the detriment of the economy (letter 106). See: Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 32-34; Montesquieu, "Letter 26," in *Persian Letters*, trans. Margaret Mauldon, 36-38 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), "Letter 99," 136-137, "Letter 106," 147, "Letter 107," 147-148.

⁶² Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 167-168.

spite of the revolution's emphasis on universal membership, Landes suggests the continued partiality of the revolutionary public sphere, including the conscious exclusion of women from the public 'whole.'⁶³

Other historians have demonstrated considerable resistance to Landes' work, challenging her claim that the public sphere was consciously and deliberately intended to exclude all women from public society. In particular, historians disagree with Landes' implication that women were politically reduced over the course of the decade, exiting the revolution with fewer rights or freedoms than they enjoyed during the Old Regime. Barrie Rose, for example, identifies the tendency of feminist historians to almost completely reject the gains of the revolution.⁶⁴ He places Landes' work in conversation with these other feminist re-evaluations, but concludes that she seems "to have pitied the plumage and forgotten the dying bird," overstating the freedoms of the Old Regime and the urgency of women's subordination under the Napoleonic Code while downplaying the 'good intentions' of the revolutionaries who aimed to improve conditions for women.⁶⁵ Rose concludes with the suggestion that gains in women's control over their own fertility and the size of their families through the course of revolution were some of the more enduring legacies of the revolution, and that these represented significant turns for Frenchwomen

⁶³ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 10.

⁶⁴ Rose's discussion of feminist disappointment in the revolution specifically refers to Simone de Beauvoir's work, *The Second Sex*, where she wrote that "It might well have been expected that the Revolution would change the lot of women. It did nothing of the sort. That bourgeois revolution was respectful of bourgeois institutions and values and it was accomplished almost exclusively by men," as well as Catherine Silver's piece, "Salon, Foyer, Bureau: Women and the Professions in France," and Jane Abrey's article, "Feminism in the French Revolution." See: Abrey, "Feminism in the French Revolution"; Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe* (Paris, 1949), 2 vols. Vol. 1, 182; Rose, "Feminism, Women, and the French Revolution," 254-255; Catherine Silver, "Salon, Foyer, Bureau: Women and the Professions in France," in *Clio's Consciousness Raised*, edited by M. Hartmann and C.W. Banner (New York, 1974): 72-85

⁶⁵ Rose, "Feminism, Women, and the French Revolution," 258-259.

who, he argues, married earlier but bore significantly fewer children.⁶⁶ Rose's work effectively critiques feminist historical work on the revolution which underemphasize the importance of women's gains during the revolution, while commenting on the differences and disconnects between feminist histories and the history of women in the Revolutionary period.

Analyses of revolutionary imagery, as in Lynn Hunt's work, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, are important indicators of the ways society perceived women and their inclusion in revolutionary politics.⁶⁷ Hunt's work extensively analyzes political imagery, including images of women, in order to demonstrate the ways women were both subjects and participants in the development of revolutionary culture. The feminine figure of liberty, for example, is a prominent focus in her work, in part due to the evident discrepancy between using a female figure to depict liberty, while real women were subordinated within a dominantly masculine society as well as within the newly developing landscapes of liberty and fraternity. Hunt's analysis of the engraving, *Le peuple mangeur de rois*, for example, describes how the image emphasizes the conquest of liberty while denying an active role for women in the struggle for sovereign power.⁶⁸ Joan Landes' work, *Visualizing the Nation*, also comments on the ways representations of women were used within popular imagery in order to communicate political and social meanings during the revolution, and uses an analysis of these images to better understand the "articulation, promotion, and dissemination of political arguments."⁶⁹ Landes provides multiple examples of ways images of women's bodies were used to disseminate

⁶⁶ Rose cites a few factors that likely influenced this shift, including the conscription of bachelors for the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, as well as the revolution's "dechristianising and egalitarian tendencies," which liberated French couples from prohibitions on contraception. See: Rose, "Feminism, Women and the French Revolution," 265-267.

⁶⁷ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, 10-11.

⁶⁸ Rose, "Feminism, women and the French Revolution," 108-9.

⁶⁹ Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001): 6.

revolutionary messages, including the use of a diseased and dying female body to represent the corporate body in the 1790 image *Le Corps Aristocratique sous la Figure d'une Femme expirant dans les bras de la Noblesse*.⁷⁰ In each of these works, engravings and images of women reveal some of the ways women were considered by their contemporaries, and their utility as abstract, allegorical representations of concepts such as 'liberty' rather than participants in their exercise.⁷¹

While Hunt's work considers the impact of images in revolutionary political culture, her analysis also engages with multiple other facets of political culture. In one chapter entitled "the Rhetoric of Revolution," she argues that political language expresses more than an ideological position; it helped to both develop these ideologies and- where it was relevant to female political participation- shape perceptions of women's interests.⁷² This focus on political language in the revolution can also be seen in David Garrioch's work titled "Verbal Insults in Eighteenth-Century Paris," and Dorinda Outram's article, "*Le langage mâle de la vertu*: Women and the discourse of the French Revolution," both of which show the impact of language and speech as political tools throughout the revolution.⁷³ Garrioch, for example, argues that speech itself is a

⁷⁰ Landes argues that the corporate body was traditionally represented by a sanctified male body, and that the depiction of this diseased and dying female figure was intended to be contrasted with the healthy, patriotic body and the regenerative character of the revolution. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation*, 73-74.

⁷¹ Other studies on imagery and the revolution include: Antoine de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770-1800* trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Vivian Cameron, "Political Exposures: Sexuality and Caricature in the French Revolution," in *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991): 90-107; Madelyn Gutwirth, "The Rights and Wrongs of Women: The Defeat of Feminist Rhetoric by Revolutionary Allegory," in *Representing the French Revolution: Literature, Historiography, and Art* ed. James A.W. Heffernan (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992): 150-168

⁷² Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, 24.

⁷³ David Garrioch, "Verbal Insults in Eighteenth-Century Paris," in *The Social History of Language*, ed. Peter Burke and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 104-119; Dorinda Outram, "*Le langage mâle de la vertu*: Women and the Discourse of the French Revolution," in *The Social History of Language*, ed. Peter Burke and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 120-135.

product of the society in which it is formulated, and acts with a significance beyond the definitions of the words used.⁷⁴ Language is the site where ideas circulating in political culture are applied and begin to grow through discussions and the process of discourse.

Studies on political imagery and language complement one another as tangible applications of political culture, and provide important clues about the ways women's actions were shaped and perceived by contemporaries.⁷⁵ The ways people speak about women's revolutionary activity as well as their depiction in revolutionary imagery are useful tools in ascertaining the ways eighteenth-century society viewed women and their capacity for participation. Lynn Hunt references the substitution of Marianne, the female figure of liberty, with Hercules in the National Convention seal as being caused, in part, by the concern that women were increasingly taking Marianne as an invitation for their own active participation in the revolution.⁷⁶ Whether women did or did not take the active figure of Marianne as a cue for their own action is a difficult question to answer, but Hunt's work indicates a growing concern among National Convention deputies regarding the power and influence of imagery in inciting revolutionary action and participation. The ways women are depicted in revolutionary images, with or without weapons, as well as their substitution with other, masculine figures, demonstrates the importance of image analysis in understanding perceptions both of women and of legitimate political activity.

⁷⁴ Garrioch, "Verbal Insults in Eighteenth-Century Paris," 104.

⁷⁵ The importance of both revolutionary imagery and language is additionally emphasized in other works, which deal primarily with the representations of ideas and people throughout the revolutionary era. See: Noel Parker, *Portrayals of Revolution: Images, Debates and Patterns of Thought on the French Revolution* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990)

⁷⁶ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, 104.

In examining women's engagement with revolutionary politics, it is important not to focus solely on women's actions. The historical works discussed in this chapter and the diversity of their content emphasize some of the different ways women engaged with the revolution and with its ever-developing political culture. However, the connection between these- where revolutionary political culture was processed and began to shape practical actions- is key. Political culture is an imperative element in determining how women saw themselves, and at the same time, it contributed to the development of what women perceived to be appropriate responses to the revolution. Crucial to this middle step, between the development of political culture and the concrete actions of women, is the issue of political self-perception. The ways individuals viewed the options available to them in their specific, revolutionary circumstances is key to understanding the forms of action they took and the shape of their political engagements.

The question of how women perceived themselves as political actors is the issue at the heart of this project, and its general absence in historical work on women and the French Revolution is problematic. How did women navigate their own dubiously defined citizenship and perceive their relationship to the politics of the revolution, and in what ways did these perceptions define the shape of their political engagement? These questions are intricately entangled with the gendered norms and ideologies that structured life in the late eighteenth-century, including the patterns of everyday life and the gendered responsibilities assigned to both men and women. Particularly important are the various ways that revolutionary actions, both everyday and exceptional, were defined through reference to gender. While women evidently acted politically throughout the revolution in spite of their gender, or in some cases because of their gender, their actions and participation were also constrained and defined on the basis of their femininity. This work will explore perceptions of women's political activity throughout the

revolution, comparing the ways both the women themselves and government officials perceived women's relationships to the politics of the revolution, and the ways they defined the limits of women's political engagement.

In Chapter One, titled "Women and the Politics of the Everyday," I will examine the relationship between women's traditional role in subsistence activities and their revolutionary involvement in the March to Versailles in October 1789. On this occasion, thousands of women from across the city of Paris marched to Versailles on October 5th in order to express their concerns over the supply and price of bread to the King. The following day, the crowd returned, bringing with it over fifty wagons of grain and flour, the National Guard, the Flanders Regiment, and- crucially- the royal family. Prior to the march, women had enjoyed a traditional responsibility for the wellbeing of their families, and often functioned as the voices of their neighbourhoods, particularly in cases where food security and subsistence were at stake. These roles and responsibilities were imperative foundations to their decision to march to Versailles in October 1789, and contributed to the general perception of the women's march as a legitimate and necessary form of political intervention for women.

In Chapter Two, "Women and the Nation," I will explore the ways women perceived themselves as belonging to the *patrie*, and as responsible for the continued development of the revolution. This chapter aims to explore the ways women's responsibilities to the nation and their revolutionary 'duties' were defined through reference to their gender. Although women were denied active citizenship rights and lacked a substantial or formally recognized political role, as half of the nation, they continued to be seen as necessary participants in official displays of revolutionary and national unity, including festivals and oaths. Indeed, the relationships between women and the nation and women and the revolution were inseparable from women's

gender and from the assumption that men and women were fundamentally different, and that their contributions had to be complementary to one another. Consequently, women were perceived as enjoying a unique relationship to the nation that was characterized by their gender, and which emphasized the importance of their maternal identities and traditional roles to the progress of the revolution.

Finally, in Chapter Three, “Women and Political Institutions,” I will discuss women’s interactions with formal political structures, including petitions to the national government, attendance in the galleries of the National Assembly, and their participation in Jacobin clubs and revolutionary societies. While each of these elements demonstrates a different means for women to interact with political institutions, these revolutionary interactions were still often justified through reference to women’s traditional roles and responsibilities, including subsistence concerns, charity, and their maternal responsibilities. Increasingly, however, women’s avocations for their own inclusion referred to revolutionary values such as equality as rationales for their right to political engagement, particularly among more militant and radical participants. These interactions with political institutions were not perceived by the women who participated as being wholly inconsistent with their gender, but rather, were viewed as complementary components of these gendered roles and as essential to the pursuit of revolutionary aims. Official responses to women’s engagement with political institutions were comparatively hostile, and by late October 1793, women’s participation in political clubs and societies had been curtailed, exemplifying a perception of women as locked within the private sphere and naturally incapable of political thought.

Perceptions of women’s political activity changed over the course of the revolution, demonstrating a genesis in the ways women’s capacity for political participation was defended

by women themselves, as well as the ways women's relationships to politics were viewed by French society more broadly. Although women's connections to revolutionary politics and political activity were most often gendered and connected to their traditional responsibilities in their homes and neighbourhoods, as the revolution progressed, women increasingly began to dispense of these gendered rationales in favour of the language of equality and unity. Although in 1789 women's participation in the October Days was viewed as being continuous with their traditional responsibility over subsistence issues and was a celebrated form of political engagement for women, by October 30th, 1793, with the suppression of all women's political clubs and societies, it seemed that gendered and traditional rationales for women's political involvement had become progressively frail foundations for women's political participation. In spite of women's attempts to escape the limitations of their gender on their political participation, gender remained an enduring characteristic in the ways women's engagement with the politics of the revolution was viewed by French society as well as by women themselves.

Chapter One: Women and the Politics of the Everyday

In a journal entry dated 17 September 1789, Parisian bookseller Siméon-Prosper Hardy recalls the presence of a large crowd of women outside a local bakery at five in the morning. He wrote that for some time, it had been necessary to have armed riflemen stationed at the bakery while bread was being distributed, due to the potential for the crowd to become unruly or even violent. Towards the conclusion of his entry, Hardy notes that rioting women went to city hall on the same afternoon to complain about their baker, and that they claimed “that men did not understand about the matter, and that they wished to play a role in affairs.”¹ In the fall of 1789, the supply of bread in Paris seemed precariously low, and the price of bread was unreasonably high. The short supply of expensive bread meant that as the summer and fall of 1789 progressed Paris entered a state of near panic and crowds became increasingly obsessed with the availability and price of food. The everyday responsibility of women to provide food for their families as well as the division of eighteenth-century household labour meant that women were often the ones to stand for hours outside of Parisian bakeries, waiting in uncertainty for food to feed their families. It was clear that something needed to be done to resolve the crisis, and women’s rhetoric, in their own writing and in police depositions, indicates that they perceived it as their responsibility to do so.

These feelings of responsibility for their family’s subsistence became important when, on October 5th, 1789, thousands of Parisians, predominantly women, marched roughly 21 kilometers to Versailles in order to bring the high price and limited availability of bread to the attention of

¹ Siméon-Prosper Hardy, “Acts of Thanksgiving and Demonstrations of Strength,” in *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795* ed. Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979): 35.

the King and the newly formed National Assembly. Upon their arrival in Versailles, a group of women went to the Assembly and sent a small delegation to the King, while the remainder of the crowd waited outside of the château in the rain. In the Assembly, to the frustration of the deputies, women repeatedly attempted to redirect the topic of their discussion to subsistence. In spite of the King's assurance that he would do all he could to resolve the crisis, the majority of the crowd remained in Versailles throughout the night of the 5th. At six o'clock in the morning on October 6th, a small crowd broke into the château in an attempt to murder the Queen, who escaped with her children to the King's chambers. Although the group did not succeed in murdering the Queen, the incident did lead to the death of two of the King's guards, whose heads were seized and displayed on pikes both on the grounds of the château and during the journey back to Paris. Afraid of the increasingly violent crowd, the King appeared on his balcony and announced, to applause, that the royal family would move to Paris later that day. That afternoon, the crowd returned to Paris alongside the National Guard, the Flanders Regiment, over 50 wagons of grain and flour, and the royal family. Upon their return, one of the women allegedly told Parisians that they were returning with "the baker, the baker's wife, and the baker's son," and that soon they would have bread.² To the crowd, the presence of the King in the capital seemed to guarantee that they would have affordable food, and that the crisis would be over shortly.

The October Days were an early and important event in the revolution for Parisian women, as it gave them a chance to demonstrate their own sense of themselves as legitimate political actors through their active involvement in the march. During the march, women demonstrated their belief in themselves as viable participants with a unique ability to resolve the

² Jean Sylvain Bailly, *Mémoires d'un témoin de la Révolution* vol. 3 (Paris: Baudouin Frères, 1821):118-119, cited in Roessler, *Out of the Shadows*, 34.

bread shortage, and continuously expressed their revolutionary consciousness through their actions and their choice of words. The decision to bring the issue of subsistence to the King and the National Assembly as opposed to the local Parisian government, as well as their verbal defense of their own interventions are indicative of women's awareness of political issues and dynamics, and of their own perception of themselves as efficacious revolutionary participants. Importantly, the subsistence crisis was not wholly separate from contemporary political concerns, and was itself framed as a political issue. This chapter will begin with a discussion of subsistence as a politically significant issue, before examining women's traditional involvement in food riots and subsistence crises in order to better identify the continuities between women's expected roles and their intervention in the October Days. Finally, it will use various accounts of the October Days in order to demonstrate the importance of these traditional roles as foundations for their participation in the October Days, and to comment on the ways both men and women perceived women's active role in the march. In doing so, this chapter will emphasize the continuities between and growth of women's traditional roles into their revolutionary ones, including the ways their everyday responsibilities contributed to the broad perception of women's intervention in the October Days as a legitimate, if limited, form of revolutionary participation for women.

The Politics of Subsistence

In the late summer and fall of 1789, Parisians found it difficult to isolate any single satisfactory explanation for the apparent crisis. Parisian workers had always spent a significant proportion of their wages on bread- 50 percent, on average, between 1726 and 1791- but by 1789

this figure had increased to an all-time high of 88 percent.³ To many, such an increase in an essential expense seemed unprecedented, which contributed to their perception of the urgency of the crisis itself.

Importantly, historical work since the revolution has also failed to identify a single cause of the crisis, instead emphasizing a variety of factors that contributed to the subsistence crisis. A number of these are environmental in nature: they suggest that the crisis was both natural and uncontrollable, as unfavourable weather resulted in a series of poor harvests in 1787, 1788, and 1789.⁴ Harsh winters and a lack of wind also were used as meteorological explanations: a *Journal de Paris* article in July 1789 indicated that the King had been required to purchase a large quantity of grain to ensure the subsistence of Parisians due to the intensity of the previous winter, when the frost had rendered water-powered mills inactive.⁵ Papers such as the *Journal* also mentioned dry weather conditions, although drought was an increasingly unconvincing explanation for the crisis following particularly wet weather in the fall. In fact, none of these explanations seemed to convince many Parisians, who remained skeptical about the persistent grain shortage, given a comparatively good harvest, relative to recent years, in 1789.

Economic factors also contributed to the development of the bread crisis. Fears over the potential for state bankruptcy and the precarious French financial situation led Parisians to hoard money, while uncertainty surrounding the payment (or not) of seigneurial dues and royal taxes created a lack of incentive for peasants to sell their grain immediately. This led many farmers to wait to sell their harvests with the hopes of prices rising, a tendency that likely confused

³ Ernest Labrousse, *Esquisse du Mouvement des Prix et des Revenus en France au XVIIIe Siècle*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1933): 597-608, cited in George Rudé, "Prices, Wages and Popular Movements in Paris During the French Revolution," in *the Economic History Review*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1954): 247.

⁴ Alan Forrest, *The French Revolution* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995): 26.

⁵ « Supplément au no. 191 » *Journal de Paris*, 10 Juillet, 1789 : 866; Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship*, 13.

Parisians who assumed a decent harvest would logically lead to an adequate supply of affordable grain.⁶ Finally, systemic unemployment in both Paris and the provinces contributed to the urgency of the crisis, as a large population of people were ill-prepared to afford steep increases in the price of essential goods. The 1787 Eden Treaty, which flooded the French market with cheap English goods, led to particularly profound unemployment in textile towns like Lyon, where unemployment rates hovered at approximately 20,000 out of a total 58,000 workers between 1787 and 1790.⁷ Alongside unfavourable weather conditions, these economic dynamics helped the subsistence crisis of 1789 develop into an especially urgent situation.

A third and final explanation for the bread crisis proposed that the shortage of affordable grain had been artificially manufactured. Those who held this view blamed the crisis on monopolists, disloyal government officials, and wealthy Parisians, which contributed to the development of class-based antagonisms as rumours spread that the nobility and grain merchants were hoarding provisions in order to starve working-class Parisians.⁸ Instead of attributing the crisis to uncontrollable weather or economic factors, these rumours presented the crisis as a conspiratorial and deliberate policy pursued by national traitors and public enemies. In the radical newspaper, *L'Ami du peuple*, Jean-Paul Marat expressed his own suspicions about the crisis, writing:

*Aujourd'hui les horreurs de la disette se sont fait sentir de nouveau, les boutiques des Boulangers sont assiégées, le Peuple manque de pain ; & c'est après la plus riche récolte, au sein même de l'abondance que nous sommes à la veille de périr de faim. Peut-on douter que nous ne soyons environnés de traîtres, qui cherchent à consommer notre ruine ?*⁹

⁶ Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship*, 13.

⁷ R.B. Rose, "18th Century Price Riots, the French Revolution, and the Jacobin Maximum," *The International Review of Social History*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1959): 435-436. For further on the Eden Treaty, see: W.O. Henderson, "The Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1787," in *The Economic History Review*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1957): 104-112.

⁸ Forrest, *The French Revolution*, 32.

⁹ Jean-Paul Marat, « Séance du 15 matin, » in *L'Ami du peuple*, no. 6 (16 septembre 1789): 60-61. <https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/journauxdemarat/navigate/6/table-of-contents/>

Marat emphasizes the issue of class in his evaluation of the crisis, depicting affluent Parisians as traitors who are literally eating enough to ruin the city while the poor besiege bakeries and die of hunger. Marat's article attempts to find someone to blame for the developing crisis, concluding in a later passage that it is the responsibility of the Parisian commune and districts to identify those responsible for the crisis.¹⁰ In emphasizing this governmental responsibility, Marat seems to imply that the crisis is not a natural phenomenon, but one of man's making, and that therefore, it could be solved.

