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# A REANALYSIS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: CAUSES FOR SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION TO THE WAR AMONG WOMEN

Jacquelin Biggs
jbiggs96@siu.edu

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by

Jacquelin Biggs

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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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Approved by:

Gray Whaley, Committee Chair and Advisor

Hale Yilmaz, Committee Member

Tiffany Player, Committee Member

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**AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF**

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TITLE: A REANALYSIS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: CAUSES FOR SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION TO THE WAR AMONG WOMEN

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Gray Whaley

This paper examines the existing intellectual historiography of the causes of the American Revolution through the perspectives of both Revolutionary and Loyalist Women. Through the analysis of letters, petitions, and political pamphlets authored by women of the Revolutionary era, this research challenges Bernard Bailyn's *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* and highlights the limitations of his conclusions when applied to the female experience. Women such as Abigail Adams, Martha Washington, Esther Reed, Grace Galloway, and Sarah Fisher demonstrate that despite being aware of the ideologies behind the American Revolution, these were not the only factors they considered in making their decision. The research of this paper reveals that it was in fact societal expectations as wives that ultimately decided a woman's choice during the American Revolution. For women, it was family, not politics, that was most influential in their decision to support or to oppose the American Revolution.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the guidance of my advisor Dr. Gray Whaley. This paper started out as an idea based upon taking his colloquium in Early American History. Not only did he help in providing me inspiration, but also throughout the research and writing process. Additionally, I would also like to thank my other committee members Dr. Hale Yilmaz and Dr. Tiffany Player for their insight as I was completing this paper. Dr. Player's discussions towards the implications of this kind of research truly inspired me to challenge the silences within the historical narrative.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper and research to my mother, Martha Biggs. Her encouragement and undying support for my academic pursuits allowed for me to complete this project.

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# HEADING 1

## INTRODUCTION

The American Revolution presents one of the most interesting cases for historians studying trends and patterns in revolutionary countries. One of the major reasons for this is because the causes of the American Revolution are less evident than other major revolutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Gordon Wood summarizes this best when he states, "the social conditions that generally are supposed to lie behind all revolutions – poverty and economic deprivation – were not present in colonial America… In fact, the colonists knew they were freer, more equal, more prosperous, and less burdened with cumbersome feudal and monarchical restraints than any other part of mankind in history."[1] As a result, the American Revolution appears to be solely based upon ideals. At least, this is what Bernard Bailyn argues in his foundational work *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*.[2]

For Bailyn, the "American Revolution was above all an ideological, constitutional, political struggle and not primarily a controversy between social groups."[3] This conclusion inspired later works such as Pauline Maier's *From Resistance to Revolution*, who builds upon Bailyn's ideas and Gordon Wood's *The Radicalism of the American Revolution,* who opposes his claims and argues that there was a social aspect of the Revolution.[4] Other historical works have also expanded upon the question of the motivations behind the Revolution.[5] However, the question that these monographs were seeking to answer, what caused people to organize or join a

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[1] Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 4.
[2] Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution,* Fiftieth anniversary ed. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017).
[3] Ibid., xxviii.
[4] Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), and Wood, 86.
[5] Thomas Humphrey's "Conflicting Independence Land Tenancy and the American Revolution" addresses the rural populations in New York and Virginia, Jessica Roney's "1776, Viewed from the West" examines the motives of the

revolution against the British Empire, continues to lack a response that considers the female perspective. This is especially the case within intellectual history.

Bailyn's work emphasizes the political pamphlets published during the American Revolution, and inadvertently limits his subjects of study to the male, intellectual, elite of society during the revolutionary era. While Pauline Maier and Gordon Wood attempt to broaden the scope of the discussion by including the lower classes, both authors still have a gaping absence of women. However, the female experience of the Revolution has not been passed over entirely. Linda Kerber's monograph *Women of the Republic* presents one of the most complete arguments about the female experience and successfully demonstrates the interconnectedness between political history and women's history. In this monograph, Kerber argues that women were actively engaged in the war effort and developed the ideology of "Republican Motherhood" to explain and act upon their female patriotism.[6] Additionally, Kerber expands her research to cover the years after the war to conclude that the American Revolution failed to provide women with the liberty and equality that it provided the white male populations.[7] In this sense Kerber's work has laid the foundation for the more recent works on female agency during the American Revolution.[8]

Concerning the ideals presented by Bailyn, Kerber argues that women had to transform the rhetoric of the Revolution to incorporate themselves into the political sphere. In Kerber's analysis, the American Revolution was an ideological transformation for women. However, her

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Wataugans and Cherokee tribes in the Tennessee Valley, Robert Parkinson's *The Common Cause* argues that the motivations for the middling public was the British handling of slaves, mercenaries, and Native American tribes.

[6] Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic* (Williamsburg, VA: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

[7] Ibid., 11.

[8] Barbara Oberg's edited collection of essays *Women in the American Revolution* presents the economic, social, and political impacts of the American Revolution through a series of microhistories. Emily Arendt's "Ladies Going about for Money" presents a detailed examination of the female volunteerism to support the war effort. Mary Beth Norton's "Eighteenth Century Women in Peace and War" discusses the experiences of Loyalist women.

work evaluates the meaning of the American Revolution by studying the changes after the Revolution had occurred. As a result, the intellectual motivations or "causes" for women to revolt remain largely untouched. This research seeks to build off Kerber's and other's scholarship by more directly confronting Bailyn's concepts of the "ideological origins" of the Revolution regarding women.

The primary source base for this research includes letters, petitions, diaries, and journals written by women from the period 1765 – the year in which the Stamp Act, considered one of the major events to spark discontent in the colonies, was passed – through 1787, the year when the Treaty of Paris was signed, officially ending the war. The reason for this is to evaluate the mentalities of the women both before and during the revolution to determine their motivations and examine any changes they may have had as the war progressed. However, this research is also limited because of its dependency on written materials, resulting in elite, white, and married women being the most often cited. Not only were these women more likely to be able to record their thoughts down, but additionally they were more likely to be closely related to a man that held a prominent role on either side of the Revolution. In this case, this research is limited by not incorporating the voices of the lower class or enslaved women. By no means is this research to present an overgeneralized experience for women during the American Revolution. Instead, it seeks to present one potential explanation for the specific cases analyzed.

By examining the writings of women during the Revolutionary era for Bailyn's "ideological origins", the goal is to evaluate what factors contributed to female support and opposition during the war. Both the writings of female Revolutionaries, a term used in this case designate women who supported the revolution, and Loyalists will be evaluated in this manner.

However, in this case Loyalists will be defined similarly to Kacy Tillman's definition.[9] Tillman argues that during the Revolution, the term Loyalist not only applied to those who were actively loyal to the British but also groups such as Quakers who did not support the Revolution at all because of their religious beliefs against conflict.[10] Revolutionaries during this time viewed pacifists as Loyalists and similarly treated them to those that were actively aiding the British forces. Since this was the case, this work attempts to use these same qualifications when evaluating the letters.