Marat's concern over the subsistence of Parisians throughout the fall and summer of 1789 indicates the political importance of the topic, as the wellbeing and survival of the French people is presented as being at least partially the responsibility of the local government. Government intervention during times of hardship was relatively common throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including state purchase of grain which was then sold at a loss, often far below the market price, in order to bring the price of bread to an affordable level.¹¹ Louis XIV had made such interventions during bread crises in 1662, 1684, and 1693-4, while royal intendants and commissioners intervened more locally during crises in 1698-9, and 1709-10.¹² Government regulations of the price of bread within cities were also a form of government control over subsistence, in which the price of bread was arbitrarily set instead of being dictated by the price of wheat.¹³ After Controller General of Finances Turgot's liberalization of the French grain market on September 14th, 1774 devolved into state-wide disturbances and a major

¹⁰ Marat, « Séance du 15 matin,» 60-61.

¹¹ Louise Tilly, "The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France," in *the Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 2, no. 1 (Summer 1971): 34.

¹² Tilly, "The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France," 34.

¹³ Tilly, "The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France," 28.

food crisis, government control over the price of grain was widely accepted.¹⁴ While the threat of a riot often resulted in some leeway in terms of the price of grain, official regulations of the price of bread exemplify the longstanding and expected responsibility of the government over the issue of subsistence. By 1789, the food market was not free: it was regulated by the government in a number of ways in order to ensure the wellbeing of the French people.

Newspaper articles in the period leading up to October 1789 make various references to governmental responsibility for subsistence. In these instances, Parisian journalists expressed their expectation for the government to intervene, often implying that the government is the only body capable of truly resolving the crisis. This position is frequently paired with a critique of governmental inaction, where the crisis only continues due to the insufficient or misdirected efforts of the King or the National Assembly. In a September 21st article, Marat proposes that the concessions the National Assembly had recently made- the abolition of the feudal system and its privileges- would be unable to solve the root of the subsistence problem. He writes: « Si l'on considère que la plupart des concessions annoncées ne peuvent avoir qu'un effet encore éloigné ; qu'aucune ne va au prompt soulagement de la misère du Peuple & des maux de l'Etat ; si l'on considère que c'est du pain dont les malheureux ont besoin actuellement... »¹⁵ What the government is accomplishing is important, Marat concedes, but these accomplishments would not solve the immediate problem of Parisian hunger.

In sum, the perception of subsistence as a political issue was not a new in 1789; it was

¹⁴ For further details on the onset and causes of the Flour Wars, see: Cynthia Bouton, "The Flour War: What Happened and Who Did It," in *The Flour War: Gender, Class, and Community in Late Ancien Régime French Society* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993): 79-120.

¹⁵ Jean Paul Marat, « Projet dévoilé d'endormir le Peuple & d'empêcher la Constitution, » in *L'Ami du peuple*, no. 11 (21 Septembre 1789): 101.
<https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/journauxdemarat/navigate/11/table-of-contents/>

part of a longer history of viewing food security as a governmental responsibility. Through referring to the almost paternal responsibilities of the state to provide for French citizens, literature throughout the French Revolution built upon previously established assumptions on the role of the government in incidences of crisis. Newspapers such as the *Journal de Paris* implied that the King was meeting this expectation, writing, for example, that « le Roi a fait tout ce qui était humainement possible & tout ce qu'on pouvait espérer d'un Monarque & d'un Père. »¹⁶ However, as the summer of 1789 progressed and the crisis continued, the King's efforts seemed to have little impact on the public's perception of the crisis. The supply of bread still seemed too low, and the price seemed too high, and the people of Paris continued to believe that the solution to the crisis would be a political one.

Traditional Roles

Women's involvement in the 1789 bread crisis was a direct consequence of their everyday responsibilities, and their participation in the October Days march was largely perceived as continuous with their pre-revolutionary social identities. In previous times of hardship, women had enjoyed a unique responsibility over the issue of subsistence, and the legacy of these previous interventions bolstered popular perceptions of women as the appropriate actors to intervene in the subsistence crisis. Forms of participation such as popular price fixing, food requisitioning, and instances of cross-dressing to avoid prosecution are each patterns of action that occurred not only during the French Revolution but also in prior food riots.¹⁷ These patterns suggest the importance of considering the October Days within the context of traditional

¹⁶ « Supplément au no. 191 du Journal de Paris, » *Journal de Paris*, 866

¹⁷ Bouton, *The Flour War*, 3.

forms of action, particularly given the marked increase in food riots over the course of the eighteenth century; according to one study, there were 182 food riots in France between 1690-1720, a figure that increases to 652 in the period 1760-1789 before dropping off in the mid-19th century.¹⁸

The prominence of women is one particularly pertinent commonality in accounts of food riots in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Women were often crucial actors, assuming leadership roles and even acting as instigators of the riot. Their presence was legitimized through reference to their maternal responsibilities, and was popularly sanctioned as long as women participated collectively in the riot, refrained from engaging in any violent acts towards property or people, and rioted only in times of exceptional hardship.¹⁹ Women's responsibility for their families and homes was a fundamental aspect of their social roles that was widely sanctioned by dominant ideologies. The division of household labour between husbands and wives meant that while men were the primary wage earners for their families, women were responsible for managing those wages and using the funds to procure food for their families.²⁰ Local markets and food shops such as bakeries were important sites of sociability for women and for the expression of public opinion, as well as the development of revolutionary action in cases such as the October Days.²¹ Importantly, women's participation in food riots was considered to be consistent with their expected responsibilities and roles, and was an important extension of their authority into political matters in periods of dearth.

Female participation in food riots throughout the decades prior to the revolution took a

¹⁸ Guy Lemarchand, "Troubles populaires au XVIIIe siècle et conscience de classe. Une Préface à la Révolution française," *AHRF* 279 (Jan-March 1990): 34, cited in Bouton, *The Flour War*, 6.

¹⁹ Hufton, "Women in Revolution 1789-1796," 94.

²⁰ Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, 25.

²¹ David Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris 1740-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 23.

variety of forms. In one instance, women marched to Versailles during the particularly hard winter of 1708-9 to ask for Louis XIV's intervention to end an ongoing famine.²² Here, women demonstrated their understanding of the King in Versailles as a paternal figure with a commitment towards assisting his people. This instance bears a strong resemblance to the women's march to Versailles in 1789, although different from the 1708-9 case, the 1789 crowd did not leave following an "unsatisfactory" audience with the King, but remained in Versailles with the hope of soliciting a guarantee for bread.²³ By 1789, it was not enough to bring the issue of subsistence to the King's attention; the women who went to Versailles wanted a tangible resolution to the bread crisis.

The "Flour Wars" of 1775 were also characterized by the active and diverse involvement of women. Women in the Oise region raided barges intended to transport grain to Paris, while women in Brie stopped carts carrying grain. At multiple points throughout the conflict women also ransacked granaries and mills, and participated in marketplace riots.²⁴ In each instance, women were responding to a shift in royal policy that impeded their ability to feed their families, namely Louis XVI's declaration on the free circulation of grain, which rioters considered to be in direct conflict with to the state's traditional responsibility for protecting the people's wellbeing.²⁵

Importantly, women were not the only ones who considered food riots to be a form of 'women's work.' Women's participation in food riots was often officially sanctioned, and in many cases, women were expected to act as representatives of both their own families and their communities in matters of subsistence. The prevalence of women in food riots is at least in part strategic, as women were less likely to be punished for their participation in riots and were often

²² Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship*, 15.

²³ Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship*, 16.

²⁴ Bouton, *The Flour Wars*, 114.

²⁵ Bouton, *The Flour Wars*, xix.

treated more leniently than men, as their maternal roles helped to justify violent or desperate actions in cases where the wellbeing of their families was under threat. Traditional assumptions about women which identified them almost exclusively with their familial and maternal roles also helped strengthen the effectiveness of this strategy, as women were viewed as being politically powerless and consequently as a less dangerous political force than men.²⁶ In the aftermath of the Flour War riots, for example, only 93 women were arrested compared with 455 men, despite repeated references in contemporary accounts to women's leadership and active participation, and evidence, in many of the same accounts, that men were less prominent participants in the riots.²⁷ These arrest rates imply a tendency towards official leniency for women, and further suggest that officials perceived women's participation in food riots as a legitimate extension of their maternal identity and a necessary application of their authority in order to resolve the ongoing crisis.

Women's participation in food riots was politically significant, as it indicated their understanding of subsistence as a political responsibility in which the government had an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of their people. In both 1708 and during the October Days, women brought their issue directly to the monarch, demonstrating this awareness of subsistence as a political obligation, and showing that they expected a political resolution. Still, the October Days differed significantly from previous riots in terms of the scale of participation, the diversity of participants, and the lasting political ramifications of the event itself. While previous forms of protest were often localized in individual neighbourhoods, participants in the October Days march came from neighbourhoods across the city.²⁸ This pattern of participation contrasted even

²⁶ Bouton, *the Flour Wars*, 18.

²⁷ Bouton, *The Flour Wars*, 114.

²⁸ Garrioch, "The Everyday Lives of Parisian Women," 234.

with the storming of the Bastille several months earlier, where participants had come overwhelmingly from a small number of neighbourhoods and trades.²⁹

The notion of political efficacy, which I have taken from a 1954 study titled *The Voter Decides* by political psychologists Angus Campbell, Gerald Gurin, and Warren E. Miller, seems particularly helpful in studying political consciousness and perception.³⁰ Women's participation in previous riots was a foundational source of their sense of political efficacy in the case of the October Days, when they perceived themselves as the appropriate political actors to resolve the crisis. The legacy of their involvement served the purpose of bolstering their confidence in themselves, and allowed for the development of their sense of political consciousness and efficacy within the context of the subsistence crisis. Campbell et al. define political efficacy as "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process... It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that individual citizens can play a part in bringing about that change."³¹ Although I have made use of Campbell's definition broadly, it is important to note that more recent studies have tended to differentiate between different types of political efficacy, depending on whether their focus is on the individual citizen pursuing change or on political institutions. Internal political efficacy focuses on the individual, and is defined as the belief that an individual is "capable of understanding politics and is competent enough to participate in political acts." In contrast, external efficacy "measures expressed beliefs about political institutions rather than one's own abilities."³² These different definitions of efficacy are important in an assessment of political perception, as women

²⁹ Rudé, "Appendix II-V," *The Crowd in the French Revolution*, 242-249.

³⁰ Angus Campbell, Gerald Gurin, and Warren E. Miller, *The Voter Decides* (Row, Peterson and Company, 1954).

³¹ Campbell et al., *The Voter Decides*, 187.

³² Stephen C. Craig and Michael A. Maggionto, "Measuring Political Efficacy," in *Political Methodology*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1982): 86.

were not equally confident about the ability of all political institutions to resolve the subsistence crisis. The following section of this chapter will use these definitions to discuss women's sense of their internal efficacy as well as their perceptions of institutional efficacy in the case of the October Days of 1789. In doing so, I hope to emphasize the importance of women's traditional roles and responsibilities as foundational elements of their confidence in their ability to pursue political change.

Instigating the March

In their accounts of the October Days, participants identified a variety of different factors that led to the development of the march on the morning of October 5th. Although the price and availability of bread were the primary issues that members of the crowd went to Versailles to resolve, these were not the only elements that inspired their actions. The issue of subsistence was entangled with various other political concerns that contributed to the formation of a large and diverse crowd of marchers. One important motivation for the march was women's negative assessments of the efficacy of the local Parisian government. Many Parisians did not believe that the local government was capable of resolving the subsistence crisis, and believed it was necessary to bring their concerns directly to the government in Versailles in order to find a satisfactory resolution. In his account of the October Days, popularly recognized hero of the Bastille Stanislas Maillard describes the political awareness of the women who instigated the march, including the escalation of their complaints into a riot at the *Hôtel-de-ville*, and to their decision to march to Versailles. He recalls going to the *Hôtel-de-ville* on the morning of October 5th to lodge a complaint, only to find the building and its grounds occupied by a large crowd of women. Upon entering the building, Maillard describes finding women armed with torches and

threatening to burn all the government papers stored there, yelling that « c'était tout ce qu'on avait fait depuis l'époque de la révolution, et qu'elles les brûleraient. »³³ A similar hostility was directed towards Parisian government officials such as the mayor and the head of the National Guard, M.M. Bailly and Lafayette. Maillard wrote that he tried to persuade the women to bring their grievances to the local council as an alternative but that they were less than enthused with his suggestion, rebutting that « ...tout la commune était composée de mauvais citoyens, qui méritent tous d'être à la lanterne, MM. Bailly et La Fayette les premiers. »³⁴ Thus, the women in Maillard's recollection expressed a negative perception of both their local government's efficacy and the character of its officers. In failing to rectify the subsistence crisis, the Parisian government had contributed to women's perception of them as an ineffective government composed of bad citizens who were unable to effectively address their complaints. As an alternative, women suggested bringing the issue directly to the National Assembly, and proposed that they go to Versailles to demand to know what the government had accomplished. In spite of Maillard's objections that the National Assembly did not owe them anything and that their presence would only impede the government's engagement with the problem, women made plans to go as a group to Versailles in order to confront the Assembly with their problem, although they still placed Maillard at the head of their procession.³⁵

Many accounts of the October Days also refer to the importance of a banquet held on October 3rd, when members of various military regiments drunkenly trampled the national tricolour cockade. In these accounts, the banquet is used to justify the necessity of relocating the

³³ Jean Sylvain Bailly, « Déposition de Maillard sur les événements du 5 et 6 octobre, » *Mémoires de Bailly: avec une notice sur sa vie, des notes et des éclaircissemens historiques*, (Paris: Baudouin Frères, 1822): 406-407.

³⁴ Bailly, « Déposition de Maillard, » 408.

³⁵ Bailly, « Déposition de Maillard, » 408..

King to Paris, as women are described (or describe themselves) as perceiving Versailles to be full of royalists who would prove to be a corrupting influence on the King. In her account of the march, entitled « Événement de Paris et de Versailles, » participant Marie-Louise Cheret identified three main factors that influenced women's decision to march to Versailles, including the pursuit of justice against those who favoured the black cockade of Habsburg over the national tricolour cockade.³⁶ Maillard's account similarly emphasizes the importance of cockades to women during the march, as he recalls women responding with violence to individuals donning black cockades along the route to Versailles.³⁷ Black, white, and tricolour cockades factor prominently in the testimonies of those involved in the march, who describe insults to the tricolour cockade as an impetus that drove the march, or which treat the sight of black or white cockades as symbols of corruption they encountered along their journey to Versailles.

By expressing their concerns about the recent insult to the nation at the banquet, women's testimonies on the October Days indicate the importance of their political awareness on this topic to their decision to march to Versailles. Moreover, given the political nature of the subsistence crisis, the news of the incident helped contribute to the perception of Versailles as a corrupt environment and bolstered women's perception that the subsistence crisis could only be truly solved through relocating the King. The contemporary newspaper, *Révolutions de Versailles et de Paris : dédiées aux dames Françaises*, indicates that:

... elles ont juré, dit-on, d'arracher le Roi des bras des Aristocrates, pour l'engager à vivre au milieu de son Peuple, regardant ce moyen comme le seul qu'on puisse désormais mettre

³⁶ Cheret identifies inquiries about the supply of bread as well as the demand to relocate the King and Queen to Paris as two additional instigating factors to the march alongside demands for justice following the cockade incident. *Femme Cheret*, « Événement de Paris et de Versailles, par une des Dames qui a eu l'honneur d'être de la Députation à l'Assemblée générale, » in *Les femmes dans la Révolution française*, vol. 1 (EDHIS, 1982): 2

³⁷ Bailly, « Déposition de Maillard, » 415.

*en usage, pour l'empêcher d'être à la merci de ses propres ennemis & de ceux de la Nation.*³⁸

The author of this article underscores the political awareness of female participants in the October Days by arguing that from the beginning of the march they had desired to relocate the King from Versailles and from the corrupt influence of Aristocrats, and to return him to the comparatively positive influence of the Parisian people. The women, we are led to believe, perceive the King as an efficacious figure who is able to solve the crisis, although his efficacy is dependent on his location and on those who are influencing him.

While these accounts speak to the broader political factors that contributed to the development of the march, the testimonies of individual women on their participation in the October Days reveal additional impetuses beyond cockades or frustrations with local inaction. The largest collection of accounts on the October Days is the Châtelet Inquiry, for which officials began to collect interviews in December 1789 in order to investigate the violent invasion of the royal château on the morning of October 6th. Given that this is a police inquiry, it is important to recognize the limitations of testimonies made to the Châtelet tribunal. The Châtelet was a long-standing high court with jurisdiction over all crimes of *lèse nation*, or treason. However, Barry Shapiro describes the Châtelet as being generally right-leaning, serving to reconcile and bolster conservative and royalist agendas, and argues that the inquiry into the October Days contributed to the development of a campaign against the more radical, revolutionary left.³⁹ If he is correct, then in attempting to defend the royalist right and condemn the left through the suggestion that the October Days had been premeditated, the inquiry would

³⁸ *Révolutions de Versailles et de Paris; dédiées aux dames Françaises*, no. 1 (3 octobre 1789): 9 <https://archive.org/details/revolutionsdever00unse>

³⁹ Barry M. Shapiro, *Revolutionary Justice in Paris, 1789-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 14-15, 84.

have tended to develop a biased narrative. Regardless, testimonies in the Châtelet Commission have been used by historians as an invaluable source in studies on the October Days, and many of the details within the 393 testimonies remain particularly useful in assessing the ways both men and women perceived the event, and how they evaluated the efficacy of women in seeking a resolution to the underlying bread shortage.

Only 37 of the 388 testimonies contained within the Châtelet Inquiry are from women, and many of these begin with the assertion that the respondent had been either swept up in the crowd and carried to Versailles, or had been somehow coerced into joining the group. Although all of these women who were ‘swept up by the crowd’ actively participated in the October Days, including Marie-Rose Baré and Françoise Rolin who participated in the delegation to the King, none admitted to any individual impetus or desire to bring their grievances to the government in Versailles within their testimonies. In one interview, for example, Jeanne Martin testified that on the morning of October 5th she was confronted by a crowd of approximately forty women and was forced to accompany them to Versailles. She recalls that women in the crowd held sticks in their hands and threatened her with “misfortune” if she did not participate.⁴⁰ Somewhat more comically, Elisabeth Girard testified that at midday on October 5th, a crowd of women approached her house to insist that she accompany them to city hall, and that she was forced to follow as they threatened to cut off all her hair if she did not.⁴¹ Although the pressure of a police commission was likely one factor that led participants to downplay their own political ambitions, in their testimonies to the deposition these women denied having any desire to instigate the event, while legitimizing and even necessitating their participation once their involvement in the

⁴⁰ « Déposition 82, » in *Procédure criminelle, instruite au Châtelet de Paris, sur la dénonciation des faits arrivés à versailles dans la journée du 6 Octobre, 1789, vol. 1* (Paris: Chez Baudouin, 1790): 133.

⁴¹ « Déposition 90, » in *Procédure criminelle, vol. 1*, 144.

march had been solicited.

In addition to the assertion that women were being ‘dragged’ to Versailles by a crowd of women, other elements that appear consistently throughout the inquiry’s interviews provide insight as to the perceptions of women’s actions. The table below details a few of these trends in order to demonstrate their prominence throughout the inquiry, and to emphasize the way people understood what had happened on October 5th and 6th. Elements that appear throughout the interviews conducted indicate the importance of these themes to the way people perceived the event, including the role of women recruiting other women for the march, and recollections of men disguised as women within the crowd:

*Table One: Trends in Châtelet Commission Testimonies*⁴²

	Total (out of 388 testimonies)	Women (out of 37 testimonies)	Men (out of 351 testimonies)
References to men disguised or dressed as women	62	2	60
References to violent or inflammatory remarks against the Queen	42	7	35
Reference cockades as an instigating factor or significant element	41	4	37

⁴² Information included in this table comes from the 388 testimonies contained in the *Procédure Criminelle*, and is subject to some interpretation. For example, information included in row 2, pertaining to violent and inflammatory remarks made against the Queen, includes overt threats of violence, such as cutting the queen’s head off, as well as direct, inflammatory remarks made by members of the crowd in reference to the Queen, such as calling her a *garce*, or a *coquine*, but does not include expressions of fear or vague expressions that the queen ‘might be in trouble.’ Notably, as indicated in rows 4 and 5, a significant number of testimonies state that they do not know anything about the subject of inquiry, although many of these testimonies (see row 4) proceed to describe other elements of the October Days that they witnessed, or information about the event that they received from someone else.