The evaluation of women's writings reveals that although Bailyn's ideologies are prominent, this was not the only or even the dominant factor women took into consideration in deciding their support for the Revolution. It appears that amongst the population studied that there were three main factors. One factor, as already stated, was the political ideologies presented by Bailyn. Another is the ongoing war itself. Lastly, the final factor is the women's societal obligations to her husband and family. Of these three factors, the third factor appears to have been the dominant factor women considered in deciding their support for the war.

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[9] Kacy D. Tillman, *Stripped and Script,* ( University of Massachusetts Press, 2019).
[10] Ibid, 51.

## HEADING 2

## POLITICAL THOUGHT ANS SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF REVOLUTIONARY AMERICA

Both preceding and during the American Revolution, the primary concept for political thought was the idea of power. According to Bailyn, the political framework at the time placed power and freedom at odds with one another. In other words, the accumulation of power deteriorates the freedoms of others.[11] This duality of power and freedom was the primary concept applied to revolutionary complaints of oppression. Such complaints included lack of representation, the fear of standing armies, and the idea of "rights." This rhetoric also emerges in the colonist's belief in a growing Parliamentary threat. The colonists perceived the increasing severity of the Stamp Act of 1765, Townshend Acts of 1767 and 1768, and the Intolerable Acts of 1774 as signs of Parliamentary oppression. Revolutionaries perceived the passage of these acts as a sign that the English constitution and government were being dismantled by "throwing off the balance of the constitution, [making] their 'despotic will' the authority of the nation."[12]

However, it was also believed that power was necessary to avoid anarchy. "So long as the crown, the nobility, and the democracy remained in their designated places in government and performed their designated political tasks, liberty would continue to be safe in England and its dominions."[13] This need to avoid anarchy emerges as a primary political philosophy among Loyalists. Both sides used this rhetoric of power to formulate their arguments, and Bailyn's conclusions appear strongly supported when evaluating some of the important works preceding the Revolution. For example, the Declaration of Independence is brimming with this rhetoric.

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[11] Bailyn, 58.
[12] Ibid., 125.
[13] Ibid., 76.

Some of the most obvious examples are the mentioning of "unalienable rights" and stating that it was the colonists' right to "throw off such Government, and to provide future Guards for their future security".[14] It can also be seen when the Declaration states, "the history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States."[15] Here, the writers of the Declaration seek to argue how the King has become a tyrant, which infers absolute power and corruption, and ultimately means, for the colonists, obstruction of their freedom.

Similar language is used by Loyalists to argue for the maintenance of British rule. In the "Declaration of Dependence", published in 1781, various Loyalists signed a declaration that almost mirrored the Declaration of Independence.[16] However, instead of arguing against tyranny, this document argues against anarchy. "[When] a long train of the most licentious and despotic abuses, pursuing invariably the same objects, envinces a design to reduce them under anarchy, and the distractions of democracy, and finally force them to submit to absolute despotism."[17] This demonstrates the relationship between power and liberty from the Loyalist perspective. It appears for the loyalists; this Revolution had tipped the balance of power too far in the direction of liberty and resulted in anarchy. When comparing these grievances in these documents, one can see the importance that these concepts of power and freedom had during the American Revolution and the validity behind Bailyn's conclusions.

Another important document of the time was Thomas Paine's *Common Sense.* Published in January 1776, Paine argues for the separation from Great Britain and the establishment of

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[14] Thomas Jefferson, et al, July 4, *Copy of Declaration of Independence*, 1776. Manuscript/Mixed Material, *Library of Congress*, https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib000159/.
[15] Ibid.
[16] *The Royal Gazette*, November 17, 1781, quoted in Ruma Chopra, *Choosing Sides: Loyalists in Revolutionary America* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2013), 116.

more democratic legislatures.[18] Gary Nash argues that this pamphlet was imperative in spreading revolutionary ideas and emotions to the broader public through its use of simpler rhetoric and avoidance of legal jargon.[19] However, Pauline Maier questions the importance of such a document, claiming that it was the growing discontent over the years that led the masses to support the revolution, not the publishing of this pamphlet.[20] Despite these disagreements, most historians acknowledge that this pamphlet provides an ideal source for intellectual analysis.

In response to Paine's *Common Sense,* James Chalmers published *Plain Truth.* In his response he argues against the separation from Britain, claiming that this will lead to instability and anarchy because the colonies would not be united under the British Empire, but would seek to claim power for themselves. "Can we suppose that the people of the south, would submit to have a seat of Empire at Philadelphia, or in New England; or that the people oppressed by a change in government, contrasting their misery with their former happy state, would not invite Britain to reassume the sovereignty."[21] Again, Bailyn's concept of power can be seen in these documents. For Thomas Paine, democracy is more stable because it allows for representation within the government and protects individual freedoms. For Chalmers, it is the British Empire that provides stability to the colonies, and that the current system of power protects from anarchy and uncertainty. Bailyn's conclusions about the "ideological origins" of the Revolution appear correct. However, these works were also written by the elite male class of society. Therefore, these notions of power still need to be evaluated in works authored by women to truly discern the validity behind Bailyn's "ideological origins".

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[17] Ibid., 117.
[18] Bailyn, 286.
[19] Gary Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books. 2005), 190.
[20] Maier, 267.

Since the focus will be on women, it is also important to consider how the social expectations impacted a woman's ability to participate and interact with these ideologies. During the revolutionary era, women overall had very few legal rights. At this time, the practice of coverture was commonly accepted and embraced by society. Coverture was the legal practice in which the woman's identity became covered by the identity of her husband once she married.[22] In essence, this resulted in the silencing and elimination of women from the realm of politics. This perception has greatly impacted the political history of the Revolution because it validated the elimination of women from these accounts, as seen in Bailyn's, Maier's, and Wood's monographs. However, historians such as Linda Kerber have demonstrated that although many women may not have had a direct say in the politics occurring around them, this did not exclude them from the effects of the political climate. Revolutionaries would often seize the property of the families that fled to the British side of the conflict.[23] This confiscation also applied to the property wives brought into their marriage because of coverture. This practice enforced the notion of separate spheres between the home and the political world. Since society deemed women to be in the home, this severely limited their ability to participate and interact with these ideologies in the manner that intellectual historians have accustomed themselves.

The cases for women present an interesting avenue of analysis about the causes of the American Revolution. Based on existing literature, at the core of the Revolution are the fundamental ideals of power and freedom. The leaders of the Revolution primarily extended these ideals to the white male population and excluded other groups from their perceptions of "representation" and "freedom". Women were aware of the same ideologies that Bailyn presents

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[21] James Chalmers, *Plain Truth; Addressed to the Inhabitants of America, Containing, Remarks on the Late Pamphlet, Entitled Common Sense* (Philadelphia: Humphreys, 1776), found in Ruma Chopra, *Choosing Sides*, 89.
[22] Kerber, 120.

in his monograph. However, to challenge his conclusion, it appears that in the case of women, political ideologies and beliefs were not the dominant factors in a women's decision to support either side of the Revolution.

[23] Ibid., 50.

## HEADING 3

## WOMEN AND POLITICS

Women of all classes were limited in their ability to participate politically in society. The coverture laws as well as the beliefs of the homeliness of women affected the amount of direct involvement they could have. As a result, when browsing through the various letters, poems, ledgers, and writings of these women, there are limited examples of direct discussion on the political ideas and beliefs. There are a few exceptions to this. Abigail Adams, Martha Washington, and Mercy Otis Warren's writings are filled with references to ideas such as "our cause", "virtue" and references of subjugation. The opinions of Loyalist women are even more difficult to find because of policies passed that resulted in the development of Committees of Safety and Confiscation. These committees were in charge of monitoring "loyalty oaths" and confiscating property that was previously owned by a Loyalist.[24] Additionally, the committees were responsible for the continuous reading of letters, diaries, and journals, sent between inhabitants to ensure that people were not sharing important information with the British forces.[25] As a result, the difficulty of this research is dealing with this silence from the other side. When reading the works of Grace Galloway, Sarah Fisher, and Elizabeth Drinker, one can conclude that Loyalist women were just as political as their revolutionary counterparts. In their writings, they also referenced notions of "liberty", "tyranny", and "justice." However, their use of these terms was often critiquing how the Committees were infringing on their liberties and rights. In these sources it becomes clear that although women may not have been expected or encouraged to be political, they were aware of and understood the political debates of power that dominated the American Revolution.

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[24] Tillman, 4.

Women were aware of the ideological arguments emerging during the American Revolution. This is especially clear in the various letters written by Abigail Adams to both her close friend Mercy Otis Warren and her husband John Adams. For instance, Abigail Adams was incredibly invested in the ideas of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense,* calling his ideas "weighty truths"[26] and additionally, she was curious about how the Congress received Paine's ideas.[27] Based on this, it appears that Abigail Adams was heavily convinced of the ideas that the colonies were being oppressed. However, this was not because she read *Common Sense* as there are clear signs that she believed in the colonies' oppression long before this pamphlet was published. For instance, in her letter written to Mercy Otis Warren in 1773 Adams states, "[you] Madam are so sincere a Lover of your country, and so hearty a mourner in all her misfortunes that it will greatly aggravate your anxiety to hear how much she is now oppressed and insulted… No action however base or sordid, no measure how cruel and villainous, will be a matter of surprise."[28] This language demonstrates that Adams herself believes in the "oppression" of the colonies, supporting Bailyn's analysis of the ideological motivations behind the American Revolution.

Adams was not the only woman to present her awareness of these ideals of the revolution. For instance, Martha Washington, the wife of General George Washington, refers to the Revolution as "our cause" in a letter written to her sister Anna Maria Bassett. In another letter written to Mercy Otis Warren in March 1778, Martha Washington's comments about the direction of the war. "I hope and trust, that all the states will make a vigorous push early this spring… and thereby putting a stop to British cruelties – and afford us that peace liberty and

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[25] Ibid.,, 2.
[26] Abigail Adams to John Adams, February 21, 1776, "Adams Papers Digital Edition", *Massachusetts Historical Society,* https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/volume/AFC01/pageid/AFC01p350.
[27] Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 2, 1776, "Adams Papers Digital Edition", *Massachusetts Historical Society,* https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/volume/AFC01/pageid/AFC01p350.

happiness which we have so contended for."[29] Once again, in these writings we can see women referencing the common politically charged terms of the time through its references to "liberty" and "happiness." Hannah Griffitts also uses similar language in her poem about enforcing the nonimportation movement, published in 1768. To begin with, the poem is addressed to "the Daughters of Liberty in America" clearly identifying the political role of women and the awareness of these political ideologies.[30] Throughout the text, there are various references to the ideas of the Revolution. In this one poem she makes references such as, "Are strip'd of their Freedom, and rob'd of their Right" and "As American Patriots, -our Taste we deny."[31] Again, there are clear references to ideas of "Freedom" and "Right". As it has been shown previously, the idea that a person could have their freedom stolen from them is inherently related to Bailyn's concepts of power and liberty. The writings of women also appear to support the conclusions made by other historians as well.

Pauline Maier argues that at the outset of the Sugar Act and Stamp Act in 1765, a revolution was not on the minds of the colonists.[32] Instead, the ideas of revolution needed to be developed and bolstered by the most radical leaders of the resistance. Maier concludes that it was not until around 1775, with the Intolerable Acts, that many colonists felt that Revolution was the only possible solution to their perceived oppression.[33] The Intolerable Acts, also known as the Coercive Acts, were a series of acts passed in 1774 by Parliament to restrict the rebellious practices of the colonies, specifically Massachusetts. When reviewing the general narrative of the

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[28] Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, December 5, 1773, *Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Author%3A%22Adams%2C%20Abigail%22%20Dec%205&s=1111311111&r=1
[29] Martha Washington to Mercy Otis Warren, found in Joseph E. Fields, ed. *Worthy Partner The Papers of Martha Washington*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 177.
[30] Hannah Griffitts, "The Female Patriots" quoted in Louis V. North, Janet M. Wedge, and Landa M. Freeman, *In the Words of Women*, (New York: Lexington Books, 2011), 6.
[31] Ibid., 6.
[32] Maier, 53.

American Revolution, these acts are often considered the watershed for the transformation from rebellion to revolution. The reason for this is because the colonists viewed these acts as confirmation that there was an organized plot to subdue and destroy American freedom.[34] This attempt to "strangle Massachusetts into submission"[35] was used by radical revolutionaries to justify the need to separate from England entirely. The Boston Committee of Correspondence condemned these acts as "glaring evidence of a fixed plan of the British administration to bring the whole continent into the most humiliating bondage."[36] The letters written by Abigail Adams demonstrate this transformation and shift in attitude. In her letter to Mercy Otis Warren in 1773, she sounds fearful at the prospect of war and how willing many would be to fight.