Women's testimonies that begin with the acknowledgement of being forced to join or carried by the crowd to Versailles	10	10	/
Testimonies that deny any personal or specific knowledge of the subject of inquiry, but still provide details or information, including discussions of public rumours, hearsay, those who saw the crowd return, or other elements of the event, etc.	79	6	73
Testimonies that deny <u>all</u> knowledge and information regarding the subject of inquiry	42	6	36

Gossip, rumours, and the staunch denial of any personal knowledge of the event whatsoever were each dominant characteristics in the interviews conducted by the Châtelet Commission on the October Days. Regardless of this emphasis on hearsay, the interviews are nonetheless an important source in ascertaining the types of public discussion that surrounded the event, including the ways Parisians thought about women's capacity to resolve the crisis. In particular, as will be discussed in the following section, the interviews demonstrate a perception of women as efficacious and legitimate revolutionary actors within the context of the food crisis.

Perceptions of Authority, Efficacy & Legitimacy

In their testimonies regarding their own participation in the October Days, women often expressed positive assessments of female authority, including their right to act and to intervene

in the developing bread crisis, assertions which began in the period leading up to the event and continued in later descriptions by contemporaries. In testimonies on the October Days, the legitimacy of women's intervention in the subsistence crisis is often alluded to through reference to their authority over, and experience with, the issue of subsistence. The rhetoric used by women indicates that they perceived themselves to be efficacious political actors, and accounts of women in markets reflect assertions of their own role in resolving the developing crisis. In one woman's words, « Les hommes traînent... les hommes sont des lâches... Demain des choses iront mieux: nous nous mettrons à la tête des affaires. »⁴³ This perception of agency is similarly mirrored in Maillard's testimony on the October Days, where he recalls women persevering in their belief that « les hommes n'avaient point assez de force pour se venger, et qu'elles se montreraient mieux que les hommes. »⁴⁴

In these examples, the women are comparing themselves to men: they assert that their role in the crisis is both legitimate and necessary for the resolution of the crisis, as men are either unwilling to or incapable of finding a satisfactory solution. This attitude is also reflected in the newspaper *Révolutions de Paris et de Versailles*, where the author recounts accusations of male cowardice and inaction: « Les femmes gourmandent les hommes sur leur paresse à les seconder; elles les traitent de lâches & de mauvais Citoyens... »⁴⁵ The implication is that women felt that they were the more effective political actors in that circumstance: they are not cowards, they will not hold back, and they will take hold of the crisis, proving themselves “better” than men. Women's rhetoric demonstrates their perception of themselves as competent actors in comparison to their negative perception of male efficacy, and grounds this sense of competency

⁴³ Baron Marc de Villiers, *Reine Audu* (Paris: 1917): 10-11 in Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship*, 13-14.

⁴⁴ Bailly, « Déposition de Maillard, » 407.

⁴⁵ *Révolutions de Paris et de Versailles*, 1789, 8.

in their female gender. Because they are not men, they believe that they will be more effective in leading the city of Paris out of the crisis.

Maillard's account also provides evidence of women asserting their authority over the situation. Despite the fact that Maillard physically led the group, his testimony describes how the women dismissed his input, arguing that they know what needs to be done and expressing their desire to control the situation. They rejected his suggestion that they settle for bringing their grievances to the local government, and instead insisted on going to Versailles.⁴⁶ Additionally, Maillard's hesitancy to cross the Tuileries gardens due to the presence of the Swiss Guards was met with derision by women, who physically assaulted him and exclaimed that « puisque lui déposant ne voulait point condescendre à leur volontés, qu'il eût à se retirer de leur tête. »⁴⁷ Maillard's initial refusal to acquiesce to the women's wishes was problematic for them, as they perceived themselves as being in charge of the march in spite of having a man at the front of their procession. Women's actions in these instances demonstrate that they perceived themselves to be the main actors and decision makers in the march.

The perception of Versailles as a haven of corruption shaped women's rhetoric during the early revolution, including threats of violence against members of the court and of the privileged orders. In one instance, Maillard recalls a woman in the National Assembly insulting and hitting a member of the clergy, which he explains through reference to a rumour that had been circulating in Paris, that the clergy was impeding the formation of a new French constitution.⁴⁸ The hostility towards this member of the clergy and woman's proclamation of « à bas la calotte ! » are motivated by their frustrations with the government's inaction and demonstrate the

⁴⁶ Bailly, « Déposition de Maillard, » 408.

⁴⁷ Bailly, « Déposition de Maillard, » 410.

⁴⁸ Bailly, « Déposition de Maillard, » 419.

political awareness of female participants. Her insult is guided by her perception of the clergy as being corrupt and holding back the progress of the revolution. Women's threats against Marie Antoinette were similarly motivated, as they perceived the Queen to be a conservative force, as well as being partially responsible for the shortage of bread. Names for the Queen such as « Madame Déficit » and « Madame Vêto, » as well as women's threats against the Queen throughout the march exemplify these antagonisms, and demonstrate the crowd's perception of her corrupt influence over the King.

This theme comes out clearly in depositions from the October Days. Throughout the Châtelet Inquiry interviews, multiple depositions refer to violent and inflammatory remarks directed at the Queen by women in the crowd, although many of the interviewees are careful to emphasize that they did not make these remarks themselves and that other women within the crowd generally chastised the women who made them. In one instance, Madeline Glain recalled hearing a known prostitute proclaim that she intended to return to Paris with the head of the Queen, but that she was scolded by members of the crowd for saying so.⁴⁹ Jeanne Martin recalls hearing a woman yell that they were going to Versailles and that they would bring back the head of the Queen on the end of a sword, a statement which was apparently met with silence. Further along in Martin's testimony she recalls members of the crowd cheering: « vive le roi, vive la nation, vive le dauphin » as the royal family appeared on their balcony on the morning of the 6th, but that when she and a few others yelled « vive la reine » they were physically hit by women in the crowd until they were silent.⁵⁰ Jean-Louis Brousse des Faucherets, a male participant, testified that he distinctly recalled hearing women say: « Ah! Cette petite Marie-Antoinette, si nous l'avions attrapée, nous l'aurions fait danser comme il faut... C'est bien ce qu'elle mérite,

⁴⁹ « Déposition 83, » in *Procédure criminelle, vol. 1* 136.

⁵⁰ « Déposition 82, » in *Procédure criminelle, vol. 1* 135.

car elle seule est la cause de tous les maux que nous souffrons, »⁵¹ while Antoine-Jacques René Perin recalled hearing women discuss the pieces of Marie Antoinette they wanted to bring back to Paris, including a leg, and her intestines.⁵² In each of these examples, women verbally demonstrated their hostility towards the Queen, blaming her for their suffering, and speaking of her murder as if it would help solve the problem that brought them to Versailles.

Importantly, women's presence in Versailles was legitimized not only through their own rhetoric, but also through the presence and action of others. Many of those who testified before the Châtlet Inquiry, for example, emphasized the presence of men dressed as women within the crowd that marched to Versailles. In some of these accounts, men disguised as women are described as being the instigators of violence, while women's role in the march is presented as being more limited to the issue of subsistence and the provisioning of bread. In his testimony, Guy-le-Gentil, Marquis de Paroy recalls seeing men disguised as women within the violent crowd that broke into the château on the morning of the 6th.⁵³ Jean François de Beaumont's testimony similarly recalls an armed group primarily composed of men disguised as women on October 5th.⁵⁴ While the numerous accounts of men disguised as women within the crowd may be an exaggeration, these accounts suggest that Parisians perceived the march as a legitimate political activity for women, but not necessarily for men. Alternately, it might suggest that Parisians perceived women as more efficacious actors within the context of the march, and that they would be more effective or better received than a mixed sex crowd. The association between men disguised as women and the more violent incidents of the October Days

⁵¹ « Déposition 30, » in *Procédure criminelle*, vol. 1 61.

⁵² « Déposition 243, » in *Procédure criminelle, instruite au Châtelet de Paris, sur la dénonciation des faits arrivés à versailles dans la journée du 6 Octobre, 1789*, vol. 2, 112.

⁵³ « Déposition 246, » in *Procédure criminelle*, vol. 2 116.

⁵⁴ « Déposition 307, » in *Procédure criminelle*, vol. 2 175.

additionally implies that many of the witnesses who gave testimonies did not necessarily associate women with violence.

Contemporary accounts of the October Days further idealized the event and legitimized the actions of its female participants by applauding women for their intervention and referring to them as the restorers of liberty. The newspaper *Révolutions de Paris et de Versailles*, for example, opened its first issue with the recognition of women as liberators who brought salvation to the French nation, writing: « O généreuses Héroïnes! C'est donc à vous que les François devront cette seconde révolution, qui va décider le sort glorieux qui étoit réservé à leurs hautes destinées ! »⁵⁵ One other anonymous journalist, in a pamphlet titled « Les Héroïnes de Paris, » develops the theme further. Here, the journalist posits that the shortage of bread had been artificially manufactured with the intent of starving the city of Paris, and argues that women were inspired to intervene by Providence, and that it was under the protective care of God that they were enabled to persuade the King to move to Paris.⁵⁶ Through their daring actions, the author suggests, women protected their families and the French nation, freeing them from an aristocratic plot and ensuring their liberation. However, at the end of the article the author emphasizes that women's role as liberators is exceptionally situational and limited; women should be cautious, they write, not to become overly confident or to seek a reproduction of the October Days, but should instead exercise self-discipline and maintain the glory they have already acquired.⁵⁷ The author lists a number of ways women can continue to support the revolution, including policing city tollgates to prevent the entrance of spoiled grain and rotten fruit in order to protect Parisians,

⁵⁵ « No.1, » *Révolutions de Paris et de Versailles*, 1.

⁵⁶ Anonymous, “Les Héroïnes de Paris, our L'Entière liberté de la France, par des Femmes. Police qu'elles doivent exercer de leur propre autorité. Expulsion des Charlatans, &c., &c., le 5 Octobre 1789,” in *Les femmes dans la Révolution Française* (Paris : EDHIS, 1982) : 4.

⁵⁷ « Les Héroïnes de Paris, » 6.

particularly children, from becoming ill through their consumption.⁵⁸ While the author recognizes the continued importance of women's role in subsistence-related issues, their roles as revolutionary restorers and liberators is described as comparatively limited and situational. Although women freed Parisians from an aristocratic plot through their intervention in the subsistence crisis, they cannot continue to do so indefinitely and need to resume their usual roles and responsibilities in order to maintain the progress of the revolution.

Both *Révolutions de Paris et de Versailles* as well as the anonymously written article imply that women “saved” the nation and the revolution through their interventions. The authors perceived women's role in the October Days as an idealized form of revolutionary engagement for women, in defending and ensuring the continued subsistence of the nation. Here, women's revolutionary engagement is heralded and applauded. Women are perceived as being efficacious, and capable of pursuing a resolution to the subsistence crisis through virtue of their gender. Both women and men perceived women as the most effective and competent actors in resolving the bread crisis. As we have seen, women directly compared themselves to men and critiqued male inaction, while asserting men's inability to resolve the shortage: « les hommes n'avaient point assez de force pour se venger, et qu'elles se montreraient mieux que les hommes. »⁵⁹ Given the circumstances, women perceived themselves as having the best chance of finding a resolution to the bread shortage, and demonstrated their own political awareness in pursuing that resolution. Women were critical of men's inaction, and they were also critical of the local government, whom they identified as being composed of « ...mauvais citoyens, qui méritant tous d'être à la lanterne, MM. Bailly et La Fayette les premiers. »⁶⁰ They were similarly critical of the court in

⁵⁸ « Les Héroïnes de Paris, » 7.

⁵⁹ Bailly, « Déposition de Maillard, » 407.

⁶⁰ Bailly, « Déposition de Maillard, » 408.

Versailles and the Queen, whom they viewed as being responsible for the shortage of bread, and as corrupt influences on the King. In contrast, women's rhetoric and actions imply that they viewed the National Assembly and the King differently, as political bodies that would be able to ensure that the city had access to enough affordable bread, and that they saw themselves as the most appropriate actors to bring them to account.

On October 6th, 1789, women returned from Versailles in a procession to Paris, accompanied by wagons of grain, the King, and the royal family. Yet despite the King's presence in the capital, and his promise to resolve the grain shortage and to enforce a fair price for both bread and meat, the crisis continued. Food riots continued to be a prominent feature throughout the revolution, and women continued to be important actors in these events, such riots over the price of sugar in January 1792, the *journées* of February 1793, the insurrection of 12 Germinal Year III, and riots on 1 Prairial Year III, among other (often smaller) instances of *taxation populaire*. Regardless of their inability to resolve the bread shortage in 1789, women's intervention in the October Days remains an important event in the early revolution and demonstrates the ways women perceived their own capacity for political action at the onset of the decade. Women's actions in the march to Versailles demonstrate that they understood the subsistence crisis to be a political issue, and that they perceived that they had the right to pursue a political solution. Through bringing the issue of bread directly to the King and the National Assembly, women recreated traditional forms of action within a new revolutionary context, and emphasized the importance of their own role in resolving issues of subsistence. Women's sense of authority and competency were grounded in and developed upon traditional forms of action, which enabled them to view themselves as the appropriate actors to resolve the subsistence

crisis.

The scale of the march and the diverse composition of the October Days crowd are elements that indicate that the 1789 march to Versailles was different both from earlier food riots and from revolutionary uprisings such as the taking of the Bastille. The marchers were not from any one distinct neighbourhood, and included participants from across the city. Additionally, the march ended with women's return to Paris alongside the King and the royal family, demonstrating the diminished authority of the King and his inability to stand up against the revolutionary crowd. The ability of the crowd to compel the King to return to Paris is a significant political concession, and illustrates the growing influence of "the people" and their ability to solicit profound political change through collective action. Women did not simply bring the issue to the King on October 5th and take his word that he would resolve it; rather, they demanded a resolution and they remained in Versailles until the morning of the 6th when the King agreed to move to Paris. In this instance, women demonstrated an acute political awareness of the situation, including the necessity of removing the King from a political climate they viewed as corrupt in order to satisfactorily resolve the crisis.

Historical work on the October Days has emphasized the development of women's revolutionary political consciousness among a variety of significant aspects of the march. Historians have stressed the importance of women's political consciousness and awareness through reference to the October 3rd banquet as an instigating factor, women's use of a revolutionary crowd to influence the government, and their tendency to target centres of power for a resolution to the crisis.⁶¹ These works also emphasize the importance of women's

⁶¹ See for example: Garrioch, "The Everyday Lives of Parisian Women," 232, 245; Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship*, 15; Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 110; Roessler, *Out of the Shadows*, 9.

traditional roles in food crises, although this emphasis often focuses on similarities in action rather than treating traditional roles as a source of women's revolutionary or political efficacy.

Yet this scholarship engages only tangentially with the question of women's self-perception. While the march to Versailles was an important event in the development of women's revolutionary consciousness, their involvement built upon a long history of women's engagements with subsistence crises, and used women's pre-revolutionary social identities and traditional roles as foundations to their authority over the 1789 food crisis. Through both their actions and their rhetoric, women presented themselves as legitimate political actors within the context of the food crisis, and demonstrated a sense of political authority in its resolution. Due to the perception of subsistence as a political issue, the October Days of 1789 provided an important window of political involvement for women, enabling them to participate in the politics of the revolution in ways that were consistent with their pre-revolutionary identities. While women's sense of agency was bolstered and informed by their traditional roles, their perception of themselves was also in a state of flux, which would justify their continued revolutionary involvement and political intervention.

Chapter Two: Women and the Nation

In a piece titled « Vues législatives pour les femmes adressées à l'Assemblée Nationale par Mademoiselle Jodin, fille d'un citoyen de Genève, » the author begins with an epigraph that reads : « Et nous aussi nous sommes citoyennes. »¹ Throughout this epigraph, Jodin identifies women as being part of the French nation, and implies that she believes women's contributions will be integral to the nation's success and to the progress of the revolution. Jodin clearly imagines a place for women within the revolution and conceives of a form of female citizenship that involves a sense of national belonging and duty.

Being a *citoyenne* entailed having a stake in the nation, yet women's revolutionary obligations were perceived as being inherently gendered by all but the most radical revolutionaries. Female citizenship seemed to necessitate a different set of duties, and the notion that being a part of the nation meant something different for women than it did for men is prevalent throughout tracts on female citizenship in the revolutionary era. Interestingly, these sources do emphasize the importance of women's national contributions, but the form of citizenship that they embrace is characterized by their gender, and invokes their traditional roles in domestic spaces as well as their maternal identities. Even though women's work was primarily within the home, that did not mean, to contemporaries, that it was apolitical or separate from their civic identities. Instead, the domestic space was perceived as being women's

¹ Mademoiselle Jodin, « Vues législatives pour les femmes adressées à l'Assemblée Nationale par Mademoiselle Jodin, fille d'un citoyen de Genève, » in *Les femmes dans la Révolution Française*, (Paris: EDHIS): 303.

revolutionary domain, a place where they could ensure the generation and development of appropriate civic ideals within their families.

Although the pursuit of public virtues in private spaces was perceived as key to women's role as *citoyennes*, women were also involved in a variety of events outside the home that solidified their ties to the nation. As we have seen, women were important figures in key events in the early revolution such as the march to Versailles, but they also participated widely in smaller public demonstrations of national unity such as oath taking ceremonies, festivals, and recitations of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*. As Darline Gay Levy and Harriet Branson Applewhite emphasize, these were important occasions for women to claim civic rights and to participate in civic processes.² Oath taking ceremonies served the purpose of making the nation concrete, and dramatized the process of binding the individual to the nation.³ Festivals similarly attempted to shape their participants in accordance with the values of the revolution. As Mona Ozouf writes in her work *Festivals and the French Revolution*, "...although the legislator makes the laws for the people, festivals make the people for the laws."⁴ Public civic events were important for solidifying revolutionary values and creating a unified nation, and participation in these was an integral part of becoming a citizen.

Yet the kind of citizen women were expected to become is clear from the alignment of their participation with their traditional roles. Women were generally given responsibility for teaching civic oaths to children, and their participation in festivals was often tied to their status

² Darline Gay Levy and Harriet Branson Applewhite, "Ceremonial Dimensions of Citizenship: Women & Oathtaking in Revolutionary Paris," in *Proceedings of the Fifth George Rudé Seminar in French History: Wellington, 26-29 August 1986*, no. 3 (Victoria: University of Wellington, History Department, 1986): 220.

³ Levy and Applewhite, "Ceremonial Dimensions of Citizenship," 221.

⁴ Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991): 9.

as mothers.⁵ Even an homage dedicated to the celebration of women's hard work and patriotic contributions to the 1790 Federative Festival ended with the assertion:

*Votre tâche n'est pas remplie,
Donnez-nous des petits Héros:
Dignes émules de leurs perès,
Qu'ils héritent de leur valeur;
De la France, comme leurs merès,
Qu'ils soient la gloire et le bonheur!*⁶

Thus, women were included and celebrated participants in demonstrations of revolutionary citizenship, but their presence was contingent on their maternal and instructional responsibilities. This chapter will compare perceptions of female citizenship and revolutionary roles, both public and private, in order to better understand the ways women were understood as being part of the revolutionary nation. The ways women viewed themselves as well as their connections to the nation and the revolution, can help explain the types of events they participated in, and the ways they aimed to contribute to the revolution's progress.

First, however, a word about terminology. The idea of the 'nation' can be applied both politically, as a substitute for other terms such as 'state' or 'country,' or in a more cultural sense, to connote a feeling of connection between a group of people that is not defined by arbitrary borders. This chapter will use the term in this cultural sense in order to emphasize the feelings of belonging and of unity between members of the French nation. National belonging implies not only being French, but also the right to active involvement within an imagined French community and a commitment to the wellbeing of others within the nation. It invokes a sense of

⁵ Levy and Applewhite, "Ceremonial Dimensions of Citizenship," 224; Prudhomme, "On the Influence of the Revolution on Women (12 February 1791)," *Liberty, Equality Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*. <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/483/>

⁶ Anonymous, « Hommage rendu aux dames Françaises sur leur patriotisme pour accélérer la Fête Civique du 14 Juillet (1790), » *Bibliothèque nationale de France, Archives de la Révolution française*, 7. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k56709g?rk=21459;2>

connection among members defined by their ‘Frenchness’ and shared membership in the nation. Lastly, it implies that national belonging is not idle work, but requires active participation and commitment from all members of the nation, including women.

Societal Ideals

The late eighteenth century understanding of women as inherently different from men meant that even their political identity – and their ideal relationship to the nation – was fundamentally intertwined with and characterized by their gender. On a basic level, women were generally associated with their responsibilities to their homes and families, leading to an identification of women as ‘private’ individuals in comparison to the broadly ‘public’ man. Regardless of women’s public responsibilities, the identification of women as broadly ‘private’ is still somewhat salient during this period, as women were generally more tightly tied to their homes and neighbourhoods than men were.⁷ And yet, in spite of women’s public roles and responsibilities and the limitations of a seemingly unyielding distinction between ‘public man’ and ‘private woman,’ the dichotomy is nonetheless a useful starting point to consider the influence of the idealized gender roles that characterized perceptions of women within the nation.⁸

The vision of the ideal woman existed in a variety of forms throughout the late eighteenth century. *Philosophe* Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s fictional character, Sophie, constituted a widely disseminated and particularly influential model of the ideal woman in eighteenth-century literary

⁷ Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris*, 59.

⁸ Although the public/private binary is oftentimes overly simplistic and fails to capture the lived realities of historical actors, the binary was used by these actors as a means of structuring everyday life and of thinking about ideal roles. For more on the relationship between this binary and gender, see: Lawrence E. Klein, “Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth-Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure,” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1 (Fall, 1995): 97-109.

culture.⁹ In Rousseau's work, *Emile, or On Education*, Sophie is a necessary companion for Emile, as without her Emile would be unable to properly fulfil his roles as husband, father, and citizen.¹⁰ Rousseau begins Book V of his work by considering the similarities and differences between their genders. Although he concedes that men and women have the same basic needs, organs, and faculties, he argues that "[in] everything connected with sex, woman and man are in every respect related and in every respect different."¹¹ He continues, writing that "[in] the union of the sexes each contributes equally to the common aim, but not in the same way."¹² Rousseau's work presents an understanding of men and women as being inherently different yet complementary to one another, and suggests that they can work in pursuit of a common goal achieved through their cooperation and use of their own unique talents.

Rousseau's understanding of gender and of the complementary characteristics of men and women implies, with respect to revolutionary politics, that women would have a role in ensuring the progress of the revolution, but that this role should be distinct from men's contributions. They "ought to act in concert, but they ought not to do the same things."¹³ As Joan Landes contends in *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, Rousseau denied women a public position but assumed they would continue to wield power and authority within their own domestic sphere, believing that women's confinement to the private sphere would

⁹ The importance and broad dissemination of Rousseau's character, Sophie, appears throughout secondary works on the French Revolution, particularly in reference to the ubiquity of Rousseau's views on women and female education. See for example: Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 73-4, 78-85; Smart, *Citoyennes*, 43-49, 52; Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, 27, 268-270; Jennifer Popiel, *Rousseau's Daughters: Domesticity, Education, and Autonomy in Modern France* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 70.

¹¹ Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, 357.

¹² Rousseau, *Émile, or On Education*, 358.

¹³ Rousseau, *Émile, or On Education*, 363.

function as a public indicator of their political virtue.¹⁴ According to Rousseau, political virtue was expressed differently for women than it is for men, and he emphasizes the importance of domestic, private life for women in juxtaposition to men's public engagements.¹⁵ In fact, to writers such as Montesquieu and Rousseau, women's presence in the public sphere implied a certain degree of dissimulation: they suggest that women taught men to act one way in public and another in private, concealing their true feelings and pursuing selfish goals rather than the public good.¹⁶ To prevent the complete feminization of French society and the state, it seemed necessary to solidify the differences between men and women – hence Rousseau's focus on gender complementarity and sexual difference.¹⁷

Both male and female revolutionaries engaged with Rousseau's work, and his emphasis on the importance of complementarity is found broadly throughout works on women and the nation, which assume fundamental differences between men and women.¹⁸ As Jennifer Popiel

¹⁴ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 67.

¹⁵ Joan Landes and Christine Roulston each argue that seventeenth and eighteenth-century society became increasingly hostile towards women's participation in political life and the public sphere, contributing to the privileging of models of female domesticity such as Rousseau's Sophie. In her work, Landes suggests that members of the aristocracy began to use metaphors of "women out of place" to signify the corruption of society and the emasculation of state power, while Christine Roulston identifies the emergence of a counter-discourse that posed women's public engagements as unnatural and culturally denaturalizing alongside the development of women's salons. See: Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 28; Christine Roulston, "Separating the Inseparables: Female Friendship and its Discontents in Eighteenth-Century France," in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2 (Winter, 1998/1999): 216.

¹⁶ Lynn Hunt, "The Many Bodies of Marie-Antoinette," in *The French Revolution in Social and Political Perspective*, ed. Peter Jones (London: Arnold, 1996): 272.

¹⁷ Concerns over the feminization of French society are found in both Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, as well as multiple of Rousseau's works, including Emile as well as his 1758 *Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre*, which cautions against women's involvement with the public sphere and its feminizing effects: "... every woman at Paris gathers in her apartment a harem of men more womanish than she..." warning that "... no longer wishing to tolerate separation, unable to make themselves into men, the women make us into women." See: Montesquieu, "Letter 107," 147-148; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968): 100-101.

¹⁸ Although female revolutionaries such as Rosalie Jullien engage with Rousseau's work, their embrace of Rousseau is often selective and ambivalent. As an example, Jullien demonstrates frustration with Rousseau's limited view of women's roles, comically exclaiming « tais-toi, Jean Jacques ! » in frustration

argues, when viewed within the appropriate historical context, Rousseau's writing was generally in line with contemporary understandings of women, and "[if] he was not a twenty-first century feminist, neither was he, by eighteenth-century standards, a complete misogynist."¹⁹ Further, as Leslie Walker argues in *A Mother's Love*, it is important not to attribute undue responsibility to Rousseau's work as the "cause" of women's domestication. While pieces like *Emile* and *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* helped consolidate an existing movement that idealized women's domesticity and motherhood, many of the ideas attributed to Rousseau's "domestic agenda" were already in circulation by the time he began writing.²⁰

Bearing children and instilling the appropriate values in these children through their early education was, to Rousseau, and to eighteenth-century French society, women's proper role, and represented an essential element in developing men's good character and thus ensuring the strength of the nation.²¹ This vision of women's roles was reflected in ideals of women's revolutionary participation, as seen in the documents discussed in the next few pages. Such texts often emphasized the importance of women's maternal identities and familial duties, and pointed out their contributions in raising good citizens for the nation through inspiring a proper love for *patrie*, liberty, and virtue in their children. Thus, mothers fulfilled an imperative educational function within their homes; working in tandem with the public sphere, they would ensure the

over his freedom in comparison to her household responsibilities. However, Jullien also used *Emile* as an educational tract when teaching her son, and embraced his views on the importance of motherhood. See: « R. Jullien to Julien père, 5 December 1785, » in Parker, "Family and Feminism in the French Revolution," 45; Popiel, *Rousseau's Daughters*, 2.

¹⁹ Popiel, *Rousseau's Daughters*, 3.

²⁰ Walker invokes the works of historians such as Dena Goodman and Joan Landes as examples of those who (perhaps unintentionally) treat Rousseau as a villain who displaced Enlightenment projects like salons and "caused" women to become trapped within a domestic ideal. See: Leslie H. Walker, *A Mother's Love: Crafting Feminine Virtue in Enlightenment France* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2008): 70-71.

²¹ Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, 362, 365.

complete development of principles such as liberty and equality within children.²² By instilling public virtues in private spaces, French society imagined a political role for women as ‘civic mothers’ that remained consistent with ideal figures such as Sophie.

In a 1789 pamphlet titled « De l’influence des femmes dans l’ordre civil et politique, » the anonymous author emphasizes the importance of women’s homes as schools of patriotism for their children. « [C’est] au milieu des paisibles occupations de la vie domestique, » he writes, « que doivent être posés & assurés les fondemens de notre liberté... une mère citoyenne doit joindre l’exposé des principes sur lesquels repose la sureté du genre humain. »²³ The author refers to the *mère citoyenne* as a central figure in ensuring the safety of the nation, as women provided their children with a proper civic education. Here, domestic life and children’s education are portrayed as being foundational to French liberty and essential to the success of the revolution. Pages later, the author emphasizes that these educational pursuits are naturally suited to women:

*Qui doute que de pareilles instructions, semées d’une main maternelle dans l’âme d’une tendre jeunesse, ne la prémunissent de bonne heure contre les insinuations du despotisme, & ne l’attachent fortement aux loix du pays qui l’a vu naître ? Tel est le glorieux apanage des femmes, de commander également à l’esprit & au cœur.*²⁴

Thus, by linking women’s maternal nature to their educational duties, the author of the pamphlet demonstrates an understanding of women that was consistent with eighteenth-century norms, and which implied a uniquely feminine ability to inspire revolutionary action.²⁵

Similarly, in a 1790 essay titled « Essai sur l’éducation et l’existence civile et politique des femmes, dans la constitution Française, » author Charles-Louis Rousseau, a deputy from

²² Smart, *Citoyennes*, 27-28.

²³ Anonymous, « De l’influence des femmes dans l’ordre civile et politique, » (A. Eleuthéropolis, 1789) : 32.

²⁴ « De l’influence des femmes, » 35.

²⁵ « De l’influence des femmes, » 6.

Tonnerre and a feminist, begins with the assertion that he intends to call women to their work, and that their happiness and the prosperity of the state each depend upon this realization.²⁶ The ‘work’ Rousseau refers to throughout his essay is raising children with a proper love of the public good and in the glory of the *patrie*.²⁷ He argues that by instructing their children within the private sphere and by serving as good examples for them, women act in the interests of the nation and the revolution. Rousseau depicts women’s contributions as less violent or overtly sacrificial than those of men; rather, they are sustained, everyday activities that work in the interest of the nation that deserve their own recognition.²⁸ Rousseau viewed reforming public life to be in accordance with public principles as an imperative task for women to accomplish in order to ensure the hold of the Constitution.²⁹ Women’s work was a key element in ensuring the happiness and virtue of future generations, eradicating human vice through educating their children with proper principles.³⁰ Through becoming the mothers of a new French nation and ensuring the survival of a virtuous and revolutionary people, women’s natural tasks represented an equally important effort in ensuring the security of the revolution.

Revolutionary motherhood reconciled women’s political involvement with their gender and natural maternal roles, demonstrating understandings of female citizenship and contributions that were inherently gendered. Such contributions to the revolution were inextricable from women’s gender, and indicate considerable consistency with Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s vision of women as naturally private, domestic, and maternal. Importantly, this perception of women as

²⁶ Louis-Charles Rousseau, « Essai sur l’éducation et l’existence civile et politique des femmes, dans la constitution Française, » Bibliothèque national de France, les archives de la Révolution française, 3. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k42686g?rk=21459;2>

²⁷ Rousseau, « Essai sur l’éducation et l’existence civile et politique des femmes, » 6-7.

²⁸ Rousseau, « Essai sur l’éducation et l’existence civile et politique des femmes, » 5-6.

²⁹ Rousseau, « Essai sur l’éducation et l’existence civile et politique des femmes, » 6-7.

³⁰ Rousseau, « Essai sur l’éducation et l’existence civile et politique des femmes, » 8.

inherently private is meant to compliment men's engagements with the public sphere and revolutionary politics. Through being revolutionary mothers and providing their children with civic educations within their homes, women's transmission of public virtues within the private sphere would help solidify the development of the revolution within their children and the nation as a whole. This maternal role is accorded considerable importance in the texts discussed above, and is further illustrated by a 1790 piece on the necessity of dissolving female religious chapters. In it, the Moselle deputy, M. Duquesnoy, argued that the value placed on celibacy in religious institutions was one reason justifying their dismantling.³¹ Here, women's maternal role is posed as being both natural and necessary, while any institution perceived as impeding the realization of this role is both unconstitutional and dangerous.

Finally, in a February 1791 article in *Révolutions de Paris*, journalist Louis-Marie Prudhomme expressed his own understanding of women as fundamentally tied to their homes, writing that “[a] woman is only comfortable, is only in her place in her family or in her household. She needs only know what her parents or her husband judge appropriate to teach her about everything that takes place outside her home.” This statement, that women's appropriate revolutionary role was purely and naturally domestic, echoes the dominant perception of women throughout the revolutionary period. Prudhomme's piece emphasizes the importance of women's maternal and domestic identities, and ties women's revolutionary and political contributions to their actions within their homes and within the private sphere. Earlier in the same article, Prudhomme emphasizes the potential danger of women holding political influence outside their homes, stating that “[the] reign of courtesans precipitated the ruin of the nation: the queens consummated it.” Prudhomme thus views women's public political character as a corrupting

³¹ M. Duquesnoy, *Sur la suppression des chapitres des femmes, par M. Duquesnoy* (Paris : De l'imprimerie nationale, 1790) : 3. <https://archive.org/details/surlasuppression00duqu>

influence, and emphasizes the importance of their presence in their homes as a solution more in line with their nature:

[women] have never shown this sustained and strongly pronounced taste for civil and political independence... destined to pass all their lives confined under the paternal roof or in the house of their marriage; born to a perpetual dependence from the first moment of their existence until that of their decease, they have only been endowed with private virtues.³²

Prudhomme's article expresses a view in line with the societal perception of women as characterized primarily by their maternal and domestic identities, but pushes this perception further by limiting women's political knowledge to things her husband or parents deem appropriate to teach her. Prudhomme ties women so closely to the domestic sphere that he denies the possibility of any autonomous political life for women separate from what her male family members tell her. While Prudhomme's article exemplifies an extreme application of the ties Rousseau perceived between women and their domestic, maternal identities, it also indicates his opinion that women's revolutionary participation was corrupt and unnatural when it occurred outside of the home.

Citizenship

Women were perceived as having a role to play in the developing revolution, but did this role imply their inclusion in revolutionary citizenship? If so, how would female citizenship compare with male citizenship, and what would it entail? The questions of whether, where, and how women fit within the purview of revolutionary citizenship are complicated by the fact that there were multiple changing definitions of citizenship in circulation throughout the period,

³² Prudhomme, "On the Influence of the Revolution on Women (12 February 1791)," *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/483/>

which contributed to controversies over the question of who qualified as a citizen.³³ In Rousseau's treatise, *The Social Contract*, "the citizen" is defined through reference to his active engagement and participation in political affairs, and to the comparatively inactive "subject." While the citizen contributes to processes such as the formation of laws, the subject remains under the complete control of the monarch and does not participate in such processes.³⁴ Rousseau's definition of citizenship is relatively narrow, and restricts itself to those who actively engage with the construction of society, comparing this active political role to the complete domination of a monarch over their subject. Sovereign authority is located within the citizenry who exercise it by creating laws they deem to be within the public interest, rather than allowing it to be exercised by a monarch.³⁵

In comparison, Diderot's definition of *citoyen* in his *Encyclopédie* article emphasizes the importance of rights and freedoms rather than political participation as criteria for citizenship. He writes: « Citoyen: c'est celui qui est membre d'une société libre de plusieurs familles, qui partage les droits de cette société, & qui jouit de ses franchises... Celui qui en a été dépouillé, a cessé de l'être. »³⁶ Here, Diderot explicitly links citizenship to the enjoyment of rights and freedoms rather than political inclusion. Nonetheless, he excludes women, young children, and servants from the category of citizenship, and argues that these members are not true citizens, but are accorded the title solely due to their membership in a family with a male *citoyen*. Thus, while Diderot's definition of citizenship differs from Rousseau's, 'true' citizenship remained an

³³ Rachel Hammersley, "Concepts of citizenship in France during the long eighteenth century," in *European Review of History* vol. 22, no. 3: 468.

³⁴ Sewell, "Le citoyen/la citoyenne," 105.

³⁵ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and other later political writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 51.

³⁶ Diderot, « Citoyen, » ARTFL Encyclopédie Project <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.2:1024.encyclopedie0513>

inherently exclusive category in each conception which could not be applied evenly to all members of the French state.

If not all members of society were *citoyens*, how was the French state to identify and differentiate those who would be able to act in the public interest and who had the right to exercise sovereign authority in 1789? Answering this question entailed engaging with a problem: how should deputies ascertain which members had the capacity to participate in the duties of citizenship, and who held what rights? In 1789, clergymen and political writer Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès wrote his piece, « Reconnaissance et exposition raisonnée des droits de l'homme & du citoyen, » where he distinguishes between passive and active rights:

*Tous les habitants d'un pays doivent y jouir des droits de citoyen passif : tous ont droit à la protection de leur personne, de leur propriété, de leur liberté, &c. ; mais tous n'ont pas droit à prendre une part active dans la formation des pouvoirs publics ; tous ne sont pas citoyens actifs. Les femmes, du moins dans l'état actuel, les enfans, les étrangers, ceux, encore, qui ne contribueroient en rien à soutenir l'établissement public, en doivent point influencer activement sur la chose publique.*³⁷

Sieyès argues that although all members of the nation enjoy passive natural rights, not all members of the nation have an equal right to active citizenship, including women « du moins dans l'état actuel, » children, and foreigners. It remains somewhat unclear whether Sieyès was suggesting that women would eventually be able to hold active political rights. However, he does argue in his tract that although women had certain natural rights, these natural rights did not include political inclusion or participation. While women were part of the nation, their relationship to that nation was different, and entailed a distinct set of rights and a restricted form of political access in comparison to men.

³⁷ M. l'Abbé Sieyès, *Preliminaire de la Constitution. Reconnaissance et exposition raisonnée des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen. Lu les 20 et 21 Juillet 1789, au Comité de Constitution* (Paris : Chez Baudouin, 1789) : 21. <https://archive.org/details/preliminairede00siey>

Sieyès' pamphlet was an important precursor to the 1791 Constitution, which applied Sieyès' structure by dividing active and passive forms of citizenship, excluding women, racial minorities, and dependents from membership as active citizens. This division between different types of citizenship is premised on the assumption, as demonstrated by Sieyès, that not all members of the nation had the same kinds of political rights. Key criteria in the 1791 Constitution defined active citizens as French, over the age of 25, paid taxes equal to three days of labour, and not engaged « dans un état de domesticité, c'est-à-dire, de serviteur à gages. »³⁸ Important to this definition of active citizenship is the notion that citizens needed to be independent rather than existing in a state of reliance upon anyone else. Thus, while the Constitution does not explicitly reference women or designate them as passive citizens, their exclusion is implicit in the emphasis it places on independence as criteria for active citizenship. Because women were perceived as being in a state of dependence upon men, they were not seriously considered as candidates for active citizenship. Moreover, exclusion from active citizenship had an impact on women's political rights, which were not inherent, natural, or evenly distributed among members of the nation. Although the 1791 Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man stipulated that all French citizens would have equal civil rights, voting remained an exclusive right of active citizens, which then naturally excluded women, domestic servants, felons, bankrupts, and men under the age of 25.³⁹

Having a divided class of revolutionary citizens seemed somewhat dissonant alongside the revolution's emphasis on national unity and the creation of texts such as the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*. However, citizenship was not a rigid category or classification,

³⁸ « Constitution de 1791, » *Conseil Constitutionnel*, <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/la-constitution/les-constitutions-de-la-france/constitution-de-1791.5082.html>

³⁹ Isser Woolch, *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civic Order, 1789-1820s* (New York: Basic Books, 1993): 64-65.

and was effectively expanded during the revolution to include some previously excluded segments of the population. One of the most significant and hotly debated expansions of active revolutionary citizenship was to previously excluded religious groups, as with Jews in 1791. The case of French Jews was particularly complex: the restriction on including them as citizens had been tied to their nationality, as Jewishness was often considered akin to a separate nationality. The problem was that this Jewish nationality could potentially compete with a French identity, as it connoted certain privileges and rights connected to Judaism. In a 1789 speech to the National Assembly, deputy Clermont-Tonnerre expressed his belief that there could not be a separate Jewish nation within the French nation, and that Jewish people needed to either become French citizens or be banished. In the 1789 debate surrounding Protestant enfranchisement, the continued exclusion of Jewish Frenchmen was premised on the belief that Jewish separatism was a conscious choice made by the Jewish community, and that elements of their religion, including keeping Kosher and the Saturday Sabbath, were evidence of their unwillingness to mix with non-Jewish neighbours.⁴⁰ Being both French and Jewish was seemingly dangerous to revolutionary unity, as these were perceived as being two separate and conflicting national identities.⁴¹ By September 1791, French Jews could officially renounce their religious privileges, formally choose to identify themselves as French rather than Jewish nationals, and swear a civic oath to become French *citoyens*. As a category, citizenship proved itself to be at least somewhat flexible, provided the population was perceived as being able to undergo adequate changes in order to fit the defined criteria of active citizenship.

⁴⁰ Shanti Marie Singham, "Betwixt Cattle and Men: Jews, Blacks, and Women, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man," in *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994): 118.

⁴¹ Clermont-Tonnerre, "Speech on Religious Minorities and Questionable Professions (23 December 1789)," *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*.
<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/284/>

Yet while Jews could, in theory, renounce their Jewish privileges in favour of a more universal French identity, women were unable to renounce their gender in a similarly meaningful way. The perception of women's identities as being fixed meant that they remained unsuitable candidates for active citizenship. As Rousseau had argued more than 25 years before in Book V of *Emile*, women were inherently different from men, and should not be allowed to exercise the same kinds of political rights. Maternal and domestic duties seemingly debilitated women, rendering them unable to properly reason or exercise political rights. Unlike the unifying effects of extending citizenship to French Jews, allowing women to become active citizens and to exercise political rights seemed unnatural and chaotic, and was not perceived as being within the public interest or women's own ability as *citoyennes*.

The dominantly masculine conceptualizations of active citizenship enshrined in the 1791 Constitution and in Sieyès' work were widely accepted at the time, but did not go unchallenged by contemporaries. Although French society primarily viewed women as inherently domestic, revolutionary feminists put forward an alternative viewpoint which argued in favour of granting women active political rights, and used diverse arguments to demonstrate the utility of female enfranchisement and an equal application of rights between men and women. While the works of these feminists were not widely embraced by French society at the time, they demonstrate an increasingly diverse understanding of gender and represent an important challenge to societal norms of female citizenship, questioning the appropriate nature of women's relationship to the revolution and to the nation.