> Altho the mind is shocked at the thought of shedding humane blood, more especially the blood of our countrymen, and a civil war is of all wars, the most dreadful such is the present Spirit that prevails, that if once they are made desperate many, very many of our heroes will spend their lives in the cause, with the speech of Cato on their mouths 'what a pitty it is, that we can die but once to save our country.[37]

Abigail Adams demonstrates her hesitancy towards war in a multitude of ways in this part of her letter. Not only does she discuss her fears of conflict, but she emphasizes the idea that a war would be a civil war. With this language it implies that Adams still sees the connection to the British, and still sees herself as a subject of the British Empire. However, in a letter to Warren in 1775, Abigail Adams presents a different opinion about the war. "Heaven only knows what is next to take place but it seems to me the Sword is now our only, yet dreadful alternative… [Britain] who has been the envy of nations will now become an object of their

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[33] Ibid., 225.
[34] Ibid., 225.
[35] Nash, *Unknown Revolution*, 90.
[36] *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, quoted in Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 126.
[37] Adams to Warren, Dec. 5, 1773.

scorn and abhorance."[38] Adams' views upon British actions demonstrate the transformation of her perceptions of the British. Again, in the same letter, Adams details how she views war as necessary.

> I think upon the matures deliberation I can say, dreadful as the day would be I would rather see the Sword drawn… we cannot be happy without being free, that we cannot be free without being secure in our property, that we cannot be secure in our property if without our consent others may as by right take it away. We know too well the blessings of freedom, to tamely resign it…[39]

In two years, Adams' opinion of Revolution altered dramatically. From initially viewing war as a "civil war" and being afraid that too many men are anxious to go to war, she appears to have accepted it as the only possible solution. Another example that demonstrates Adams' fervor in the Revolutionary conflict comes in a letter she wrote to her husband in 1776, in which she calls for every Tory to be removed from America so that they can be prevented from "undermining and injuring our cause."[40] This letter appears to show the most dramatic transformation in Abigail Adams' identity because she is now wishing for the removal of potential threats to the cause, which based on her initial letter of 1773, would appear to have been inconceivable. This case supports Maier's conclusion about the development of revolutionary ideas as unrest increased, for the transformation in Adams follows the same pattern with her calls for war not appearing until after the Intolerable Acts.

Abigail Adams is not the only woman by the time of the Declaration of Independence who was calling for separation and the warfare that would come with it. Esther Reed, who would later go on to initiate a door to door fundraising movement for the Continental Army, also ardently supported the Revolution. In a letter from 1775, she examines the political climate and

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[38] Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, February 3, 1775, *Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Author%3A%22Adams%2C%20Abigail%22%20Feb%203&s=1111311111&r=3.
[39] Ibid.

potentiality for violence. In her letter she states that if the King refuses to listen to the propositions for negotiation, "WE SHALL DECLARE FOR INDEPENDENCE, and exert our utmost to defend ourselves."[41] The examples provided by Adams and Reed not only support Maier's argument about the transformation from resistance to revolution but also demonstrate how personal political beliefs and ideologies were a factor for women to consider when deciding who to support in the Revolution.

Female writers of this time also use the notions of "freedom" and "power" to advocate for their individual political rights. Once again, Abigail Adams' writings provide such examples, as she discusses with both her husband and close friend Mercy Otis Warren the hypocrisy of restricting women's rights when claiming to be a Revolution for freedom. In a series of letters written in March, April, and May of 1776, Abigail Adams evaluated the broader application of the ideals of the Revolution to women. In her letter to John Adams in March, she directly challenges his and other male revolutionary leaders' loyalty to these ideals. "I have sometimes been ready to think that the passion for Liberty cannot be equally strong in the breasts of those who have been accustomed to deprive their fellow creatures of theirs."[42] This line can apply to both slavery and women, but within the context of the rest of the letter, it appears that these "creatures" that Adams eludes to are the women. For in the same letter she writes, "I desire you would remember the Ladies… Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands."[43] In her attempts to draw comparisons to the plight of the colonists with that of women, she even goes as far as to warn of a potential rebellion. "If perticuliar care and attention

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[40] Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 2, 1776.
[41] Esther Reed letter to unknown, October 28, 1775, found in North, Wedge, and Freeman, *In the Words of Women*, 97.

is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to forment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice, or representation."[44] In this case, especially, it is clear that Adams makes her argument using the rhetoric of "power" as described by Bailyn. Not only does this come across because of her use of the word "power" but the fact that she states that husbands have "unlimited power" and infers that this means that a woman would have no freedom from her husband.

In her letter to Mercy Otis Warren in April, Adams asks that she participate in the petition she hopes to make to Congress over the issue.[45] A month later, she wrote to her husband in May of the same year, she again pressures him to reconsider his position on women. This time, however, she appeals not to his political ideals, but his image as a father. "Our little ones whom you so often recommend to my care and instruction shall not be deficient in virtue or probity… but they would be doubly in-forced could they be indulged with the example of a Father constantly before them."[46] Abigail Adams was persistent in advocating for female political freedoms during the months preceding the publication of the Declaration of Independence, but these demands would not be met. Yet her demands and usage of the same rhetoric of the Revolution provide a prime example that women were aware and able to formulate their own political opinions of the time.

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[42] Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 31, 1776, *Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Author%3A%22Adams%2C%20Abigail%22%20March%2031&s=1111311111&r=1

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, April, 27, 1776, *Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Author%3A%22Adams%2C%20Abigail%22%20April%2027&s=1111311111&r=1

[46] Abigail Adams to John Adams, May 7, 1776, *Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Author%3A%22Adams%2C%20Abigail%22%20May%207&s=1111311111&r=5

Another example of a woman using the rhetoric surrounding the Revolution to justify their political involvement was Esther Reed. Esther Reed is the assumed author of "Sentiments of an American Woman" although the publication had an anonymous author.[47] In 'Sentiments", Reed seeks to justify her and her fellow ladies' contributions and actions, as these "Ladies Going about For Money" challenged the existing separation of women and politics.[48] In her justification, she emphasizes that these donations are for the soldiers who are fighting and defending their liberty, and to criticize the women for doing so is to be a bad citizen. "We are at least certain, that he cannot be a good citizen who will not applaud our efforts for the relief of the armies which defend our lives, our possessions, our liberty?"[49] This political printing demonstrates how women used the rhetoric and meaning of the American Revolution to justify their political actions; but unlike Adams who used it to address the female situation as hypocritical to the values of the Revolution, Reed uses the rhetoric to support the women's efforts in the war.

Loyalist women also used similar rhetoric in their writings, although these are difficult to find. Kacy Tillman's monograph *Stripped and Script,* explains that the reason for this is that these women needed to protect themselves from crowds and Committees of Safety to avoid being convicted of treason. The consequences for being convicted of being a traitor or a Loyalist resulted in ostracism, loss of property, and in some cases execution.[50] For a woman in the colonies, this could mean the loss of everything that they had once had, and leave them destitute.

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[47] Emily J. Arendt, "'Ladies Going about for Money' Female Voluntary Associations and Civic Consciousness in the American Revolution," *Journal of the Early Republic,* 34 (2014), 165.
[48] Ibid., 166.
[49] "The Sentiments of An American Woman", 1780, *Library of Congress,* https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.14600300/
[50] Tillman, 5.