The Marquis de Condorcet was one proponent of granting women a more equal role in revolutionary citizenship. In his 1790 pamphlet, titled "On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship," he writes that the exclusion of women from the domain of active

citizenship constituted an act of tyranny. Since men's rights were derived from their sentience and capability of moral thought and reasoning, and because women possess the same abilities, he argues that women must enjoy equal rights. To his way of thinking, either no individuals have any true rights, or all should have the same.⁴² He further refutes the notion that women cannot become citizens because they are dependent upon their husbands, arguing that this state of dependence is created by the law rather than being natural.

Although Condorcet acknowledges that women are, in general, more gentle and sensitive and less susceptible to vice than men, he argues that these gendered differences are socially constructed and enforced rather than natural.⁴³ Instead of emphasizing the complementary differences between men and women, he focuses on the similarities between men and women as the basis of their natural equality, and argues that the violation of women's natural rights has been normalized. Consequently, he refutes the notion that allowing women to exercise political rights would go against their gender, or would lead them to leave their homes and children any more than it encourages any man to leave their own professions for politics. The exercise of political rights would not detract from women's maternal abilities any more than it detracts from men's artisanal abilities, and further, women would become better educators for their children as a consequence of their political education and involvement.⁴⁴ As opposed to viewing active citizenship as unsuitable for women, Condorcet believed that it was women's natural right to become citizens, and that women's political engagement would only strengthen their ability to perform their gendered roles and to raise their children with a love of the nation and of liberty.

⁴² Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, "On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship (1790)," in *Condorcet: Selected Writings*, ed. Keith Michael Baker (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1976): 98.

⁴³ Condorcet, "On the Admission of Women," 100.

⁴⁴ Condorcet, "On the Admission of Women," 101-2.

In an article titled « Du sort actuel des femmes aux bons esprits, » published through the revolutionary press of the feminist *Cercle Social* club, Madame de Cambis laments the denial of women's rights, property, and power within the institutions of marriage and motherhood, and argues in favour of restoring women's natural rights.⁴⁵ While she argues that women have previously sat alongside their husbands and sons in legislative assemblies, voicing their opinions, she suggests that women's political rights were "revoked" when they fell into disuse due to women's distraction with religion.⁴⁶ The article emphasizes that women have a natural right to political equality with men, but that society has placed women in a state of inferiority, teaching them to find happiness in their servility and in their dependence upon men rather than in self-sufficiency or political involvement. The article makes extensive use of the language of slavery to explain women's contemporary position of inequality and the extent to which women have been made subordinate in spite of their natural rights. The health, strength, and virtue of the nation, according to Cambis, each depend upon the restoration of women's natural rights, and their rescue from this state of slavery.⁴⁷

Condorcet and de Cambis seem to agree upon certain elements within each of their arguments. Most importantly, each concludes that the differences between men and women have been overstated by contemporary society, to the point that they have deprived women of their natural right to political inclusion. Additionally, each proposes that allowing women to exercise political rights would act to the benefit of society. As opposed to viewing women as exclusively domestic and consequently political only within their homes, these feminist pieces imagine a

⁴⁵ Although Cambis published her piece anonymously, it has since been attributed to her. See: Desan, *the Family on Trial*, 40; Kates, "Appendix B: Bibliography of Works Published by the Imprimerie du Cercle Social, 1790-1793," in *The Cercle Social, the Girondins, and the French Revolution*, 284

⁴⁶ Madame de Cambis, *Du sort actuel des femmes aux bons esprits* (De l'imprimerie du cercle social, 1791), 4-6. <http://libx.bsu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/FrnchRev/id/411>

⁴⁷ Cambis, *Du sort actuel des femmes*, 5-6, 8.

natural place for women within public political life. Each of these authors perceives the inequalities between men and women as being dangerous for the French nation and the revolution, and present women's citizenship as an urgent topic for national wellbeing.

Women's Perceptions of Citizenship

Women's perceptions of their own relationships to the nation and of their potential for citizenship both deviate from and remain consistent with societal norms in a variety of ways. Even among politically active women, women's self-conception as members of the nation continued to reflect the importance of their gender, and they used their female responsibilities and roles as foundations for their arguments. Most women continued to view themselves within the gendered framework of the late eighteenth century, but were able to reconcile a more active and equal role within the revolution with their gender through their works.

In that sense, one of the most popularly studied documents of women's revolutionary history, Olympe de Gouges' 1791 *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*, is a departure from the norm. De Gouges' *Declaration* acted as a critique of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, which seemingly disregarded women, by inserting women into each and every article. De Gouges begins with the assertion that « [la] Femme naît libre et demeure égale à l'homme en droits, » in comparison to the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*'s more restricted Article 1: « Les hommes naissent et demeurent libres et égaux en droits. » De Gouges similarly integrates women into the text of the original *Déclaration des droits de l'homme* in Article 6 where she writes that:

La loi doit être l'expression de la volonté générale; toutes les Citoyennes et Citoyens doivent concourir personnellement ou par leur représentants, à sa formation; elle doit être la même pour tous: toutes les Citoyennes et tous les Citoyens, étant égaux à ses yeux, doivent être

*également admissibles à toutes dignités, places et emplois publics, selon leurs capacités, et sans autres distinctions que celles de leurs vertus et de leurs talents.*⁴⁸

For the time, de Gouges' work was radical. The *Déclaration* outlines the importance of women's political participation, their input to the general will, and their extensive equality with men in direct contrast to the different types of rights discussed in Sieyès' work. To de Gouges, women's citizenship should resemble men's citizenship, both in rights and in their application. Olympe de Gouges' work is unusual in a number of ways, and has perhaps been overemphasized in historical writing on women in the French Revolution.⁴⁹ However, elements of de Gouges' arguments appear throughout some women's work during the same period, demonstrating that some women did imagine the potential for a more active revolutionary role and for greater equality with men's political rights.

In many cases, women's connections to their homes, including their role as mothers, defined the ways they perceived their relationship to the nation and the revolution. In a letter directed to her husband, dated April 30th, 1792, Rosalie Jullien laments her inability to attend proceedings in the Legislative Assembly every day, due to her duties as a mother: "It is the greatest sacrifice I could make not to go every day. But you see, I know how to control myself:

⁴⁸ Gouges, « Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne, » 8.

⁴⁹ Olympe de Gouges figures prominently in many studies on women in the French Revolution. For some more recent examples, see: Althea Arguelles-Ling, "Famille, Révolution, Patrie: National Imaginings in the Plays of Olympe de Gouges," in *Australian Journal of French Studies* vol. 44, no. 3 (2007): 244-256; Lisa Beckstrand, "Olympe de Gouges: Feminine Sensibility and Political Posturing," in *Intertexts*, vol. 6, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 185-202; Gregory S. Brown, "The Self-Fashioning of Olympe de Gouges, 1784-1789," in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3 (Spring 2001): 383-401; Marie Josephine Diamond, "The Revolutionary Rhetoric of Olympe de Gouges," in *Feminist Issues*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1994): 3-23; Mary Cecilia Monedas, "Neglected Texts of Olympe de Gouges, Pamphleteer of the French Revolution of 1789," in *Advances in the History of Rhetoric*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1998): 43-51; Wendy C. Nielsen, "Staging Rousseau's Republic: French Revolutionary Festivals and Olympe de Gouges," in *The Eighteenth Century*, vol. 43, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 268-285; Joan W. Scott, "'A Woman Who Has Only Paradoxes to Offer': Olympe de Gouges Claims Rights for Women," in *Rebel History*, ed. Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 102-120; Janie Vanpée, "Performing Justice: The Trials of Olympe de Gouges," in *Theatre Journal*, vol. 51, no. 1 (March 1999): 47-65.

my brother offered to take care of [Auguste], but I would rather sacrifice a truly grand pleasure and stay instead at my post.”⁵⁰ While Jullien’s letters detail her fascination with the Assembly’s proceedings and meetings, which she often attends and describes in detail, in this letter, she still privileges her maternal identity over her attendance of these meetings. Jullien also expressed a politicized view of her role as a mother, writing in a letter to the Procurer General of the department of the Drôme that:

our politics is founded entirely on morality and virtue... [these feelings] animate all the real Republican *mères de familles*, and I know two thousand in Paris even more empathetic than I in their exclamation of, and pride in, this conviction.... They all have husbands and children whom they cherish, and whom they correct if they are misguided, whom they denounce when they are corrupt.⁵¹

In this letter, Jullien portrays a view of motherhood as infused with political significance, going as far as suggesting she has a responsibility for denouncing family members who are not in line with the tenets of the revolution. Although Jullien is a mother and a wife, she also implies that republican motherhood required a sense of duty to the wellbeing of the nation and to the revolution.

This sense of maternal and revolutionary duty is similarly echoed in texts that advocate improving women’s educational opportunities, often invoking their maternal responsibility to teach their children as justifications. In a speech made to the National Assembly, later published under the title « *Annales de l’éducation du sexe, ou Journal des Demoiselles*, » Madame Mouret emphasizes the importance of properly educating women, arguing that although there are numerous educational institutions for men, women have not enjoyed the same access. She suggests that the happiness of men and the well-being of society in general each depend upon

⁵⁰ R. Jullien to Jullien père, 30 April 1792, cited in Parker, “Family and Feminism in the French Revolution,” 50.

⁵¹ R. Jullien to Procurer General Payan, 24 June 1793, cited in Parker, “Family and Feminism in the French Revolution,” 53.

women's education, as their idleness would naturally lead to the development of vices such as luxury and frivolity.⁵² Perhaps most importantly, however, women would be able to share their newly acquired knowledge with their children in order to more effectively nourish them with good principles and a love of virtue.⁵³ In a petition titled « L'imprimerie des femmes, » Madame de Bastide also invokes the importance of women's education to the progress of the revolution. Bastide argues that women are well suited for typographical work, being naturally sedentary and patient, and that the education of women in typographical schools would naturally benefit Parisian commerce.⁵⁴ Thus, education would not only enable women to become more independent, but would help them to contribute to « cette heureuse révolution. »⁵⁵

In other texts, we see the importance of equality invoked. Consider, for example, the letter published in *Le Courrier de l'Hymen, ou Journal des Dames* in which the author, a Madame L., critiques the unequal educational opportunities of men and women. « Pour me faire croire que notre éducation doit être, pour le fond, absolument différente de celle des hommes, » she writes, « il faudroit me prouver d'abord qu'il existe une différence entre leur intelligence & la nôtre. » The author goes on to propose that the lingering inequalities between men and women are not natural; rather, they are both produced and maintained by the profound discrepancy between their educations.⁵⁶ In an anonymous piece written after the March to Versailles in October 1789, titled « Requête des dames, à l'Assemblée nationale, » the author also expresses his

⁵² Madame Mouret, « Annales de l'éducation du sexe, ou Journal des Demoiselles, » Bibliothèque nationale de France, 14-15, 16-17. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k42636x?rk=42918;4>

⁵³ Mouret, « Annales de l'éducation, » 17-18.

⁵⁴ Madame de Bastide, « L'imprimerie des femmes: École gratuite de Typographie en faveur des femmes, sous la protection de la municipalité de la ville de Paris, proposée par la dame de Bastide, avec mémoire imprimé et manuscrit, et lettre à l'appui (19 novembre 1790), » in *Cahiers de doléances des femmes en 1789 et autres textes* (Paris, 1981) : 88.

⁵⁵ Bastide, « L'imprimerie des femmes, » 89.

⁵⁶ Mme. L. « Première lettre d'une femme sur l'éducation de son sexe, » in *Le Courrier de l'Hymen: Journal des Dames* (April 24, 1791): 73.

or her own view on the inequalities between men and women and the absurdity of maintaining male privileges, given the emphasis of revolutionary reforms on abolishing privileges and establishing equal rights. The petitioner, who seems to have been a woman, asks:

*serons-nous donc les seuls pour qui existera toujours l'âge de fer, cet âge malheureux qui a pris sa naissance dans l'origine du monde & que de siècle et siècle est venu, sans interruption, jusqu'à nous? N'y aura-t-il que nous qui ne participerons point à cette éclatante régénération qui va ranimer la face de la France...?*⁵⁷

Here, the author worries that the revolution's focus on liberty has forgotten women, and that they are being left behind by the revolution. In spite of a revolutionary emphasis on abolishing special privileges and ensuring unity, women have remained in an unhappy and archaic state of inequality. The petition proposes abolishing the gendered privileges that distinguish men from women and establishing the equality of men and women's liberties and rights, as doing so would help ensure the strength of the revolution and the consistent application of its aims.⁵⁸ Although the proposed solutions are radical, the author of the piece indicates their deep concern over the unequal standing of women as individuals, and emphasizes the importance of women's equal status within the newly formed revolutionary nation.⁵⁹

Finally, a 1792 address made by a group of self-proclaimed patriotic women to the Legislative Assembly uses the language of unity and equal rights to request permission to bear arms in defense of themselves and the constitution. Led by Pauline Léon, the future president of the radical *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires*, the group begins with the assertion that

⁵⁷ Anonymous, « Requête des dames à l'Assemblée nationale, » in *Les femmes dans la Révolution Française*, vol. 1 (Paris : EDHIS, 1982): 3.

⁵⁸ « Requête des dames, » 11.

⁵⁹ It is important to note that historians have been generally unable to agree about whether this piece was truly written by a woman, or if it was penned by a man impersonating a woman as a satirical take on more serious feminist demands and claims. Although I have treated it with the assumption that it is both female-authored and a serious feminist claim, if it is satirical it is nonetheless indicative of the prevalence of these feminist claims and of the anxiety they solicited in satirical authors. For more on this debate, see: Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 23, 348n27.

the right to defend their lives and liberty is naturally given to every individual, that « société ne peut ôter ce droit que la nature nous donne. »⁶⁰ The petition, signed by 320 women, asked for permission to organize a female national guard and invoked women's citizenship as a rationale, claiming that the defense of the nation is the responsibility of both *citoyens* and *citoyennes*.⁶¹ The unity of men and women, armed against the plots of counterrevolutionaries, would make the nation stronger, better defended, and more impenetrable: « [pourquoi] donc n'emploieroit-on pas, pour terrasser l'aristocratie & le despotisme, toutes les ressources du civisme & du zèle le plus pur...? »⁶² In fact, this was not the only time during the revolution that women would request the right to arm themselves. Later that same month, in a speech given on March 26th, Théroigne de Méricourt urged women in the Fraternal Society of Minims (*Place-Royal* section) to “compare where we are with what we should be in the social order,” and asked them to organize in an armed corps in order to “repel the attacks of the enemy.”⁶³ More than a year later, on July 31st, 1792, a group of women from the *Hôtel de Ville* section approached the Legislative Assembly, asking for their permission to arm themselves in defence of the capital.⁶⁴ In each case, women invoked the necessity of their contributions and of their cooperation with male militias to the security of the revolution, demonstrating an understanding of themselves as equally vital actors in the protection of the nation.

⁶⁰ Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, 108; Anne Pauline Léon, « Adresse individuelle à l'Assemblée Nationale, Par des Citoyennes de la Capital, le 6 Mars 1792; imprimée par ordre de l'Assemblée Nationale, » Bibliothèque nationale de France, les archives de la Révolution française, 1. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k56677p?rk=21459;2>

⁶¹ Léon, « Adresse individuelle à l'Assemblée Nationale, » 2.

⁶² Léon, « Adresse individuelle à l'Assemblée Nationale, » 3.

⁶³ A.N., C 154 d.292 bis, p.1, cited in Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, 109.

⁶⁴ “Women from the Hôtel de Ville Section of Paris Ask for Arms, July 31, 1792,” in *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795*, ed. Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979): 124.

The emphasis on equal rights throughout these women's appeals contrasts with Sieyès' assertion on the differences between passive and active rights, and the presumed inequality of rights between men and women that had been foundational to their exclusion from active citizenship under the 1791 Constitution. That document assumes that the distribution of rights between men and women is inherently unequal, implying that women's comparatively apolitical roles stem from their traditional feminine roles and their natural place in the private sphere. In contrast, these (sometimes radical) female authors identify a fundamental contradiction between, on the one hand, the revolutionary emphasis on equality and on the abolition of privilege, and, on the other hand, women's continued subordination under men – a condition they consider akin to slavery. To ensure that the revolution and the constitution remained consistent with itself, and to truly abolish archaic privileges, these authors argued that it would be necessary to emancipate women, to restore their natural rights, and to formally recognize their equal political rights with men. Doing so would ensure French unity and protection from the plots of counterrevolutionaries.

Yet although these pieces, as well as those of Condorcet and the *Cercle Social*, emphasize the importance of recognizing women's equal rights with men, they still act within a gendered framework, speaking about women through reference to their gendered roles. Condorcet is perhaps the most radical in refuting these roles in his work, and yet he still includes reference to women's task in raising their children. Similarly, the *Cercle Social* member, Cambis, accords significant importance to women's roles in bearing, raising, and properly instructing future French citizens.⁶⁵ To these authors, ensuring the full realization of women's inherent political rights would also improve their ability to raise their children with revolutionary

⁶⁵ Cambis, *Du sort actuelle des femmes*, 8.

values and ensure the continued health of both the nation and the revolution. Even the women's 1791 address to the National Assembly references their role in caring for their families and homes, writing that although they would not abandon these responsibilities to run to meet the enemies of the revolution, it is "cruel" to force women to wait helplessly in their homes to die, losing their families and their liberty.⁶⁶

While men and women were recognized as being naturally and biologically different, female and feminist male writers in the revolutionary era used the logic of equal rights and of revolutionary cooperation between men and women to explain the ways they viewed women's relationships to the revolution and the nation. In doing so, these works adhere to the notion that men and women are complementary to one another, and that these complementary roles need to work in tandem in order to present a united nation. While women viewed themselves differently in comparison to men in some respects, they also perceived the need for equality of certain rights in order to ensure the interests of the general will. Although the women in these works are undoubtedly more radical and militant than most women of the period, they also demonstrate the relatively consistent influence of gendered knowledge in society, as it remained present in militant revolutionary feminism. Even while advocating their right to bear arms women still made overtures to their role as revolutionary mothers, situating their appeal within the framework of these existing roles and emphasizing their importance as a justification for the extension of their rights.

Women perceived their connections to the nation in various ways, but most often emphasized the importance of their gender as a defining feature characterizing their involvement.

⁶⁶ Léon, « Adresse individuelle à l'Assemblée Nationale, » 2-3.

An understanding of men and women as being inherently different but complementary to one another is foundational to this perception, and it appears throughout both men and women's works on female citizenship. This perception of men and women as having complementary tasks and skills is particularly pertinent given the revolutionary emphasis on unity, but seems at first to be discordant with its emphasis on equality. However, for contemporaries, this notion of inherent differences does not appear to contradict overtures made in favour of women's political equality with men or for the realization of their natural rights. In order to best ensure the aims of the revolution and the general interest, it seemed imperative for men and women to cooperate with one another as a united whole against the threat of counterrevolutionaries. According to advocates for political equality, men and women could be equals while still being different, and while still having distinct and gendered responsibilities.

What it meant to be a woman and to be a citizen is contested throughout the texts discussed in this chapter. However, they generally seem to settle upon an image of female citizenship that is largely defined by women's maternal capacity and educational responsibilities. Even arguments made in favour of extending women's revolutionary rights use these responsibilities as justifications, claiming that women will become better mothers, or better educators, through extending their political, defensive, and educational rights and making them more equal with men's. Extending these rights would not make women more like men, but would instead have the potential of making them better women, mothers, and *citoyennes*.

Chapter Three: Women and Political Institutions

“Women... have as their first obligation private duties; the sweet functions of wives and mothers are entrusted to them... nevertheless, it is possible to reconcile what nature imperiously requires with what love of the public good commands.”¹ In an address made by the *citoyennes* of the *Section des droits de l’homme* to the *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires*, women expressed a view of their own gender and roles that was both ‘public’ and ‘private’ to a revolutionary club comprised solely of women. In this address, women posed their maternal duties and familial roles as natural and inherent, but not in contradiction to their participation in, or pursuit of, the “public good.” The “love of the public good” these women evoke in their address entails their participation in revolutionary institutions and organized political bodies, not in spite of their gender, but rather because of it. Women viewed their relationships to the nation and to the revolution in various ways, and often emphasized the importance of their maternal identities as a defining element of their revolutionary contributions. As previously demonstrated, women viewed themselves as distinct members of the nation, whose membership was often defined through reference to their gendered roles and responsibilities. Although women viewed their relationship to the nation as characterized by their maternal roles, these familial responsibilities were not always seen as contradictory to a more overtly ‘political’ role. To these *citoyennes*, it was not necessary to choose between their gendered roles and loving the public good.

¹ “A Laudatory Address to the Revolutionary Republican Women,” in *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795*, ed. Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979): 177.

What did ‘politics’ and the act of ‘being political’ mean for women in the revolutionary period? These concepts have been defined in innumerable ways within historical work on the French Revolution, and have proven themselves difficult to distill into simple, universally accepted definitions. In an article titled “Politics, Culture and the Origins of the French Revolution,” Sarah Maza observed that “... of course, ‘politics’ can no longer be narrowly defined as a jockeying for power played out in the highest spheres of government.”² Thinking about politics strictly within the context of government-level power relations is unnecessarily restrictive, and discounts the wide variety of ways people engaged with politics in the French Revolution, including their interactions with its ideas and symbols. As discussed in Chapters One and Two, women engaged with political ideas and with the revolution in ways that did not necessarily entail their formal organization or participation in the revolutionary government itself. Women’s status as passive citizens excluded them from the purview of electoral bodies and representative government, but allowed for a form of political engagement that built upon their traditional roles and responsibilities. However, as the revolution progressed, women’s political engagements also took more overt forms in spite of their passive citizenship. Dominique Godineau emphasizes the complexity of revolutionary political identities and the diverse ways women were able to participate in revolutionary politics in spite of their inability to vote. Godineau argues that revolutionary citizenship should not be identified through reference to constitutionally defined political rights alone, and emphasizes instead the importance of political rights derived from women’s membership in the sovereign body.³ As members of the nation,

² Sarah Maza, “Politics, culture and the origins of the French Revolution,” in *The French Revolution in Social and Political Perspective*, ed. Peter Jones (London: Arnold, 1996): 102.

³ Dominique Godineau, “Femmes en Citoyenneté: Pratiques et Politique,” in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* no. 300 (April-June 1995): 198.

identified as sovereign, women often perceived themselves as having a right to citizenship and to political inclusion in spite of their gender.

Women participated in the politics of the revolution in spite of their exclusion from active political rights. As members of the sovereign body, women exercised a form of political authority and expressed a sense of political belonging separate from their lack of constitutionally recognized citizenship. In the 1751 *Encyclopédie* definition for ‘political authority,’ Diderot wrote that “it is always the people who make the lease or the agreement: they always intervene in the contract that adjudges its exercise. It is not the state that belongs to the prince, it is the prince who belongs to the state...”⁴ Although Diderot was not referring to women when he vested political authority in “the state,” women’s political participation throughout the revolution reflects a sense of their own political authority as grounded in their membership in the nation. Women’s participation in and interactions with revolutionary political institutions acted as tangible demonstrations of their relationships to the nation by connecting this abstract sense of ‘belonging’ to a right to participate and contribute to revolutionary political organizations.

In her study, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, Joan B. Landes uses sociologist Jürgen Habermas’ concept of the public sphere as the starting point for her discussion of revolutionary political life.⁵ Landes’ central argument is premised on the assumption that the historical realization of Habermas’ idea of the public sphere, as a realm where matters of general and political interest could be publicly discussed, was both essentially masculine and consciously intended to exclude women. Landes’ work demonstrates the reconstruction of the ‘public’ through reference to bourgeois society, and the influence of this

⁴ “Political authority [abridged,] in “Denis Diderot’s the Encyclopedia: Selections,” (New York: Harper and Row, 1967) <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.062>.

⁵ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 5.

conscious construction of the public sphere in curtailing women's involvement in the political life of the revolution.⁶ In spite of the emphasis of bourgeois society in this definition of 'the public,' and its conscious construction against female inclusion (according to Landes), women did participate in the revolutionary public sphere and in revolutionary politics through their engagement with the ideas of the revolution and of the public good. Through expressing their opinions about the public interest, often through reference to the revolution, women engaged in politicized discussions and expressed a view of themselves as politically involved and as rightfully concerned with public wellbeing. Women's view of themselves as political participants is premised on their self-identification as members of the French nation, a membership which conferred the right to exercise their own form of political authority beyond the walls of their homes in spite of their gender.

Women interacted with political institutions in a variety of ways between 1789 and 1793, often invoking gendered aspects of their own identities as a rationale guiding the interaction. Although women were participants in politics from the onset of the revolution, they became increasingly assertive and consistent participants in national politics in early 1793, as Timothy Tackett argues, in part due to the increasingly high prices of grain and essential commodities such as sugar, soap, and candles.⁷ Women's traditional dominion over subsistence issues as well as their functions as representatives of public opinion, and their responsibilities as educational mothers are only a few of the ways women increasingly justified their inclusion in political life as the revolution progressed into 1793. Women's participation in revolutionary organizations was not seen as wholly inconsistent with their gender and social responsibilities, but as a

⁶ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 203.

⁷ Timothy Tackett, *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015): 252-3.

complement to these existing roles. Moreover, women's active participation in formal political institutions built upon these traditional foundations and women's perceptions of their own national belonging to allow for their deeper engagement with the revolution and its ideas. Still, 1793 was a turning point in the revolution for many women, who more often used the discourses of 'equality,' and 'unity' in justifying their right to revolutionary participation. Although women saw themselves as belonging to the nation in a gendered way, as demonstrated in Chapters One and Two, by 1793 many women seemed increasingly frustrated by the limitations of female citizenship, and sought instead full membership in the nation and the revolution as contributing and legitimate participants. This chapter will suggest that women's interactions with the government, in the form of petitions and unofficial *cahiers*, as well as their presence in political galleries, and the formation of women's political societies, are each demonstrative of women's growing perception of themselves as legitimate participants in the institutions of the revolutionary nation. Although this chapter will draw upon examples of women's petitions and participation from throughout the revolution, it will also highlight a shift in women's perceptions of their own interactions with these structures in 1793, towards a consideration of women as full and equal political participants in the revolution, and the role of this shift in contributing to the closure of women's clubs and societies in October 1793.

Lobby Groups, Petitions & Demonstrations of Support

Throughout the French Revolution, venues for the expression of political thought flourished, and members of the French nation had ample opportunities to voice their opinions. As members of the nation, women offered their opinions, views, and perspectives to the national government. Through bringing their issues directly to the government, either in writing or in

person, women interacted with the national government in ways that expressed their belief in their own right to provide input, make requests, and participate in the political decision-making process as *citoyennes* and members of the sovereign body. In their petitions and interactions with government officials, women emphasized the ways their requests would serve the public interest, often tying demands associated with their gender, such as reforms to matrimonial and familial legislation, to the attainment of the ‘public good.’ In doing so, women represented themselves as a vital part of the sovereign body with a right to political representation and to be heard by the governing body, and identify a stake for their participation through reference to their impact on the public good.

Instances such as women’s enthusiastic participation in plebiscites during the summer of 1793 evidence their desire to be heard by the revolutionary government, as well as their perceived right to political participation. During the summer of 1793, the National Convention submitted their proposed draft for the Constitution of 1793 to the people, asking them to accept or reject the draft, and invited the people to provide their feedback and suggestions. In July, over 4,800 primary assemblies opened across France, drawing nearly 2 million participants out of approximately 7 million eligible voters. Notably, women were present in at least 24 of these primary assemblies, where they voted by acclamation.⁸ Women’s participation in these deliberative assemblies, where they took the civic oath and voted alongside men on the Constitution, is demonstrative of their perception of themselves as able participants in the functioning of revolutionary democracy due to their shared membership in the nation.⁹

Women also presented their political opinions and beliefs through sitting in public galleries and commenting on their proceedings, demonstrating a sense of national belonging in

⁸ Woolch, *The New Regime*, 88-89.

⁹ See also: McPhee, *Living the French Revolution*, 130-131.

an institutional setting. During the revolution, government bodies such as the National Convention, Parisian sections, revolutionary tribunals, and city halls allowed the public to attend their meetings and to listen to their proceedings in galleries as a sign of their democratic commitment and virtue. These galleries were one pertinent venue of participation available for women, where they could listen to the government's proceedings, express their political opinions, and demonstrate their felt sense of national belonging alongside male attendees. In a letter to her husband dated August 5th 1792, Rosalie Jullien tells him that she will be attending the proceedings of the National Assembly the following day, after having spent the week listening to the Jacobins at her section assembly, which she reflects on fondly, and where she recalls having seen two or three hundred other women, whom she believes to have been similarly inspired by the proceedings.¹⁰ Jullien's letter exemplifies the significant presence of women in government galleries, where they often brought their work and their children, shredding linen and nursing whilst jeering or applauding those making speeches. Galleries often instituted regulations on speech or forbade public commentary altogether (as in the case of the National Convention in September 1792) in order to better regulate their proceedings and maintain order. However, by February 1793 public galleries were generally open to the expression of approval or disapproval from spectators, ranging from their cheers of approval to instances where women yelled and stomped their *sabots* in annoyance or derision.¹¹ As David Andress indicates in his discussion of galleries, although women's presence in the galleries was seen as "acceptably passive in the eyes of politicians," women in attendance still adhered to a tradition of female popular surveillance, and viewed their gallery attendance as a unique form of revolutionary

¹⁰ Rosalie Jullien, *Journal d'une Bourgeoisie Pendant la Révolution, 1791-1793* (Paris, Calmann Lévy, 1881): 206-207.

¹¹ Durham, "Citizenesses of the Year II of the French Revolution," 93; Tackett, *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution*, 255.

contribution.¹² In one example, a woman arrested in Prairial Year III demonstrated the weight attributed to women's presence in the galleries of clubs and the Convention, claiming that through her gallery attendance she "served [her] country like [her] husband and [her] children serve it in the armies."¹³

Although women's presence in these galleries represented one integral aspect of their participation in its own right, attending meetings as observers in the galleries was also a way for women to assert their shared membership in the nation and their political stake as *citoyennes*. In one such example, on February 4th, 1790, women stood alongside men in the galleries of the National Assembly, listening to the King describe the nation's financial situation. They responded to the King's request that there be a single national will and an attachment to the new constitution through signing an individual civic oath alongside all the men in the Assembly, including observers in the galleries, as well as the assembly's deputies.¹⁴ Although women's signatures comprised only a small portion of the total, their participation signaled that, as members of the nation, they believed they had the right to participate in political acts such as oaths.

Rosalie Jullien similarly recalls her own contributions to public statements of political opinion in her entries, including her intention to go to the galleries of the National Assembly and to present a petition against Lafayette alongside multiple other women.¹⁵ In a later letter, Jullien recalls with pride that the petition received many signatures, and her letters in the days that

¹² David Andress, *The Terror: Civil War in the French Revolution* (Little, Brown: London, 2005): 234.

¹³ A.N., F7 4775^11 d. Saint Prix, F7 4775^29 d. Thomas, F7 4775^32 d. Toupiolle, F7 4648 d. Christophe, cited in Godineau, "Appendix 3: Portraits of Militant Women," *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, 397-8.

¹⁴ Levy and Applewhite, "Ceremonial Dimensions of Citizenship," 223. A record of women's signatures on the February 4th 1790 petition can be found in: « Séance du jeudi 4 février 1790, » *Archives Parlementaires*, 11: 433-34.

¹⁵ Jullien, *Journal d'une Bourgeoise*, 204-205.

follow track developments in the National Assembly, demonstrating her continued presence in their galleries and her stake in the outcomes of the conflict.¹⁶ By August 10th 1792, she wrote in a letter to her husband that « [les] affaires d'État sont mes affaires de cœur ; je ne pense, je ne rêve, je ne sens que cela. »¹⁷

Petitions represented a similarly significant aspect of women's political participation, marrying women's perceptions of themselves as members of the national sovereign body with their perceived rights to inclusion and to the expression of political opinions. Women both penned themselves and signed petitions on various subjects throughout the revolution, signaling their awareness of various issues, their belief in the ability and necessity of the government in dealing with their issues, and a belief in their own right to present issues to the government. As with the February 1790 oath, women often signed general petitions alongside men, such as the July 14th, 1791 petition imploring the National Assembly to wait to hear the opinions and verdict of the people before deciding the fate of the King following discovery of the royal family's flight to Varennes. The petition, which includes the signatures of 41 women, requests that the assembly "make this sacred commitment to await the expression of this public voice... before pronouncing on a question which affects the whole nation".¹⁸ By signing their names, these women included themselves in the petition's expression of a public voice, and posed themselves as members of the sovereign body with a right to be heard on issues that affected the nation.

Petitions drafted and signed exclusively by women similarly express their membership in the nation, but do so in a different way, emphasizing not individual membership but the

¹⁶ Jullien, *Journal d'une Bourgeoise*, 209.

¹⁷ Jullien, *Journal d'une Bourgeoise*, 217.

¹⁸ This petition on the fate of the King was signed by a total of 104 individuals, including 41 women. The full petition as well as signatures can be found, reprinted, in Albert Mathiez, *le Club des Cordeliers pendant la crise de Varennes et le massacre du Champ de Mars* (Paris : Librairie Ancienne II. Champion, 1910) : 112-114. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k40104f.texteImage>

collective position of women as half of the national whole. Women's petitions asking for the right to bear arms, as discussed in the previous chapter, exemplify women's perceptions of themselves as half of the nation, and premise the demands they make on this national status and their sense of duty.¹⁹ As Timothy Tackett argues, the mobilization of male family members to fight in the revolutionary wars was likely an additional contribution to the politicization of many women and gave shape to their revolutionary petitions, including demands for their right to bear arms.²⁰ In particular, this politicization entailed a division of responsibility over internal and external enemies of the revolution. While men fought these 'external' or foreign enemies of the revolution in the war, women increasingly pursued the 'internal' enemies, such as nobles, political enemies, and hoarders through their revolutionary engagements. In another case, on February 24th, 1793, a deputation of women approached the municipal government and requested their permission to petition the National Convention for price controls on food and a death sentence for hoarders. According to the *Moniteur's* presentation of the encounter, the Mayor responded:

*qu'elle n'avait pas besoin d'autorisation pour aller à la Convention ; néanmoins il les invite à se retirer paisiblement dans leurs foyers, et à se reposer sur la sollicitude des magistrats du peuple, qui déjà ont pris des mesures sur cet objet, en arrêtant qu'il sera fait une adresse à la Convention nationale pour solliciter une loi répressive contre les accapareurs.*²¹

Although the mayor seemingly dismissed the deputation's concerns, by the following day the situation evolved into waves of *taxation populaire* across Paris. In this case, women's contact with the French government was motivated by their concerns over the security of the food supply, and rapidly escalated into a city-wide riot when their concerns were not adequately

¹⁹ See for example: Léon, « Adresse individuelle à l'Assemblée Nationale, »

²⁰ See: Tackett, *The Coming of the Terror*, 253.

²¹ « Mercredi 27 Février 1793-- L'an 2 de la République Française » *Réimpression de l'Ancien Moniteur*, Vol. 15 (Paris : Plon Frères, Decembre 1847) : 555.

addressed. In a final example, during the summer of 1793, the *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires* submitted a petition to the National Convention, requesting the harsher punishment of internal conspirators against the revolution, including aristocrats and political enemies. In their petition, members of the *Société* expressed their concern over the lax enforcement of the Law of Suspects, arguing that “we see only the loss of intriguers in a country where the laws are strictly observed.”²² Women’s petitions in 1793 often reflected their preoccupation with the security of the nation, and demonstrate a sense of involvement in and ownership of the persecution of internal conspirators.

As women’s revolutionary petitions spanned diverse topics, some pursued ends that were not overtly politicized, such as women’s education, but which were posed by their authors as objects of political concern with far reaching consequences for the public good and members of the French nation. Even seemingly apolitical subjects, such as Madame de Bastide’s endorsement of a typography school for Parisian women, become subjects of political concern in these petitions through invoking the potential for public benefit and the importance of women’s education in ensuring the proper transmission of public virtues in private homes. Madame de Bastide ties the public interest to the education of Parisian women, and presents the two as codependent, as establishing a typography school would help alleviate women’s financial hardships while also benefitting Parisian commerce. Bastide argues that the lack of educational opportunities and institutions for women is problematic, comparing women’s limited opportunities to the various languages, sciences, and arts available as academic subjects for men.²³ The establishment of a typography school would, according to Bastide, address the

²² “Petition from the Revolutionary Republican Women to the National Convention on the Leadership of the Armies and the Law of Suspects,” in *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795*, ed. Levy, Applewhite, and Johnson (University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 1979): 173.

²³ Bastide, « L’imprimerie des femmes, » 87.

educational gap between men and women, which prevented women from achieving independence or being able to adequately support their families.²⁴ Since women were naturally suited to sedentary work such as typography, the establishment of such schools would provide women with skills suited to them and to national prosperity, contributing to « cette heureuse révolution » and benefitting women through enabling their independence as well as the public good.²⁵

Petitions and requests for legislation on familial reforms similarly appealed to the public good while recommending developments favourable to women's independence. The genre of *cahiers* was an important mode of political expression for female authors, who often claimed to represent the collective concerns of women in their works. These unofficial *cahiers* were often addressed to the National Assembly and the King in imitation of the official *cahiers de doléances* composed in early 1789, but functioned effectively as statements of opinion and petitions for change, stringing together multiple grievances such as appeals for better female education and for the improvement of women's positions within their marriages and families.²⁶ In one example, a 1790 *cahier* directed to the National Assembly titled « Griefs et plaintes des femmes mal mariées, » its author, Madame Cailly, lamented the dangerous scandals and selfish disorders that resulted from women's inability to escape unhappy marriages, including those of adultery and celibacy.²⁷ Throughout the pamphlet, Cailly presents a view of women and of marriage that emphasizes women's subordinate and oppressed position in comparison to the total

²⁴ Bastide, « L'imprimerie des femmes, » 87.

²⁵ Bastide, « L'imprimerie des femmes, » 89.

²⁶ Desan, *the Family on Trial in Revolutionary France*, 21.

²⁷ Madame Cailly, « Griefs et plaintes des femmes mal mariées (extraits), » in *Cahiers de doléances des femmes et autres textes* ed. Paule-Marie Duhet (1981): 128; Although Madame Cailly wrote the piece « Griefs et plaintes » anonymously, the text has since been attributed to her. See for example: Desan, *the Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): 20.

authority of the husband: « le mari est maître absolu de la personne & des biens de sa femme. »²⁸ She concludes the petition by asserting the necessity of a new law that pays better attention to the interests of women, and which enforces a more equitable relationship where men are no longer the complete masters of women and their property.²⁹

Cailly's pamphlet critiques eighteenth-century marital practices and argues that the health of the nation depends upon the reformation of gender relations within families and marriages. The dependence of women upon men and their lack of individual autonomy are problematized in Cailly's pamphlet, which presents companionate, freely chosen marriages and the recognition of women's individual liberties and rights within marriages as integral reforms for the wellbeing of the French nation and the revolution. The allusion to slavery Cailly uses here appears throughout other works endorsing marital reform, and which critique practices that left women in « l'état d'infériorité; disons vrai, d'esclavage, dans lequel ils nous retiennent depuis si longtemps. »³⁰ Her pamphlet explicitly connects conjugal reforms to national-level benefits through their ability to combat the dangers of celibacy and adultery, producing legitimate children in companionate and happy households. Cailly presents an example of an unhappy marriage, where a formerly young and vibrant young woman is reduced to a state of dejection, boredom, and captivity, and where she loses her youth, beauty, and liberty within her unhappy marriage.³¹ Cailly asks: « Que résultera-t-il de ces deux espèces de mariages? Rien pour la population, si la femme est honnête ; ou des enfans adultérins, si elle ne l'est pas. »³² The elevation of women above a condition comparable to enslavement and the reformation of marital laws are essential in combatting the

²⁸ Cailly, « Griefs et plaintes des femmes mal mariées (extraits), » 131.

²⁹ Cailly, « Griefs et plaintes des femmes mal mariées (extraits), » 141.

³⁰ « No. 1, du 30 Novembre 1789, » *Etrennes nationales des Dames par M. de Pussy et une Société des gens de lettres* (30 Novembre 1789): 1.

³¹ Cailly, « Griefs et plaintes des femmes mal mariées (extraits), » 135.

³² Cailly, « Griefs et plaintes des femmes mal mariées (extraits), » 135.

unhappy scenarios Cailly presents within her pamphlet. To Cailly, society will not flourish under such unhappy conditions and women's enslavement within marriage, and legislative reform seemed necessary to ensure women's happiness within their marriages, the legitimacy of their children, and the morality of society as a whole.³³

Cailly's pamphlet was not the only work that extolled the virtues and societal benefits of companionate marriages, or which argued that the revolution and national good depended on conjugal reforms. Other pamphlets critiquing Old Regime marital practices emphasize the detrimental effects of reducing women into beings whose only duties were to please their husbands. In one example, titled « Lettre d'une citoyenne à son amie sur les avantages que procurerait à la Nation le patriotisme des dames, » its author complains about the reduction of women to ornaments, commenting: « l'idée que notre million se bornoit uniquement à embellir la Société, & à en faire l'ornement, ah! montrons, montrons au monde entier, au Roi & à la Patrie, que les Graces peuvent encore s'allier avec les devoirs sacrés de Citoyennes. »³⁴ Novels, plays, and pamphlets throughout the period similarly advocated companionate marriages as a means of societal reform through emphasizing the importance of liberty within marriages to produce political benefits for state and society : « Si la liberté publique est le fruit heureux de nos travaux, elle sera cimentée par d'heureux mariages ; et des pères fortunés laisseront pour successeurs, de bons citoyens. »³⁵ The realization of liberty within marriages would, then, cement both public and individual liberty and would ensure national wellbeing. The connections Cailly draws within her pamphlet are found throughout the wider literature on the topic of

³³ Cailly, « Griefs et plaintes des femmes mal mariées (extraits), » 141.