According to petitions written by Loyalist women, along with physically losing their valuables, they were often left feeling "extreme mental stress", sorrow, fear, and horror.[51]

Even female revolutionaries were dismayed by the treatment of people who had once been their neighbors. For instance, Hannah Griffitts wrote a poem about the execution of two men that were accused of being Loyalists. "Here, clad is solemn sympathy of woe, My soul retire's to share my neighbor's grief."[52] When considering these circumstances, it is no surprise that women who were married to husbands that were considered Loyalists would avoid speaking about the politics of the Revolution or speak negatively of the Revolution in general. Kacy Tillman summarizes the dilemma of Loyalist women when she states, "loyalist women occupied a nearly impossible position: they could neither officially stake a claim in the revolution nor could they avoid being persecuted for their familial affiliations."[53]

In the works written by Loyalist women, there are minimal mentions of the political rhetoric of the Revolution, again most likely because of the fear of being branded for treason. However, as is the case with the women who supported the Revolution, this did not mean that they were absentminded or ignorant of the ideas around them. In 1769, in response to the growing influence of the Sons of Liberty, Christian Arbuthnot Barnes, the wife of Henry Barnes, dictates her fears over the growing strength of the Sons of Liberty and claims that the public is being led by "false maxims." Barnes was very vocal about her skepticism towards the ideas that the Sons of Liberty claimed to support during the nonimportation movement. For her, it was the Sons of Liberty that were sparking the problems among the local population. "The spirit of discord and confusion which has prevail'd with so much violence in Boston has now begun to

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[51] Mary Beth Norton. "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (1976), 403.
[52] Hannah Griffitts "On the Death of John Roberts and Abraham Carlisle," in Ruma Chopra, *Choosing Sides*, 158.

spread itself into the country. These poor deluded people with whom we have lived so long in peace and harmony have been influenced by the Sons of Rapin to take every method to distress us."[54] Barnes's letter was written before the statutes were set in place, most likely allowing for her to be more openminded about her opinion. The logic of Loyalists can also be seen in her writings. Although this letter predates Chalmers *Plain Truth* by five years, both make similar use of the concept of "power" and its connection to anarchy as seen in her choice to use words such as "discord" and "confusion."

It appears that Bailyn's "ideological origins" were not only present in the published political writings of the male elite, but also the private writings of the female population. These women not only repeated the use of familiar terms but demonstrated that they had an individual understanding of the notions of power. In some cases, women used this scenario to argue against their oppression, and in other cases, used it to support their actions in the political sphere. However, it should be noted that the women mentioned so far had close ties either through blood or marriage to members of the political elite. As a result, they were more than likely to have been in direct communication with these men about these ideas, or at least in close enough proximity to learn of them themselves. This should not discount the conclusion that political ideology was a factor women considered when deciding which side to support during the revolution. Despite the presence of Bailyn's "ideological origins" in these writings, they demonstrate the weakness in his claim that these were the sole motivations for revolution. Although the ideologies contributed to their decision, it was not the factor that what most strongly considered.

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[53] Tillman, 11.

## HEADING 4

## WOMEN AND WAR

The Revolution did not stay on the battlefield, and often women were displaced from their homes as the British and Continental armies continuously changed the occupation of their hometowns.[55] Most often, those that were most affected by this conflict were the Loyalist women. These women were often left alone once their husbands were exiled, and then later lost their land because the laws passed by Congress that resulted in the confiscation of lands that belonged to convicted Loyalists.[56] For instance, a law passed in New York in 1779 stated that Loyalists, "severally justly forfeited all rights to the protection of this state" and in doing so allowed for the "forfeiture of their respective estates."[57] Women also lost their own property during these confiscations because of the laws of coverture. Women were directly affected by the war around them, making it a factor in their decision on who to support during the war. Of the three factors that influenced a woman's support for the war, the ongoing war itself appears to have been the weakest influence. Instead of being a factor that decided their support, the warfare often contributed by strengthening their original stance.

Loyalist women's opinions seem to be the most impacted by the effects of the war. One case that demonstrates this is Grace Galloway. Galloway's husband was exiled for his Loyalist sympathies and had his lands confiscated, which included lands that were originally her own.[58] In the end, Galloway never received her lands back and lived a fairly destitute life compared to

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[54] Ibid., 15.
[55] Ruma Chopra, *Choosing Sides: Loyalists in Revolutionary America* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2013), 3.
[56] Tillman, 35.
[57] "Act for the Forfeiture and Sale of the Estates of Persons who have adhered to the Enemies of this State, and for declaring the Sovereignty of the People of this State, in respect to all Property within the same" in Ruma Chopra, *Choosing Sides,* 115.
[58] Tillman, 37.

before the war.[59] Tillman's analysis of Galloway's writings details how Galloway became bitter not only with the revolutionaries but also the British for failing to defend her. A common practice by Loyalist women in efforts to obtain their land back was to appeal to the Supreme Court and declare themselves as a *feme covert,* in which they said they lost their property because of their husband's loyalties, not their own.[60] However, Galloway did not use this defense and even denied purchasing the land back in 1779 when it was offered to her by the Supreme Executive Council.[61] Tillman interprets her actions as Galloway's refusal to support the Revolution as it was the revolutionaries that had taken her land in the first place.[62] Galloway was also vocal with her discontent for both sides of the war, differential herself from the majority of Loyalist women. "[I am] quite vext with the English, but I hat[e] the others… I would turn rebel rather than hold such a wretch to be my King…There was no justice in the English more than the Americans… I hate the King and all his court… and I renounce the nation."[63] From this, one can see that Galloway refused to support either side of the war, but her motivations and personal opinions appear to be most strongly linked to the effects of the war itself. Her hatred of both sides relates to the loss of her property, not related to her previous political beliefs.

Another case of how the war resulted in the "choosing" of sides for Loyalist women is presented in the case of Sarah Logan Fisher, whose husband was a successful merchant who was arrested and exiled.[64] However, Fisher presents a different case from Galloway because she and her husband were Quakers. The label of Loyalist during the time of the American Revolution was often extended to those that wished to not take either side. This was especially the case

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[59] Ibid. 47.
[60] Kerber, 130.
[61] Tillman, 45.
[62] Ibid., 37.
[63] Grace Growden Galloway, quoted in Tillman, *Stripped and Script,* 46.

among the Quaker populations. Quakers opposed the war upon religious grounds, believing that it violated their principle of Inner Light because of its necessity for violence.[65] However, their choice to not outrightly support the war resulted in being labeled as Loyalist traitors. Some revolutionaries attempted to "prove" that the Quakers posed a threat by creating falsified evidence like the Spanktown letter, which supposedly was a documented spy letter produced during the Spanktown Yearly Meeting in 1777.[66] As a result of this accusation, suspicion for Quakers spread across the colonies, and labeled anyone part or affiliated with the Society of Friends as a target, which included Fisher's husband. Fisher proceeded to deny aid to the rebels and went even further to denounce the Revolution. According to Tillman, Fisher began to challenge the principles of the Revolution, claiming that the people were simply switching from one tyrant to another.[67] Initially, Fisher had rejected supporting the Revolution because of her claims for pacifism. After the Spanktown letter, Fisher more directly challenged the legitimacy of the American Revolution and the ideals of revolutionaries. In a passage from her diary in 1777, she comments on the mandated oaths Pennsylvania was requiring its citizens to sign. She describes it as, "a most extraordinary instance of arbitrary power, & of the Liberty we shall enjoy should [the Revolutionary] government ever be established, a tyrannical government it will prove from weak & wicked Men."[68] In Fisher's case the actions of the war, namely the Spanktown letter, proves to be an incredibly formative experience for her position regarding the war and the people involved in it.

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[64] Tillman., 52.
[65] Ibid., 51.
[66] Ibid., 49.
[67] Ibid., 54-55.
[68] Sarah Logan Fisher, quoted in Tillman, *Stripped and Script,* 54.

Women who supported the revolution were similarly impacted by the incoming British troops. For example, Mary Morris accounts in a letter to her mother her growing fears as the British forces approach Philadelphia in 1777. "We are preparing for another flight in packing up our furniture and removing them to a new purchase."[69] Morris had the option to simply move to another home, unlike most women of this time. Instead, the letter by Cornelia Bell details the fears and experiences most women faced when troops approached towns. "[The soldiers] will not be very desirable visitors, as they mark their own way with ruin and devastation. 'Tis impossible to picture the distress they have brought upon innocent families who have lain in their route, by plundering them of their property, not leaving them the necessaries of life."[70] Tryphena Martin Angell accounts for her own family's displacement. "Some of our things were buried, others sunk in the well, and the rest put into the oxcart… When we got back we found all these things had been stolen by the Tories. We never got any trace as to who it was that had taken them."[71] Indeed, these actions seem to have greatly impacted women that watched their neighbors be exiled of their own homes. For instance, Elizabeth Drinker details in her journal the consequences faced by two of her neighbors. "They have actually put to death, hang'd on ye commons, John Roberts and Abm Carlisle' this morning… an awful solemn day it has been."[72]

These cases demonstrate why the war itself was not the main determining factor that women considered when making their decision. For instance, in the case of Sarah Fisher, she already had a determined opinion of the war because of her Quaker beliefs. The effects of the war only appear to have radicalized her opinions about the war effort but were not completely altering in her opinions. Similarly, the revolutionary women documented above were displaced

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[69] Mary W. Morris to E.H. White, April 14, 1777, in North, Wedge, and Freeman, *In the Words of Women*, 106.
[70] Ibid., 107.
[71] Tryphena Martin Angell, found in North, Wedge, and Freeman, *In the Words of Women*, 78.

because of their and their family's pre-existing political beliefs. In each of these brief excerpts, the evacuation of women appears to only have strengthened their support for the colonist side of the war. This can be seen in their accounts with the emphasis they place on the forced removal of "innocent families". For these women, the removal by soldiers helped villainize the British and Loyalist forces, encouraging their political alignment with the Revolutionaries. During the Revolution, wives and families were not safe in their homes. The constant fluctuation of the war placed all women in danger of being displaced. These extreme circumstances could have contributed to the development of strong feelings about the war, as is demonstrated by Galloway and Fisher. However, it appears that in most cases, the effects of the war acted as justification for a woman's original decision. Since political ideologies and warfare were not the primary factor women considered in choosing to support the war, this leaves social and familial obligations.

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[72] Elizabeth Drinker, "Facing British Evacuation" (1778), found in Ruma Chopra, *Choosing Sides*, 156.

## HEADING 5

## WOMEN AND FAMILY

Women during the age of the Revolution were in a secondary political status to that of men. It has been shown that this did not necessarily mean that women were unaware or unknowledgeable of the politically charged environment surrounding them. Historians have inadvertently removed women's agency when it comes to choosing a side during the war by subjecting their political opinion to that of their husbands. Instead, historians should acknowledge that women during the Revolution were presented with a choice. Women had to choose either to remain loyal to their family or remain loyal to their personal beliefs. When previewing the letters and petitions of women, it appears that when women made their decision regarding which side to support, they often chose familial loyalty. In other words, for most women during the Revolution, the most important factor for women in making their "choice" in the Revolution was their family.

Some might argue that the restrictions placed on women socially drove them to make this choice, removing agency from their actions. In other words, the social expectations of women at the time removed any choice they could have had. Some sources could support this conclusion. For instance, one woman writes about how she hopes to make her new marriage work.[73] "One of my first resolutions I made after marriage was never to hold disputes with my husband – never to contend with him in my opinion of things – but if ever we differed in opinions not to insist on mine being right, and his wrong… It is a [married women's] business to give up to their

[73] Louis V. North, Janet M. Wedge, and Landa M. Freeman, *In the Words of Women,* (New York: Lexington Books, 2011), 198.

husbands."[74] However, agency still existed for these women, whether they perceived it or not. In this case, the woman in question is making the active choice not to argue with her husband. Although this is influenced by the expectation society has placed upon her, these expectations act more as justification for her decision, not as a limitation.

Not only did women internalize their subordinate role as a wife to their husband, but also their separation from politics. In many cases, women often dismissed their political opinions in the final sentences of their letters. This is represented in a conciliatory letter written by Cornelia Bell to her brother. In her first letter, Bell wrote of her fears and views of the American Revolution, even inclosing a portion of George Washington's Proclamation in the letter. Shortly after, she wrote again to apologize for her political brashness. "I'll not trouble you with any more of my politics; they are so disagreeable to you. Every rationale creature, you know, has a right to think, and everyone cannot be of the same opinion. I am not a politician. I detest it in a female character as much as you, but we must say something, even if it is nonsense."[75] In this brief letter, the societal expectations of women to be silent are apparent, especially in how Bell tries to label her ideas "nonsense." Whether this was to be a snark reply to her brother, or whether Bell believed the words in which she wrote, it demonstrates how women were impacted by societal expectations of them to be apolitical members of the family. Christian Barnes provides another example. After discussing her discontent with the Sons of Liberty, Barnes seems shocked herself to her mentioning of politics. "This is my private opinion, but how I came to give it is a mistry for politics is a puddle I never chose to dabble in."[76] Even in letters not to personal family

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[74] Elizabeth Foote Washington, journal entry, 1789, found in North, Wedge, and Freeman, *In the Words of Women*, 199.
[75] Cornelia Bell to Andrew Bell, March 4, 1777, found in North, Wedge, and Freeman, *In the Words of Women*, 108.
[76] Christian Arbuthnot Barnes to Elizabeth Murray Campbell, November 20, 1769, in North, Wedge, and Freeman, *In the Words of Women*, 15.

members, women addressed their limited role in politics. Ann Gwinnett wrote to the Continental Congress declaring that there were tory sympathizers in the Georgia troops and ended her warning with a note that stated, "These things (tho from a woman, & it is not in our sphere, yet I cannot help it) are all true."[77] Once again it can be seen how women were aware and in many instances accepted their submissive role within society. If this is the case, for these women, politics would not have been a factor in deciding their support for the war. Instead, they would choose to follow their husband's decisions because they perceived him to be more knowledgeable about politics.