³⁴ « Lettre d'une citoyenne à son amie sur les avantages que procurerait à la Nation le patriotisme des dames, » in *Les femmes dans la Révolution française* EDHIS, 4.

³⁵ Emmanuel-Henri-Louis-Alexandre de Launay, Comte d'Antraigues, *Observations sur le divorce* (Paris: de l'imprimerie nationale, 1789): 23 https://archive.org/details/observationsurl00antr_1; Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 36.

companionate marriages, emphasizing the connections between women's liberty in marriage and the public good.

Women's petitions were not limited to topics of education and marital reform, but also contained more overtly political content and advocated women's greater political involvement. In one such example, titled « Vues législatives pour les femmes, adressées à l'Assemblée nationale, » Mademoiselle Jodin advocates the establishment of official female tribunals and a women's assembly to govern alongside the masculine National Assembly.³⁶ She implores the King not to forget that women comprise half of the nation, and that they should not be excluded from the work of lawmaking and governance.³⁷ Jodin couches her request within the context of women's morality, maternal authority, and their natural ability to inspire justice.³⁸ She uses the presumably inherent, natural differences between men and women as one justification for the development of female assemblies, and suggests that because women represent half of the French nation they should not go unrepresented in the national government. Emphasizing women's natural dominion over moral and familial issues including marital and familial conflicts, Jodin contends that because women throughout the world have historically been included in government bodies, female tribunals in France would not be a radical innovation, but rather a logical recognition that women's virtues were necessary for the wellbeing and order of society.³⁹ Women's differences from men and their identity as half of the French 'whole' meant

³⁶ Mademoiselle Jodin, « Vues législatives pour les femmes, adressées à l'Assemblée nationale, » in *Les femmes dans la Révolution Française*, Vol. 1 (EDHIS, 1982) : 34, 43.

³⁷ Jodin, « Vues législatives pour les femmes, » 43-4.

³⁸ Jodin, « Vues législatives pour les femmes, » 44.

³⁹ Jodin, « Vues législatives pour les femmes, » 30-33. On pages 30-31, Jodin invokes multiple examples of countries governed by women, including the rule of Queens in the West Indies, the provincial governance of Ethiopian women, and Aristotle's accounts of women's active roles in Spartan governance. Her examples range in both geography as well as the extent of the role accorded to women in each instance

that they needed to be included in governing bodies in order to truly recognize the public interest at the national level, and to ensure the success of the ongoing revolution. Although Jodin's views were radical and went largely unrealized, her argument emphasizes the interconnected relationship she saw between women's familial roles and the necessity of recognizing their public, political authority. Because women were an integral part of the nation, they had the right to political participation and representation as well.

Women interacted directly with the national government in many different ways throughout the revolution, and in doing so portrayed themselves as members of the nation with a right to provide their input. Importantly, the diverse topics of women's petitions, ranging from their radical demands for equality and the right to bear arms, to requests for educational, marital, and family law reforms, indicates that women perceived a wide range of topics as having political ramifications. Moreover, their engagement with formal petition-writing suggests that they believed in the far-reaching importance of the national government as a revolutionary body in the pursuit of political change. Although the forms of women's engagement with revolutionary institutions were varied, by 1793 these engagements had become increasingly radical and overt, including women's participation in plebiscites ratifying the 1793 Constitution, their progressively prominent and vocal participation in governmental galleries, and their perceived ownership over the persecution of internal enemies, as evidenced in petitions denouncing hoarders and speculators.

Political Clubs & Societies

Some groups of women interacted with organized politics beyond pamphlets and petitions alone. Women's participation in political clubs and societies was an imperative aspect

of their political existence, and members demonstrated an understanding of themselves as viable participants in organized and sometimes militant political institutions. Although women's club membership is significant, it is important not to overstate its significance or to understate the militancy and radicalism of many female club members. In the early years of the revolution, particularly between 1790 and 1792, a handful of notable and politically vocal women including Olympe de Gouges, Pauline Léon, and Etta Palm d'Aelders used Jacobin clubs as platforms to advance arguments favouring women's rights to civic parity and to bear arms in defense of the nation. In spite of the importance of these arguments and the prominence given to them in feminist histories of the French Revolution, the impact of women's radical participation in these early clubs was generally minimal.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, this section will discuss the ways women fit within Jacobin political clubs and societies until the dissolution of the *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires* in October 1793. As visible members of Jacobin clubs, women were able to participate in revolutionary politics and to exercise their own membership in the nation and limited political influence, reconciling their gender with a form of active political participation.

The Jacobin club network began to develop in the spring and summer of 1789 in Versailles, when deputies from Brittany met in the evenings following Estates-General meetings, rallying other like-minded deputies including Mirabeau, Robespierre, and Sieyès.⁴¹ Although Jacobin clubs were exclusively masculine at their onset, women's associations began to form in Paris in early 1790, developing from the foundations of Old Regime benevolent societies and religious associations.⁴² Women's clubs were often formed as auxiliaries to men's clubs, and devoted the bulk of their time to instructional purposes such as reading newspapers, and to

⁴⁰ Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship*, 23-24.

⁴¹ Michael L. Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution: The First Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982): 3-4.

⁴² Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution: The First Years*, 93.

feminine appearances in Jacobin festivals as ornamental embodiments of concepts such as reason and liberty.⁴³ As many of the symbols of revolution were represented by women, female club members were important participants in events such as the Festival of Reason, where they participated as actors to represent important allegorical figures such as Liberty.⁴⁴ Although historian Michael L. Kennedy has dismissed the political influence of women's auxiliary societies (with the exception of their defense of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1791), the development of these gendered societies is a historically significant aspect of women's revolutionary experiences. In spite of the differentiation between men's and women's clubs and the limited political influence of women's societies, the existence of these clubs and the desire of women to participate in them and to pursue revolutionary information is telling of the ways they viewed themselves and their own capacity for political involvement.

Women were also present actors in men's clubs and mixed gender clubs throughout the period, both as members and as observers of meetings. Women's admission to men's political societies elicited heated arguments in clubs across France, including concerns that women were inherently vain and superstitious.⁴⁵ Additionally, women's lack of education was used as a rationale for their limited membership in Jacobin clubs, as this educational deficit was posed as preventing women from becoming proper patriots or active members of Jacobin clubs. In late 1791, women's admission to Jacobin clubs was haphazard, as women were not necessarily admitted to every club and were allowed varying degrees of access to different clubs. Even upon

⁴³ Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution: The First Years*, 97.

⁴⁴ Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, 101, 212. Suzanne Desan also makes the claim that these ceremonial roles distanced women from everyday politics and did little to validate women's political activism in clubs or assemblies. These functions, then, were seen as useful for women in decorating, inspiring, and animating men's political activity. Desan, "'Constitutional Amazons,'" 18-19.

⁴⁵ Kennedy, Michael L. *the Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution: 1793-1795* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000): 105.

their admission, in most cases women remained second class members; they were unable to vote, and were only able to make motions through a designated male representative and to speak only when explicitly invited.⁴⁶ Female members in clubs were often related or married to male members as their wives, mothers, or daughters, and in many cases women's membership in clubs was numerically restricted in order to ensure the continued dominance of men within the club.⁴⁷ Although women were physically present within revolutionary clubs such as the *Société fraternelle des patriotes de l'un et l'autre sexe, Défenseurs de la Constitution* who admitted women as members, records of their participation in open debates and the society's transactions reflect the minimal nature of women's contributions.⁴⁸ While it is difficult to determine whether women's absence in these records is an archival flaw or an accurate reflection of their participation in proceedings, women's membership in most revolutionary clubs reflected a secondary status, and women still remained wholly excluded from many societies until late 1793.⁴⁹

In spite of the restricted forms of club membership available for women, they continued to use these clubs as important platforms for the advancement of their arguments on female liberty, independence, and education. In her May 1791 speech to the *Société des Amis de la Constitution* in St. Sever-Cap titled « Discours sur l'état de nullité dans lequel on tient les

⁴⁶ Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution: 1793-1795*, 106.

⁴⁷ In one example, the Luxembourg Section Society allowed the membership of daughters over the age of 14 and of women more generally over the age of 22 with the caveat that women could comprise no more than 20% of the total number of members. See: R.B. Rose, "Symbols, Citizens or Sisterhood: Women and the Popular Movement in the French Revolution: the Beginning of a Tradition," in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 40, no. 3 (December 1994):306.

⁴⁸ Rose, "Symbols, Citizens or Sisterhood," 308.

⁴⁹ On 9 Brumaire Year II, when the National Convention dissolved all women's political clubs and societies, they also stipulated that all political club meetings must be made public. Consequently, all clubs that had previously admitted only men to membership were required to allow women entrance to galleries and to observe their society meetings in spite of previous restrictions on their attendance. See: « Séance du mercredi 30 octobre 1793, » in *Archives Parlementaires*, tome 78: du 29 octobre au 10 novembre 1793: 49.

femmes, relativement à la politique, » Elisabeth Bonaventure Lafaurie commented on the denial of women's political voices and the injustice of subjecting women to laws they had no part in forming. Lafaurie, at the conclusion of her speech, emphasizes the importance of admitting women to the *Société* as equal members to men, with the same deliberative voice and political rights.⁵⁰ Her speech reaches beyond the context of those women within the political club, and appeals to the injustice of the widespread denial of women's rights across political institutions:

*Je dis de plus, que quand même il serait généralement reçu que les femmes seront exclues des délibérations politiques, il ne s'ensuivroit pas que cette exclusion fût bien fondée, ni qu'elle dérivât de la nature même des choses : il me reste à le prouver, et c'est ce que je vais tâcher de faire.*⁵¹

To Lafaurie, women's exclusion from political processes was not natural, and was not conducive to women's liberty or independence. Consequently, in order to fully recognize women's liberty as individuals, it would be necessary to integrate them into the political process and to give women political voices of their own. To Lafaurie, women's political voices, both within Jacobin clubs as well as outside them, were essential components of their liberty and were a natural right that deserved further recognition. Although the club Lafaurie spoke to in May 1791 had not yet admitted women as members, the club structure provided her with the opportunity to advance an argument favouring women's inclusion – an argument which reflected a vision of women as part of the nation that deserved political representation.

⁵⁰ Elisabeth Bonaventure Lafaurie, « Discours sur l'état de nullité dans lequel on tient les femmes, relativement à la politique, dédié à M. Carra, par Elisabeth Bonaventure Lafaurie, patriote et démocrate, mère de quatre enfants, dont elle en allaite un actuellement, prononcé le 16 mai 1791, dans la salle des séances de la Société des Amis de la Constitution, séante à St. Sever-Cap, qui par délibération du même jour a décidé qu'il serait transcrit sur des registres et envoyé à l'impression, à Dax, Chez René Leclercq, Imprimeur-Libraire, 1791, » *Société internationale pour l'étude des femmes de l'ancien régime*, 7. <http://www.siefar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Lafaurie-Discours1791.pdf>

⁵¹ Lafaurie, « Discours sur l'état de nullité dans lequel on tient les femmes, » 1.

The *Cercle Social* and its club, the *Confédération des Amis de la Vérité*, was one of the most significant political organizations for advocates of female independence and for the development of feminist revolutionary ideology.⁵² It is important to note that eighteenth-century ‘feminists’ did not pursue the same goals as late nineteenth or twentieth-century feminists, and that the designation of these women as ‘feminist’ is retroactively applied; they did not identify themselves as such.⁵³ Sexual differences and the natural roles of women were widely accepted concepts amongst eighteenth-century feminists who often accepted the idea that women belonged within their homes, and argued that their political equality with men would only make them better wives and mothers. Improving the status and condition of women often entailed the pursuit of marital law reforms and increased political rights for women, both of which were feminist causes pursued by the *Cercle Social*.⁵⁴ In fact, the *Confédération des Amis de la Vérité* was the first revolutionary club to admit women as regular members, to establish a separate section for women, and to emphasize the importance of equality for all individuals, regardless of their sex.⁵⁵

The *Cercle Social* was an important platform for the advancement of women’s arguments, both through their admission to the *Confédération des Amis de la Vérité*, as well as the publication of women’s political writing through the group’s press, the *Imprimerie du Cercle Social*. Feminist publications released through the *Imprimerie* as well as women’s speeches in the *Confédération*’s meetings advanced the cause of female independence through engaging with

⁵² The *Confédération des Amis de la Vérité* was a club associated with the *Cercle Social*, established October 13th, 1790 and disbanding after the Champ de Mars massacre on July 17th, 1791. As a society, the *Cercle Social* was larger than the *Confédération* alone, and became a particularly prominent publisher of revolutionary literature following the club’s dissolution in 1791 until 1793.

⁵³ Kates, *The Cercle Social, the Girondins, and the French Revolution*, 118-119.

⁵⁴ Kates, *The Cercle Social the Girondins, and the French Revolution*, 119.

⁵⁵ Kates, *the Cercle Social, the Girondins, and the French Revolution*, 122.

multiple mediums over the span of the revolution. Madame de Cambis' 1791 work, « Du sort actuel des femmes, » is one example of a feminist text published by the *Cercle*. Cambis' work critiques the structures of marriage and motherhood which necessarily stripped women of their property rights as a consequence of fulfilling their 'natural,' gendered duties.⁵⁶ Pushing back against structures she views as problematic for women's independence, Cambis was enabled to express her radical ideas by the comparatively progressive and feminist press run by the *Cercle*.

The *Confédération's* meetings were an additional means by which women demonstrated an understanding of themselves as viable political participants, and through which they pursued arguments on women's independence and rights. By December of 1790, women had been admitted to the *Cercle's Confédération*, enabling women such as the Dutch radical Etta Palm D'Aelders to use the club as a platform for disseminating their ideas. In a December 30th, 1790 speech to the *Confédération*, D'Aelders applauded the club for all they had done regarding women's independence and participation within the club while also signaling that there was still work to be accomplished in order to fully achieve just and liberated conditions for women. D'Aelders used the club as a means of critiquing the unequal application of the laws and the ways legal structures continued to favour men over women because of the unequal balance of political power between the sexes. She emphasizes the importance of women's roles as wives and mothers, and the ways these natural roles have become corrupted due to this imbalance:

The prejudices with which our sex has been surrounded-- supported by unjust laws which only accord us a secondary existence in society and which often force us into the humiliating necessity of winning over the cantankerous and ferocious character of a man... those prejudices have changed what was for us the sweetest and the most saintly of duties, those of wife and mother, into a painful and terrible slavery...⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Cambis, *Du sort actuel des femmes*, 7-11.

⁵⁷ Etta Palm D'Aelders, "Discourse on the Injustice of the Laws in Favor of Men, at the Expense of Women, (30 December 1790)" in *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, edited and translated by Lynn Hunt (Boston: Bedford, 1996): 122-123.

The *Confédération* and the structure of mixed-gender Jacobin clubs was thus imperative not only to the development of radical women's arguments, but also for the political education of more moderate women through their attendance and participation in society meetings.

Women's participation in mixed gender clubs took a variety of forms aside from the radical speeches given by militant participants such as D'Aelders. Indeed, as historian Michael Kennedy has indicated in his study of Jacobin clubs, women's presence in society galleries represents a significant aspect of women's revolutionary history, impacting the dynamics of galleries in Jacobin societies across the nation.⁵⁸ Through sitting in the galleries of revolutionary clubs, the Convention, sections, and city halls, women demonstrated their desire to seek political educations and to participate in debates and discussions in a way they perceived as being accessible to them and acceptable for their gender. Importantly, as Dominique Godineau argues, listening in the galleries was not considered a passive action by revolutionary contemporaries, but rather was viewed as a means for the sovereign body to exercise control over their elected officials.⁵⁹ As Godineau indicates, women were more likely to attend and to sit in revolutionary galleries alongside other women from their neighbourhood than they were to sit with their male relatives, demonstrating a separation between male and female political lives and emphasizing the importance of gallery attendance as an aspect of female political sociability. She tells the story of a pair of militant women who met in the galleries of their section's club, and who regularly attended these meetings together alongside their own neighbours in a display of "female political conviviality."⁶⁰ Here, women's gallery attendance alongside other neighbourhood women signalled women's perception of themselves as part of the political

⁵⁸ Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution 1793-1795*, 105.

⁵⁹ Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, 211.

⁶⁰ Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, 213-14.

whole, and of the sovereign body, as well as their willingness to pursue their own political educations alongside other women.

The development of exclusively female clubs across France, such as the Parisian *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires* in May 1793 further emphasizes the desire of many women to participate in the political life of the revolution.⁶¹ Although the Parisian *Société* is perhaps the most well-known of these women's clubs, women organized in political societies across the nation including active clubs in Bordeaux, Dijon, Lyon, and Besançon, although they were comparatively sparse in more rural areas or regions such as Provence.⁶² Suzanne Desan's study of Jacobin women's clubs indicates that these clubs were primarily an urban phenomenon, but that they were also found in smaller towns and villages with memberships generally between 30 and 70 women and with a larger number participating in events such as founding ceremonies and festivals.⁶³ Membership in these clubs was diverse, with members coming from multiple different professions, including shopkeepers, artisans, the bourgeois wives of men's club members, and the wives and daughters of arrested suspects.⁶⁴ Even before the development of the *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires* in May 1793, women across France participated in auxiliary or 'sister' societies that functioned alongside men's clubs. However, as Desan indicates, the relationship between men's clubs and their sister societies was increasingly tenuous as the revolution progressed, and was often characterized by male instruction of the

⁶¹ « Lundi 13 mai, 1793 » *Réimpression de l'Ancien Moniteur*, Vol. 16 (January 1840) : 362.

⁶² Desan, "Constitutional Amazons," 12; Patrice Higonnet, *Goodness beyond Virtue: Jacobins During the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998): 96. Interestingly, Higonnet indicates that the network of men's clubs in these areas was among the densest in the nation in spite of the absence of women's clubs and societies. This may be due to regional traditions and stronger patriarchal structures in comparison to urban areas.

⁶³ Desan, "Constitutional Amazons," 13.

⁶⁴ Desan, "Constitutional Amazons," 14; Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution 1793-1795*, 108.

women's club.⁶⁵ Regardless, women's participation in these clubs took innumerable forms, including expressions of support for the revolution, organizing women's contributions to the war effort, and the education and revolutionary instruction of themselves and their families in revolutionary ideologies.⁶⁶ These auxiliary societies were a space for the development of women's political identities alongside other men, but represented a type of 'middle step' between women's presence in the galleries of men's clubs and the development of uniquely feminine clubs, devoid of any type of male leadership or affiliation.

The *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires* was founded in May 1793 as an exclusively female club, a characteristic which was increasingly of some concern to the National Convention and more moderate women of the period, given their belief in gender complementarity and the perception of political institutions as being generally unsuitable environments for women. Many moderate women, while still revolutionaries, deemed the *Société* to be overly transgressive against the established eighteenth century gender roles. While they believed that women's revolutionary duties towards providing their husbands and children with the appropriate values entailed their participation in revolutionary *fêtes* and gallery attendance, the active intervention of the *Société* seemed comparatively radical and inappropriate.⁶⁷ In response, women of the *Société* resisted the view that women must always be confined to the private sphere as passive and isolated individuals, arguing that although women's primary responsibilities were to the home, their love of the public good could be reconciled with their domestic duties and that the two could coexist.⁶⁸ While the *Société* was radical in comparison to more moderate women's beliefs and to women's actions in mixed gender and auxiliary societies,

⁶⁵ Desan, "Constitutional Amazons," 15.

⁶⁶ Desan, "Constitutional Amazons," 12.

⁶⁷ Durham, "The Citizenesses of Year II," 96.

⁶⁸ "A Laudatory Address to the Revolutionary Republican Women," 176-177.

many of the goals and problems the *Société* identified demonstrated a reconciliation between their traditional roles and their desire for revolutionary political inclusion. Although the *Société*'s focus was often on more militant political causes such as the establishment of a female militia, they continuously couched their position as within the realm of acceptable female political action and demonstrated an understanding of their inclusion as complementary to men's political duties. For example, in February 1793, when a deputation of women from the *Section des Quatre-Nations* approached the Jacobin Society asking for a space for the *Société* to meet, their intended topic of discussion was to be hoarding.⁶⁹ In doing so, women demonstrated their perception of themselves as political actors who were able to be concerned with political issues regardless of their gender and the associated natural duties, marrying their traditional roles and revolutionary activism in a unique form of female political engagement.