Of course, not every woman so strongly believed in female submissiveness, as has been revealed with Abigail Adams' demands to her husband for female political engagement. Another example that demonstrates women seeking to extend their sphere into politics are the actions taken by Esther Reed and her calls for fundraising for the troops. "Let [the women] not lose a moment; let us be engaged to offer the homage of our gratitude at the altar of military valour."[78] Even loyalist women were just as likely to be active in the protests and war efforts of the time. One newspaper account describes the audience's reaction when the British marched into New York City in 1776. "[In] all respects, Women as well as Men, [behaved] like overjoyed Bedlamites. One thing is worth remarking; a woman pulled down the Rebel Standard upon the fort, and a woman hoisted up in its stead His Majesty's Flag."[79] Although these women were very politically active for their side of the war, this does not mean that this was the reason why

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[77] Ann Gwinnett to John Hancock and the "other members of the Grand Continental Congress," 1777, quoted in Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 79.
[78] "Sentiments of An American Woman".
[79] Edward H. Tatum Jr., ed., *The American Journal of Ambrose Serle, Secretary to Lord Howe, 1776* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1940), 104, quoted in Ruma Chopra, *Choosing Sides*, 33.

they chose that side in the first place. Instead, women made their choice during the war based on their loyalty to the family.

The personal letters from women focused on social topics rather than the war. For instance, Abigail Adams, who has been shown to have been highly political, wrote multiple times to her husband about the health of the family, the occurrences of the neighbors, and even her fears of his well-being. Even her political discussions are surrounded by social inquiries. A similar pattern emerges in the letter of Martha Washington. In her letters, she includes descriptions of the movements of troops and the toll that this war had placed on her husband. However, surrounding these brief mentions of war, many of her letters to her closest friends and relatives inquire as to the condition in which their family is living. In her letters to Anna Maria Bassett (Her sister), Martha Washington comments on the conditions of her sister, her nephews, and any illnesses they may have.[80] These two women are just a couple of examples that demonstrate how the war, despite its intrusion into their lives and the lives of their husbands, was often discussed as simply another topic to include in everyday life. From this, it can be argued that even highly political women embraced the familial expectation of women and considered their family in deciding their loyalties during the war. Another woman who exemplifies this is Esther Reed. Her political pamphlet "Sentiments of an American Woman" has already been discussed as a vocalization of the strong opinions women had during the war. Additionally, the language used throughout the document emphasizes the importance of family. "If I live happily in the midst of my family, if my husband cultivates his field, and reaps his harvest in peace; if,

[80] Martha Washington to Anna Maria Bassett, November 18, 1777, found in Joseph E. Fields, ed. *Worthy Partner the Papers of Martha Washington*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994).

surrounded with my children, I myself nourish the youngest, and press it to my bosom, without being afraid of seeing myself separated from it, by a ferocious enemy."[81]

In addition to private letters and political publications, petitions to the government also showcase how women highly regarded family loyalty. Mary Beth Norton based most of her research on Loyalist women upon the claims and petitions made to the British in efforts to gain compensation after the war. Norton makes an incredibly valid point about why these petitions provide insight into female loyalties during the war. "Although these manuscripts have been used extensively for political and economic studies of loyalism, they have only once before been utilized for an examination of colonial society."[82]Additionally, these petitions allow for access to a broad spectrum of classes, as the claimants came from all different social and economic levels.[83] Therefore, while analysis of letters may limit the research to women of higher social standing, these petitions provide insight into all social classes of white women.

When reviewing the petitions of both Loyalists and Revolutionaries, two kinds of arguments emerge. Both rely on and reflect on the importance of familial loyalty. The first arguments require the women to attempt to distance their loyalties from that of their husbands. In these cases, the women attempt to claim that while their husband was in the wrong, they were secretly supportive of the other side of the war effort but were bound to stay loyal to their husband's wishes. For instance, in the case of Grace Kempe, her attorney uses this to argue for the return of her lands. "She can have no will different from [her husband's]. She is bound by law to live with him if he required it… as freedom of will is of the essence of all crimes, a woman cannot commit a crime of this sort, not even this species of treason, by obeying her

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[81] "Sentiments of an American Woman".
[82] Norton, 387.
[83] Ibid., 388.

husband."[84] This argument demonstrates the importance placed upon women as subordinate to the ideas and workings of her husband. The second argument once again requires the wife to emphasize her close connection and loyalty to her husband. For these cases, the wives would often emphasize the husband's loyalties and claim them as justification for compensation for the family. These arguments are directly opposite to one another, but both depend on the wife's ability to proclaim and defend her loyalty to her husband. Therefore, when reviewing these petitions, it appears that it was familial loyalty that became the driving force behind which side of the war women supported.

These petitions for aid and recompense written by women similarly demonstrate their emphasis on their roles as mothers and wives. For instance, Florence Cooke's petition to receive her land back not only resulted in her distancing her opinion from her husband's, but also in emphasizing her role as a mother. She does this by emphasizing that this land needs to be returned for the sake of her child.

> "[The confiscation statute] she humbly thinks the more severe as her child received early & strong impressions of real attachment to the liberty of her native country… who if providence had blessed her with a number of sons, would have thought herself happily engaged employing all the influence and care of a mother, to render them fit for the defense and support of their country… And lastly she humbly implores of this honourable house, that she may not be deprived of the only resource for herself and the maintenance & education of her daughter, who must otherwise be turned into the world, without friend or protector, exposed to the misfortune and affliction, which seldom fail to pursue an unhappy female fallen from affluence to poverty."[85]

When reading this petition, Cooke uses her role as a woman and as a mother to garner sympathy from the committee. She highlights the negative impacts the war can have on a widowed or abandoned mother, and how that can negatively impact her children. Also, the terminology of this petition demonstrates how Cooke is using this role in conjunction with the

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[84] *Kempe's Lessee v. Kennedy et al.*, (1809), quoted in Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 131.

politics of the time to validate the returning of her land. It appears that Cooke is driven by the need to protect her family and uses the rhetoric of patriotism to justify why she deserves to be recompensated. This provides an example of how women justified their political motivations based on their loyalty to the family.

In other petitions, women also referenced their husband's loyalty to the cause as justification for receiving aid. Ann Glover's husband was enlisted in 1775 to the 2nd North Carolina Continental Line and died by execution as an example to the rest of his men in 1780 when he sought to receive adequate pay.[86] In her petition to the General Assembly of North Carolina, Glover criticizes how he was not adequately paid or fed for his services to his country. "[He] demanded [his fellow soldiers'] pay, and refused to obey the Command of his superior officer, and would not march until they had justice done them… Allegiance to our country and obedience of to those in authority, but the spirit of a man will shrink from his duty when his services are not paid and injustice oppresses him and his family."[87] In this manner, she blames his death on the inadequacy of the military, not on his lack of loyalty to the country. To finish off her petition, it reads, "Your humble petitioner, distressed with the recollection of the fatal catastrophe… requests that you will extend your usual benevolence and charity to her and her two children."[88] From this petition, the woman refers to her familial connections and loyalty as justification for her loyalty. In contrast with Cooke's petition, this demonstrates how women used the practices of coverture and their subordinate status to dictate their loyalty during the war.

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[85] Florence Cooke to the General Assembly, January 21, 1783, found in Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 127.
[86] North, Wedge, and Freeman, 147
[87] Ann Glover, "Petition to the General Assembly of North Carolina," 1780, found in North, Wedge, and Freeman, *In the Words of Women*, 148.
[88] Ibid., 148.

Similar methods were used in petitions by Quakers and Loyalists. For example, Molly Price wrote to the British Commander-in-Chief in New York City seeking aid from the British. The most interesting part about her petition is the emphasis placed on her role as a wife and mother. In this petition, she is looking for aid, "to support herself, a mother, and two small children" and continually emphasizes this point saying that although she has been able to live with friends, "it is far from being sufficient in these times of distress for the care, support of a helpless widow, her mother, and children."[89] Even petitions sent to the American courts used similar language to describe the reasons for why women sought compensation.

One such case of this is Elizabeth Graeme. In her petition, Graeme sought to prove her patriotism. "I have for my own part constantly remained on the premises; earnestly praying for peace but if the Sword must decide our fates, sincerely wishing on the side of America; which in my short view of things I looked on to be the injured party."[90] In addition to this claim for loyalty, Graeme referenced various actions that demonstrated her patriotism within her situation. "I never went into the city while the British were there… I had no acquaintance with the military gentlemen… At the time Mr. Fergusson took the Department of Commissary of Prisoners, I wrote to him… to endeavor to dissuade him from acting in any shape under General Howe."[91] To conclude her petition she repeats her negative feelings towards the British, stating, "The winter the British passed in Philadelphia was the most completely miserable I ever passed in my life, I should prefer annihilation to a repetition of it."[92] Graeme is attempting to use the first of the two arguments presented earlier. From this it can also be inferred how wives, despite

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[89] Sir Henry Clinton Papers, July 1779, Memorial of Mary Price, quoted in Ruma Chopra, *Choosing Sides,* 161.
[90] Elizabeth Graeme to John Dickenson, September 10, 1779, found in North, Wedge, and Freeman, *In the Words of Women*, 128.
[91] Ibid., 128.
[92] Ibid., 128.

differing opinions, often acted in the interests of their husbands. Additionally, determining whether these were the real sentiments of Elizabeth Graeme can be confounded with the purpose in which this document is written. This was an appeal to obtain back the land that was confiscated when the American troops managed to take Philadelphia. As a result, Graeme could have overemphasized her patriotic beliefs and actions to have a chance of receiving compensation. This is an essential condition to consider when previewing this document and similar petitions made by women that claim to have different political opinions from their husbands. Even if these women's opinions are honest in these documents, the fact that they proceeded to remain loyal to their husband's actions demonstrates that during the Revolution, women placed their family first when deciding their own loyalties.

## HEADING 6

## CONCLUSION

Discerning motivations are perhaps one of the most difficult challenges a historian will face. This is especially the case when attempting to examine the motivations for groups that were subjected and restricted because of factors such as gender. This is one of the largest weaknesses of Bernard Bailyn's *Ideological Origins* and the subsequent monographs based on his research. Bailyn's ideological transformations relied predominantly on the political pamphlets of the male elite in society. As a result, his conclusions ignore the meaning of the Revolution for other groups. Such criticism is brought up by Gordon Wood, who declares that the Revolution was the catalyst for later social transformation in the United States.[93] Linda Kerber attempts to fill this gap in Bailyn's logic with her analysis of the impact of the war on women. Kerber concludes that the American Revolution provided women with the rhetoric necessary to insert themselves into the sphere of politics, but that the Revolution ultimately failed in dramatically alter the subordinate role of women in society, supporting Bailyn's initial arguments. Although Kerber's research greatly expanded the discussion on women in the American Revolution and demonstrated that women were aware of the ideologies Bailyn emphasizes; there remained a lack of research evaluating motivations from the female perspective.

Overall, women's motivations for either supporting or opposing the American Revolution incorporated three broad categories. The first is political philosophies and beliefs. This factor evaluated female writings for the same ideologies as presented by Bailyn and Kerber. While these ideologies were prominent in the writings of women, demonstrating that it was indeed a factor, there were few instances when these ideologies were the main motivations behind a

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[93] Wood, 86.

woman's decision. The second factor was the effects of the war itself. Based on the writings, it appears that the effects of the war greatly impacted the opinions of women. However, in the cases studied, these instances only strengthened the woman's pre-existing notions of the two sides of the Revolution. For white women, the war itself only radicalized their position on the war. This leaves the third factor, social expectations, and family. Since women were so strictly bound to their husband and family because of expectations placed upon society, the family became the dominant factor for women in deciding which side they would support during the war. This appears when evaluating the personal letters, but additionally the petitions women wrote in their efforts to obtain aid from either side of the war. Ultimately, women were provided with a choice during the American Revolution. Although the practice of coverture and subordinate status did impact the individual woman's perceived individuality and freedom, they chose to remain loyal to their family and husband's decisions first, regardless of their personal beliefs about the war. This often resulted in women facing the consequences for their husband's actions, but in most instances, women did not blame their husband, but instead the opposing side of the war. In this regard, Bailyn's "ideological origins" did not apply to the female experience of the war. This challenge to his conclusions demonstrates how similar studies should be taken up evaluating the perspectives of slaves, Native Americans, and other oppressed groups.

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# VITA

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

Jacquelin Biggs

biggs.jackie@comcast.net

Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Bachelor of Science, History, May 2018

Special Honors and Awards:
Summa Cum Laude

Research Paper Title:
A Reanalysis of the American Revolution: Causes for Support and Opposition to the War Among Women

Major Professor: Dr. Gray Whaley