Women's clubs, particularly the *Société*, vigorously attempted to integrate themselves within the existing networks and structures of Jacobin clubs as complementary but equal participants in revolutionary club life. However, women's attempts to assimilate themselves within the club network were met by Jacobin revolutionaries with ambivalence, as female clubs seemed to threaten traditional gender roles, and to question the sexual and social orders of French society.⁷⁰ Women's participation in the broader context of Jacobin clubs is exemplified by their use of liberty caps during club proceedings and as apparel on Parisian streets. Liberty caps became especially prominent among Parisian revolutionaries in early 1792, with patriots wearing them on the streets and – crucially – at Jacobin club meetings.⁷¹ By 1793, most clubs

⁶⁹ « Séance du vendredi 22 février 1793 : Présidence de Billaud-Varenne, » in *La société des Jacobins : Recueil des documents pour l'histoire du Club des Jacobins de Paris*, ed. F.A. Aulard, Tome 5- Janvier 1793 a Mars 1794 (Paris : Maison Quantin, 1893) : 37.

⁷⁰ Desan, "Constitutional Amazons," 12.

⁷¹ Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution: The Middle Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988): 220.

required their officers and speakers to wear caps, while others required all members to wear them.⁷² At this point, the liberty cap had become a significant element of Jacobin club attendance, closely associated with the revolutionary concept of liberty as well as organized political activity. Red liberty caps were significant political symbols, and although Marianne, the revolutionary personification of liberty, was often portrayed wearing a red cap and wielding a pike, these accessories were widely perceived as inappropriate political attire for women.

As most other Jacobin clubs of the period, women in the *Société* attributed profound political importance to the liberty cap during their sessions in spite of the perception of women wearing liberty caps as generally transgressive or subversive. Article 5 of the *Société*'s regulations stipulates that the President should wear a liberty cap during the club's proceedings, removing it only to restore order to the room and to regain the attention of its members.⁷³ However, many members also wore the cap outside of the club's meetings as a symbol of their political devotion to the revolution, although doing so generally incited popular anxiety and conflict. In one instance, during an inauguration for the busts of Lepeletier and Marat on 7 Brumaire Year II (October 28, 1793), the sight of *Société* members wearing red caps led women seated in the galleries to yell: "down with the red cap, down with Jacobin women... These villains are responsible for the unhappiness of France."⁷⁴ In this instance, women in the galleries posed those wearing red caps as transgressive, inviting disorder and being dangerous to the progress of the revolution in spite of the importance -- more generally speaking -- of the liberty cap as a symbol of the revolution and a significant aspect of Jacobin club participation.

⁷² Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution: The Middle Years*, 121.

⁷³ *Règlement de la société des citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires de Paris*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, les archives de la Révolution française, 5.
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k42524n.texteImage>

⁷⁴ *Les Révolutions de Paris*, no. 215 cited in Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 167.

Regardless of the cap's symbolic importance and the prevalence of caps in other Jacobin clubs, moderate women perceived the cap to be highly problematic and often inappropriate attire for political women.

Liberty caps also inspired turmoil on Parisian streets between radical women wearing the caps and more moderate revolutionaries who saw these caps as inappropriate political statements, given the female gender of their wearers. In another incident in Brumaire Year II, three Parisian women appeared before the *Comité de surveillance révolutionnaire* to resolve a dispute over women wearing liberty caps. According to the accounts of Louise Elizabeth Charlot (Femme LeSage) and Catherine Cristophe (Femme Landry), the two had been walking down the rue des Fossés-Montmartre when Marie-Françoise Dorlet (Femme Sacriste) forcibly removed their red caps. LeSage and Landry each recall being verbally assaulted by Sacriste for wearing their red caps, and LeSage claims Sacriste had chased them down the street in order to snatch their caps, yelling that they were prostitutes and threatening to cut their hair since they were wearing these caps. In her own statement, Landry remembers Sacriste repeatedly pulling off her cap without any regard for the attached cockade, and throwing both into the mud on the street. Sacriste rationalized her own actions with the argument that she removed the caps because they were only appropriate political attire for men, and that she had forced them to come to the *Comité* with her to find a solution to the matter.⁷⁵

The sight of women wearing liberty caps became a cause for concern for more moderate women, because the caps were considered by observers to be unsuitable attire for women, incompatible with their female gender. Although the *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires*

⁷⁵ "Women Wearing Bonnets Rouges Encounter Resistance from the Authorities and From Moderate Political Women," in *Women in Revolutionary Paris 1789-1795*, ed. Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979): 205-7.

attempted to integrate themselves within the existing practices of Jacobin clubs in 1793 through their use of political symbols such as the liberty cap, doing so entailed subverting public opinion and entrenched social norms. Perceptions of radical women including *Société* members were broadly negative— public opinion considered radical women to be akin to prostitutes and aristocrats, and generally applauded the Jacobins for their persecution of “female grenadiers.”⁷⁶ Witness accounts of the conflict between LeSage, Landry, and Sacriste recall men vocally supporting the removal of the caps, adding that women who wore these caps were either politically corrupt and being paid off by the aristocracy, or were otherwise morally corrupt and were prostitutes.⁷⁷ In either case, women wearing liberty caps inspired claims of corrupt female political activity and of women acting inappropriately for their gender, thus inviting revolutionary disorder and chaos through threatening established social and gender dynamics.

Resistance & Restriction: October 30th, 1793

Although women’s clubs, including the *Société*, imagined themselves as part of the network of Jacobin clubs, women’s clubs were met with ambivalence and hostility by much of French society. The editor of *Révolutions de Paris*, Louis Prudhomme, was one individual who published pieces in his paper condemning the women’s clubs of 1793 and attacking women’s participation in political clubs. In a January 1793 article in his paper, Prudhomme critiqued the women’s club of Lyon, imploring the women of Lyon to remain at home instead:

Au nom de la patrie dont elles portent l'amour dans leur cœur, au nom de la nature, de laquelle il ne faut jamais s'écarter, au nom des bonnes mœurs domestiques dont les clubs de femmes sont les fléaux, à cause de la dissipation qu'ils entraînent avec eux, nous conjurons les bonnes citoyennes de Lyon de rester chez elles, de veiller à leur ménage,

⁷⁶ Durham, “Citizenesses of Year II,” 96.

⁷⁷ “Women Wearing Bonnets Rouges Encounter Resistance,” 207.

*sans s'inquiéter de la réforme du catéchisme de l'évêque Lamourette, & sans avoir la prétention d'entendre le contrat social à livre ouvert.*⁷⁸

Prudhomme's insistence on the importance of women remaining in their homes is grounded in his multiple invocations of the national good, nature, and women's domestic morals.

Prudhomme's vision of what women's meetings should look like differed substantially from the realities of women's clubs in Lyon. While Prudhomme found little fault with women meeting in groups with their children and work in tow, discussing the work of the state and learning of pertinent political developments through their husbands and fathers, he describes women's clubs as chaotic, licentious, and consequently dangerous.⁷⁹ In his critique, Prudhomme expressed a view of the Lyon women's club as being problematic and unnatural, and exemplifies the societal resistance to women's clubs in 1793. Although women posed these clubs as being within the national interest and as consistent with their gendered roles, Prudhomme doubts the reality of this view, firmly asserting that women had no place teaching little girls chapters of Rousseau's *Social Contract* or meeting in organized and structured political clubs.

Prudhomme was only one of many who seemingly doubted the consistency of women's clubs with women's gender and their responsibilities, and who invoked women's nature and the chaotic potential of women in politics as reasons why women's clubs were problematic. However, it was not only men who viewed women's clubs as potentially dangerous; women also critiqued the existence of these clubs, viewing them as unnatural and inappropriate forms of political engagement for themselves. On October 29th, 1793, the National Convention admitted a group of Parisian women from sections across the city to file a complaint over an incident from the day before, when members of the *Société* had worn liberty caps and pants to a Parisian

⁷⁸ Louis Prudhomme, "Club de femmes à Lyon," in *Révolutions de Paris: dédiées à la nation et au district des Petits Augustins, Volume 15* (December 31, 1793): 235.

⁷⁹ Prudhomme, "Club de femmes à Lyon," 234-5.

market, intending (according to the deputation) to force other women to wear the same outfit. After one member of the deputation requested the abolition of the society, the Convention promised that the *Comité de sûreté générale* would prepare a report on the issue.⁸⁰ The report was presented the following day by André Amar, one of the Committee members, who concluded that women were generally ill-suited for elevated thought and were disposed to an over-excitation that would be ‘deadly’ to the state, resulting in little other than error and disorder. He argues that women should not meet in political associations, as:

*[Les] fonctions privées auxquelles sont destinées les femmes par la nature même tiennent à l'ordre général de la société ; cet ordre social résulte de la différence qu'il y a entre l'homme et la femme. Chaque sexe est appelé à un genre d'occupation qui lui est propre ; son action est circonscrite dans ce cercle qu'il ne peut franchir, Car la nature, qui a posé ces limites à l'homme, commande impérieusement, et ne reçoit aucune loi.*⁸¹

Amar’s argument against the continued existence of women’s societies is premised on his belief that these clubs and societies exist in contradiction with women’s female identities and roles. Unlike the *Société*, who so clearly articulated their own belief that their maternal and political identities could co-exist, Amar refuted the notion that women’s popular societies acted in the public interest. Acting on the recommendation of the report, the National Convention formally dissolved and prohibited all women’s political clubs on October 30th, 1793, citing their detrimental and chaotic impact on public peace.

October 30th, 1793 is the only moment during the revolution when deputies openly discussed and attempted to define women’s appropriate political and social roles in the Assembly.⁸² Through forcibly suppressing women’s popular societies, the National Convention

⁸⁰ « Séance du mardi 29 octobre, 1793, » in *Archives Parlementaires*, tome 78: du 29 octobre au 10 novembre 1793: 20

⁸¹ « Jeudi 31 octobre 1793 (no. 40) » *Réimpression de l’Ancien moniteur*, Vol. 18 (January 1841): 299. <https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=d7M9AAAAAYAAJ>

⁸² Godineau, « Femmes en Citoyenneté, » 199.

aimed to redefine the boundaries of women's relationship to the revolution, emphasizing their roles within their homes as opposed to in public spaces through restricting their activities in political clubs. As alternatives to their presence in clubs, the *Comité de sûreté générale* suggested other more 'natural' ways for women to express their love for the revolution:

*... elles peuvent éclairer leurs époux, leur communiquer des réflexions précieuses, fruit du calme d'une vie sédentaire ; employer à fortifier eux l'amour de la patrie par tout ce que l'amour privé leur donne d'empire ; et l'homme, éclairé par des discussions familières et paisibles au milieu de son ménage, rapportera dans la société les idées utiles que lui aura données une femme honnête.*⁸³

The report argues the exclusion of women from political life acts in the interests of the revolution and the nation. Through leading sedentary lives, facilitating peaceful discussions in their homes, and ensuring a love of the nation in their children, women would be able, the deputies argued, to act in the interests of the revolution in a way that better seemed to reflect the Convention's own understanding of appropriate gender roles.

The women who composed the *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires* certainly perceived their political efficacy differently from the members of the *Comité de sûreté générale*, who were seemingly unable to reconcile women's gender and familial duties with an active political identity. Although women's involvement in clubs as well as their participation in civic oaths and petitions to the national government indicated their perception of themselves as political actors, the Convention's views on political women aimed to exclude them from the purview of organized political institutions. Regardless of how women perceived themselves and their own capacity for political action, women's political clubs were formally dissolved on October 30th, 1793 in a move that aimed to solidify the divisions between the public and private, and between men and women's political inclusion.

⁸³ « Jeudi 31 octobre 1793, » in *Archives parlementaire*, no. 40, 300.

Women's capacity to participate in formal political processes and to interact with political institutions became a particularly heated topic of debate in 1793 with the development and closure of women's political clubs across the nation. Women formed clubs like the *Société des républicaines révolutionnaires* across France, arguing that they had a right to be included in political processes as members of the nation, and that their exclusion from political institutions was unnatural. In contrast, French society seemed unwilling to accept the development of women's political clubs, which men such as Prudhomme and Amar perceived as being wholly incompatible with women's gender and their nature. The extent of the differences between men and women were central to these debates, which questioned whether women had the right to political participation, or if including women in political institutions would be unnatural and tantamount to inviting political chaos and revolutionary instability. While women were seen as belonging to the nation, the question of what constituted an appropriate expression of this belonging and of their citizenship inspired debates and the eventual suppression of women's clubs in October 1793. In spite of the ways women in clubs viewed themselves, French society in 1793 was markedly more hostile towards the prospect of women's political participation, suppressing women's political societies in order to better emphasize the divisions between 'public men' and 'private women.'

Conclusion

The Prairial Days of Year III, in late May 1795, have been identified as both “the height of the mass women’s movement,” and as a “psychological watershed” by historians of the French Revolution.¹ Accounts of women’s rioting on 1 Prairial and the depositions of those arrested during the riots emphasize the physical violence of women in the crowds and their vocal castigation of the National Convention. In his account of 1 Prairial, General Kilmaine describes the crowd as composed of “twenty thousand armed men and forty thousand furies—for they cannot be referred to as women....”² His account emphasizes the numerical domination of women within these crowds, although his use of the term ‘furies’ implies that he does not view them as behaving in ways befitting an eighteenth-century woman. He recalls being “received with howling and the most atrocious insults by a great number of armed men and a greater number of women, or rather, furies, who wanted to butcher us alive, or so they assured us.”³

Women’s violent rhetoric within crowds is similarly emphasized in the police depositions of those arrested for their participation in the riot. In the report of Citizen Hosteau concerning Femme Mandrillon, he recalls Mandrillon attempting to incite other women to murder a deputy’s wife, proclaiming that she was “really going to get inside their hearts and spill their blood, even wash my hands in it...”⁴ Dominique Godineau stresses a further connection between women’s

¹ Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, 331; Hufton, “Women in Revolution, 1789-1796,” 105.

² Général Kilmaine, “The Military Establishment in Year III Offers Its Perspective on the Prairial Days,” in *Women in Revolutionary Paris 1789-1795*, ed. Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979): 296.

³ Kilmaine, “The Military Establishment in Year III Offers Its Perspective on the Prairial Days,” 296.

⁴ “The Case of Femme Mandrillon, Referred by the Section Tuileries to the Military Tribunal for Violent Behaviour During the Prairial Days,” in *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795* ed. Darline Gay Levy,

attacks on the Convention and their attacks on merchants, including the ‘furies’ who “swore aloud that after having annihilated the Convention, they would pillage merchants and others,” and another woman who, upon seeing the body of a slain deputy pass, proclaimed: “Bravo, bravo, soon it will be the merchant’s turn to get this treatment; it is necessary.”⁵

Undoubtedly, women were prominent participants in the events of 1 Prairial. Waves of women travelled to the National Convention on that day, forcefully demanding both bread and the Constitution of 1793. They were loud and verbally aggressive towards the Convention deputies, laughing in mockery, and hurling obscenities and threats. Women were also physically aggressive and destructive, in one instance forcibly removing a police officer from a bench and using it as a battering ram to break down the doors to the Convention.⁶ They repeatedly used the slogan of “bread and the Constitution of 1793,” connecting a political objective to their concerns over the supply of bread. As a consequence of their actions and participation in the riots, women’s access to Convention galleries was suspended on the evening of 1 Prairial. On 4 Prairial, women were legally ordered to withdraw to their homes and were forbidden from meeting in groups of more than five on the streets, facing dispersal by armed forces and arrest.⁷ Notably, although the Prairial riots lasted for three days, in the days following 1 Prairial women were comparatively absent, and the days were predominantly characterized by male, sans-culottes involvement.⁸

Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979): 302.

⁵ Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, 339.

⁶ Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, 335.

⁷ Dominique Godineau rationalizes women’s absence following the onset of the riot to *mentalités* that assigned women responsibility for launching the insurrection before handing it off to men in subsequent days. See: Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, 345-7.

⁸ Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, 340.

The spaces available for the expression of women's political opinions were drastically curtailed by the National Convention in the aftermath of 1 Prairial. Under the Directory, established in November 1795, women's opportunities for political participation did not improve. Olwen Hufton, in her article, "Women in Revolution 1789-1796," invokes women's desire to return to some semblance of normalcy following the Prairial riots, including their cries of *vive le roi* and in the streets, and those who nostalgically recalled Robespierre's rule and the days of cheap bread.⁹ The revival of popular Catholicism and religious toleration in the Constitution of Year III (1795) saw the general return of those who had renounced their religion to Catholicism across France.¹⁰ In spite of the strides women had made in bettering their own circumstances, including divorce legislation and reformed inheritance laws, by the implementation of the Napoleonic Civil Code in 1804, the patriarchal authority of fathers and husbands had been legally redefined and solidified in reaction against policies that had attempted to introduce individual rights and equality within families.¹¹

Historical writing on women in the French Revolution has typically reached pessimistic conclusions, and has questioned whether the revolution improved the condition of women in any tangible or lasting way. Jany Abray laments the failures of revolutionary feminism, while Joan Landes has concluded that women were objects of political representation rather than participants in the bourgeois public sphere.¹² Olwen Hufton, as discussed above, concludes her article with the apologetic return of urban women to the Catholic Church, their nostalgia for the days of stability and their preoccupation with the losses they sustained throughout the revolution

⁹ Hufton, "Women in Revolution, 1789-1796," 105.

¹⁰ Hufton, "Women in Revolution, 1789-1796," 107.

¹¹ Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 283-4.

¹² See: Abray, "Feminism in the French Revolution,"; Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 205.

in the name of liberty.¹³ Still, women engendered success in many ways throughout the revolution. They marched to Versailles in October 1789, responding to a perceived shortage of affordable bread and to the degradation of the tricolour cockade by military officials during a drunken banquet only days prior. Women identified themselves as *citoyennes* with a unique stake in the revolution, which they argued necessitated improvements to their own education and justified the development of their political knowledge. Their role as mothers were important foundations to their political activity, demonstrating the growth of women's revolutionary political roles from pre-existing eighteenth-century gender norms and traditions. Women petitioned the National Assembly on a variety of issues, participated in men's revolutionary societies, and founded their own, finding spaces for the expression of their own political opinions and pursuing a form of revolutionary political education. Although the feminist movement failed to take hold in revolutionary France and in spite of the suppression of women's clubs and the dismantling of legislation favourable to their independence, it is hard to discount the importance of the numerous ways women did succeed politically in the revolution.

Moreover, women's own self-perception had changed: in many cases, they considered themselves to be viable political participants in the French Revolution. While women's political participation was seen as being distinct from men's participation, it was presented by both women and French society as a necessary complement to male political action. Female citizenship was closely related to widespread perceptions of gender, as exemplified in prominent eighteenth-century texts such as Rousseau's tract on education, *Emile*. Women perceived themselves politically and as revolutionary participants, but these identifications were grounded

¹³ Hufton, "Women in Revolution 1789-1796," 108.

in eighteenth-century gender norms, and showed continuity from women's pre-revolutionary identities.

The ways women perceived themselves and the ways they were viewed by members of French society is key in understanding women's political behaviour in the French Revolution. While this project has focused predominantly on the influence of women's maternal identities and familial responsibilities on their revolutionary participation, these were far from being the only factors influencing the ways women were perceived throughout the revolutionary period. Further areas for greater study include deeper engagement with official perceptions of women as closely associated with Catholicism and counterrevolution, and a more extended comparison of these perceptions with women's revolutionary activities. Not all women saw themselves as revolutionaries, and it cannot be reasonably expected that all women perceived themselves politically. The influences and perceptions of Catholicism, counterrevolution, and apolitical women represent further areas of study which should be addressed in order to better understand the shape of women's revolutionary involvement. Although I have chosen to focus predominantly on Parisian women, those in the provinces additionally deserve further attention, including an extended comparison between provincial and urban political identities.¹⁴

¹⁴ Many historians have started this work, focusing on topic such as Catholicism, counterrevolution, and provincial women. For a few examples, see: Gemma Betros, "Liberty, Citizenship and the Suppression of Female Religious Communities in France, 1789-90," in *Women's History Review*, vol. 18, no. 2 (April 2009): 311-336; Suzanne Desan, *Reclaiming the Sacred: Lay Religion and Popular Politics in Revolutionary France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Michel Fol, « Patriotes au Féminin : Les Femmes au Club des Jacobins de Bonneville (1792-1794), » in *Revue Historique*, vol. 295, no. 2 (April 1996) : 369-406 ; Jacques Guilhaumou, « Conduites Politiques de Marseillaises Pendant la Révolution Française, » in *Provence Historique*, vol. 46, no. 186 (October 1996): 471-489; Martine Lapiéd, « Conflictualité Urbaine et Mise en Visibilité des Femmes dans l'Espace Politique Provençal et Comtadin, de l'Ancien Régime a la Révolution Française, » in *Provence Historique*, vol. 50, no. 202 (October 2002): 427-438; Martine Lapiéd, « La Place des Femmes dans la Sociabilité et la Vie Politique Locale en Provence et dans le Comtat Venaissin Pendant la Révolution, » in *Provence Historique*, vol. 46, no. 186 (October 1996) : 457-469 ; Christelle Nadau, « Les Femmes et le Catholicisme à Bordeaux sous la Révolution Française (1789-1799), » in *Annales du Midi*, vol. 117, no. 252 (October 2005) : 505-525.

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